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The Artists' Text as Work of Art

Ilse van Rijn

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ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT
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aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
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Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen

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Introduction

I had gotten used to getting my texts back heavily edited, comments in the margin, red lines and yellow marks covering the pages. Dreading the editor's notes, I also grew to know their argument by heart: your writing is hermetic: your tendency toward the poetic conceals the object from the reader's view. The first time I read these remarks I was taken aback and preoccupied by them for several days: apparently there were strict rules an essay or review had to correspond to. Regardless of whether my texts really were poetic, couldn't they have a phrasing, rhythm, and logic of their own? Weren't there more ways in which an object could be perceived, and further, a way to translate one's critical distance to an artwork into words?

Rewriting my pieces I found a secret joy in renegotiating what I experienced as textual standards while remaining true to my wording and writerly pace: how could I rework my writing within a system the apparent strictures of which I didn't entirely agree with? How could I safeguard my language and choice of terms while unpacking my thoughts, which concerned not only the object on view, but also the language in which my view on it could be transcribed? Editing the editing, I wondered whether my stakes were too high for the small article I was supposed to write. Was that the reason why my piece had been judged too closed and introspective? And what did the term "poetic" actually mean in relation to my writing on visual art?

My initial surprise at the nature of the comments on my articles never went away. It only grew, evolving into a question I knew I'd have to confront. This moment came when the artists whose projects I had been discussing in my texts started to write. Questions regarding the translation of the object at hand deepened: how could I write about writing? What did my position as a "critic" enhance once the artists I was interested in put pen to paper? Jill Magid, Jeremiah Day, Josef Strau, Dora García, Nicoline van Harskamp, Falke Pisano, they wrote and published their writings as autonomous works. And these artists were not the only ones to articulate their thoughts: the number of visual artists writing and publishing their texts started to increase. The character of their works differed, varying from novel to script, verging on theoretical writing, essay, poem, diary entry, journalistic report, and, most often, a combination of these forms. What was the common denominator of these writings? What were their key characteristics? And how could artists' texts be approached?

For the purposes of this research, I define artists' texts as texts written and produced by visual artists. The heightened quantity and expanding complexity of contemporary artists' texts prompt questions regarding their

institutional positions and the operative force. How can artists' writings be situated in art practices marked by a strongly developed and still developing discursivity?

The phenomenon itself of visual artists writing and publishing their words is not new.[1] Language has attracted artists from Salvador Dalí to Theo van Doesburg, from Wassily Kandinsky to Henri Matisse.[2] But especially since (Proto-)Conceptual artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s radically exploited an art unrestricted by medium, language has been employed in a "visual" art practice in a more conscious way.[3] Words were often visualized and utilized as material by artists.[4] For others, the indeterminacy of language, abstaining from clear referentiality, and made to operate "between literal and metaphorical signification" [5] was activated in texts that paradoxically communicated to museum audiences what was not visible within the confines of its walls. This dual reliance on language as both matter and not matter might be characteristic of the period.[6] It certainly also points to the attempt at what Peter Osborne has rightly termed the "fundamental *transcategorical* practice" of the day, or a post-Conceptual ontology of art in general.[7] The mere use of language reminded the viewer that artistic motivations were led by an *idea* supposedly less tangible than so-called traditional art (i.e., painting and sculpture).

Confronted with contemporary artists' writings, especially at the beginning of my research in 2010/2011,[8] the problem of categorization and its relation to individual works persisted.[9] Institutions were struggling with models to present written pieces in an exhibition setting, questioning how to discuss them. Thus books were put on a pedestal, favoring their object status at the expense of the written structure they also deployed: the mere form of presentation withheld the possibility for Justin Gosker's book *Ummm…* (2012), containing poems and aphoristic phrases, to be leafed through, let alone read. Nor could it be bought.[10] Likewise the physical and mental distance between Mariana Castillo Deball's 2002 rewrite of George Perec's posthumously published *Penser/Classer* (1985), with which it shared a title, and the onlooker could not be overcome. Merely placed on a counter, the intimacy and immediacy of the artists' writing could not be grasped, nor could its translation in physical space be comprehended.[11] On other occasions the artists' writings were accessible. But the limited edition and mode of distribution for these writings based on a gallery system still often steeped in the uniqueness of a work of art, did not correspond to the objective proper to most written works, if only as a principle inherent in a printed publication: to be multiplied and read! While I was anxious to study Jill Magid's *Becoming Tarden* (2010), the artist's gallery did not answer my repeated requests

for a copy, apparently more interested in dealing a lucrative installation; Melvin Moti's *No Show* (2004) was impossible to obtain, as it lingered between museal production, self-published booklet, and extension of the film *No Show*; Maria Barnas's *The Writing Room* (2007), a newspaper, had to be handled with gloves in the museum's library, its shop lacking an edition.

Today, much like in the 1960s, the conditions for the reception of artworks are challenged by the appearance of a written piece in an exhibition space. The discrepancy between multiple temporalities must be faced. A museum generally follows the clock time usual for institutions. But the reading of a narrative work such as Keren Cytter's *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters* (2008), which will be discussed in the first chapter, would take you well outside the exhibition's opening times. On other occasions, the uneasy incongruity of time frames is both stressed and tacitly maintained, allowing for the publication to be taken home.[12] These conflicting temporalities cause practical problems, showing up an institution's functional standards, conceptions, and efficacy.

A current use of language in artists' texts marks a difference from its historical use in Conceptual Art. Language is no longer assumed to be an instrument to circumvent the problematic status of the art object. The present-day generation of artists' writings that are studied in my research see language as *not* neutral, *not* "aiming at the suspension of the conflictual basis of discourse." [13] Educated with and well aware of Conceptual Art and post-structuralist thought such as Barthes's, on which Conceptualists so heavily relied,[14] today's artists witnessed the failure of a Conceptualist project intent on keeping the market at bay through the use of what they perceived as transient, ephemeral language. Or as art historian and former advocate of Conceptual Art Lucy Lippard formulated her experiences of the time, major Conceptualists were seen selling their works "for substantial sums," being represented by and showing in the "world's most prestigious galleries." [15] Language had clearly not been an efficient tool to bypass the commodity status of the object and the market-driven orientation of the time, it being strongly intertwined with the world of which it forms an indelible part. Or to frame it differently, for the current generation, Jacques Derrida's famous adage "There is nothing outside of the text [there is no outside-text; *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*]" had to be taken with a pinch of salt.[16] Or at least nuanced.

Working in the aftermath of Conceptual Art, contemporary artists, especially those since the 2000s who I focus on in this research, have

nevertheless become habituated to reflecting on the functioning of the text *qua* text. Employing language now, the question arises how this textual consciousness is spelled out in artists' writings, inquiring into the status and operative force of the artists' text.[17] It is my intention to situate artists' writing more precisely in relation to Conceptual Art and to apprehend its functioning given a still prevalent institutional frame predicated on visuality. In order to do so, I will choose what is historically often regarded as the opposite pole of visuality, concentrating on the textuality of the text. In the artists' text and my study if it, the visual and the textual are not treated as antinomies, however. It is my premise that an awareness of the text *as a text* is translated into textual strategies that effectuate the transformation of the word in a written work. What Roman Jakobson called literariness (*literaturnost*) is immanent in the artists' text, as it's writing that stands out from habitual uses of the written word.[18] My study of this textual awareness thus engages in a poetics, which answers the question: "What makes a verbal message a work of art?"[19] Subsequent chapters will trace these inherent textual procedures. To do so the artists' text will be (temporarily) isolated, severed from a visual practice to which it is (possibly) linked. The reason for this separation is that the artists' writing circulates in a detached and autonomous manner as well as tied to its visual counterpart. What is more, the artists' text is all too often perceived as an extension of a visual or visually oriented practice. As an assumed logical, often causal connection, the visual-textual dichotomy seems to entrench the artists' text in institutional constraints it immanently escapes and contests. It obscures what is actually at stake in the text *as a text*.

Following textual procedures of the artists' writing that, according to me, mark the text, the artists' writing is read up close and compared with literature. Thus four themes seminal to artists' writing are studied in four case studies that exemplify what I despite (or thanks to) the earlier mentioned variety of artists' writings still call *the* artists' text. For reasons of clarity, they will be treated separately, though they actually overlap. The themes and case studies consolidate the multiple artists' writings and variegated texts.

Variations notwithstanding, the criteria guiding my selection of artists' texts, not disregarding my personal preference, were: contemporary having gained an autonomous status, i.e., reflecting on its textual self and (also) circulating unconnected within a so-called visually oriented institutional frame; a consistent part of the artists' practice; and not yet fully integrated (by 2000) in the dominant institutional discourse. Although writings like that of Maria Barnas or Tom McCarthy continue to be of importance, they were less suitable to be among my objects

of research given recognition and categorization emphasized the institutional embrace and overshadowed the mostly obscured poetical strategies (the reflection on the text as *a textual becoming*, that is) in which I am interested here. The limit cases are intriguing due to their unsure and unsecured position, which often underlines an overt experimentation with textual fringes, a manipulation of borderlines, bargaining and crossing frontiers that make up the work. For the same reason, I am less interested in the notion of genre, as it directly qualifies and encapsulates a practice that seems willingly erring. Lastly, the writings had to differ from each other in ways that, at first sight, seemed significant. Thus Matthew Buckingham's shorter "article" "Muhheakantuck – Everything Has a Name" (2005, 2007, 2008), discussed in the fourth chapter, seemed to stand miles apart from Cytter's full-length "novel" *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-four Chapter*s; Dora García's heavily fragmented and collaborative artists' writing seemed to differ considerably from Josef Strau's text, in which the first person singular, or "I" protrudes.

Accordingly, chapter one, taking as its point of departure Cytter's work mentioned above investigates the narrative lines of the artists' text, comparing it with postmodern literature. The second chapter, delving into Dora García's *The Inadequate* (2011), examines the form of the artists' text, reading it against the notion of metafiction. The third chapter inquires into the position of the author, juxtaposing Josef Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence* but *W.H.C.T.L.J.S.* (2008) with autobiography/ autofiction. The final chapter asks after the functioning of the single word in artists' writing, studying Buckingham's work "Muhheakantuck," seeking possible parallels with poetry, and conceptual writing as a branch of poetry specifically.

Conceptual Frame

Confronted with current artists' writings, it is my aim to comprehend the functioning of the text *as a text*, and its relation to Conceptual Art specifically, situating it in an institutional (theoretical) discourse. Reading and rereading artists' writings, I found that literary theory revealed itself as insufficient to grasp the artists' texts' operative force. Whereas artists' writings seemed to rub shoulders with postmodern approaches concentrating on what in relation to postmodern practices has been termed the textual surface, I suspected their motivations lay elsewhere. But where? And how did these incentives materialize, if at all? Thus repeatedly coming across metatextual comments in the artists' text, I was wondering what premises underpinned these procedures that are

reminiscent of postmodern textual strategies.[20] To what degree did a predilection for *petites histoires* in artists' texts like Buckingham's differ from or respond to postmodern renunciations of grand narratives? [21]

Searching for a way to analyze artists' writing, I suspected that its complex situation, "between" traditional disciplinary domains, had to be accounted for. I quickly discovered that its conspicuous visual art support did all but act as a negligible décor. But how could the ramifications of influences implicit in artists' writing be methodically explained? My modus operandi had to allow for a study of the *sinuosity* and *implacability* of the artists' text. This led to a reconsideration of my initial empirical address of the artists' text. I took up an approach to empiricism, as accounting for the experience of influences (impressions and reflections differing from each other and repeating each other) coming from the outside, intertwining it with a patchwork of different techniques, thus responding to the artists' text's branching out, forking among, and position *between*.

Today's artists' writings aren't neutral writings like Conceptual artists' texts. Current artists' writings do not seek to outplay or baffle the paradigm of visual art. Part and parcel of my quest for an approach to the artists' text was the question of how this lack of neutrality could be methodically carried out in my research. Artists' writings seemed to be *produced with* the complex milieu that brought them forth, a tangled web of social, machinic, and mental interrelations. Conscious of artists' writings complicity in economic mechanisms and means—be they institutional systems or the ever more intricate media and cybernetic network on which society is based—the term production has to be understood here not solely as an economic configuration. In relation to the artists' text, production seemed to be a composite unity of forms of life including social relations and political and cultural operations closely linked to their material environment. I asked myself how these elements impinged on the artists' text, as they appeared to mingle and seep into each other. Issuing from a context that is composite in itself, I proposed the diversified artists' text could only be grasped through a *transversal* reading of it, i.e., taking into account its crossing several domains.[22] How does the artists' text realize what surfaced as an intra-active writing, it being marked by a position *between*? [23] How does artists' writing take a stance vis-à-vis an apparently stable and so-called canonical field, an institutional framework to which it looked likely to respond while (re) configuring it?

In order to grasp the functioning of the artists' text and its immanent complexity, I combined empirical research with a conceptual architecture. This combination is key to circumscribing the artists' writing, and

provided a method by which I could follow each and every, what so far seemed capricious, textual move. Crucial to my framework for cracking open the artists' text's has been my study of the notion of *dissensu*s in an analysis that compared the writings of Jacques Rancière and Félix Guattari. Whereas Rancière's work deepened an understanding of the image-text divide that dictated, and, to me, concealed discussions about artists' writings, Guattari's offered an approach that made do with these (and other) all too familiar established distinctions. Let us briefly look at the Rancière-Guattari debate.

Rancière's comprehension of *dissensus* pivots around his initial investigations of the image, interesting in relation to the way artists' writing is still comprehended along the image-text divide. For Rancière, the image is heterogeneous, and, as such, grounded in what he calls "the great parataxis" [*la grande parataxe*]. The great parataxis consists of "a great chaotic juxta-position, a great indifferent melange of significations and materialities" where " all common terms of measurement that opinions and histories lived on have been abolished."[24] It is the common factor of dis-measure or chaos that gives art its power, according to Rancière. A contradictory tribute to history is being paid, as he himself admits: "The measurement of aesthetic art then had to construct itself as a contradictory one, nourished by the great chaotic power of unbound elements, but able, by virtue of that very fact, to separate this chaos—or 'idiocy'—from the art of the furies of the great explosion or the torpor of the great consent." Rancière then proposes to call this measurement the "sentence-image" or "la phrase-image": "By this I understand something different from the combination of a verbal sequence and a visual form… The sentence is not the sayable and the image is not the visible. By sentence-image I intend the combination of two functions that are to be defined aesthetically—that is, by the way in which they undo the representative relation between text and image."[25] It is what Kant called the "aesthetic idea" of art, "inventions that transform the willed and the unwilled, the known and the unknown, the fact and the non-fact."[26] An approach to historical disciplinary categorizations, the question arises whether the sentence-image enables the localization of artists' writing, grasping its textual becoming *with* a world of which it partakes.

Rancière debunks the dualities of text and image, time and space, tracing the conditions and assumptions underlying representation, his reconfiguration remaining a strictly aesthetical one. This aesthetical rearrangement is elaborated on in his later work, where he proposes to term the reconfiguration of historical demarcations another "distribution of the sensible." What needs modification, Rancière explains, is an "a *priori* distribution of the positions and capacities and incapacities attached to these posi-

tions."[28] His proposition is a political one. The dialectics of active and passive are challenged, positing that "emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting, when we understand that the self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection."[29] What is then formulated as a refusal of radical distance, of the distribution of roles, and of the boundaries between territories, allows for "a reconfiguration in the here and now of the distribution of space and time, work and leisure." [30]

This dynamic can be reframed in what Rancière termed "scenes of dissensus." What *dissensus* means for Rancière is another organization of the sensible, "where there is neither a reality concealed behind appearances nor a single regime of presentation and interpretation of the given imposing its obviousness on all. It means that every situation can be cracked open from the inside, reconfigured in a different regime of perception and signification. To reconfigure the landscape of what can be seen and what can be thought," Rancière continues, "is to alter the field of the possible and the distribution of capacities and incapacities." This allows for the "employment of the capacity of anyone whatsoever, of the quality of human beings without qualities." [31]

Rancière's reconfiguration "of space and time, work and leisure," and its cry for "idiocy" and chaos from *which it resurrects itself* seem of importance in relation to the artists' text.[32] Like Rancière's view on dissensus, the artists' writing starts from the thesis that language can simultaneously designate and reconfigure the world. Confronted with Rancière's reconfiguration or the proposed aesthetical regime, what strikes one is that it ultimately excludes the "idiocy" on which it is grounded. Striving for a rearrangement, the dissensus it implies is recomposed, the aesthetical regime in which it results seeming to bar existence or "bare life" from playing a part. Rancière's ontology is rationalized in its exclusion of the preindividual, bare life or being. It is staged and exclusive at that, arguing from a rational individual and already individuated being. For Rancière, artistic inventions verify the ontology that renders them possible, since they place "one sensible world in another: the sensible world in which the imagination obeys the concept, in the sensible world in which understanding and imagination relate to each other without concept." The ontological principal is based on equality and has "no other consistency than that it is constructed by these verifications." [33]

The extent to which Rancière's approach to the ontology of his aesthetic regime is restricted becomes apparent when his notion of *dissensus* is juxtaposed with Guattari's. Guattari states, "rather than looking for a stupefying and infantilizing consensus, it will be a question in the future of cultivating a *dissensus* and the singular production of existence".[34] Guattari's aesthetic paradigm implies a transversal way of thinking, experimentation with new relations between the three ecological registers he defines, in this case: the environment, social relations, and human subjectivity. Through an ethico-political articulation, or ecosophical perspective a "reequilibration of the capitalist semiotic Universe" will be brought about.[35] To realize this revolution, one "must not be exclusively concerned with visible relations of force," but "molecular domains of sensibility, intelligence and desire" have to be taken into account as well.[36] A gentle revolution is proposed, summoned forth by *a-signifying ruptures* at the heart of ecological praxes. These a-signifying ruptures are the catalysts for existential breaks, creative repetitions or "existential refrains" enabling virtualities (incorporeal objects, abstract machines, and universes of value) to "make their presence felt."

Allied with an "expressive support," *dissensus* allows here for a processual reactivation of "isolated and repressed singularities" that are "turning in circles," Guattari argues. This practice is an aesthetic one. For Rancière, by contrast, *dissensus* has no voice of its own, being re-inscribed in the "equal inventions of a common capacity in a common language." [37] Whereas Rancière's aesthetic regime is based on equality and homonymy, presupposing existence, Guattari's is grounded in the heterogeneous, aiming at overturning prevalent modes of living, action, and thought. Whereas Rancière's space for thought and action takes place in the gap *dissensus shows*, without being it, Guattari proposes the "gap" itself to be activated. For Guattari, Rancière's action would be an orchestrated one in the end, obeying language construed as a common language, thus following the "capitalistic semiotic Universe" he, Guattari, intended to challenge and change. "The crucial objective," Guattari underlines, "is to grasp the a-signifying points of rupture—the rupture from denotation, connotation and signification—from which a certain number of semiotic chains are put to work in the service of an existential autoreferential effect." [38] What matters is what he calls a *heterogenesis*, or a process of "continuous resingularization:" a becoming that is "always in the process of adapting, transforming and modifying itself in relation to its environment." [39] This can be articulated in the form of "a nascent subjectivity," "a constantly mutating socius" and/or "an environment in the process of being reinvented." According to Guattari: "we need new social and aesthetic practices, new practices of the Self in relation to the other, to the foreign, the strange." In this manner, new techniques and procedures can be invented and put to work, new forms of expression and life, other forms of organization and reinventions of

the subject of enunciation that produces utterances. He further explains: "It is important not to homogenize various levels of practice or to make connections between them under some transcendental supervision." [40] Homogenization is reductive. Reasoned from an ecosophical perspective it is precisely this homogenization that is at stake in Rancière's aesthetic regime. Based on Kant's aesthetic idea of art, it does not want to spill over into ethical concerns, Rancière's aesthetic regime states. In relation to contemporary artists' writings I doubt whether a Rancièrean aesthetical agenda that can be perceived as a silencing and immobilizing one in the end, is a fruitful and effective approach. In my analyses of the texts of Cytter, García, Strau, and Buckingham I further elaborate on the point.

Context

Artists' writings seem untimely, or at least at odds with the environment in which they appear and which produces them. Much contemporary art criticism of the artwork in which writing is prominent testifies to this —so too current academic research: *as* writing, artists' texts are rarely examined.[41] Unable to situate them or unsure of how to read them, this lack of criticism specific to their writerly aspect is significant for both the artists' writings' unresolved functioning, and for institutional processes (still) striving for, without being quite capable of dealing with, the *questions* of categorization, or *un*categorization.[42] My research seeks to offer an initial response to this aporia. Suggesting empirical research that participates in a broader theoretical arena, I attempt to re-evaluate my own position as a critic and teacher at an art school in the Netherlands, tangled up with what I perceive and feel to be an institutional impasse in this context.

The recent surge in artists' writings, often paradoxically resisting their commissioning institutions be it in form or content, correlates with recent political-economical transformations and educational reforms. For instance, the major funding cuts and resultant reorganization of institutions in my context of the Netherlands. While seemingly unrelated, these institutional reorganizations help contextualize my thesis that it is this debilitating political-economic tide that is pushing artists into ceaseless production and presentation as cultural entrepreneurs. Higher fine art education in Europe has been preoccupied by the consequences of the Bologna process. [43] This process's decision to implement an academic structure at art academies means that they are accredited to deliver bachelor, master, and PhD degrees, leading to (or the fear is) the unification of an educational system so it might contribute more "efficiently" to a European knowledge economy. Attuned to a neoliberal vision, the emphasis on

cognitive capital necessarily raised the question of the artists' work vis-à-vis this systematic educational change. Art education's application of a uniform and unified system, based on output to be quantified, awoke the fear of standards turning into standardization. It prompted questions of conformity impinging upon artistic research and research's relation to an economy-driven culture industry equipped for unremitting production and presentation. The autonomy of artistic research was feared jeopardized by educational reforms, obliterating spaces for process-based reflective research. What is interesting in relation to my study is that an important part of the discussion pivoted around the question of the place writing was to occupy amid these educational changes. Once artists were allowed to pursue PhDs, the question became whether they had to dedicate (part of) their doctorate to a written supplement to meet academic standards. And if so, what form should this written part take? [44]

These heated debates around what were felt to be academic contrivances can be viewed in terms of a more corporate attitude toward a market economy that has attained recognition not only on a European scale but a global one as well. With neo-capitalistic attitudes permeating art, its market, and its institutions, artists not only live, they manage their careers, often experiencing difficulties doing both. Neoliberalism marking a continuing trend toward individualism gives the contemporary artist a face. She is required to be available 24/7, incessantly adjusting to a knowledge economy difficult to avoid. A reflective working process following its own method and pace, including its possibility to hesitate and fail, hardly complies with the current economy. Several authors have justly pointed out the problems and pitfalls of its strategies in relation to art.[45] What is important for my investigation is the position artists' writings take in this debate. Or as I would rather have it: the possibilities they create within this turmoil of radical institutional shifts.

It is clear that artists continue to write,[46] in spite of, or thanks to neoliberal times. Although institutional positions have been, and still are in the process of being rephrased, sustained protests against political-economic accoutrements seem antithetical to an actual art practice. With art understood as intimately linked to market-driven configurations and an educational system only seemingly operating at the periphery of economic motivations, artists' writings have often been comprehended as concrete accounts of otherwise vague practices - as extensions of the puzzling and opaque.[47] [48] The artists' text would legitimize an art project, reflecting on the artist's own oeuvre or art in general.

Reading contemporary artists' texts, such views seem limited as they disregard language's malleability clear in the artists' writings procedures

and textual strategies, such as lapses between narrative layers, overt applications of metatextual comments, and organizations of the text employed as material. Traditional divisions are frequently maintained between image and text, criticism and creation. Reading Cytter, Moti, McCarthy, García, Magid, Strau, Day, Barnas, Camille de Toledo, Buckingham, and many others, I see that traditional categorical divisions are mined, questioned and altered, tested, trespassed, transformed, and transgressed. From a historical point of view, reigning perspectives on artists' texts seem to forget the various forms of writing experimented with already, especially since the 1960s and 1970s, as was pointed out before. Although the relation of contemporary artists' writing to "its" past and Conceptual Art specifically has to be studied more closely, something subsequent pages seek to do, alternative relations are being forged both within art practices and between their many and diverse constituent parts.

Cytter, García, Strau, and Buckingham

The first chapter commences with the question of how narrative is constructed in the artists' text. It takes Cytter's *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* as its starting point. The textual strategies immanent in this work are read with postmodern literature and its critique, tracing the artists' writing's procedures. Central to this comparative analysis is the notion of referentiality. Referentiality is the key problem of postmodern theory, and not fully addressed.[49] The artists' text seems to expand precisely on referentiality. Thinking through referentiality within the artists' text vis-à-vis intertextuality, I take into account Lyotard's understanding that tries to add nuance to the relationship between the textual structure and visuality; it thus opposes a post-structuralist comprehension of referentiality that has breached an all too intimate connection between word and world.

As the cover serves as entry point to the artists' text, three main questions could be attached to an analysis of what appears a textual threshold or *Seuil*.[50] The cover evokes questions about imagination's operative force in relation to referentiality; it instigates quests into the functioning of the image vis-à-vis referentiality, and asks after the position the reader occupies, which in this case focuses on Cytter's work. Separated into three subsections, the first chapter examines the notion of referentiality against the background of the narrative construction of the artists' text. Departing from a Barthesean understanding of narrativity as "the confusion of consecution and consequence, what comes *after* being read in narrative as what is *caused by*," the role of the fantastical transpiring in the artists' text, and the textual handling of the "theme" is investigated:

how is the fantastical textually embedded,[51] compared to a postmodern problematizing of textuality? [52] Image-text relationships are researched, aligning them with narrative relations, and postmodern valuing of the image as textual fringe.[53] This positioning simultaneously relies on textual closed circuits and language as a code.[54] The chapter closes with a look into how the relationship between reception and production are elaborated in Cytter's work given postmodern promulgations that only language happens in the text, and that the author is dead while the reader survives.[55]

Starting from García's work *The Inadequate* (2011), the second chapter takes as its core study the form *of* the artists' text, *in* the artists' text, as it is discussed by the artists' text. A paradoxical position is thus created, since the question arises as to how such a formal self-exploration can be realized *at the same time* as reflecting on it. This paradoxical situation is known as metafiction. Juxtaposing *The Inadequate* with metafiction, three aspects construing the artists' text—story, insight, and conviction—are recast in two strands that compose metafiction. The latter is "intent to mask dead conventions." Alongside this, metafiction thinks through the relationship between practice and reflection or theory ("the distinction between literary and critical texts begins to fade").[56] The artists' writing's highly designed form, a predilection shared with metafiction,[57] manifests itself in its fragmentary character.

Given that textual fragmentation and textual self-reflection are not unrelated,[58] I wondered how this interrelationship reveals itself in artists' writing. *The Inadequate* is studied in analogy to various forms in which the fragment appears,[59] investigating whether its characteristics can be comprehended as metafictional detours.[60] Concentrating on its textual manufacturing, I research to what degree the fragmentary participates in an agency of the artists' text.[61]

The second chapter prioritizes the fragment and the fragmentary, thereby implicitly questioning the role and function of the author. The frequent and recurrent use of the "I" in artists' writings in general makes the issue an urgent one. The third chapter taps into the debate addressing the second translation of the Jena Romantic journal *Athenaeum*'s notion of auto-formation, discussed in the second chapter in relation to the fragment. It pivots around processes of subjectification and individuation, of the constitution of an "I" or a self, of the relation between these, and between the subject and the other or its Other. Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S.* (2008) is taken as a starting point to investigate the theme, setting the artists' text against autobiography/autofiction.

A typology is construed to enable the research. The artists' text-as-autobiographical is suggested to be: 1) a narrative unfolding from the now of the exhibition (and the construction thereof) to the past and the future, thus including several times, or comprehending time as multilayered; 2) a retrospective account, constructive and communicative report simultaneously, linking the psychical subject of the work to the social individual relating "it" to the group; 3) an ongoing process; and 4) transdisciplinary. Delving into the autobiography/autofiction debate, the position of psychoanalysis in the constitution of the "I" is further investigated. This also works toward getting a firmer grip on the mechanisms immanent in the conception of writing in the artists' text.

Key to the fourth chapter is the functioning of the single word in the artists' text. This choice of focus is underpinned by my interest in "concretism" in artists' writing, that is, the sense of rendering language concrete.[62] I am interested in how something within the text, such as the word, could offer a counterbalance to the post-structuralist predilection to focus on syntactical construction.[63] Although artists' writings might resist categorization, the discourse around them often turns to the question of a vocabulary peculiar to *the* artists' text.[64] Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck – Everything Has a Name" (2005, 2007, 2008) is examined here for possible blueprints on which to map out a more specific vocabulary, chosen especially for its form as trilogy immediately pushing the idea of categorization to the fore.

Contemporary poetry and artists' writings having shared concerns in both having to face an increasingly mediatized world leading to a growing presence of the word, begs for analysis against poetry.[65] In the first section of this chapter I discuss the crisis between poetry and 1960s and 1970s Conceptual Art that seems to underlie artists' texts today.[66] I attempt to position artists' writing, Buckingham's in particular, in relation to conceptual writing and the distribution of the text. Following this, the archival work immanent in artists' writing is explored specifically with respect to these questions:[67] how does the textual construction of the artists' text elicit a certain reading of it? What can a comprehension of the artists' text learn from poetry's textual strategies, and of conceptual writing specifically? Following this, I return to the question of the functioning of the image in the artists' text,[68] trying to localize it while starting to suggest approaches to "Muhheakantuck's" formal variations. While the chapter ends on a speculative note, reading the artists' writing with the work of the French poet Francis Ponge, I conclude with what I perceive as the distinctive features of the artists' text.

1

Narrative Threads and Referential Explorations:

Keren Cytter's *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters*

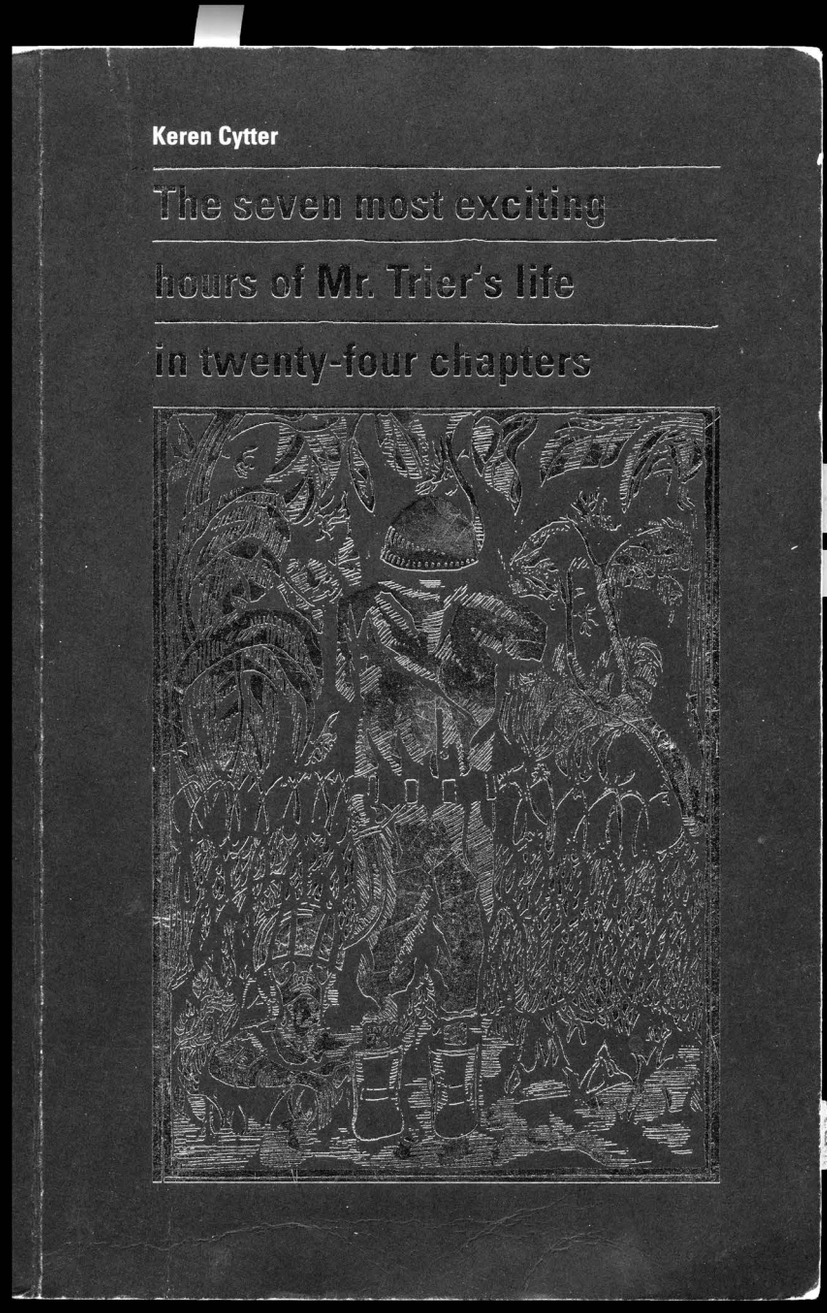


fig 1.1
Keren Cytter, *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters*, 2008. Cover.

Introduction

The artists' text starts with a dream. And, as it goes with dreams, it seems to resist a logical order. The dream in this case is Tibor Klaus Trier's, the protagonist of Keren Cytter's *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters*. In an initial state of panic, not knowing where he is, Tibor discovers he is surrounded by the impenetrable forests of wartime Vietnam. A tangle of branches and mud color the background. Fights and flying bullets define the scene. Tibor's best friend Martin, who, like Tibor, has joined the Danish forces, saves him from a foreign attack whereupon the two men take refuge in a nearby tower. The shelter resembles a lighthouse, its clear outlines and verticality contrasting with the jungle's darkness and density. The glass dome that marks the lighthouse is pierced by seagulls and causes the structure to fall onto Tibor and Martin. The "screaming and moaning" finally waking Tibor does not come from either of the two friends squashed underneath the dome's glass panes, but from Tibor's wife Margaret, nine months pregnant and lying by his side.

In this opening scene of *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* the story's setting unfolds and main characters are introduced, centering on Tibor Klaus Trier during some anxious hours while his wife gives birth to their son, or what he hopes is their son.[69] As the baby is about to be delivered in the hospital, he learns that he might not be the father of his future child. The rumor, the writer/narrator confides to the reader, is based on a real-life interview in which film director Lars von Trier revealed that his mother has told him he was the son of a relative of H. C. Andersen who worked in the Danish government. Cytter abstracts a story from this anecdote, having Tibor Trier chase his wife's lover, the government official Karl Friedrich Muller. Tibor, a cancer victim, is crushed in a car accident during the pursuit and ends up in the same hospital as his wife.

The last pages of the story are dominated by the suspicion that the Triers's unborn baby might not even be a human being. The hospital's role in these fears is investigated, the shady practices of its personnel, the ever more apocalyptic décor; nightmares, spiritual sessions, and ghostlike creatures dominate the narrative. As a reader you are taken along in this gloomy state of vertigo, losing the thread of what Cytter terms "true story" and what is not, fact and fiction twisting and merging into a Gordian knot.

The Seven Most Exciting Hours is based on Lars von Trier's TV mini-series *The Kingdom* (1994, 1997), which revolves around murky transactions and unresolved histories that take hold of a hospital and its staff. *The Kingdom* is the raw material of the story that, along with numerous references to film, architecture, and visual art, seep into Cytter's text in each and every scene. This intertwining of textual layers leads to the question: how can the writing's entanglement best be comprehended and approached?

The overt allusions to, mainly, filmmaker and director Lars von Trier, but also to Captain Benjamin L. Willard's (played by Martin Sheen) dangerous mission to Cambodia in Francis Ford Coppola's Vietnam War classic *Apocalypse Now* (1979) that underlie the aforementioned dream, seem to divulge the artists' text's indebtedness to postmodern literature: that is, the text's predilection for intertextuality, that "paradise of words." It is tempting to understand *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* as rejoicing in a comparable and typically postmodern playful, intertextual universe. On closer inspection, however, Cytter's work or *world* seems not protected by a sense of "general writing;" it isn't caught in a network of sheer "Text that does not stop at Literature,"[72] its discourse being all but conspicuously neutral. Compared to postmodern literature and the post-structuralist comprehension of text that underpins it,[73] so-called cracks in the structure of the artists' writing seem to appear, causing the once solid architecture of the text (or Text) to crumble. For Cytter's writing the Derridean adage that there is nothing outside the text subsides,[74] communicating in another manner and mode, construing an alternative pact with the reader. For instance, I doubt that the relatively vivid character of Tibor Trier could be understood as "just" another textual instance, part and parcel of the system, or a "mere" textual sign at a safe distance from the reader. His figure and maneuvers cannot be fully grasped as functioning in and as textuality, being composite and complex, engaging with his environment in various manners and finding himself in different milieus with their own dynamics.

In an attempt to untie what initially struck me as the chaotic universe of Cytter's writing, and studying what, seen through postmodern literature, appear as fissures in the artists' text, the following pages concentrate on the reference as that which was in postmodernism often kept at bay. By looking at the artists' text against postmodern literature I focus on how reference functions in the artists' writing, operating as a necessary building block instead of outside of the text. (Re)introducing the notion of reference, or the referent, doesn't imply that the text *qua* text is neglected. I rather understand the artists' text as composed of different referential registers conditioning its genesis. As a consequence, the artists' writing needs to be read in a transversal manner, traversing and linking the discourses of different domains, be they mental, social, or cultural, in order to grasp its functioning.

When I speak of the operative force of the artists' text, I take into account the production, meaning by that not solely its economic configuration enabling the text's material coming into existence and circulation. Production points to a wider contextual universe and interplay between the writing and its social, environmental, and subjective aspects.[75] Treating Cytter's writing as such a constellation helps distinguish three referential registers interlaced in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*. Separating these for analytical reasons I attempt to point out the gaps in the textual structure, and trace the operative force of her text. Textual ruptures or inconsistencies emerge in three forms of reference as a form of relation linking the word to the world: 1) imagination's agency; 2) the function of images; and 3) the part played by the reader. The first form is dealt with in the narrative construction of the text, the second in its material constitution, rendered concrete in the handling of images in the text, and the third in writing's relationship with the reader.

Reference and Narrative Construction

Dissecting the Title, Ambiguity

The title *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters* unambiguously reveals the artists' text's story and its narrative construction. It explicitly informs the reader that she will be told the story of the seven most exciting hours of Mr. Trier's life over twenty-four chapters. Looking more closely at its syntactical order, it communicates even more: suggesting the story is construed around a plot. Characterized as the most important part of the story, the mention of "seven hours" marks an implicit crisis. The added adjectival phrase "most exciting" not only enhances the critical quality of the time span, but also inserts a subjective comment. The qualification of a personal or lived-through perspective is what Gilles Deleuze called a manifestation, presuming an *I* who utters the proposition.[76] This confronted with the mathematically measured and coded "seven hours." Such a combination suggests that Mr. Trier's life is designated, evaluated, and described from another, more distanced vantage point, as if it has a signification of its own. The precisely calculated demarcation of linear time is confronted with a more cyclical experience of it. In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze distinguishes between *Aiôn* and *Chronos*, respectively the essentially unlimited past and future, which gather incorporeal events, at the surface, as effects, contrasted with "the always limited present, which measures the action of bodies as causes and the state of their mixtures in depth". [77] However, whereas the theorist perceives these two concepts of time as excluding one another, in her text the artist reasons otherwise. Considering the construction of the first part of the title, in which the personal experience of time is embedded, put between, thus "embraced" by its schematic notion of it—seven-most-exciting-hours, following a-b-b-a—the confrontation between the two temporalities embodies an inclusion, at a syntactical level at least.

Whereas the question as to how precisely the "seven most exciting hours" relate to "Mr. Trier's life" remains open, their manipulation in the form of "twenty-four chapters" is clear from the start. Here, within the isolated phrase of the title, the placement of the number "twenty-four" at the end of the clause corresponds with that other cardinal seven at the beginning of the sentence. The "hours" specified by that last number are regulated and coded, mathematically precise, as are the composed and carefully calculated "chapters." The correlation between the measurable entities underlines their different modes, however, an hour being not the same as a chapter: the time of telling is contrasted with the time of the events.

The question remains as to what degree the syntactical concord between the quantifiable units in the title actually corresponds with the work's structure, its deployment and understanding of time in story and text. Is the artists' text's naming of the chapters a strict tautological gesture, repeating the work's "trivial" conventional partitions the reader can count for herself? The sheer mention on the cover makes you aware of the book's structure, of the written work as a structure, as well as the process leading to it. The title conveys that the work in your hands is *always already*: it is a re-presentation. This wake-up call is communicated otherwise through the prominent reference to what later appears to be the protagonist of the artists' text, sharing its name with the famous filmmaker, resulting in general ambiguity. As a reader you are confronted with the distance between word and thing once again, with the arbitrariness of a term. The question that arises, however, is whether the proper name as it is utilized in the artists' writing is innocent. The indeterminacy caused by the title draws *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* nearer to postmodern literary practices, its disputing unifying concepts (autonomy, authority, closure, etc.) and contesting a work's relation to experience.

With respect to this work, and in contrast to postmodern literature, there is no abyss to cross between word and world, nor between strictly separated paradigmatic and syntactical levels in the artists' writing. The notion of reference as constitutive of the chasms between narratological strata and largely excluded from structuralist thought is not questioned nor problematized in the artists' text, as in postmodern literature.

Conscious of post-structuralist conceptions of text and its use in projects designated as postmodern, the artists' writing varies with regard to the

strict oppositions, the negative widths between terms (sender-receiver, black-white, etc.) constitutive of the text and its implicit difference. In *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*, a vertigo or torsion occurs instead, nestling between terms, in terms, between a term and a state of affairs. A direct relationship between words and instances seems subverted, a private rendezvous, a one-on-one contact is disturbed. Chaos rules.

Torsion, or the Porous Strata of the Artists' Text

It isn't just the title that gives away the constructive rules of the game played out in the writing. More or less explicit deliberations on the manufacture of the text are numerous. They can be detected among paratextual elements, like the title, characterizing the textual threshold [*Seuil*] or "vestibule," that skirts the text constituting an "undefined zone" between the inside and the outside. So-called directions of use are intrinsic to the work, if one upholds the "hard and fast" boundary separating the inside (turned toward the text) from the outside (turned toward the world's discourse about the text).[78] Thus every chapter boldly states that the reader has reached its conclusion: "End of First Chapter," "End of Second Chapter," "End of Third Chapter," etc. Once again consciousness about the textuality of the universe is raised. The remarks are indicative of a discernable communicative pact between the writer and the reader: the reader has to turn the page, her gesture enabling access to a new stage in the story. The frame highlighted, representation is represented bearing the traces of its creation. The processes of writing and reading are actualized to the point of becoming indistinguishable. Like writing, reading is indispensable; becoming an act in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*, the story needs execution, it has to be performed.

The liminal markers demonstrating the presence of the writer in the story and the active part played by the reader yield remarks like the following: "He [Tibor] goes to the kitchen, unaware of the fact that his steps are documented on paper. If he read this chapter he'd probably find it boring. By comparison, the dream from the previous chapter seems so interesting and exciting, and daily life hardly exists, like a thick fog in the brain" (16). The reader witnesses the musings of the author, or of the narrator acting as a writer. The presence of the character in the story is alluded to, and alongside this, Tibor's steps being "documented on paper," granting him the capacity to read. His is a multiple and complex, or at least ambiguous, presence, since one is left unsure as to whether his "steps" should be comprehended in a literal sense or not. Does the writer gather the indexical signs the walking figure has left behind, editing them? Or does she document while perceiving the protagonist's whereabouts remaining aloof from them? Within a single passage, writer (as the first reader) and main character interchange roles. The distance between them is minimized to the point of becoming null and void. Or what surfaces is the torsion in the narrative construction, the raw material permeating the story, while some serious doubts about the sequential ordering of that raw material are shared. Tibor Trier is treated as a real-life person and character simultaneously, thus being unreliable, like the author herself.

The cacophony of voices in which it results paradoxically silences the characters *qua* characters who are little fleshed out. Instead of round and living entities, they are merely objectively described like puppets in a scene, dominated by the author's vision and intentions pulling their strings. Descriptions often take the protagonist Tibor as their focal point: "Tibor could curse…," "He forgets…," "He looks up…," "His pupils dilate…" The importance of the author's determination is accentuated by comments like: "Tibor's fate has been set before this story was ever written" (33); he turns "a blind eye to all the signs and suspicions" the author confronts him with, the author states, indignant but also amused; the reason for this, however, might be that he "doesn't know … that the whole plot revolves around him" (58). But the other characters are also subjected to the author's will and the process of writing. Witness the technician repairing the heating system, referred to as "the man from the second chapter" (55). And Dr. Governor, for instance, who "left the morphine bottle in the archive and he doesn't pay any attention to it because he doesn't remember it yet" (151). The artists' text hardly shows, it tells.

The interpenetration of narratological levels in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* results in ambiguity said to be immanent in the genesis of the story: "This is exactly what Lars von Trier said in the interview: after his father died, his mother told him that his father wasn't his real father and that she had slept with someone in the Danish government who's a relative of H. C. Andersen because she wanted her son to be an artist. True story" (150). One could hesitate over whether the last comment, true story, regards the story of this work, the interview on which it is said to be based, or the relation between the two. The reference to Andersen, a writer of myths and fairytales, mines the factuality of the statement, as does the unequivocal note, true story, and the subjective force of the interjection. The illusion of the story and its credibility are disrupted by the intervention, which paradoxically states the "truth" of the raw material construing the story we simultaneously read. The documentary evidence of the interview is thwarted by the fiction of the text; the indexicality of the document (the interview, the steps from the previously cited passage) is both supported (true story) and denounced, the artists' text rather setting out to tell the story behind the document. The wonderful

and unbelievable aspects of the inside information consequently breach the formality of the document. Mentioning the obscure lineage secures a preference for the 'otherworldly' fiction. Or, one could say that Cytter mingles a predilection for probable impossibilities (the interview) and improbable possibilities (the stories emerging from it), thus countering what Aristotle in the *Poetics* perceives as the poet's task: "the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities" (1460a27), and: "the impossible must be justified by reference to artistic requirements, or to the higher reality, or to received opinion" (1461b10). She writes on the edge of the (im)possible and the obscure, letting imagination do its work where knowledge can't reach.

The overt references to the structuring devices of the narrative, suspending the story's illusion and unobstructed reading, might be recognized as a postmodern "convention." The remarks could be seen as a "rewritten … relationship between a *topic* and a *comment*," according to Fredric Jameson, writing on postmodern literary techniques. In postmodern art a "new hierarchy is established," he argues, between a fable and a mise-en-scène, between the anecdote, the raw material of the basic story, and the way in which those materials are told or staged. Or, as of video art, "signs change places!".[79] And, indeed, a foregrounding of the process of production in line with postmodern works can be witnessed in the artists' text. And like postmodern practices, Cytter's writing lingers on or makes ample use of the index, described by art historian Rosalind Krauss as "that type of sign which arises as the physical manifestation of a cause, of which traces, imprints, and clues are examples." Krauss then designates an indexical sign as a "message without a code." The relation of signifier and signified is quasi-tautological, unequivocal, the distance between them being reduced. Cytter transforms the functioning of the index, however, imposing doubt on the physical connection between the two parts of the sign, as we saw in the case of that "indubitable" index: the step. And in contrast to postmodern works, *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* has another way of addressing "putative messages, meanings, or content," taking them seriously. That is, the artists' writing faces the consequences of the postmodern strategic procedures with which it is familiar.

Acknowledging that a text is always already a construction and necessarily invented, it subsequently develops this agreed upon constellation in a quasi self-evident manner, testing what happens if the strategy is followed throughout. Thus rumor or hearsay is presented and treated as evidence, as in the case of the Lars von Trier interview. Or fiction is translated into fact, and vice versa. This textual strategy results in a form of writing that takes as its starting point the typically postmodern discontinuous form Jameson observes in Samuel Beckett's novels and plays, and which he discusses at great length in relation to Claude Simon's novel *Les corps conducteurs* (1971). In Simon's and Beckett's works, discontinuity is central to the fiction.

Distances between structuralist instances (Lyotard) or functions (Foucault) seem to be minutely measured and translated in diverse modes and forms of address in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*. The rifts between writer and reader, author and character are transgressed through a presentation of the acting potential of what postmodernism kept separated and conceived as distinct roles. Thus the reader is confronted less with an artificial separation within and of the text, reminding her of its constructed character, than with a tentative filling out of it. The artists' writing occupies the blanks in the structuralist grid. Details and extensions are added where they weren't provided in the postmodern text, doubts, veering away from the postmodern predilection for clear-cut facts, are added and expanded on. This textual strategy does not imply a mournful return to realist illusions or naturalist decors, voicing a deep regret about a splintered totality of life, as I tried to demonstrate before. Rather details here entail the material and the musings as material in relation to the arrangement and manufacture of the story. The procedure probes and tests language's potential, as a material and a means, a point to which I will return in relation to the use of images.

Here already one can notice the artists' text's reflection on the possibility of a paradoxical *transitivity* of language as material. Cytter's work manipulates and modifies a structuralist fascination with language as *intransitivity*. The earlier preoccupation with language's intransitivity is testified to by the event scores or "word pieces" developed in the early 1960s by Yoko Ono and George Brecht, for instance. Their short instruction-like, sometimes meditative texts were initially written as performance instructions. However, the notations gradually moved away from realizable actions to the internal act of reading or observing. And whereas the mutability and transposability of the event scores, read in print as either poetry, performance

fig 1.2
Georg Brecht, *Word Event*, 1962. Score, designed by George Maciunas around 1963.

instruction, or score, could be understood as a corroboration of Barthes's plea for writing as performative, it having no other origin than language itself, this view obliterates the fact that these texts were often related to the production of an object as residue of the action performed.[81] Or as art historian Liz Kotz convincingly formulates in referring to Brecht's work *Word Event* (1961), what a word piece initiates is a chain of substitutes between "word, sign, object, action, and so forth, *all contained within just one word*".[82]

Juxtaposing 1960s word pieces such as Brecht's with the description or documentation of Tibor's "steps," for instance, it can be observed that the artists' writing scrutinizes the possibilities of "just one word" in language (other examples will elucidate this procedure shortly). In this strategy language does not shy away from textual techniques that inhere in *literariness*, that transformation of a word into a work.[83] Cytter's writing thus distinguishes itself from that of Conceptual artists' work, Joseph Kosuth in particular, fiercely debunking literature, judged too subjective for an art (and the designation thereof) that should be general ("not connected to an action or material"), yet specific (not mingled with "science, politics, or entertainment").[84] In *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*, however, a word is no stable, categorized, and categorizing entity: both literature and not literature, it travels instead, it mutates.

The tentatively reformulated contacts in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* both between textual strata, and between what, for reasons of clarity, I will continue to term instances (the author, the reader) and their textual relations can thus very well be comprehended as an entry into myriad translations and possibilities, or what logicians call "possible worlds" introduced by "just one word." In other words language is understood not only in its paradigmatic and syntagmatic use, but in its formal manifestations, "without excluding amalgams and blends".[85] Like the earlier mentioned "steps," tracing the functioning of other single terms clarifies how the artists' text works.

The Seven Most Exciting Hours evolves what in relation to postmodern literature is called a chain of signifiers, operating in and of itself as if inattentive to the linearity of the sentences or the story's semantic logic. One of these terms is *cold*: "Tibor is conscious of the cold temperature," the hospital's secretary answers in a "cool, objective voice," "it's cold in the flat," "Many people think she [Margaret] 's cold…," "… he notices how cold it is outside." A peculiar universe is evoked in this manner, generated and maintained by a single term, creating a bizarre harmony and rhythm that transgresses borders between narratological layers and worlds. In a strange way, Cytter's textual procedure is reminiscent of

Raymond Roussel's, constructing his novel *Impressions d'Afrique* (1910) around the different denotations of words phonematically resembling each other (billard/pillard).[86] The attention Cytter pays to words seems quite different from Roussel's, nevertheless. The poet's carefully and precisely corresponding meaning with the words, extracts the most from them given their particularities and tensions; this conscious reworking of terms seems absent from the artists' writing, at first glance. The mostly casual phrasing and plain style of the artists' text rather point to Cytter's criteria lying elsewhere. On the one hand, *cold* and its variants allow for scenic contrasts to be played out, to contrast and bridge opposing states of mind and different worlds. Thus Margaret is cold, while also having a "hot" adulterous relationship, a lover with whom she reads poetry; Tibor is woken from dreams and heated situations by the cold; the secretary's cool voice contrasts with the pressing apocalyptic circumstances in which she finds herself. Yet the unembellished style of the artists' text corresponds well with the cold ambiance it invokes. A formal integrity is acquired. A conceptual continuity is built based on the plurality of possibilities within "just one word."

The artists' writing's textual procedures can then be said to both diverge from their postmodern counterparts and come closer to them. They bring "into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a life-form," simultaneously breaking with the structure of what in relation to postmodern literature is conceived as a language game: an utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying its properties and the uses to which it can be put, like in a game of chess.[87] Whereas the chapters' concluding remarks (End of First Chapter, End of Second Chapter, etc.) could very well be perceived as such rules of the game, as an explicit contract between the players (the writer and the reader in this case), the repeated crossing of boundaries between the narrative's layers points to the fact that no rule is observed as it is continuously traversed. Or following Jean-François Lyotard's observations: the rules being incessantly modified, the game is adapted time and again. Or, the artists' text does not satisfy the rules of the game, so does not belong to it.[88] The repetitive schema construed by the adjective *cold* in the artists' text does not introduce a self-sufficient pattern referring to language alone, and the *raison d'être* of language. The artists' writing does not invoke a Beckettian world, in which "nothing" but the writing "happens," thus typically indicating a referent that is "repressed."[89] In *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* the repetition introduces less a widening of the rift between signifier and signified, between word and world, than installs a non-hierarchical co-existence between raw material and story, between story and narrative text. Differences between and within descriptions of either characters or scenes are minimized: depth of field hardly

exists. Whereas postmodern writing upheld the immanent and integral structure of the text, safeguarding it against exterior influences through a continuous translation of those extraneous "threats" (Lyotard's "moves" in the language game) into textual forms, or designating them as such, the artists' text integrates so-called outer failures as failures, causing what once were strictly textual structures to potentially collapse. Thus protagonists *possibly* act like mouthpieces of the author's intentions; the inside and the outside world *possibly* stretch out and fold, *possibly* eliminating the frontiers between hospital and apartment, highway and hallway, public (reader's) area and private (writer's) room; the possibly smooth, unified domain of the anonymous town in which the characters act is split time and again, then unified once more through repetitious descriptions and returning words (cold).

These textual cracks or folds are ambiguous and filled with potential. Cutting through a once fixed, stable, and self-supporting textual spatiotemporal realm, the fissures do not necessarily cause a fictional universe to be broken down, crumbling and demonstrating the difference between text and world. Rifts, edges, and folds must be understood as saturated with directions the text does not necessarily provide. They are charged with dreams, chaos, unreason, ignorance, and imagination. They are the loose thread in the master's knotted carpet showing his unbridled craft and his control. As such the chaos pervading the artists' text could better be described not as the disorder or disorganization that initially seemed to define it, but as composed of an infinite speed causing forms to disperse. Chaos is a void [*vide*], in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, a "*virtual*, containing all possible particles and drawing out all possible forms, which spring up only to disappear immediately, without consistency or reference, without consequence".[90] Or as Margaret thinks out loud: "'What is this game?' But it is not a game—it's reality in her imagination" (116).

The gaps in text are consequently not postmodern negative ones. They are positive widths, as the repeated word *perhaps* in the artists' text reminds the reader. For now it's sufficient to posit that the artists' writing has a dynamic of its own. *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* is a text endowed with potential, in which nothing is concluded. As a result, the reader is far removed from the postmodern self-sufficient textual time-space Alain Badiou in relation to Beckett's writings once characterized as a rather paralyzed and irremovable "grey." Paradoxically, and no matter how "failing" the artists' text might appear from a postmodern, post-structuralist point of view—since there are no rules, there is no game. An unconventional linking of levels and terms draws attention to the writing's fullness. This is comparable, but not identical to the way the physicality of Beckett's characters was honored or recalled through their stumbling (*Film*), crumpling (*Endgame*), or filth (*Molloy*).

Perhaps and Potentiality

Considering the fullness of the artists' text in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* allows me to delve into the idiosyncratic and ambivalent world that issues forth from this kind of writing. And comparing Cytter's work with postmodern procedures can sharpen what it is that gives way to the operative force of the artists' text, its functioning and its effects. A postmodern self-sufficient text is interrupted through unrelentingly shifting and often equivocal perspectives. A second reading of the passage mentioned above elucidates this incertitude: "He [Tibor] goes to the kitchen, unaware of the fact that his steps are documented on paper. If he read this chapter he'd probably find it boring. By comparison, the dream from the previous chapter seems so interesting and exciting, and daily life hardly exists, like a thick fog in the brain." The "previous chapter" introduces the dream that begins this chapter, in which Tibor is in a Vietnam based on the film *Apocalypse Now* that he had been watching with his best friend Martin before falling asleep. The cited excerpt "He goes to the kitchen … in the brain," begins from an external perspective and ends from the internal one. Or so it seems, since to whom "the dream from the previous chapter" is "so interesting and exciting" is not clear. From a narratological point of view it is only natural for the reader to switch to Tibor's state-of-mind, since it is from his perspective that the dream is perceived. But here she hesitates wondering whether these are Tibor's thoughts and experiences or those of the "documenting" writer/narrator's. This hesitation is born of the constructive role of the writer/narrator and her experiences percolating into the text. A possible double perspective is thus achieved by one character's combined internal and external point of view, the unspecificity of the narrator/writer's function simultaneously casting doubts on their complicity.

This indeterminate role of the narrator/writer and the ceaselessly adjusted double perspective are complicated by the world evoked by the artists' writing. You therefore do not become aware of the narrative's architecture as a result of the narrator's/writer's remarks, which are in line with postmodern literature that wants the reader to become conscious of the sheer textuality of the text. Instead, you experience doubt as to how to understand the chaotic and ever more supernatural events.

The artists' text brings into being what can be called a fantastical realm.[91] Disbelief remains suspended, doubt rules. Apprehension on the part

of the reader of this willingly suspended disbelief is characteristic of the fantastical as a genre and specific to an ambiguous perspective. It never turns into a postmodern critique of language encapsulated by "failed" representations, as Jameson contends in relation to postmodern discourse.[92] In postmodern literature representations are only seemingly "denaturalized," simultaneously "inscribing and subverting the conventions of narrative." As Linda Hutcheon explains, what is denaturalized is "both realism's transparency and modernism's reflexive response while retaining (in its typically complicitously critical way) the historically attested power of both".[93] The artists' text can be said to testify to another history, its legacy lying elsewhere. The fantastical acts, then, as an image or *art object* both hiding and unveiling this heritage. It draws on the fertile background, or it sketches the conditions of the writing's genesis. Through the fantastical the artists' writing's potentiality is signaled, in other words, what it is capable of. As a concept and breeding ground the fantastical operates in a way comparable to the term *cold* mentioned before, the latter demonstrating the vast array of manners in which "just one word" *can* function and be understood.

What is materialized in the text is the translation of the fabula or raw material into the story, the story into the narrative text, and the questions this reworking as a process provokes. (Postmodern) conventions are inverted and turned inside out; traditional borders safeguarding instances as integral are transgressed. Or as Margaret voices, musing about the story's structure, you could as well "construct [it] from the end backwards" (149). The artists' writing's transgressive behavior, running in parallel to the apocalyptic world the text conjures, is prefigured in Tibor's dream based on *Apocalypse Now* with which Cytter's work (and this chapter) opens. You could even say that the film, the dream, and the ensuing world outlined in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* constitute the three tiers of the text's non-hierarchical model. The dream is median between film and story, overlapping sometimes, drawing a soothing veil over both while constituting their driving force.

This tiered partition can be recognized in the characters' names and features. Margaret reads Lewis Carroll's "nonsensical" poem *The Hunting of the Snark* with her lover Karl Friedrich Muller, who could as well exist only in Tibor's feverish mind, especially since Muller's position is equivalent to the "official in the Danish government" proposed as Lars von Trier's father in real life. This rumor is key to the basis of *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*, which seems rather close to Carroll's poem. This is not only due to the material construction of Carroll's and Cytter's work—drawings are inserted in both—but also in their questioning of the rational. For instance, a "talking frog" figures in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* alluding

to a fairytale by the Brothers Grimm mentioned by "an anthropology and literature professor" in his "book called *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*," about "folk-story heroes all over the world." Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is cited as well (one even recognizes traces of its protagonist Rashkolnikov's dilemmas and fights for justice in Tibor's mental struggles). Besides interpolating literary and cinematographic elements, descriptions are borrowed from visual art and architecture: "Spots warp and mix with Suzy's face and Sven's muscles and look like Marc Chagall's drawings" (23); "Then he [Tibor] looks down the hallway . . . blurred, airy and dark like a Rothko painting" (38); the metastases in Tibor's lungs are allegorically called Koolhaas and Gaudi (129).

The multiple allusions testify to the contingency of rationality's reliability, and thus of language as a trustworthy construction performing the translation from fabula /raw material to story to text. Appropriated references transform the artists' text into a hybrid, an accumulation of images that seems to arrest the reading's function within a horizontally constructed chain of events. The writing crosses the boundaries between visual and verbal, mingling horizontal (syntagmatic) and vertical (paradigmatic) axes of language. Through the synthetic collage-like fusion it describes, it seems to come close to what art historian Craig Owens defines as the allegorical impulse characteristic of postmodern art. In contrast to the allegorical inclination motivating postmodern works, reading doesn't come to a halt in this text. The text isn't a hieroglyph, a rebus composed of concrete images to be untangled, thus marking a typical allegorical "reciprocity between the visual and the verbal" (Owens mentions Lawrence Weiner's murals composed of large, clear letters to illustrate his point).[94] Nor is it a ceaseless piling up of fragments, "without any strict idea of a goal", comparable to Hanne Darboven's scribblings and appreciation of language as systematic quantification.[95]

Although a predilection for diegetic combination is present in Cytter's work, as shown above, a syntagmatic disjunction certainly leads what still can be called a narrative, instead of the counter-narrative subtending the allegorically motivated works, whose "essence is fragment".[96] What happens in artists' writing is still the "confusion of consecution and consequence, what comes *after* being read . . . as what is *caused by*," according to Barthes's definition of narrative in his "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" (1977). The most problematic aspect with respect to artists' writing then in Owens's use of the allegorical as underlying postmodern works is not so much the description of the allegorical per se. Incompatible with it are the strict oppositions that are upheld: between horizontal and vertical, between neurotic (paradigmatic) conjunction and rational, clearly ordered (syntagmatic) disjunction. In *The*

Seven Most Exciting Hours the choice either/or cannot be made. Barthes's argument in relation to narrative remains valid in this case: meaning runs across narrative layers and eludes all unilateral investigation.

Within the framework of my research, it is more fruitful to approach the artists' text in a transversal manner, taking into account the complex of universes that condition it and bring it about—allowing for variation and diverse combinations between the elements that constitute the text. It is precisely the so-called foreign elements in the text (the visual and the verbal, the "stammering" resulting from a combined disjunction and conjunction, or in the case of Cytter's work Gaudi, Rothko, and Dostoyevsky performing (in) the writing, the silenced, dreamed, or imagined) that define the work. One could say that Cytter's is a multilingual text, a foreign one, but written in its own tongue.[97]

The multiple references do not allude to a reliance on language, and the rational, conscious deliberation and agency associated with it, as is the case with postmodernism's preference for intertextuality. On the contrary, language is pushed to its limits in the artists' text, a pursuit thematically expanded upon through a recurring authoritative "madness" or "unreason." The fantastical as an art object, incorporating and mediating the oscillation between reason and unreason, between belief and its suspension, plays a pivotal role in the artists' writing's textual situation. The fantastical could be said to act as a demythologizing image, both concealing and revealing textual procedures. This is embodied in the characters themselves: the "supersensible" and demanding patient Mathilda, her visions of ghosts and spiritual sessions obstructing medical treatments at the beginning of the tale, is transformed into a soothsayer; Tibor's sister Suzy, initially emotionally troubled, is in the end a person on whom "a lot" depends: "Truth lands heavily on her—she's just a secondary character in the plot—who would have thought!" (160). Likewise, and perhaps as consequence, the story's is no infallible success, something of which it shows it is aware in lines like: "From that moment on they spiral away … until it is no longer dizziness but relaxing weights that stabilize the plot and provide a reason for every action" (95); referring to Margaret again, when "her consciousness leaves the delivery room and moves to the tiny bedroom with the flowery sheet:" "'What is this game?' But it is not a game—it's reality in her imagination" (116).

As of our hero Tibor, the double and ambiguous perspective (inner and outer, combining protagonist's and author's) in the passage cited above seems to stem from an incremental process of indecision characterizing both him and the story hinging on him. In relation to the protagonist the term "perhaps" returns:

> Perhaps the Triers' life had deviated from its course even before they made their way to the hospital, … perhaps the adventure had commenced when the phone rang. … Perhaps Sven is the talking frog. … Or perhaps it happened before the phone call - perhaps Tibor Klaus Trier set out on an adventure already in the first chapter, when he dreamt of the mosquitos buzzing. Maybe this book is the talking frog … (32).

Whereas these considerations could be read as the writer/narrator sharing her reluctance and doubt about the narrative construction, they could also be viewed as traces of the fantastical: that is, the reader's anxieties as to the story's ever more supernatural events are projected onto the protagonist.

In the artists' text imaginary, contingent, and rationally seemingly impossible representations intrude on the *progressive achievement* of the story. The variation on postmodern strategies springs to the eye once again, postmodern textual procedures making it the "failure of imagination that is important, and not its achievement, since in any case all representations fail and it is always impossible to imagine," as Jameson argues. In addition to a reevaluation of imagination's status and role, postmodernism's lesson borrowed from Walter Benjamin that "history progresses by failure" is taken as a source for the development of the artists' writing.[98] Fiction is reintroduced in the artists' text as a means celebrating imagination and its curative effects.

According to Hutcheon the way in which postmodern fiction plays on historiography's question of reference, is complicated in two ways: it is ontologically confused (text or experience; and it "overdetermines the entire notion of reference (we find autoreferentiality, intertextuality, historiographic reference, and so on)."[99] However, whereas postmodern fiction never succeeds in "fully resolving it [the question of reference]," as Hutcheon claims, the artists' text does not need to resolve the question—since there isn't one. *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* does not exceed in the number and kinds of allusion as a critical, textually "closed circuit, a strategy to state and imply the problem of reference, real or textualized."[100] There is no question, critique, or problem of "or" conceived within neatly structured linguistic outlines. Cytter's writing progresses through at once bulimic and exuberant "and." Articulating the issue from an ontological point of view, philosopher Levi Bryant claims: "'to be' is to make or *produce* a difference" [emphasis mine], and: "we will not proceed like Hamlet, demanding that everything be clear before we act."[101] It remains to be seen whether Bryant's ontological alternative suffices as a response to a postmodern textual perspective. For now, it

casts a light on other, unforeseen connections between textual positions and relations between terms, providing substance to the relata, that remained empty and ultrathin from a postmodern point of view.

Mr. Trier, or the Function of a Name

In *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* failure and imagination, chaos, the uncontrollable, and the rationally "inconceivable" form a constituent part of the story, however radically "different" and "nonsensical" the outcome might appear. Post-structuralism and postmodernism's fascination with language as a code (and with that ultimate script: DNA[102]) is transformed into a constructive device, both on a semantic level (the work's obsession with descendants and origin exemplified by the interview with Lars von Trier) and on a narratological plane (fabula and story, story and text, narrator, writer, character, and reader intertwine). Language as coded functions like a trampoline in the artists' writing, as a subcutaneous fertile ground or virtual to be varied and potentially deployed. The structuralist language, a set and closed circuit, is translated into a more open and malleable one. So-called entry points are created in Cytter's text, administering unforeseen access to what seems foreign or strange. The alien implies the *fait divers* of the interview, on the one hand. But on the other it also languishes in the word "perhaps," suggesting a potentiality immanent in the writing, the possibility of something *not* made explicit in the text.[103] Think of the possibility of the Triers' unborn child not being a human being. Witness Tibor's pursuit of what he *imagines* to be Margaret's lover. Thus instead of blocking a referent enabling speech, treated as a clear chain organized into a system, the alien, and exotic, the imperceptible is welcomed with open arms.

The artists' writing reconsiders the former solidity of the chain of speech via different approaches to language. "Perhaps" a "strange" element is allowed in its midst, introducing a panoply of modalities in a language structuralists organized as a grid composed of clearly defined and opposite pairs. In *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* the referent is simultaneously real and textualized, virtual and actual; the writer AND the reader participate in the text, the visual AND the verbal. Those referents "problematized" by postmodern approaches, defined as Different, explicitly Other domains are conjoined in the artists' writing, in other words, breaking up and coalescing again, constituting what could be called an assemblage.[104]

This procedure can very well be demonstrated in focusing on the way the name, that "rigid designator,"[105] can be comprehended in the artists' text, comparing its functioning to postmodern works. Since it is a name that figures prominently in the title of *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*, as we already saw, it being associated with the protagonist of Cytter's tale: Tibor Trier. Tibor is the red thread in the story: the reader shares in his musings and follows his whereabouts, she traces his intimate thoughts, faces his visions, and is witness to his accidents. Tibor's capricious performances sketch a vertiginous realm. Cytter's variegated references or referents from cinema to architecture to literature to painting attempt to contextualize his transgressive behavior, leading to his hybrid constitution.

Whereas proper names become "textual entities" in postmodern works, in the artists' writing Trier isn't reduced to its textualized form. As of typically postmodern practices "a significant difference in allusive resonance" between two names is drawn out, between "Duke of Windsor" and "Mauberley," for instance - the names' "allusions are to intertexts," Hutcheon explains, be they historical or literary.[106] In the artists' writing the allusive resonance is rather taken as a starting point in lieu of a result. The connotation, the unofficial, hearsay, or the rumor prevail. Any description (a = b), even the marginal and unpredictable ones play a decisive role in the story. Here the presumed rigidity of the name (a = a) enables both the play with words and the weight of them, the materialization of the words born of the often hazardous, diverse, and contingent descriptions. This functioning of the proper name in the artists' text and its materialization contrast with postmodern subjects and objects as remaining a function of language: "descriptions" showing "rather the breakdown of description and the failure of language to achieve the most obvious things it has been supposed to do."[107] Or: a ≠ b.

For postmodern works, which presuppose the textual playground, that area where the "rules of the game" are set in advance, names allow for "shallowness" to take form. The name thus exemplifies and is a special case of a postmodern abstention from "things." Language's referential potential fails not only in the use of proper names but in its deictic potential: that demonstrative manner and textual modulation communicated through words such as *here*, *there*, *now*, *so it seems*, and also: *perhaps*.

Jameson can help us further elucidate Cytter's writing, its repetitive use of "perhaps" and its implications in contrast with postmodern textual procedures. To point out a postmodern refraining from "things" Jameson refers to the opening section of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, known as the chapter on what Hegel calls "sense-certainty." In it, it is argued that there can be no unmediated identity between language and sensory experience in the present. Language is a universal and part of

consciousness, unable to actually reach the sensuous. As such, it presides over a multiplicity of distinct kinds of content. Or, "language, as we see, is the more truthful; in it, we ourselves directly refute what we mean to say, and since the universal is the true [content] of sense-certainty and language expresses this true [content] alone, it is just not possible for us ever to say, or express in words, a sensuous being that we mean". [108]

Juxtaposing this passage with the artists' text, it can be provisionally concluded that language's deictic potential is (re-)installed through its ominous use of the deictic "perhaps." The use of proper names in Cytter's work possibly escapes the "ruse of language" or language as a code. An inversion of a Hegelian dialectic takes place: language's synthetic unity is spelled out demonstrating its potential, carrying with it not only its own negation but also its positive form, modulating what was formerly known as a distinctive gap between the sensuous and language. Witness once again the difference between artists' and postmodern texts. For the latter there is no regulation that makes it possible to locate an object or a name in "other possible worlds," every otherness being reduced to an overarching principle called language. But in the artists' writing it remains possible to talk about someone, "Trier," in some "counterfactual world" through the simultaneous description and creation (or suggestion) of that counterfactual world. Language, and the name as a specific case of language being filled out at will through description as diverse, it is all but deprived of what could be called its "transindividual" character: it reveals itself as relational, characterized by a movement between internal and external forces, these relations being not necessarily functional: some things are *not* being said, as I mentioned before. [109] Or it is stipulated that language is an amalgamation, an assemblage, through "Mr. Trier."

Reference: Image and Text

I have suggested that the distance between textual layers is minimized in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* to the point of being negligible: textual strata contaminate or permeate each other, descriptions vary and spread causing names ("Mr. Trier," "Martin") to cross the thresholds of "their" worlds. In the artists' writing the fantastical acts as an image or "art object." What is more, these acts simultaneously conceal and unveil the textual strategies that transform the fabula into the story into the text. Trier's transgressive behavior is illuminated and camouflaged by the fantastical. The fantastical, then, masking the maneuvers of ceaseless textual conversions, the image is also a transparent one pierced by hesitation. These doubts are both caused by the writerly process and immanent to the fantastical as a genre. Whereas the difference between narratological layers is addressed in a negative manner in postmodern works of art, it is positively valued in the contemporary artists' text: so-called gaps between the structuralist predilection for polarized terms (black versus white, night versus day), these are modulated and filled with potential in the artists' writing (the frequent return of the word *perhaps*). Silences and the alien (the Triers's unborn child) are present without them being directly expressed. As a consequence the notion of reference, which draws on an understanding of difference, is conveyed in another manner in the artists' writing as compared to postmodern works. It is marked by fullness, instead of lack. Thus Trier acting in every possible world while creating these realms he, or "it" becomes a hybrid, his name the descriptive container modifying his traces. A typical postmodern textual convention like intertextuality is inverted; difference between worlds is not questioned or problematized; every possible world is rather generated and put to work.

Having unearthed the fantastical realm in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*, one must turn to the drawings. Concentrating on the connection between drawing and text, [110] from a postmodern perspective, their relation can be comprehended as an extreme form of intertextuality since the text both marks the difference from the drawing while ironically inserting difference into it. Approached as an ensemble, the combination of text and drawing can be viewed as an appropriation of a poem cited in the text, Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*. Carroll's work offers an interplay between woodcuts and text, the only difference being that Carroll did not make the woodcuts himself, [111] while Cytter drew her own drawings, something I look into further in the following pages.

The Cover as Ambiguous Entrée

The juxtaposition of the title with a drawing by the author on the cover page both underscores and gives nuance to the separation between terms. Whereas the heterogeneity of drawing and text is predicated on a recognized visual difference between them, sharing an author dissimulates or at least alters this gap. The drawing itself seems to focus on the centrally positioned soldier seen from behind (**fig. 1.1**). A mask renders the figure anonymous, and the hesitant and slightly clumsily drawn lines combined with the simplified outlines turn the character into a type. He (she? it?) is put in forest-like surroundings, pointing backward it seems, away from the reader, at a hidden target with a gun. Next to the figure's feet, in the left corner at the bottom of the drawing, a smaller second soldier is visible. In contrast to the first, he seems to be looking forward, his gaze concentrated on the spectator or reader, or on a point behind the onlooker aiming at a distant future. The story engages in a

double perspective taking up Tibor's point of view as well as an external one, reflected in the visual components seen from without and within, and underscored in the title. The title connotes *Aiôn* with *Chronos*, creating a synthesis between an unlimited past and future (*Aiôn*), the ordering of time in a straight line as *seven* in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*) with a limited present (*Chronos*, the "explosive" characterization of the seven hours as *most exciting*). The reading is complicated by the anonymous figures in the drawing, so that Tibor could be confused with the depicted soldiers. This double perspective once more reflects the text and a potentially intimate mirroring of textual and image procedures.

In explicitly approaching the cover as a montage, breaks between fragments can be understood as constitutive of the page, constructing the cover and simultaneously disrupting the illusion of the image being composed of both text and drawing: fragments of "reality" are inserted into the whole (Trier, "most exciting").[112] The jumbling of drawing and title emphasizes the different representative functions of words and images. As their distinction highlights their mutual explanatory force, sharing space alludes to the design of the cover regulated by conventions "that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader" in this case.[113] Due to this context text and drawing seem both freed from a referential relationship and bound by it. If the formality of the cover design hides that one sees words and images differently, as René Magritte's famous (non-)pipe reminds us,[114] or *The Treachery of Images* (1928-1929), as his painting is officially called, it also provides a common ground allowing for their so-called opposition to melt away.

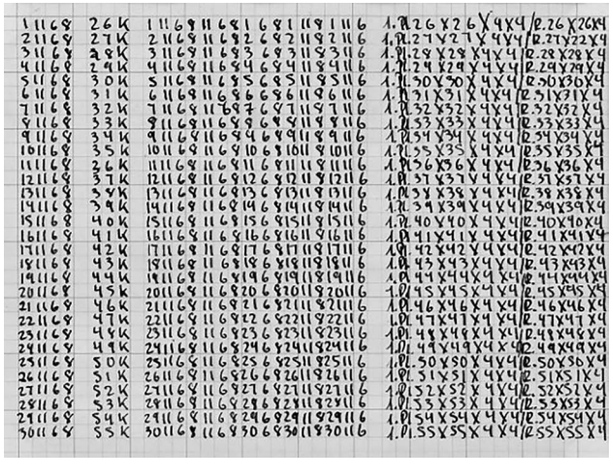


fig 1.3
Hanne Darboven, from *Sechs Bücher über 1968 (Six Books about 1968)*, 1968.

Do text and image function in a manner comparable to Magritte's painting, their stable relationship torn apart, the "calligram unraveled", words and drawing or painting only referring to themselves in the end?[115] Following my provisional conclusion that it is possible for Tibor to exist in every possible world (be it textual or drawn), while producing it, the mode of connection between text and image needs to be concentrated on. Or, how is *perhaps* visualized? What form do non-verbal effects of interrelations, both internal and external take?

More Drawings: Enigmatic Image-Text Relationships

The Seven Most Exciting Hours is composed of two parts: the first consists of thirteen chapters; the second contains eleven. The text is cut through by four drawings. The first drawing repeats the image on the cover page suggesting continuity between what is traditionally conceive as the paratext and text. The repeated image printed on black and white paper differs from its cover version, with its shiny gold lines carving out the image and text on the thick black jacket. The second drawing is positioned between the eighth and ninth chapter; the third drawing opens the second part of the artists' text; and the last drawing is inserted after the end of chapter nineteen. From their number and placement, no regularity can be deduced: the drawings do not relate to the story or impinge on either the narrative text or the story inflicting a reading that neglects a logical narrative order.

fig 1.4
Keren Cytter, *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters*, 2008. Drawing.

The distance between image and text is minimized or rephrased through the repetition of the first drawing. The emphasis is not on their being identical, but similar. A conflation ensues wherein the inside and the outside of the artists' text combine at an intermediary stage, actualized by turning the cover page. The narrative seems to start with the cover,

fig 1.5
Keren Cytter, *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters*, 2008. Drawing.

a procedure reminiscent of Stéphane Mallarmé's poem *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard* (1897), which also started on the jacket, thus inquiring into where and how the writing begins and differentiating the cover as paratext.[116]

The second drawing shows a living room (a television set, a couch, a plant) where someone seen from behind is seated in front of a computer screen, shoulders strained, a light bulb dangling above his head.

The third image presents two hands clenching a steering wheel, the highway just about visible through the front window. Its perspective is that of the driver's, the rear-view mirror demarcating the top of the visual field; the wrists form the image's bottom. Next to that a license plate is visible, numbers between an exclamation and a question mark.

The last drawing shows a person in a room or an archive, the door and the exit sign above it mark the right side of the image, the left edge framed by an open bookcase. The figure is facing shelves on which numbers are inscribed: 1815, 1814, 1821, 1820. The shelves carry folders of files, those corresponding to the year 1814 in front of him or her, however, are not there. The figure's position is slightly twisted: we see a back, a half-open apron revealing naked buttocks, a face hidden by shoulder-length hair.

The drawings seem to be illustrations, tautologies even of the paragraphs preceding the images that exactly describe what the images show. Or so it seems: "… he is obliged to open the mail. A second before he opens the message, he listens carefully and makes sure no one is watching …"

(second image); "… he hears a honk …. He presses the gas … and simultaneously moves into the right lane." (third image); "… by the dust marks and the small dustless squares he [Dr. Grovenor] understands the folders were there and that someone has stolen them" (third image). The clauses juxtaposed with the drawings leaves the reader at pains to identify the images. Inconsistencies occur, causing the necessary connection to subsequent phases of the story to fail. Who are these characters hiding their faces? Identically drawn, they lack outstanding features. In the story "properly speaking," the characters are little fleshed out, being overruled by the narrator's/writer's prominent tone and role. While proximity links the immediately preceding scenes—not unlike a medieval emblem, in which an image with a title (*inscriptio*) is joined to a lengthier explanation (*subscriptio*)—they lack a didactic overtone.

Against text and image in postmodern writing, the image in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* does not seem to be "added to" the text, as Hutcheon describes the "text-image border tensions" in postmodern photography.[117] There is no text "anchoring" an image, designating it within the textual domain where it can be comprehended as language. The text does not explain the image nor the opposite, thus

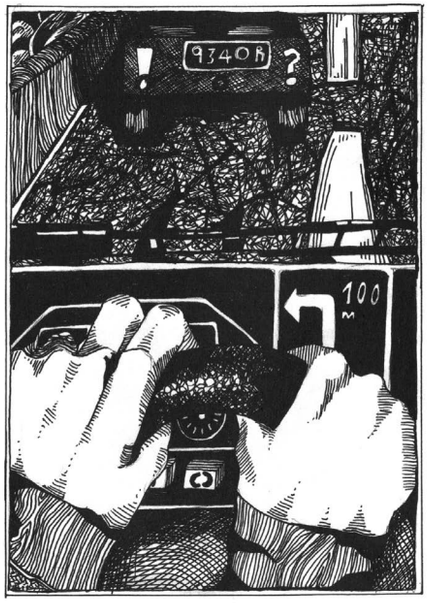


fig 1.6
Keren Cytter, *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters*, 2008. Drawing.

fig 1.7
Keren Cytter, *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters*, 2008. Drawing.

generating a certain awareness of difference in the viewer. Nor does the text "hail" the viewer, something the image, according to Hutcheon, is only implicitly, not explicitly capable of. Contrary to this view, I would argue that the image in the artists' text explicitly poses questions. It invites the reader to partake in the "game" and to find answers. To whom do the naked buttocks in the last drawing belong? The narrative immediately preceding the image does not offer a sufficient answer, since upon entering the archive Dr. Grovenor seemed to have been fully dressed. Would the nakedness then belong to the "light-minded" hospital's secretary, Lucy, who in a scene detailed in the first lines immediately following the image makes love to Adam in Dr. Hoffman's office? Or do the buttocks belong to the *sensible* patient Mathilda, who exorcises spirits, hears voices and, at the beginning of the chapter preceding the drawing, is ushered in by a supernatural presence to go to the archive to find "the last clue of the puzzle"?

Like the proper name ("Trier") the image is an assemblage, a montage of different scenes and types, or a rebus to be deciphered like Magritte's calligram. The images thus continue the chase in the story. The drawings reframe it, articulating dramatic moments or undermining the climax of the tale by inserting so-called inconsistencies. The means with which they draw on the story express the distinction of Cytter's work from the interplay of image and text conceived as a typically postmodern boundary crossing.

In sum the drawings are traced in the same unstable, capricious strokes that mark the cover image. Confronted with its black and white version its horror vacui springs to the eye, reminiscent of the chaotic world the artists' text describes and creates. Regardless of their depiction, image and text seem to coincide in this frantic moment prior to their actualization, sharing madness and disorientation. In this light Cytter's work suddenly

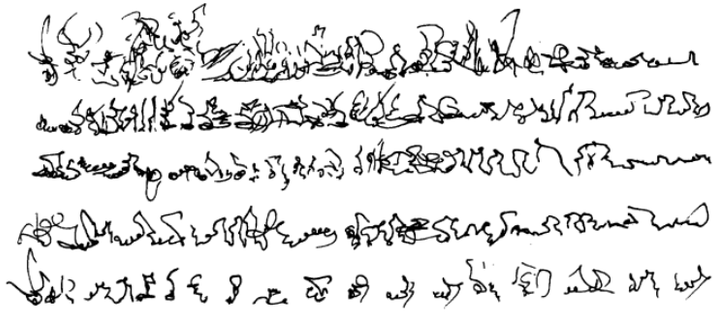


fig 1.8
Henri Michaux, *Narration*, 1927. Drawing.

comes close to the calligraphic experiments of poet and painter Henri Michaux in his *Narration* (1927). Begun after his travels to Asia, the text reminds you of Chinese characters but equally points to the abstraction of image and text seen as a drawing resembling an indecipherable script. The immanent gesture of writing is clear in Michaux's work, the pre-linguistic movement of writing, which visibly dissolves once a text is mechanically or digitally produced.

It is the dynamics of writing, disorienting or not, which is conceptually retained in the artists' writing. The text and image may differ, even contradict each other. But the storyline combined with the capricious drawings suggest a consistency: a conceptual kernel is maintained in each, only deployed differently. Alternative strategies are developed from that kernel, illustrating it and exploring or even exploiting it. Although the narrative and visual abundance of *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* are far removed from Conceptual Art's predilection for lists and records, catalogues and bare rules, Cytter's work seems to answer its manifesto, Sol LeWitt's *Sentences on Conceptual Art* (1969) in the plainness of her writing. But reading LeWitt's first sentence, another, unexpected indebtedness of the contemporary artists' text to its predecessors becomes clear: "1. Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach".[118]

Like Lars von Trier's *The Kingdom*, Conceptual Art's legacy defines the artists' writing in an important manner. Regardless of their matter and means, these histories are appropriated, adopted, and adapted. Next to the misconceptions that resonate in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*, the madness and lack of logical clues that define the artists' text result in what I call a thickness of the artists' writing, reminiscent of the "inherent thickness" of what is given in nature according to Lyotard in *Discourse, Figure*.[119] For Lyotard, "thickness" is appropriate to designation, "to that distance that makes what one speaks of something on which we have our sights, something on which to keep one's eye, something to be looked at, something one seeks to approach".[120] Designation is contrasted with signification, which is translucent, "marked by the immediate presence of the signified and the transparency of the signifier." No matter how one twists and turns the structuralist conception of language, Lyotard comes to the conclusion that the structuralist linguist measures signification against other equally "transparent" significations, eventually incorporating them in the signified. Every form of signification—Lyotard tests how a vertical axis of value could partake in horizontally oriented relations of opposite terms—is flattened by the structuralist grid: visual presence is ousted. In *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* neither a conflict between the seeable and the sayable nor a Hutcheonian tension between text and

image is at stake: the reader is not urged toward an awareness of different planes of visuality immanent in text as opposed to image; the text does not necessarily explain the image; the narrative does not explicitly draw the reader in while the image does not. The thickness of the artists' text is a thickness of writing as articulated matter developed and developing in the process of creating a story. It conceives of word *as* world, thus implicitly inverting the famous postmodern dictum conceiving the world as text. The thickness of the writing process as articulated matter is constituted by the fabula explicitly being translated into a story out of which a text is constructed, in narratological terms. Or, an *inventio*, a *dispositio*, and an *elocutio* being simultaneously conflated, deployed, and reflected upon, communicated, staged, and expressed. This occurrence of the creative phases inside and as the work does not "problematize representation" in a postmodern way, since in the artists' text the "last stage" of the creative process as representation is contextualized, articulated as produc*ing*, not as *always already* produced. It is actively representing, thus presenting the representing, instead of a postmodern positing of the text as always already represented in advance, thus immobilizing the reader and blocking any possibility to act upon the text and intervene.

Yet postulating the artists' text as this very *thickness* of the writing process as articulated matter, it seems to diverge from the notion with what in relation to postmodernist representations is often called its ultrathin surface. Discussing postmodernism in Dutch and Flemish novels, literary theorist Bart Vervaeck mentions the predominance of narrative conventions generating meaning, as opposed to psychologically drawn social realities. In these novels human beings only exist as images, metaphors, he argues, referring to Stefan Hertmans's *Naar Merelbeke* [To Merelbeke], in which meaning collapses through an image of a crushing meteor.[121] In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze develops this notion of "surface effects," composed of incorporeal events resulting from a mixture of bodies. He links these to an infinitely extending past and future (*Aiôn*), in order to "revert Platonism": what was hidden and indistinguishable, escaping Platonism, "returns to the surface" and becomes manifest in images that strongly differ from Platonist models. These simulacra, consequently, "cease to be subterranean rebels and make the most of their effects". [122]

So how can this postmodern superficial, completely external and aesthetic simulacrum, that produces an *effect* of resemblance, be elaborated in the artists' text in order for it to be stipulated as *thick*? The consequences of writing conceived as thickness rely on the reader.

Reference and Reader

Drawing the Reader In

In investigating the reader's status in artists' writing, I return to the first drawing in Cytter's *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*. Looking at postmodernism's distribution of roles allows me to hone in on the (pre-)determined division of tasks in artists' writing. It is difficult to apprehend the unique hybrid position of the artists' writing. It is a position epitomized in Cytter's first drawing, endowed as it is with a double perspective with two soldiers, one pointing backwards, the other aiming at a target in front of him. That double perspective is formally mimicked in the narrative. The question is how the position of *the* reader, if there is one, is accounted for in the artists' text.

Denying the drawing a center, however, insisting on a double perspective in both drawing and text, my reading could seem to comply with a postmodernist approach, wherein the image described contains a "paradoxical doubled positioning [of centers and borders] to critique the inside from both the outside and the inside," following Hutcheon on the ambiguous situation in postmodernism. She also addresses postmodernism's refusal to "invert the valuing of centers into that of peripheries and borders," referring to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), in which "Padma, the listening, textualized female narratee … pushes the narration in directions its male narrator had no intention of taking".[123] Do artists' writings structure textual space this way?

In *Midnight's Children*, protagonist Saleem Sinai tells his own story, inextricably linked to his nation (India), or so he thinks, born at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947 at the precise moment of India's independence. History is reduced to autobiography, India to consciousness, but contingency rules: the story is unable to catch up with life, life unavoidably invalidating the story's script. In her analysis of the novel, Hutcheon refers to the "coded oppositions" (male-female, narrator-narratee). While fruitful in considering the formulation of the narrative, it also flattens its illusion or, if applied to Cytter's drawing, its depth of field. All initiative is stifled, remaining enclosed in this narratological grid. Every potential is shunned due to unremitting categorization. Hutcheon's method envelops Rushdie's narrator and narratee in their private rendezvous, classifying them, limiting them: no time or space other than theirs exists. No occasion to escape the situation, a "chance encounter" between the couple or either one of them introducing something "strange" seems out of the question: everything happens in their textual universe. The unintended directions of the tale stumble upon the limits of the world of the text,

there being nothing outside it [*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*].[124]

Padma's active contribution to the story remains restricted, in other words, and controlled by Saleem. He cannot satisfy her desires, offering her his stories instead. Whereas Saleem's tales subvert historical continuity, challenging the limitations of continuity and linearity, hierarchy is reinstated in *Midnight's Children*, if only through Saleem's authoritative voice. Hutcheon's analysis overlooks the consequences of the dichotomy it helps to maintain. It is precisely this hierarchy, between centers and borders, that the analysis of *Midnight's Children* proposes to undo.

The centers and margins in the book are not those of Cytter's writing. The "'enabling' differences" in Rushdie's "ex-centric" 1981 text,[125] constituting the conditions for its being granted value, veer away from Cytter's work, appearing thirty years later, and in another context. Transposing the postmodern analysis onto Cytter's work, however, shows that a domestication of apparently contradictory positions obliterates a functioning and an understanding of the artists' text. What is missing from the postmodern reading if applied to Cytter's text is an introduction of difference not as opposition,[126] but as variation. Padma's unspecified and unexpected suggestions would have been followed throughout if she had a role in the artists' text. The narratee would not only be granted the possibility to push the narration, but also to step out of her role. The enunciative situation loosens, becoming more malleable and accessible, activating not only the narratee but also the reader. The enunciative situation in Cytter's work is heterogeneous. In it the notion of difference is modified. The "addressee" of the story is simultaneously implied and expulsed from it. In order for the narratee to be rejected, she is communicated to, introduced, and participatory in the story.

Returning to the drawing, the admittance of the narratee takes place in its very structure: the two soldiers are opposed to each other while side by side without their relationship becoming clear. Following the "two senses of their apparent distinction throughout" implies that the reader simultaneously arrives at a suggested past and foreshadowed future, without being sure whether these moments will be realized or which figure impersonates which moment in time. It is as if Walter Benjamin's angel of history, looking at the past while being blown into the future, is split in two. A linear conception of time immanent in Benjamin's allegory is subtended: presence is visually inserted into the drawing through the ambiguity (of perspective, of the characters) it implies, which one tends to resolve. This uncertainty is made concrete in the separation of the visual plane: a fissure between the two types invite the reader to partake in the construction of the visual field. The addressee, the reading, and the moment of reading are simultaneously made responsible for the functioning of the artists' text.

The reader being called upon within the confines of the text breaks an apparently consistent narratological time-space. And although the procedure brings to mind the postmodern fictionalizing of the barriers between writer, text, and reader, here, the addressee is not translated into a someone reminiscent of Padma, quietly listening to the voice of a single person, the author confiding in her.[127] The extension of time as interacting with the reader's present time while oriented toward a future and altering past acknowledges that difference subsists, but not as a stark opposition between time frames excluding one another, expressing a preference for one instead of another. The artists' text's potential is explored in expanding time and its conception so the reader might participate in the text.

The Implicit Act of Reading

If the reader is called upon in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*, not as an always already sketched postmodern, clear-cut, listening, passive character, but as an active *functioning* agent instead, there are at least two consequences. First, the artists' writing opens the road to a contingency that leads to a nuanced comprehension of meaning and its implications; second, the reader plays a part in the appreciation of the work: reading is not a passive textual absorption or consumption, thereby generating meaning and transformed into an act. In Barthes's words, "the reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination".[128] Once again, the question arises as to how the reader of the artists' writing distinguishes themselves from a postmodern, post-structuralist one. She seems taken into account in another manner in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*, her being contrasted with the Barthesean "space" to be "inscribed." Is she really still participating in a "social utopia" while reading, witnessing a pleasure without separation, a "jouissance" of what Barthes called the text? Does the artists' text require the reader to be a "practical collaborator" in the textual production, and by the same token, incorporate a component in that *network* the text was metaphorically called?[129] The openness of Barthes's textual space is a relative one, however, defined by horizontal linguistic mediation. It is a calculated and constrained space. The position of the reader in artists' writing seems articulated otherwise. In order to define the functioning of the reader I compare her status

with the reader's typically postmodern "labour" described by Jameson.[130] His analysis of Claude Simon's novel *Les Corps conducteurs* (1971) seems to endorse Barthes's "propositions" on the activity of reading of that object called the text.[131] Simon's novel, Jameson underscores, "renders reception (or consumption) indistinguishable from production";[132] it requires a discipline of the word by word; and, recollecting Barthes's statement that "'what happens' [in a narrative] is language alone, the adventure of language, the unceasing celebration of its coming," Jameson observes that

> we are occupied with our various tasks—identifying this or that fragment of a gesture, making some preliminary inventory of the various plot strings as they appear one after the other—when suddenly we also become aware that *something is happening*, that time has begun to move, that the objects, even as imperfectly identified as they are, have begun to change under our very eyes; the book is actually getting on with it, getting finished.

This new, "schizophrenic" mode of place and time characteristic of the postmodern moment, according to Jameson,[133] this "extraordinary feeling of aesthetic relief" he adds "has very little in common with the Aristotelian emotion that accompanies a more traditional mimesis of completed action." The postmodern novel is "no vehicle for imaginative experience."

Contrary to the postmodern novel, then, imagination is revalued in the artists' text. The reader's labor is another labor consequently. I have already stressed that she does not necessarily re-experience the illusory, realist moment of which she was deprived in postmodern literature. Postmodern literature wanted to research, instead of express an external reality and its views on that world. It sought to research research, in the words of Alain Robbe-Grillet: "le roman n'est pas un outil du tout. Il n'est pas conçu en vue d'un travail défini à l'avance. Il ne sert pas à exposer, à traduire, des choses existant avant lui, en dehors de lui. Il n'exprime pas, il recherche. Et ce qu'il recherche, c'est lui-même.[134] If the transparency of language typical of realism is not regained in the artists writing, how, then, does the author materialize her universe and find a way to communicate ideas? By what means is the reader drawn in and embedded? Compared to the postmodern novel, the artists' writing renders the act of reading more definite and defined by giving the reader a more prominent place. In what sense does her place and function vary with respect to those laid out in Jameson's interpretation of postmodernism?

In what Jameson calls a "reading of 'reading'" in the postmodern text, the reader is "alerted" that she could "possibly" read someone else's reading.[135] In relation to *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*, what was once judged

"scandalous" in the writer is now both intrinsic to the artists' text, and transferred to the reader: having opinions about her own *metier*. Robbe-Grillet still had to oppose the critique of his third novel, *La Jalousie* (1957), disliked for its implicit demonstration of the premeditated character of the book.[136] But here, in Cytter's text, not only the author but also Tibor's wife Margaret—unable to follow the poem her lover reads to her—is highly informed about the reader's interpretative task: "she tries to read it too but the story doesn't make sense, and she doesn't find it funny. Of course she mentions none of this to Karl and after two weeks she even manages to think that the story is original, the use of language virtuous, and the author—a literary genius" (114).

Jameson points out how little postmodern artists were "bothered with Being itself … in their conviction as to the weightlessness and textualization of multiple social realities."[137] These textualized, theoretical entities "are the very locus of *interpretation* today." In the artists' writing the distance between the highly theoretical, the always already "textualized," and "Being," between the theorized and the act of theorizing is minimized. Or variation is introduced in the structuralist strictly divided, opposed, and opposing realms: narrator contrasts with narratee, signifier with signified. Margaret isn't a "robot-like figure caught in a linguistic structure that transforms reality," like the neutral narrator of *La Jalousie*.[138] Margaret's conscious reading unequivocally hosts an awareness of a rationalized world and its mechanisms. She interprets, fluently using literary jargon to manifest a well thought-through instrumental efficiency. What is striking, however, is that she counters this overt instrumental awareness, an awareness that Jameson would relegate to postmodernism, by referring to "old interpretative values," like "originality" and "geniality," deemed mere "temptations," all proven "unsatisfying and frustrating" from a postmodern point of view.[139] Thus in Margaret at least two visions meet: a postmodern conviction of the opacity of the medium always already created in advance is coupled with an avant-gardist belief in originality. Next to that, she is cursed with romantic notions of artistic geniality. Margaret's diverse stances are both mystifying and revealing. Their interchangeability allows you to qualify them as many masks. Her views and beliefs function as possible readings as well as potential constructive devices. Narratological layers seep into each other; positions are porous. The postmodern adage is reversed once again: in the artists' writing, the text *qua* text gains gravitas. It is imbued with its own construction, discovering the flexibility of the writing process as it progresses. The reader witnesses this process, she participates in the text's genesis. Or, text becomes world.

Another form of reading Jameson identifies takes place in the materialization of the textual signified in postmodern writing through "words becoming mere typography." The inclusion of newspaper clippings or foreign languages is alluded to. In Cytter's work, textual cuts are mostly smoothed out, the borrowed fragment fully appropriated and incorporated. Karl's poem, for instance, isn't literally transplanted to the artists' text. The interview with Lars von Trier is reported on, it is handed over. The reader is not so much confronted with this report as a material entity estranging them from the story, than presented with a "chance encounter" (in relation to Rushdie's Saleem and Padma). The interview is both contingent on and functions as an initiation, following the nineteenth-century topos of the found book or piece of paper becoming a ritual first encounter with the world of writing. The interview, like the poem *The Hunting of the Snark* has a transitional status: found footage has a life of its own, comparable to rumors, or anecdotes exchanged by word of mouth. The artists' writing elaborates on experiencing rumors (Tibor *accidently* stumbles upon the e-mail exchange between Karl and Margaret), experimenting with forms of transformation initiated by the *fait divers* (in contrast to the postmodern predilection for facts), involving the reflection as well.

This reflection on transformation through the interjected and appropriated "other language" or cultural artifact takes a form similar to the following: "He [Tibor] parks the car and rests in his seat and thinks of why he said that sentence ['I want to see you dead']. He's very embarrassed about this childish hallucination because he thinks he copied it from a movie" (83). Tibor *doubts* whether he copied his words from a movie, the reader *potentially* reading a quote from a film. In contrast to postmodern fiction, the procedure of quotation and appropriation in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* does not result in the reader gradually discovering that the narrative has been a mere image, be it a painting, novel, or movie, as in the case of the tropical expedition in Simon's *Les corps conducteurs*. The reader already knows she is reading an image, and the writer knows the reader knows. There is no need for the story to ironically and explicitly state its own scenario, as Vervaeck states of postmodern novels.[140] Neither does the reader have to be confronted with a ritually foregrounded cliché. Clichés rather function as raw material in the construction of the story, instead of results. Or the reader is already informed about the literary topoi, there being no need for them to be explicitly laid bare.

Conclusion

One could conclude that the referent, the "most important" characteristic of postmodern hypertextuality, according to Vervaeck, is not absent in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours.* It is not erased, since in the artists' writing the story coexists with the referent it rewrites. Tibor Trier and filmmaker Lars von Trier are both involved in the artists' text that intermingles narratological strata and worlds, without problematizing what in postmodernist discourse was accounted for as a barrier between different textual layers. This particular textual strategy of translation—given it returns generally in artists' texts—cannot be viewed in line with a postmodern intertextuality that uses and abuses former texts. The locus at the junction of drawing and text that simultaneously refers to film following a recursive mode might render impossible the association of the artists' text with one single signifying system. Yet like postmodern literature, the artists' text's inclination to follow *faits divers*, instead of linguistic facts, its predilection for events and rumors, setting into motion an imaginary world, makes it impossible to perceive these worlds as separate systems. They can be equated and encapsulated in an all-embracing discourse, as with postmodern literature. Text and image, like reader and writer, do not rely on the word, they *create* a world thereby diminishing what postmodern literature comprehends as a distinction between word and world to be questioned and problematized within text. The sharp line demarcating the difference between reader and writer, narrator and narratee, sign and the referent excluded from the text in postmodernism is further nuanced in the artists' writing, through variation, modulation. The ambiguity and possibility in which this result (*perhaps*) can be considered positive and filled out, contrasts the negative postmodern conception of difference as gap. This results in the thick world of Keren Cytter's *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters*, where the thickness of writing is the materialization developed and developing in the process of creating a story. The artists' writing conceives a word, in all its aspects, *as* world, thus inverting the postmodern dictum of world as text. One could then come to the conclusion once drawn for postmodernism in relation to modernism: the artists' writing has "won," as a tradition at least, it having largely absorbed postmodernist textual strategies.[141]

2

Formal Experiments in Dora García's *The Inadequate*

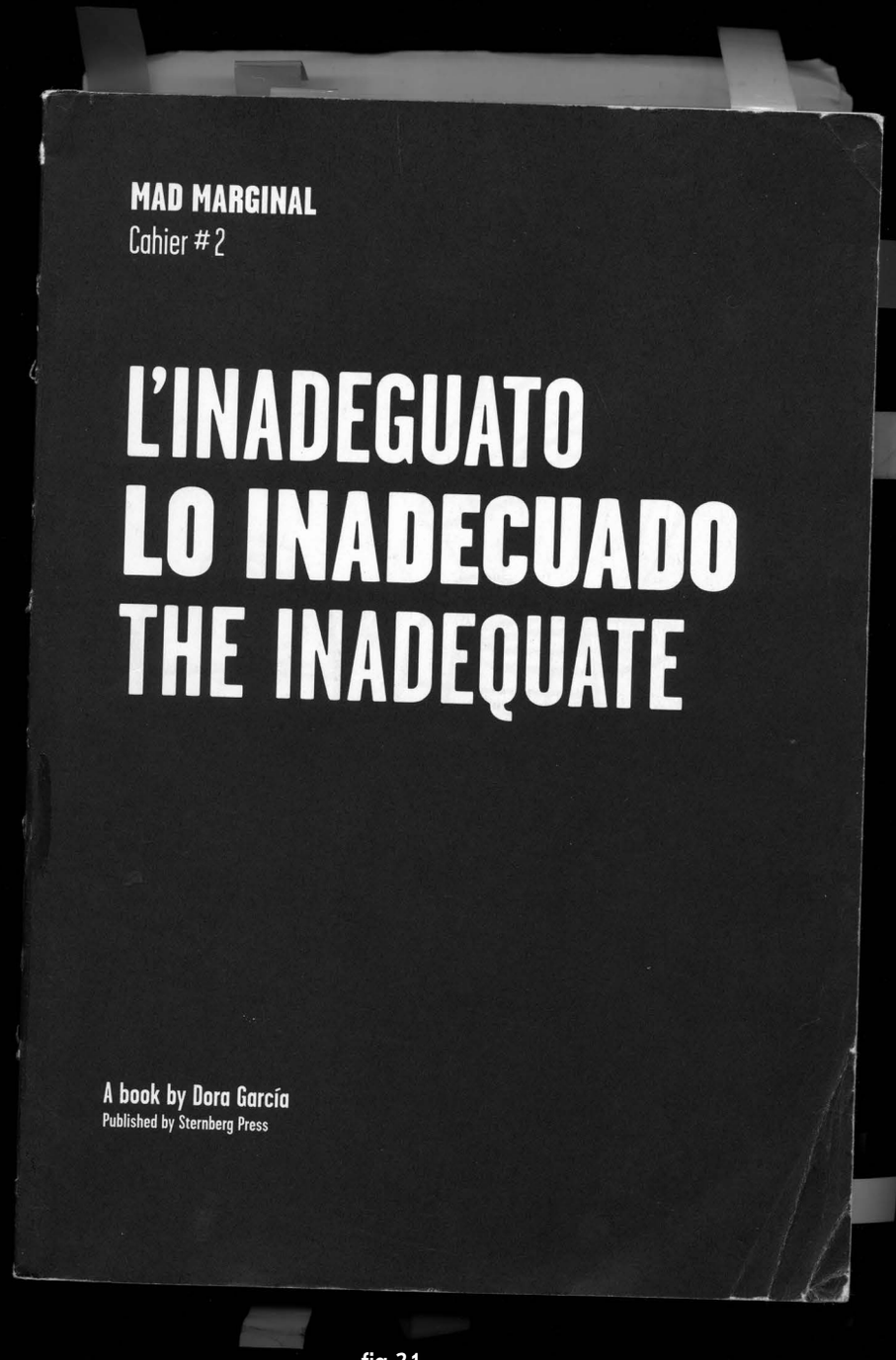


fig 2.1
Dora García, *The Inadequate*, 2011. Cover.

Introduction

The design structures the wide-ranging and dense issue in my hands. *L'Inadeguato/Lo Inadecuado/ The Inadequate* consists of separate sections sewn and glued together. The binding remains exposed. The cover's color and material are similar to the black pages demarcating articles that make up the publication, the thin shield allowing easy transgression between what is inside and outside. Leafing through the artists' project, its amalgamation reminds you of the (theoretical) reader: that book that collects diverse views, and that has grown in collaboration with museums and smaller (contemporary) art institutions alike in recent years.

The artists' text is Dora García's. Its composition signals the fragmentation of the writing, and the tension between this and the bound volume as singular work, something common to contemporary artists' writings. Due to its atomized form the artists' text is hard to position. The collective aspect of the compilation invites questions about the attribution of the writing. In the following pages I delve into the textual situatedness of *The Inadequate* asking: how can the variegated and fragmented artists' text be comprehended and approached?

The premise of my research is that form is a threefold experience in the text: *of*, *in*, and as discussion *through*.[142] Stemming from provisional conclusions drawn in the first chapter suggesting that artists' writing creates a world instead of, following post-structuralism, a word, I consider how the visualized matter with which the artists' text confronts the reader results in a *thickness* in the writing that gives it weight. It isn't a post-structuralist density of textual references, but is rather born of adventure, wherein the referent (instead of the reference) plays an active part in the text. In Keren Cytter's text, Tibor Trier stopped being a postmodern cardboard cut-out and began having a life of his own: former (post-structuralist, postmodern) negative widths between word and world are filled with potential in the artists' text causing the protagonist Trier to grow, creating his singular realm. As consequence, the reader is invited to participate in the artists' text: Cytter responds to the potentiality of the writing, imagining what was *not* being said. She partakes in the literary-ontological situation. Reaching from a postmodern, post-structuralist secluded textual universe, Cytter's writing does not re-present in a "purely" textual manner but starts to *exist*.

Acknowledging the constructive role of chance in the artists' text (which is not identical to potentiality)[143] raises questions about the limits of artists' writing. How can "its" universe be hemmed in without frontiers turning into exclusive rules and normative restrictions? What form does

The Inadequate's composite world *actually* take, taking into account its continuous expansion?[144] While the narrative thread of Cytter's writing holds the universe sketched in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* together, this narrative grip is at first glance generally absent from contemporary artists' writings. Does this diminished role of narrative result in an overall lack of cohesion, replacing it with incompletion? The chaos depicted in Cytter's work occurs because it is difficult to disentangle "what comes *after* being read" from "what is *caused by*" for the narrator, characters, and readers alike.[145] The contract between the actors involved is based on an attempt to solve the narrative riddle, with its potential to fail to come up with a response: an abstention from reason and knowable *facts* are paramount.

Applied to García's amorphous artists' text, this narrative imbroglio is either nonexistent or pushed to the limit. How is a sense of cohesion provided for? How does *The Inadequate* communicate with the reader if not through a narrative pact? The question reveals its hypothetical answer: the endeavor that underpins the artists' text, García's *The Inadequate* specifically as case study for this chapter, relies on an interest in and quest for form that the writing simultaneously introduces and contests.

I chose this work not only due to the important place writing has in García's practice, but because in the project writing is explicitly reflected on and *in*. Witness the bare binding that unmasks not solely the book, but testifies to the writing's seeming collection of autonomous texts. It is the tension between the multiplicity of the artists' text and its composition, its radical fragmentation and the inevitable unity of the publication, that grounds my research.

Analyzing the disjointed form of *The Inadequate*, and the reflection on its formal construction, artists' writing can be said to inhere in metafictional procedures. Metafiction is that process "assimilating the perspectives of criticism into the fictional process itself", born out of self-consciousness fiction and structurally inserted into the fictional work since the nouveau roman.[146] It "imitates (that is, creates) … not only an empirical world, but a view of its own linguistic and literary production. The textual mirror is turned inward and activated".[147] Several authors have demonstrated that textual fragmentation and textual self-reflection are not unrelated; the connection between them is reformulated in the artists' writing. Analyzing artists' writing by juxtaposing it with metafictional strategies like this can offer insight into formal structures of the writing, thereby clarifying its position. Although the heterogeneous artists' text is all too often set apart as a quasi-random construction that borders on formlessness, hastily composed of bits and pieces and guided by deviations and detours, it is nevertheless manufactured and meticulously designed. Neglect of what I

perceive as the artists' writings' consciously applied formal strategies lies at the basis of their as yet obscured standing.

In the analytical distinction between the formal registers of the text, I exercise my hypothesis that the artists' text formally expresses what once constituted a friction between creation and criticism, between local anecdote and an all-encompassing historical frame. The concentration is twofold: the operative force of the fragment in the artists' writing; and the dissected form of the artists' writing wedded to a reflection on its textual realization. *The Inadequate* is read with metafiction to think through the techniques used to translate and transform the word into a work.

Through its form the fragmented artists' writing revisits historical moments at which points discontinuity had been bound up with a close scrutiny of its own disconnectedness. When a literature that became manifest to itself reflected on itself in and through a fragmentary fashion, as Maurice Blanchot observed writing in fragments on the fragmentary writing of German Romantics.[149] Blanchot was especially concerned with the writing of the *Frühromantik* or theoretical Romanticism, i.e., the Romanticism of Jena organized around the journal *Athenaeum*. Fragmentary writing is inherent in Nietzsche's aphoristic and wandering thoughts as well; the fragment participates in the subversive strategies of Surrealists (see André Breton's novel *Nadja* [1928]) and the Situationists (testified to by the aphoristic writing of Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* [1967]); the fragment is reworked in modernist practices such as Ezra Pound's ideogrammatic writing in the *Cantos*; and engages in the attempt to break discourse, restoring the lost intimacy of writing, as with Barthes's later work.[150]

The variegated provenance of these examples and techniques they apply sees the fragment *en soi* function differently, taking the form of poem, maxim, philosophical treatise, *pensée*, novel, aphorism, ruin, or diary entry. Read against the background of these pulverized appearances, the atomized form of the artists' text takes a paradoxical position. Discontinuous, like metafiction, it still articulates a configuration. Metafiction's concentration on the construction of the reflection on its own product(ion), its delight in design, shines light on the fragmentary form of the artists' writing, and its highly manufactured construction.

This study follows two strands of metafiction of which Linda Hutcheon writes: one, "intent to unmask dead conventions"; and two, "the distinction between literary and critical texts begins to fade".[151] The so-called scattered artists' text is recast from these two metafictional perspectives, the first strives to unveil the obsolescence of (still) prevalent

literary notions, the second wears down the difference between creation and critique. Each perspective enables me to look at the extent to which the fragment in the artists' writing coincides with a critical textual awareness. Before elaborating on the role of what structures the artists' writing, I will give an initial outline of *The Inadequate*, my object of research.

The Inadequate is composed of two parts or *Cahiers*, one of which is titled *The Inadequate*, the other *From Basaglia to Brazil*. The two halves were initially published as separate parts of what later became the overarching project *Mad Marginal*.[152] The second Cahier forms the opening section of the complete volume, its title figuring prominently on the cover: *L'Inadeguato Lo Inadecuado The Inadequate*. The multiple languages in the title point to how we might approach the multiple languages in the volume. For the purposes of brevity I will refer to the book in full with the self-professed inadequate title, *The Inadequate*.[153] It includes essays, drawings, interviews, roundtable discussions, diagrams, and letters. Next to García's own essays and interviews are those by novelists and dramaturges, nurses and neurolinguists, psychiatrists, and art historians in Italian, Spanish, or English. A digital version circulates in which some translations can be found.[154] Each Cahier comprises a sequence of video stills titled *The Inadequate* (Cahier #2) and *The Deviant Majority* (Cahier #1). A cartoon-like drawing similar in line, tone, and theme opens and closes each volume, as if wrapping up the plurality of texts.

The two Cahiers share a theme, the second elaborating on the background of the research in the first. Cahier #1, is centered on madness, its social and political embeddedness, and "marginality as an artistic position" (MM1, 11; d11).[155] Cahier #2 discusses artistic production and its (mental) limits. The motivation of the *Mad Marginal* project relies on a good story, García explains, on an insight and a conviction. Concerning conviction she states that if "radical" means an expressed belief in "great or extreme social or political change," and if an "institution" is defined as "that which resists change" (Basaglia), then the two terms are mutually exclusive. Or: "Radical psychiatry, radical politics, radical art: rage against the institution. But also… an uncompromising idea of truth" (MM1, 14; d14). Whereas *Mad Marginal* has its roots in the "almost accidental discovery of the writings of [the Italian psychiatrist, neurologist, and professor] Franco Basaglia" (1924–1980), it is also defined by the story told by psychiatrist Erik Thys about a psychiatric patients' group working in the late 1960s whose therapeutic activities included urban guerrilla techniques. Thys intertwined this story, as related by García, with the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition in Munich, 1937 and German euthanasia program *Aktion T4* (October 1939–August 1941), wherein psychiatric

patients and people with Down syndrome were exterminated. Thys added, in the words of García, "that there is a movement in Germany right now … calling for the Prinzhorn collection [the famous collection of art created by mentally ill] to be moved from Heidelberg to Berlin … to be housed in Tiergarten 4, the very place where the decision was made to exterminate psychiatric patients." And García wonders: "Who was the man behind this contemporary movement? … a case of eternal, supernatural youth? Or a case of poetic justice?" (MM1, 11–13; d11–13) García posits the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition, where one of the slogans on the gallery walls read, "Madness becomes Method," as that instance "forever sealing the profound and complex connection between modern art and outsider art." She continues commenting on "outsider art" that "whatever meaning we give to outsider art, it says much more about *mainstream* art than about whatever is outside it." (MM1, 19; d19) Suggesting that it is a form of dissidence that avoids the center, *The Inadequate* nevertheless takes a stance vis-à-vis what "*the truth about art might sound like: radical artists profoundly mistrust the ideology of art*" [italics in original] (MM1, 19; d19).

Investigating historical source material, both stumbled upon and actively sought, *The Inadequate* researches the current status and limits of what is considered art. The writings of Basaglia are taken as an example to inquire into cultural, social, and political borders, along with the works and methods of James Joyce, Robert Walser, and Fernand Deligny. Through this particular source material and *The Inadequate*'s employment of it, artistic procedures are tested that "officially" are (or were) rejected, considered marginal and "mad." The artists' text puts forward and inhabits those practices that prevent art from being an exclusive and ideological tool.

Fragment and the Fragmentary, or "Intent to Unmask Dead Conventions"

"Open" work, a constellation

The fragment, then, is what returns in *The Inadequate*, wearing diverse and multiple hats. *The Inadequate* is differentiated through its various plurality of texts, from diverse perspectives, in Italian, Spanish, or English. As noted before the translations of (most of) the Italian and Spanish texts found in a digital edition of the *Mad Marginal* project that also includes some of the English articles extends and reformulates the work further. While *Mad Marginal* re-evaluates the notion of authorship in the artists' text by decentralizing it—addressed more in the third chapter—the reader is confronted with a disparate, apparently incoherent and chaotic work. This textual anarchy is hinted at by the inverted logical order of the Cahiers.

Each point of access into the artists' text offers a different experience. Due to the meticulously arranged constellation of heterogeneous material, each reading reshapes relations among the elements. *The Inadequate* thus seems to be what Umberto Eco called an "open work," characterized by a fundamental indeterminacy that introduces a "field" generating interpretative possibilities and reciprocal internal relations. Eco suggests a phenomenological approach for dealing with such work. He refers to Merleau-Ponty, quoting his statement: "It is therefore essential for the object and also for the world to present themselves to us as 'open'… and as always promising future perceptions": The constellation of the work and the part played by reader oscillate.[156] More than the reversed sequential ordering of the Cahiers, which rather affirms the order by and through the inversion, continuous reading is complicated, invalidated even, by the unavoidable to and fro between text and a reader who is forced to create her own cohesion from the multiple contributions. Systematic understanding is undermined thanks to the variety of articles, furthermore, written not only in different languages, and by linguists, art historians, novelists, visual artists, sociologist, psychiatrists, and dramatists alike, but also for taking on different forms. Or so it seems: interviews and essays coalesce, visual material, scientific articles, and letters alternate. A compilation, *The Inadequate* assembles and catalogues, while balancing on the "fragile line that separates construction from collapse" (MM1, 190), in García's words. Examining the position and functioning of what seem referents—instead of references—Basaglia, Tasso, and Walser, I seek to test how the artists' writing handles its heterogeneity. Read against metafiction, I proceed with a study of the fragment and the modes in which it appears.

Basaglia, Tasso, and the Translation, the Encounter

The Inadequate is a work composed of what I'd call chance encounters and "random" rendezvous. Witness the "insight," "conviction," and "good story" inspiring *Mad Marginal*, but also the "almost accidental discovery of the writings of Franco Basaglia." These so-called encounters consist of restructured and manipulated fragments and appropriated found footage. "To encounter is to find, to capture, to steal" in the words of Deleuze, "but there is no method for finding other than a long preparation".[157] The lack of method that characterizes the encounter, according to Deleuze, is specific to the "actual" fragment, as leftover or remainder, that is. Or the absence of method is specific to the encounter *as* fragment (and vice

versa) producing a strained relation between the fragment as a remnant of the rendezvous and its integration in the architecture of the text. The structural encapsulation and acceptance of the fragment seems to contradict a "real" fragment as crumb, discarded matter, defined by chance.

This same situation, balancing out inclusion and exclusion, incidental find and constructive device, can be tracked in García's concepts of madness, the radical, and outsider art as fringe phenomena—and of *The Inadequate* for that matter. As García formulates, outsider art "is defined as art by *other people* (insiders) instead of its maker (an outsider)" (MM1, 19; d19). The process of insertion and expulsion, and the border between them, is relevant to the approach of the artists' text, its subject, starting point, means, and material; looking at *how* the fragment is integrated allows insight into how the text functions.

In *The Inadequate*, the encounter is initially directed by chance. As such it is translated in the treatment of the fragment, affecting its agency. The fragments and the encounters from which they (apparently) result are given varying levels of importance, lending the writing its rhythm and its structure, while reflecting on traditional narrative continuity. Textual self-reflexivity has been present all along in literature, ever since Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote*. It defines "the status of *all* fiction". Via characterizing the textual impasse of paradoxical engagement in fiction, in which "*descriptions* of objects . . . are simultaneously *creations* of that object." Patricia Waugh, however, argues that metafiction is exceptional as it lays bare the literary conventions of simultaneously creating a context (the words on the page) and a text.[158] With respect to the artists' text, and considering the varied formal treatments of referents in quantitative terms, the encounter with Basaglia gets an entire volume, Cahier #1, while Tasso is alluded to just once. This decision could be justified by arguing that Basaglia's proposals to deinstitutionalize mental healthcare in Italy, countering (its) ideologies ("Basaglia worked against ideologies, not to create a new ideology" since "ideology is the falsification of reality" MM1, 140–141) served as a crucial steppingstone in the making of *Mad Marginal*. Torquato Tasso, by contrast, is referred to because his madness has an exemplary function within *The Inadequate*'s larger proposition on the curative properties of madness ("delirium is a remedy" MM2, d27) and living a peripatetic life, wandering along the perimeters of society at large. This does not mean that Tasso is of little importance to the text. In narratological terms Basaglia could be said to function as a *node* in the artists' writing, whereas Tasso is a *catalyst*, "reviving the semantic tension of the discourse," giving it "fresh impetus," delaying it perhaps, possibly leading it astray.[159]

Looking more closely at the forms in which the chance rendezvous are transcribed in the artists' text, the narratological view on *The Inadequate* gains nuance. The dichotomy of Basaglia and Tasso is difficult to uphold once we acknowledge that the exemplary function of the Tasso reference is a role also fulfilled by Basaglia. Each role cannot be justified by page space or semantic importance. Most referents in *The Inadequate*, Basaglia and Tasso among them, concern historical figures met with in an indirect manner: through their writings or writing about them: Jack Smith is hinted at and Aby Warburg is dedicated an entire article (MM2, d10–21). García might have happened upon Basaglia's publications and notes, but the reader never lays eyes on them. The information about the referents is channeled, in other words, communicated by mimicking the documentation as a secondary source García herself relies upon.

Through this procedure the artists' writing implicitly reflects on the secondary nature of information, and the denial of its auxiliary and subordinate place in Conceptual Art. Think of Seth Siegelaub's famous statement from 1969. Asked which means are most suitable for communication in and of art, he responded: "Books and catalogues." Whereas art is often distorted and altered in books for art depending upon its physical presence, Siegelaub says this is not the case in art that has become an abstraction: Conceptual Art. Once "color, scale, material, and context" do not matter anymore, the representation in books and catalogues "becomes *primary* information, while the reproduction of conventional art in books or catalogues is necessarily *secondary* information" [emphasis in original].[160] Or listen to Sol LeWitt commenting upon the *Xerox Book* (1968), that book-as-exhibition in which seven artists were provided twenty-five pages each and asked to contribute one work around the concept of reproduction: "And to do the show as a catalogue is a terrific idea because it involves one very, very important aspect of the work, which you call the documentation. Which is, from my point of view, as important as whatever is done".[161]

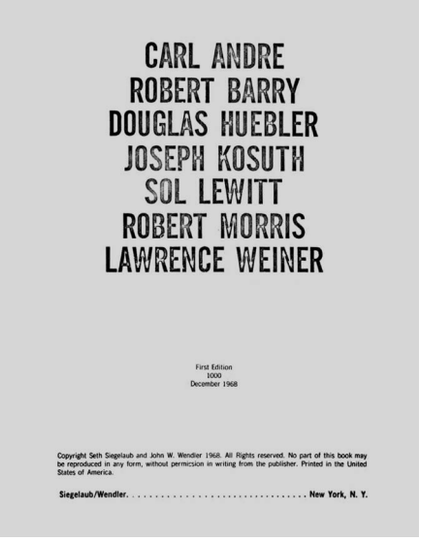
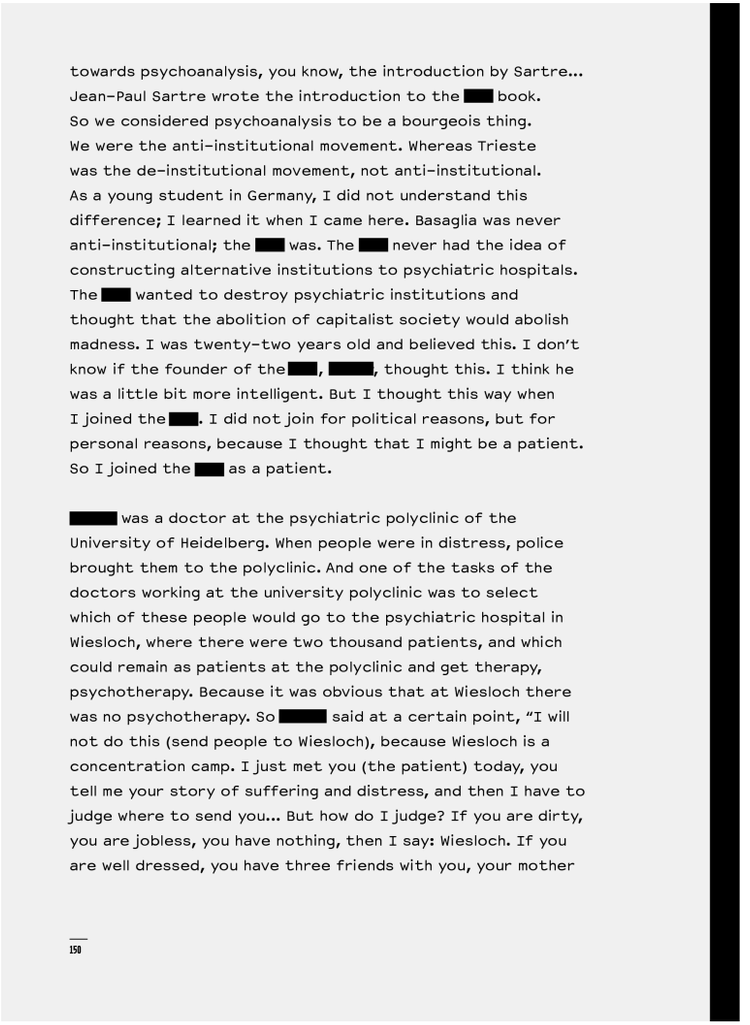


fig 2.2
Seth Siegelaub, ed., *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner* [Xerox Book]. New York: Seth Siegelaub and Jack Wendler, 1968.

The Inadequate and its treatment of information speak to an awareness of the 1960s place and function of documentation. As they profit from the possibility of information as primary matter, current artists' texts place this information on par with the historical person or situation concerned, as we will see in the case of Robert Walser in *The Inadequate*. This is why Walser and Warburg, Tasso, Basaglia, Deligny, and Smith are referents, instead of (textual) references. In the historical figures *mot* and *chose*, "word" and "thing" are combined, made one.

It is the plurality of interviews with students, followers, and collaborators of Basaglia that bear witness to *Mad Marginal*'s interest in the Italian psychiatrist—and psychiatry and politics in general. The (chance) encounters, and Basaglia's non-conventional therapies and political strategies that are discussed, not only provide the methodological blueprint for the artists' writing or offer 'mere' material. The conversations seem to *be* the work, the work *functioning as* conversation, as further research into the function of Basaglia and Tasso *The Inadequate* seeks to reveal. And yet, putting aside the quantitative, narratological, and semantic reading of the artists' text, studying the form of the reader's meeting with the psychiatrist in *The Inadequate*, the interviews with Basaglia's acquaintances render him more present than the lone mention of Tasso: the living speech of the interviews accounts for a presence the single meta-textual allusion lacks.

Within *The Inadequate* the difference between the two forms of textual appearance—the interview vis-à-vis lone reference in a more or less continuous piece of writing, the discursive vis-à-vis critical discourse on its appearance—is minimized through a reduction of the role of the interviewer in the interviews, for instance, the texts merely signed by García. The questions themselves are excluded from the writing, furthermore, thus mitigating the discursive character to the point almost of obliteration. Accordingly, the so-called natural language of the interviewees is only apparently maintained. In "An interview with Carmen Roll" (MM1, 146–159)—recounting Roll's work as a nurse with Basaglia—García's presence as interlocutor is presupposed by the allusion to art in the first lines of Roll's defensive report: "First of all, I am a person who doesn't understand anything about art. So I cannot talk about the relationship between art and madness. I have always been suspicious of this question, so I cannot talk about this. … I think that enjoying music, dancing, singing… it's right, you know. But for people who have been labelled mad, all these activities become therapy" (MM1, 147). The interviewer being largely exempt from the dialogue, mostly presupposed, results in a more or less uninterrupted text. There aren't even quotation marks.


towards psychoanalysis, you know, the introduction by Sartre...
Jean-Paul Sartre wrote the introduction to the [redacted] book.
So we considered psychoanalysis to be a bourgeois thing.
We were the anti-institutional movement. Whereas Trieste
was the de-institutional movement, not anti-institutional.
As a young student in Germany, I did not understand this
difference; I learned it when I came here. Basaglia was never
anti-institutional; the [redacted] was. The [redacted] never had the idea of
constructing alternative institutions to psychiatric hospitals.
The [redacted] wanted to destroy psychiatric institutions and
thought that the abolition of capitalist society would abolish
madness. I was twenty-two years old and believed this. I don't
know if the founder of the [redacted], [redacted], thought this. I think he
was a little bit more intelligent. But I thought this way when
I joined the [redacted]. I did not join for political reasons, but for
personal reasons, because I thought that I might be a patient.
So I joined the [redacted] as a patient.

[redacted] was a doctor at the psychiatric polyclinic of the
University of Heidelberg. When people were in distress, police
brought them to the polyclinic. And one of the tasks of the
doctors working at the university polyclinic was to select
which of these people would go to the psychiatric hospital in
Wiesloch, where there were two thousand patients, and which
could remain as patients at the polyclinic and get therapy,
psychotherapy. Because it was obvious that at Wiesloch there
was no psychotherapy. So [redacted] said at a certain point, "I will
not do this (send people to Wiesloch), because Wiesloch is a
concentration camp. I just met you (the patient) today, you
tell me your story of suffering and distress, and then I have to
judge where to send you... But how do I judge? If you are dirty,
you are jobless, you have nothing, then I say: Wiesloch. If you
are well dressed, you have three friends with you, your mother

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fig 2.3
Dora García, from "An interview with Carmen Roll", *The Inadequate*, 2011. Text.

It is the compartmentalization that reveals García's indirect yet determined presence in the text. While the unimpeded progress of and involvement with what was previously called an open work seemed to qualify *The Inadequate* as a leisurely stroll down various paths, indifference and arbitrariness are not what define the artists' text. A strict and stringent design determines the writing while it guides the reader, stimulating certain directions while closing off others. Even Siegelaub's observation that "books are a neutral source" has to be reconsidered when confronted with the contemporary artists' writing. The artists' text is reminiscent of the critique of Conceptual Art as dematerialized; likewise

García's writing dismantles its self-reflexivity in elaborating on text as material, not only handling writing as transparent vessel but also stressing that text can have visual meaning.

This determined and determining author's position, masked but formally unveiled, is underscored by censored parts of the dialogue: blackened or crossed-out names. This particular textual interference, suggesting both a provenance and active reflection, visually supports the textual rhythm. Emphasizing the visual surface, the artists' writing moves away from the encounter as accidental, performatively generating what in that encounter is understood as "mere" textual dialogue that suppresses exchange. The dialogue with Roll accounts for its social embeddedness, as it needs the reader to fill in the gaps and "complete" the work, which the blackened out and redacted parts also suggest. *The Inadequate* hovers between an eighteenth-century idea of and approach to the fragment as a deliberate refusal to finish a work—I will return to its implications shortly—as well as its more recent application in artistic practices that employ dialogue and participation to produce event- or process-based works.

As it is transcribed the Roll conversation could hardly be said to be a fragment in the sense of found footage. It is produced, as with the eighteenth-century *non finito* prevalent among writers and painters alike. Works were made "that have not become incomplete, but have been planned and executed as incomplete". Not composed of fragments in the proper sense—remnant, leftover, or discarded matter—the novel of the latter eighteenth-century coincides with the revival of the concept of art as a form of life, according to literary scholar Elizabeth W. Harries. Thus starting "*ab ovo* or even *ab semine*," Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1760) reflects on the notion of beginning and end, both in life and in fiction, embodying a reflection on how living and writing about it enable one another, but are also always out of sync. "Ending—if it ends—with a remark about a cock-and-bull story" ("L--d! said my mother, what is all this story about?--- A COCK and a BULL, said Yorick---- And one of the best of its kind, I ever heard."), the novel thinks through the finite status of its work.[163]

For Patricia Waugh, Sterne's *Shandy* is the metafictional novel par excellence. Metafictional parody, the novel's conversationalist mode discovers and criticizes what forms can express what content, its creative function releasing them to express contemporary concerns. Its "Dear reader" address disrupts literary conventions, acknowledging that the reader is a "fully active player in a new conception of literature as a *collective creation* rather than a monologic and authoritative version of history" [emphasis added].[164] Within the context of the artists' writing,

the conversation has been molded in such a manner that it can hardly be said to await the reader for completion given its assiduous design. And yet, its composition requires that the reader intervene in the writing, translating not so much the encounter but the ephemeral aspect and acuteness of the social situation, it requires the empathy of the reader to imagine socius and text. Or socius as text. Like its compilation (the two Cahiers and multiple contributions), *The Inadequate*'s Roll dialogue relies on and communicates a sense of collectivity by inserting open endings debunking the finished nature of the book.

Art historian and curator Nicolas Bourriaud writes of recent artistic practices that likewise "impose . . . a state of encounter on people," that they use human relations to generate meaning.[165] Works by Rirkrit Tiravanija and Sophie Calle, for instance, often rely on situations characteristic of societal relations like eating, drinking, or playing. Bourriaud captures those projects under the overarching term relational aesthetics. Explaining the difference of recent practices from earlier works that were very much dependent on social interrelations, he refers to Dan Graham's 1975 performance *Performance/Audience/Mirror* in which the artist is positioned in front of a museum audience facing a mirror. Like in the comparable *Mirror Performance/Audience Description* of 1977, the performance stressed the polarization of active performer (Graham himself) versus passive viewer who follows his movements, simultaneously drawing attention to the front of the performer's body vis-à-vis his back, which is habitually shielded from interactions. The exaggerated artist's activity was echoed by the onlooker's passive contemplation, thus raising consciousness of a still prevalent division of tasks. Contrary to performances like Graham's, relational works pivot around *collaborations* with their audience. Their construction requires the engagement of others.

fig 2.4
Dan Graham, *Mirror Performance/Audience Description*, 1977. De Appel arts centre, Amsterdam, 8th of June 1977. Photo: Thijs Schouten, Amsterdam.

Calle's early *Le carnet d'adresses* (1983) testifies to this collaborative endeavour. The artist contacts people in an address book found on the street, drawing their portraits; the more recent *Chambre avec vue* (2003) has passersby inviting to spend the night with the artist and to tell her stories, lying in a bed on the fourth floor of the Eiffel Tower.

fig 2.5
Sophie Calle, "Chambre avec vue" / "*Room with a view*", 2003.

Some nights you can't put into words. I spent the night of October 5, 2002 in a room set up for me at the top of the Eiffel Tower. In bed. Between white sheets, listening to the strangers who took turns at my bedside. Tell me a story so I won't fall asleep. Maximum length: 5 minutes. Longer if thrilling. No story, no visit. If your story sends me to sleep, please leave quietly and ask the guard to wake me' Hundreds turned up. Some nights you can't describe. I came back down in the early morning. A message was flashing on each pillar: Sophie Calle, end of sleepless night, 7:00 a.m. As if to confirm that I hadn't dreamt it all. I asked for the moon and I got it: I SLEPT AT THE TOP OF THE EIFFEL TOWER. Since then, I keep an eye out for it, and if I glimpse it along some street, I say hello. Give it a fond look. Up there, 1,014 feet above ground, it's a bit like home.

Bourriaud articulates the shift in focus from past performances like Graham's and more recent collaborative works from the 1990s on, as "yesterday, the stress was laid on relations inside the art world, within a modernist culture attaching great importance to the 'new' and calling for linguistic subversion; today, the emphasis is put on external relations as part of an eclectic culture where the artwork stands up to the mill of the 'Society of the Spectacle'".[166] The question is sometimes whether, and if so how, these relational, and socially engaged art practices can be distinguished from the "real" social situations they mirror. In relation to *The Inadequate* one could say with Bourriaud that the strategies seem predicated on imitation, mimicking a dialogic situation. But the relations between García and Roll are reworked. They are processed and transformed. The open-endedness of the works Bourriaud promotes is challenged by the "aesthetic resolution" of the artists' text, *also* accounting for a visual imagination and moving beyond a rhetoric of the encounter.[167]

On closer inspection, it must be underscored that the act of translation and reflection immanent in the artists' text intones the alternative bonds mentioned before: a one-to-one correspondence between writing and socius is averted in the artists' text. *The Inadequate* does not so much echo the social situation, which is, or seems, impossible due to the lived-through experience of the encounter and its material distinction from the nature of text. But it speculates on the possibility of translation, on the relative transience and temporariness of the social situation and its translation. This is done through the recursive structure of the artists' writing. In that sense, it is interesting to conceive García's role in the artists' writing as also building its textual architecture or frame, a function steeped in a consciousness that language materially writes. The notion of authorship is enlarged.

Keeping in mind *The Inadequate*'s transformation of the direct speech of the interview, translating its vivaciousness into the indirect speech of the artists' text, a similar textual strategy can be observed in the Tasso reference. Whereas the relative immediacy proper to the testimony as a form is diversified, heavily mediated through the writing, the text functions as a median once again restoring Tasso's presence: the poet is discussed in a conversation that is discussed in the first person: "In a conversation I recently had with theatre director and poet Giuliano Scabia, the initiator of the Marco Cavallo figure, he assured me that madness on a grand scale, magnificent madness, the extraordinary delirium of Torquato Tasso, had ceased to exist." After this the text expands not necessarily on Tasso, but on "madness on a grand scale," since "Delirium is a survival strategy. Delirium is a remedy" (MM2; d27).

Whereas Basaglia's presence modified the text partly by veiling his character and his writings through indirectly addressing them, Tasso's absence is enlivened through direct conversation about him; according to Waugh, the conversationalist mode is also frequent in metafiction, which assimilates non-literary languages and "helps to break both aesthetic and extra-aesthetic norms because both norms operate through very well-established conventions." Conversation as a form thus enables the reader "to proceed through the familiar to the new." Waugh's less introverted and less "narcissistic" understanding of metafiction comes closest to *The Inadequate*'s endeavour it seems, both embedded in societal forms. Whereas Hutcheon postulates that the imaginative process is called into action in both author and reader to create and articulate a literary world discussing the "*nature* of interpretation" [italics in original],[168] Waugh understands the self-conscious metafictional procedure as a reflection on literary creation and life: "Metafiction … does not abandon 'the real world' for the narcissistic pleasures of the imagination," Waugh stresses. And, "metafictional novels, have to engage with the question of the truth status of literary fiction, and, of necessity therefore with the 'truth' status of what is taken to be 'reality'".[169]

One of the modes the metafictional novel adopts is that of the conversationalist, which does not only rely on the reader for its identity and for sympathy, but demonstrates that the "apparent *impersonality* of *histoire* is always finally *personal*, finally *discours*" [emphasis in original].[170] Intertwining the *langue* with the *parole*, inserting the popular into the literary realm, the novelist as conversationalist uncovers the aesthetic elements appropriate to expressing the concerns of the age, Waugh explains, drawing on Russian formalism's concept of *literariness* and translating it "depending on the work's differential relation to the extra-literary system in which it operates".[171] It is precisely this distance vis-à-vis the "extra-literary" that is reshaped and formulated in more positive terms, activating "it" in the artists' writing, or rendering it primary material. This is done through variation on modes of absence and presence, fragmentation of the fragment, eluding speech and introducing it, inserting the I and removing the first person singular from where it was supposed to be (the interview). The immediacy of speech is tested through an alternation of modes, a surfeit of artifices, the artists' text puts to work in transforming them. Borrowing from Waugh the insistence on metafiction's relation to the extra-literary, the variety of the textual forms in *The Inadequate* taps into Hutcheon's demand for close and thorough examination of the nature of interpretation. Unlike Waugh's reading of metafiction, firmly rooted in a post-structuralist comprehension of the text, The Inadequate's extra-literary realm is not necessarily synchronous with the text, however, as I tried to show. Regarding *The Inadequate* also

implies that the artists' text is a compound of several eras in which diverse referents (instead of references) with different backgrounds meet.

One could protest that my perception of the artists' writing's variegated and often paradoxical mode and recursive structure is naive. After all, "language in its entirety is indirect discourse," as Deleuze and Guattari observe. Derrida too studying Rousseau's social struggles with speech vis-à-vis writing describes how Rousseau experiences presence, in the words of Derrida, to be "disappointed of itself in speech," concluding "to write is indeed the only way of keeping or recapturing speech since speech denies itself as it gives itself".[172] Writing, then, "must *be added* to the word urgently" [emphasis in original].[173] Self-sufficient, it supplements presence, the natural, speech, to the point of substituting it, without our being aware: we are blind: writing thus constitutes a dangerous supplement. "Languages [are] the regulated substitution of signs for things, the order of the supplement".[174] What Derrida called the metaphoricity of writing is responsible for the incessant deferral of presence that is always out of reach.[175] This delay is what he termed "différance," as we know: "Différance began by *broaching* alienation [from presence] and it ends by leaving appropriation [of presence] *breached*" [emphasis in original].[176] In relation to the artists' writing, however, the text is not centered on the strict separation of and opposition between presence and absence. In understanding their historical models as referents (in lieu of references), and through their recursive structure, relationships are modified, be they absent or present. Textual forms are sought out and reformulated, exemplifying the connections and the experience while nuancing them. The lived-through liaisons are both recounted and textually expanded. Witness the heightened visuality of the writing, understood as *also* matter. Rather than "merely" reflected upon, the referent is appropriated and inhabited in the rewriting of his work within the context of the artists' text, as we will come to see with Walser especially.

The Inadequate is a sensate form of thinking in other words. Comprehension of the text is sensate, relating to the senses, that is, a position significantly different from Derrida's wherein language is a metaphor that hides a sensory figure. Artists' writing does not elaborate on language as a fact, "always already," transporting the thing it represents and duplicates, thus allowing for its substitution. Text does not "merely" result from a cognitive process: it is a form. The sensate is intimately linked to cognition in the artists' writing. Its aesthetics are an *aisthesis*. The aesthetic of *The Inadequate* has to be apprehended not in its strict Kantian separation of thinking from sensibility, but based on its initial meaning introduced by philosopher Alexander Baumgarten in the 1750s instead: as *aisthetis*, or what has been termed a sensate thinking that reconsiders the cognitive

aspects of sensation and studies the sensitive and perceptive dimensions of cognition.[177] As such, I propose a look into artists' writing in terms of wor(l)ds, or onto-epistemological investigations. As physicist and philosopher Karen Barad formulates: "the study of practices of knowing in being," saying further that "we do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because 'we' are *of* the world.…"[178] Eco's phenomenological approach (via Merleau-Ponty) to the open work is thereby nuanced. Eco started from the visual field to explain the experience of, in this case, writing, the eye isolated and linked to a consciousness that cannot be reduced to vision alone in the artists' text. Delving into *The Inadequate*'s treatment of Walser, I seek to research the implications of an onto-epistemological approach.

Walser: Manufacture of the Referent

Tracing the way in which *The Inadequate* translates the encounter with Basaglia and Tasso, another aesthetic (*aisthetic*) apprehension of the meeting is brought about in the artists' text's treatment of the referent Robert Walser. The tension is increased between fragment and architectural encapsulation in the artist's approach to Walser, that is, between the incidental, accidental, or anecdotal, that "literary form or genre that uniquely refers to the real" as well as the teleological narrative frame.[179] It is difficult to argue for a fragment resulting from a chance encounter when we look at the structure of *The Inadequate*. It seems *The Inadequate* foregrounds its self-reflexivity by using Walser performatively: Walser is construed as an extended *mise en abyme*, providing the narrative with a speculative tinge. The prolonged embedded structure in which Walser is caught refers to the construction of the sentence, but it increases expectations as to the figure of Walser as well, like the Russian Matryoshka doll, always anticipating the next doll could be the last.

Starting from the premise that a speculative tone pervades the artists' text due to its use of an extended *mise en abyme*, one can already observe that the artists' writing proceeds in the opposite direction of metafictional strategies. Through Walser the artists' text does not so much install what from a metafictional perspective is perceived as its relation to debunking dead conventions, mingling practice and criticism. It rather postulates that these conventions are (still) relevant and open up novel (textual) perspectives. This altered move vis-à-vis metafiction is caused by the artists' writing's changed relationship to previous textual etiquette. In and through the *The Inadequate*'s contributions, textuality is understood as comprising life. Writing cannot be reduced to a mental affair, it rather functioning "on the same level as the real, and the real materially writes". [180] In consequence,

The Inadequate's universe cannot be regarded as an intertextual world, recurrent in metafictional novels: it is an intra-world.

The Inadequate's approach to textuality that softens the boundaries with life is especially conspicuous in its treatment of Walser. This referent is an important part of the text, mainly in García's "Avoid the Centre. Language on the Margins. The Inadequate" (MM2 40–53; d24–37). This piece appropriates, intensifies, and unpacks the textual strategies of the short story writer. Whereas García puts Walser's technique to work in her writing, she also expands on the writing concept he developed, as explained in the essay that directly precedes her text. For Walser, as J. M. Coetzee describes, writing was intricately linked to his life. This is illustrated in reference to Walser's microscripts (*aus dem Bleistiftgebiet / From the Pencil Zone*), an infinitesimally small and "illegible" work of handwriting in pencil figuring on tiny, mostly discarded pieces of paper.

With the pencil method Walser resolved his state of mental paralysis. After the death of the storyteller in 1956 the scraps were revealed to comprise short stories and fragments. The movement of the hand, the friction of the pencil scribbling on paper, on which meandering lines emerged, the status of the shreds—these methods were crucial to the development of Walser's tales, offering a "unique bliss." "'It calms me down and cheers me up,'" Walser commented on the pencil method.

The entanglement of writing and life is suggested through the insertion of a photograph of Walser, the picture intercalated between Coetzee's contribution and García's subsequent essay. The photograph confronts the reader with the writer, wearing a dark suit and hat, his bent figure walking uphill, plodding through the snow. Like the pencil lines, the visible traces of the footsteps testify to the writer's presence

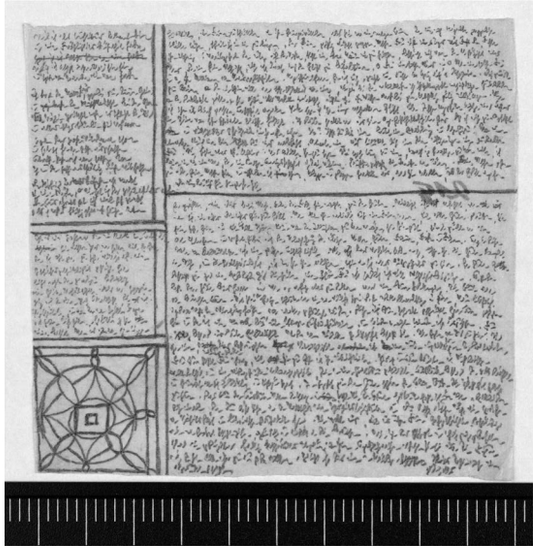

fig 2.6
Robert Walser, *Aus dem Bleistiftgebiet* ('From the Pencil Zone'), Microscript 215, recto, undated.

in an indexical manner. The photograph mimics the imprint in a recursive way. The image thus participates in the embedded structure of the artists' text it (the photograph) bears within itself. The same tripartite textual arrangement is repeated in García's aforementioned essay.

fig 2.7
Robert Walser. Photograph.

An important part of García's article "Avoid the Centre. Language on the Margins. The Inadequate" is dedicated to Walser's short story "Der heiße Brei" (1927/1928). Walser's work is quoted and translated in what García termed an amateur fashion: "(the text is my own amateur translation)" (MM2; d29). Bracketing her words challenges the sense of the sentence. It implies that "Der heiße Brei" is explicitly cited, and at the same time unofficially invested with changes. The artists' writing transforms what has been remodeled already (a translation), suppressing those changes. By the same token, the quote is removed from what it describes. It realizes an attempt to avoid the center similar to how one eats a bowl of hot porridge, as Walser describes in the story to which García's sentence refers: you start at the edges to avoid burning your tongue.

Walser's "Der heiße Brei" is a reflection on writing prose, a "Prosastückelchen," as his Swiss-German version learns. Writing is compared to both a dream and a house, or visiting either. His story is a musing, in which a man visits another man (Walser?), a writer by profession, although he hesitates to call his "Spielerei" actual work. Written in the first person singular, the guest is shown around the house and directed to its main area, the living room. The sanctuary can be watched from a distance but never entered.

In García's reworking of Walser's story quotation marks are absent, as in the previous citation of Carmen Roll's words. Besides quotation marks, a footnote is also lacking: the source of the text is unsure. Likewise the translation cannot be trusted. A comparison with Walser's text confirms

that you are confronted with "his" writing in the artists' text. García's appropriation of Walser's work has it challenged and changed.

The particular form of translating and bracketing, quoting and removing, imitating and changing Walser's writing is differentiated yet again through the form in which "Avoid the Centre" integrates "Der heiße Brei." Indented, the fragment extracted from Walser's story is clearly distinguished from García's uncited writing. A similar means of structuring is employed referring to the work of Fernand Deligny, at the end of "Avoid the Centre." The embedded sections closely follow the particular rhythm of "Avoid

Thus the autist becomes a *pilgrim*, a word that, in its Latin root *peregrinus*, meant 'foreigner' before it came to mean 'traveller'.[4]

Wandering, amateurism, pilgrimage, foreignness, travel. Avoid the centre. What do I want to talk about?

In 1926 Robert Walser wrote a short text entitled *Der heisse Brei* that explains everything.[5]

Der heisse Brei, literally 'hot porridge', alludes to the way we usually go about eating a bowl of porridge that is too hot: we start by loading our spoon at the edge. As we repeat this action, the rest of the porridge progressively becomes the edge, until finally we are able to eat the centre, having turned it into edge. Avoid the centre.

When I'm awake as an author, as a person, I go through life in a stupefied state, I sleep, I completely neglect the citizen within me.[6]

In *Der heisse Brei* someone comes to visit Walser, a writer 'by calling' no doubt, whom he shows around his home. The visitor does not appear to be surprised by anything he sees there. He also seems to be passing through. In the house, there is a central room, which Walser calls the 'real (*eigentliche*) room', in which some books can be seen in passing on a table. The two writers do not enter the room because it is inside another room, which looks 'lovely and cosy'.

4. Deligny, p. 186.

5. Robert Walser, *Der heisse Brei*, *Das Gesamtwerk XI*. Zurich and Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978, p. 90.

6. Robert Walser, *Minotauros*, *Das Gesamtwerk XI*. Zurich and Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978, p. 192. (Trans: Dora García)

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fig 2.8
Dora García, from "Avoid the centre, language on the margins, the inadequate", *The Inadequate*, 2011. Text.

the Centre." Its manipulation manifests itself in a textual fragment unlike Walser's "Der heiße Brei," and more like the shredded pieces of paper of his microscript: García's citation/translation is cut up, presented in blocks.

Whereas the layout of the text imposes a rhythm on García's writing, the fragmented format also allows for simultaneous conjunction/disjunction of the distinct pieces: embraced by García's writing and its paratextual interferences the Walser translation forms an assemblage, also due to the semantic consistency of the extract. Cut up in separate blocks the literal, visual widening enables non-linear connections, exposing the edges so they resemble islands; the external borders, new orders, and foreign connections can be imagined or dreamed. As in Keren Cytter's writing, the reader is activated, but here she is only seemingly invited to create her own textual patterns in response to the writing's broken connections. In "Avoid the Centre," both the semantic continuity of the Walser excerpt *en soi* and the textual makeup of its integration guide the reader through the text.

Linearity hasn't been eschewed entirely in the fragmented artists' text; it inserts a form of narrativity by reinventing it. The photograph appearing between García's and Coetzee's text already hinted at such halting continuity. The Walser picture both semantically and visually motivates a sense of continuity: the writer's elongated figure, black against the whiteness of the snow, drawing a diagonal line between the two neighboring essays. The degree to which linearity and coherence are set within the artists' writing becomes apparent once *The Inadequate* is juxtaposed with other assemblages that adhere to fragmentation, likewise compiled of image and text: from Marcel Duchamp's *Green Box* (1934) to André Malraux's *Le Musée Imaginaire* (1965) Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (1927–1940) to the *Mnemosyne Atlas* of "scholar and psychopath" Aby Warburg (1866–1929). The fragment operates differently in each example: disrupting art historical categorizations (Malraux); in

fig 2.9
Marcel Duchamp, *Green Box*, 1934. Photo: Salomé Roodenburg.

articulating the ruin of bygone ages (Benjamin); and endowing the sign with a *Nachleben*, understanding the image as an "organ of social memory and an 'engram' of a culture's spiritual tensions" (Warburg).[183] Yet all of them exhibit a severe vacancy within the overall textual system, gaping blanks that need the reader to construe connections in order for the information to be conveyed. This goes for Duchamp's *Green Box* especially: it consists of notes "thrown together, pell-mell, drawings and admirable photographs in a big rectangular cardboard box which is the cover of the book." The jottings are comments on *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–1923), also called the *Large Glass*. They are "torn or blotted scraps of paper, scribblings on all types of paper, in pencil, black, blue or red ink, unfinished notes, projects, plans, repetitions, etc., etc."[184]

The *Green Box*'s relative lack of connections is absent from *The Inadequate*, due to the artists' writing's textual design that maneuvers the reader in the cadence of García's reading (of Walser). The interference that manipulates one's reading materializes once you become conscious that parts of "Der heiße Brei" are left out; "Avoid the Centre" indicates them by dashes between brackets (fig. 2.8). It seems Walser's story became the material of a writer masked as reader, and vice versa. Or in García's adaptation, Walser's "wandering"[185] prose is alluded to, adopted, and realized at the same time.

The tension underpinning this textual strategy that overshadows textual provenance and mingling voices in *The Inadequate* seems to emerge from the paradoxical need to communicate the desire for incomprehensibility, stress commitment to incoherence, discontinuity, and disjunction, regardless of the thematic cohesion among parts. The delight in the illegible, characterizing an "aversion to useful speech" (MM2; d30), is at the core of the artists' text. Or in García's words: "It's still not so long ago that I had an urge sometimes to roar." The quote is Walser's, inserted in "Avoid the Centre" and surrounded by blanks. The isolation causes it to stand out from the writing, simultaneously coloring the phrase in aphoristic hues. The utterance alludes to the contradiction between *what* one says and *how* one says it, between the énoncé and the enunciation: whereas Walser's sentence makes perfect sense, roaring does not. Not from an understanding of language as rational communication, that is.

Roaring, like fragmentation, shatters the coherence and unity generally needed for comprehension. Once connections between sentences within the text are disrupted by screams and wandering thoughts, the contract between writer and reader is broken, or destabilized at least. Howls and cries, much like the atomized text, prevent the reader from focusing on one single point (call it a plot), her following a unique red thread (say, a

narrative line). The artists' writing stands in sharp contrast to what Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois (relying on Bataille) termed the formless (*L'Informe*) as opposed to the form.[186] But the dichotomy between form and formlessness is only apparently introduced in the artists' text. Its position cannot be consolidated in García's writing. This is due to "Avoid the Centre" clearly reworking Walser's writing, embedding it in its text. Reading through the artists' text and viewing it in its full ensemble, the so-called detached, aphoristic phrase of Walser's must rather be said to participate in the constellation of the artists' text. The scrap can only apparently be regarded as crumb, since it has been transformed, changed, affected, manipulated. It hasn't been left behind, rendered waste (intellectual, social), as Krauss and Bois formulated the formless. The formless is nuanced and formulated anew in "Avoid the Centre." Distance between bits and pieces is differentiated and rearticulated, distinctions (re)made.

The artists' writing thus forms a cautious constellation being heavily designed. This doesn't entail it being closed in on itself, "like a porcupine," as Jena Romanticism wanted it. Some of the fragmentary forms inserted in "Avoid the Centre" suggest this nevertheless. The detached fragment consisting of Walser's sole sentence is a case in point. It recalls the aphorism, that moral genre of the fragment, but also the *Einfall*, the sudden idea as a synthesis of thoughts.[187] In "Avoid the Centre" isolated propositions are composed of García's "own" words ("Delirium is remedy"); they are juxtaposed with phrases explicitly built on the writings of others, like Deligny or Walser ("A homeland is foreign territory for a foreigner. Every language is always the language of another"). They are written in the first person singular ("With books as with people I consider complete understanding to be somewhat uninteresting"); and the disconnected sentences are explanatory and descriptive ("In 1926 Robert Walser wrote a short text entitled *Der heisse Brei* that explains everything"). Depending on how you read them, the detachment of the lines can be interpreted differently. The isolation presupposes the involuntary character of the sudden genial idea or induces a style of injunction proper to the aphorism (that "classical" form of the fragment subjectified by Friedrich Schlegel), insisting on a striving for truth. What the isolated phrases share, however, is the authoritative stance inherent in the quasi-secluded propositions. In both cases, the Witz and the aphorism, the subject expressing the words is emphasized, since he or she is "enlightened" by the idea (the genius individual of the Witz) and/or transfers his or her knowledge (the aphorism, a remainder of an oracular truth). The subject becomes an exemplary figure, the fragment being the work of the subject, in both senses of the term: it indicates the process of the equivocal subject incessantly searching for completion and consciousness, in absolute freedom—and its essence as individuation.

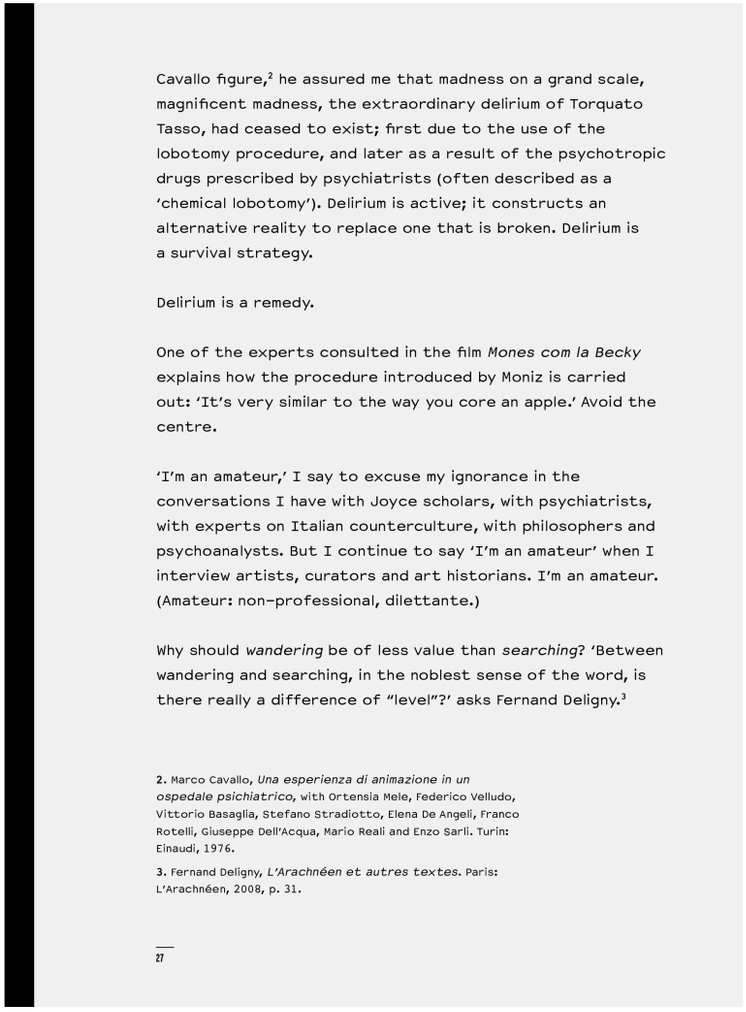
But this process is a work of the subject, the formative power posited as an aesthetical power by Jena Romanticism, the interpretation of which I use due to its closeness to both the world as organon and the work of art.

For the *Frühromantik* or theoretical Romanticism, the Romanticism of Jena organized around the journal *Athenaeum* (1798–1800), The fragment became the genre par excellence, incarnating theoretical Romanticism. Its dynamics relied on what was termed a fragmentary exigency: an auto-production or auto-formation, presupposing a fragmentary totality in its organicity.[188] Like its later modernist frère,[189] the Romantic fragment was composed of internal relationships. It was a finite fragment. The Romantic finite fragment paradoxically aspired to the whole that could never fully be attained, the detached fragment being conceived as a sign of this unfulfilled completion. Or as Schlegel wrote in *Athenaeum*'s fragment 206, "A fragment, like a miniature work of art, has to be isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a porcupine".[190] The fragment implied a total closure. It was the remainder of individuality, as individuality, finding its realization in the exchange or dialogue, that "garland of fragments".[191] *Athenaeum* epitomized this. Its issues were not only composed mostly of fragments of aphoristic character, they were a place where several individuals from different backgrounds mixed and met. Accordingly, the fragment existed thanks to the dialogical nature it produced. The Romantic fragment was not only dialogical and dialectical, however, it was a work in process, a poiesis, incessantly poetical, grounded in auto-production. Its essence lies in individuation: "in the Self, all things are formed organically" (*Athenaeum* fragment 338), under the notion that "every man should be a poet" (*Athenaeum* fragment 430).

Returning to "Avoid the Centre," the question arises as to whether this description of the aphoristic fragment following Jena Romanticism applies to the artists' writing's isolated sentences. The answer is already alluded to: no. The affirmative phrase introducing Walser's story is necessarily exempt from the understanding of the fragment as detached and enclosed. For one thing, it presents "Der heiße Brei" thereby bridging the gap between the lone sentence and the text, regardless of the blank that separates the two, the latter being a constructive device announcing the fragment *en abyme*. Neither can the other three examples cited above be perceived as self-contained and "unsociable," affirmative, and bearing their own horizon, as the Nietzschean aphorism has it.[193] In "Avoid the Centre," the aphorism is not finite. It is composed of García's "own" words ("Delirium is remedy") and grounded in the sayings of others ("A homeland is foreign territory for a foreigner. Every language is always the language of another"). In García's work the aphorism is linked to the fragment preceding it by way of repetition, the repetition of the word

"delirium": in the case of the aphorism her "own": "Delirium is active; it constructs an alternative reality to replace the one that is broken. Delirium is a survival strategy. Delirium is remedy."

The repetition of delirium generates connections between what is visually dispersed. The fragment as aphorism is not so much serialized, as with the *Sentences on Conceptual Art* (1969) by Sol LeWitt, for instance, having in common with the Romantics an aphoristic character. It rather participates in a more open-ended conception of the fragment, as formulated by Blanchot and picked up by Deleuze and Guattari.



Cavallo figure,[2] he assured me that madness on a grand scale, magnificent madness, the extraordinary delirium of Torquato Tasso, had ceased to exist; first due to the use of the lobotomy procedure, and later as a result of the psychotropic drugs prescribed by psychiatrists (often described as a 'chemical lobotomy'). Delirium is active; it constructs an alternative reality to replace one that is broken. Delirium is a survival strategy.

Delirium is a remedy.

One of the experts consulted in the film *Mones com la Becky* explains how the procedure introduced by Moniz is carried out: 'It's very similar to the way you core an apple.' Avoid the centre.

'I'm an amateur,' I say to excuse my ignorance in the conversations I have with Joyce scholars, with psychiatrists, with experts on Italian counterculture, with philosophers and psychoanalysts. But I continue to say 'I'm an amateur' when I interview artists, curators and art historians. I'm an amateur. (Amateur: non-professional, dilettante.)

Why should *wandering* be of less value than *searching*? 'Between wandering and searching, in the noblest sense of the word, is there really a difference of "level"?' asks Fernand Deligny.[3]

2. Marco Cavallo, *Una esperienza di animazione in un ospedale psichiatrico*, with Ortensia Mele, Federico Velludo, Vittorio Basaglia, Stefano Stradiotto, Elena De Angeli, Franco Rotelli, Giuseppe Dell'Acqua, Mario Reali and Enzo Sarli. Turin: Einaudi, 1976.

3. Fernand Deligny, *L'Arachnéen et autres textes*. Paris: L'Arachnéen, 2008, p. 31.

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fig 2.10
Dora García, from "Delirium is a remedy", *The Inadequate*, 2011. Text.

Although the Romantic era was a time when art, literature mainly, became manifest to itself by way of "discontinuity or difference as a question of form," the closure implicit in the aphoristic perfect sentence formulated by the *Athenaeum*, according to Blanchot, contained certain omissions. It had its center in itself, instead of in the field that other fragments constitute with it; the wait or pause separating the fragments was neglected, thus denying the rhythm of the structure. *Athenaeum* forgot that fragmentary writing makes possible new relations that exempt themselves from unity just as they exceed the whole.[194] For Blanchot, the fragment had to be positioned between two limits: the imagining of the integrity of substance and of a dialectical becoming. "His" fragment abstained from both, or as he wrote of the fragment word [*parole de fragment*]: "Whoever says fragment ought not say simply the fragmenting of an already existing reality or the moment of the whole still to come".[195] The fragment word implies the recognition of an always deferring and differing speech understood as plurality. A "*speech as archipelago*," "cut up into the diversity of its islands and thus causing a surging of the great open sea; its ancient immensity, the unknown always still to come, designated for us only by the emergence of the earth's infinitely divided depths".[196] This openness, Blanchot argues, does not dismiss that "all speech is a word of command, of terror, of seduction, of resentment, flattery, or aggression; all speech is violence—and to pretend to ignore this in claiming dialogue is to add liberal hypocrisy to the dialectical optimism according to which war is no more than another form of dialogue".[197] Fragmentary writing cannot be subordinated to the unified artwork, as modernism predicated, nor does it partake in the dialectic of realization and unrealization leading to it.[198] The fragment entails a rupture, an "arrangement . . . that accepts disjunction or divergence as the infinite center from out of which, through speech, relation is to be created." Relation is generated through fragments being *externally* connected. This is what Blanchot brings to light. Distance is indispensible for a relation to take place. Or in Blanchot's words again: "*Suppressing distance kills*."

What seems at stake is that the *between* is deployed in the artists' writing, or what Barad calls an intra-world is created. An understanding of sense that does not correspond to any fixed entities is operative in García's text. Fiction is a tool to link what cannot be thought in *The Inadequate*, forging connections where they cannot be detected by the rational eye alone. Suffice it to say for now, the *between* can be divulged in what is both a reiteration of Walser's phrases *and* not, "Avoid the Centre" recasting the sentence. As a consequence the artists' text can be marked as inhabiting the AND precisely. Due to this ambiguous position García's work is difficult to pin down. "Avoid the Centre" eludes affirmation of the work of the precursor, utilizing it, borrowing its movement but disregarding it

as an imperative. Transforming the earlier texts another order is installed, exemplified by the employment of the referents (in lieu of references) in a markedly novel design.

Fragment and Fiction: The "Distance Between Practice and Criticism Begins to Fade"

Fiction, Sense

The previous pages have tried to demonstrate that the fragment in "Avoid the Centre" behaves in what seems a capricious manner from a historical perspective as it wears several hats. Remainder or leftover, pieced together or torn apart, the variety of the fragment and its inherent function points also to itself: it becomes fragmentary. In the constellation of the fragmentary artists' text fiction plays a significant role. It is my thesis that fiction traverses the artists' writing as an operative force conditioning the fragmentary writing defined as an endless becoming. However, the question remains as to how fiction does this, that is, how it functions within the framework of the artists' text.

Historically the status of fiction has been disputed. While Aristotle's *Poetics* deemed fiction constitutive of a work, structuralist linguist Roman Jakobson gave what he termed *literariness* a more formal definition. For Aristotle "the poet or 'maker' should be the maker of plots rather than of verses; since he is a poet because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions." (1451b27) And "even when a treatise on medicine or natural science is brought out in verse, the name of the poet is by custom given to the author." This is a mistake, however, according to Aristotle, since "Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common but the metre, so that it would be right to call the one poet, the other physicist rather than poet." (1447b17) Jakobson by contrast continues to stress the "palpability of signs" as a constructive principle of literariness, literariness then being defined in 1973 as the transformation of the word (*parole*) into a poetical work, and the system of procedures that effectuates that transformation."[199] Earlier already answering the question: "What makes a verbal message a work of art?" Jakobson states that what is diminished in a word as work of art is its communicative function, poetics rather dealing with the verbal structure: "The poetic function is not the sole function of verbal art but only its dominant, determining function, whereas in other verbal activities it acts as subsidiary, accessory constituent".[200] Equating the poetic function with structural transformation, fiction is excluded from its once constitutive role of the literary domain. This is not to say that no attempts have been made to lessen the dichotomy between fictional content and poetic form since. Witness literary theorist and structuralist thinker Gérard Genette's introduction of a literature of diction, that literature "that imposes itself essentially through its formal characteristics . . . without excluding amalgams and blends".[201] Form should then be understood in its broad sense, including its capacities for exemplification, leading Genette to substitute the too restrictive adjective *formal* for *rhematic*. In Genette's formulation poetry is absorbed by fiction, the former being constitutive of literariness in diction. He also suggests making room for a conditionalist literariness, "a literariness that stems neither from fictional content nor from poetic form," but which is based on an "aesthetic recuperation" of works of language that escape and outlive their practical function (didactic, juridical, or polemical, for example). The next chapter will return to the normativity of Genette's claims exempting certain "works of verbal art" that define literariness nevertheless. Genette, like Aristotle, uses a definition of fiction as mimesis, that is, of language as a vehicle of "representation, or rather of the *simulation* of imaginary actions and events. . . . Language is creative when it places itself at the service of fiction" subsequently proposing "translating *mimesis* as *fiction*".[202]

Within the framework of my research into the status and operative force of the artists' text, and fiction's role in this, it is not only fiction as an explicitly verbal art that needs to be redefined, but also its position as a form of representation, or "*simulation* of imaginary actions and events." Whereas Aristotle contrasted the poet with the historian, Genette seems rather to rely on Plato's definition of the poet as an imitator, a maker of phantoms, who "understands nothing of what *is* but rather of what looks like it *is*" (601b). For Plato in Book X of *The Republic*, as for Genette, the work of verbal art is opposed to philosophical discourse, the former being twice removed from the real. It is precisely the polarity between knowledge and fiction, as between verbal and visual art, that is challenged in the artists' text.

In the artists' writing, García's *The Inadequate* in particular, fiction is utilized as a liaison between fragments that involve the visual. Thus the appendix of García's essay "Avoid the Centre" reads: "Joyce explained to me that the bread a child dreams of eating can't be the same as the bread he eats when he's awake; the child can't transfer all the qualities of the bread to the dream. Therefore, the bread in the dream wouldn't be made of everyday flour but rather of 'flower', a word that would take away certain qualities of the bread and give it others better suited to a dream. Italo Svevo, *Ulysse est né à Trieste*. Bordeaux, Finitude, 2003, p. 78" (MM2; d35).

Syntagmatically following the regulated and regulating order of language, the appendix seems far removed from the essay on a paradigmatic level. The references to Joyce and Svevo seem awkward. Joyce only returns in the essay following García's writing, "Thought disorder in normal individuals," by neurolinguists Peter McKenna and Tomasiona Oh. But the allusion is also testified to by the sequence of images, video stills, divided from García's writing by some fifty pages. The stills seem to disclose how fiction proceeds in the artists' text. Moving images transposed into stills reconfigure the flux of the source video. The still is a quotation. The sequence images do not correspond with the text, stressing the incompatibility of worlds: the stills feed off the video without being the video. Discordance between worlds is underlined by the disjunction of the consecutive stills, which, as a series need to be read paradigmatically. Or in the words of Barthes on reading, the still "scorns logical time (which is only an operational time)," by the instituting of "a reading that is at once instantaneous and vertical".[203] Fascinated by Eisenstein's stills, Barthes formulates three levels of reading them: an informational level of communication; a symbolic level of signification; and what he calls a third meaning, "evident, erratic, obstinate," compelling an interrogative reading. Hesitant as to how to distinguish between the second and third meanings, Barthes terms the second as the obvious meaning, while "obtuse" characterizes the third—the latter applies specifically to *The Inadequate*:

> the obtuse meaning appears to extend outside culture, knowledge, information; analytically, it has something derisory about it: opening out into the infinity of language, it can come through as limited in the eyes of analytic reason; it belongs to the family of pun, buffoon, useless expenditure. Indifferent to moral or aesthetic categories (the trivial, the futile, the false, the pastiche), it is on the side of the carnival.[204]

fig 2.11
Dora García, *The Deviant Majority. From Basaglia to Brazil*, 2010. HD Video, 34', video still.

Less than the gesturing and moving people and bodies in the first Cahier's stills—expressive, "distorted" faces, gaping and screaming mouths, limbs pointing to nowhere, questioning eyes, blinking eyes or eyes closed—the description signals what happens in the stills of the second Cahier. The first still of Cahier #2 pictures an open book on a table; it is followed by a portrayal of the book cover (the same?) reading "Svevo;" the third image confronts the reader with the gravestone of one Elio Schmitz. As a series the images suggest a curious overlap of worlds: actual and fictional, conscious and unconscious, present and absent, otherworldly realms. This overlap is emphasized, or rather worlds are falsified the moment one knows that the actual name of the Italian author Italo Svevo, writer of *The Confession's of Zeno* or *Zeno's Conscience* [*La Conscienza di Zeno*] (1923) is Aron Ettore Schmitz. The dates on the picture's tombstone do not correspond with those of the life of Schmitz, aka Svevo, however. Conscience is troubled, as is knowledge.[205]

The Inadequate realizes worlds exposing *significances* (as different from significations, Barthes's second meaning) terms cannot cover. The stills demystify illusions through images, turned inside out (the stills). Or, in the words of Barthes again: "The still offers us the *inside* of the fragment." He quotes Eisenstein envisaging the possibilities of audio-visual montage explaining his statement: "the basic centre of gravity … is transferred to inside the fragment, into the elements included in the image itself. *And the centre of gravity is no longer the element 'between shots'—the shock—but the element 'inside the shot'—the accentuation within the fragment* …" [emphasis in original].[206]

fig 2.12
Dora García, *The Inadequate*, 2011. HD video, 40', video still.

In relation to *The Inadequate* Barthes's third meaning could be called fiction. The artists' writing deploys an aversion to complete understanding, to impose meaning, insisting on the "inability [of filmmaker Jack Smith] to conform, the inability to *accept acceptance*" [emphasis in original] (MM1, 201–213). *The Inadequate* is "the determination, *in an extremely hostile environment*, to reveal the violent fragility of everything we regard as adequate" [emphasis in original] (MM2; d34). Fiction here is a performative and subversive act located in the *between*: between verbal and visual, between communication and signification *inside* the text. It defines its own arena using textual techniques without defining them as such in a prescriptive and normative way. Fiction as a strategy thus both utilizes and exudes the methodological field of the text Barthes articulated, distinguishing it from the work held in the hand,[207] since in *The Inadequate* matter *participates*.

The artists' text is a process of demonstration that speaks according to certain rules. But those "rules" are not the strictly textual Barthesian ones. Breaking and generating boundaries within the sign (flour/flower), be they onorous, or "silent" (the blanks as distances separating the fragments composing the text) fiction rather defines the amalgamation *The Inadequate*. Fiction opens up the possibility of alternative situations to define the rhythm of the text, transforming its very constitution. Writing matter, the visual partakes in this onto-epistemological realm, like the life of Walser sharing in his (its) writing. Endlessly divided from within and extended, amplified through exterior connections, the artists' text causes sense to be dispersed: as a referent *Joyce* is worked *with*. Coming to terms with *Joyce* in the process of reading the *The Inadequate*, the referent transgresses the borders of the particular text "Avoid the Centre."

fig 2.13
Ugo Guarino, "Lobotomia", *The Inadequate*, 2011. Illustration.

Although some features, like the cartoonlike drawings opening and closing the two Cahiers, point in this direction, the dispersal of sense in *The Inadequate* does not induce a reassembling of it. The formless isn't contained (and constrained) by form, as Bois and Krauss assert. Like the still, dissociated from filmic or literary technical constraints, thus engendering the "indescribable" in, of, and through the fragment, *The Inadequate* pertains to the diffracted and heterogeneous by its very decomposition. Let's look into what nevertheless presents itself as the artists' text's metafictional design, or the so-called frame that nests a representation: the line drawings encapsulating the Cahiers that constitute the artists' text. How is their relationship with the fragmentary composed? Drawn in swift black lines on a white surface, the images are comic and popular in tone. A comment in title case is inserted in each of them. Visual markers, they seem to stand off from the writings. Framing the assemblage of texts and controlling them. Drawings such as *Lobotomia*, showing a surgeon's big nose grubbing for mental illnesses in a cleft head, seem to illustrate the articles.

Seen the other way around, the drawings indicate the senses in which the plurality of artists' writings can be read. Against the background of the above citation ("Joyce explained to me"), the drawings articulating a clear beginning and end of the artists' text recall the cyclical structure of *Finnegans Wake*: a restriction is imposed on *The Inadequate*'s eclectic and open work, a design circumscribing the chaos. *Finnegans Wake*'s structure does not impart sense, promulgating triumph. Decomposing words, leveling registers, suppressing reference points, it decries sense and the ability of language to catch "it." It is this understanding of sense *The Inadequate* underscores.

Fiction paradoxically formulates, speculatively strives for what cannot be named, or for the impossibility to name; it constitutes a problem for a metafictional comprehension. Since in order for metafiction to "work" a clear separation is needed between representation and frame. This clear demarcation is frustrated in *The Inadequate*. The controlling mechanism of the frame enables the distinction between one tale and another, between frame and the breaking of it, from a metafictional point of view. It ensures the oppositional tension central to metafiction.[208] This division unobserved, makes the text "unreadable," according to Robert Scholes, reaching the limits of metafiction.[209]

One of the works Scholes judges unreadable is Andy Warhol's *a: a novel* (1968). And Scholes is not the only one to denounce it as illegible. A transcription of a 24-hour taped conversation, its 415 unedited pages include every "uhm" and "oh," resulting in a stream of language that is

spoken and explicitly not written in the form of a conversation. Taken from ordinary small talk, *a: a novel* is a fragment of life, including accidental happenings and boring repetitions. This fragment is not a part designating a whole, but a fractured shard, which refuses to dissimulate its edges and shows its cuts. Says Liz Kotz discussing Warhol's work, the novel is fully legible within the "field we still call visual art" due to its procedures, like the selection of ready-made material or the use of indexical procedures of inscription. Kotz clearly upholds the distinction between the literary field and the field of visual art, underlining that "such procedures [Warhol's in *a: a novel*] remain almost completely unintelligible and unreadable within the field of literature or writing".[210] She continues to describe the latter as "conservative" and "routinely recycling aesthetic interventions, even the clichés of twentieth-century literary modernism." Kotz, however, does not take into account the experimental artists' magazines assembling art named conceptual including poetry of the period, such as *0 to 9* (1967–1969)—a point to which the final chapter returns. Her remark makes clear that the dual relation to language at the time as both matter and not matter continues to argue from a disciplinary rigorous understanding of Conceptual Art: what happens in Warhol's writing is understood against the background of *either* literature *or* prevalent practices and conceptions of art in a visual field. Unlike contemporary writing, visual artists' work, the texts of the 1960s seem to have been developed in secluded and untainted realms.

In relation to García's *The Inadequate* it is important to note that its aim is not necessarily illegibility. It underscores the possible unreadability or lack of unified sense. Fragmentation is used as a strategy for the effect to assert itself. Pointing at itself, fragmentation connotes unreadability. Unreadability does not mean fiction, however. Returning to the question of how fiction functions in the artists' text, it can be noted that it is not predicated on a Barthesian conception of textuality severed from the real. Fiction takes on form in the artists' writing generating unexpected connections: between image and text, between writings that are dispersed inside the artists' text. Fiction is materialized in *The Inadequate* taking the consequences of its employment of Joyce, Walser, Basaglia, and Tasso as referents, instead of references: that is, it utilizes them as referents in a non-hierarchical manner so that the text is written "with" them, acknowledging that language *materially writes*. Simultaneously demonstrating that relationships can be dreamed (flour/flower), imagined (Walser's house and its visitor), falsely relied upon and believed (Schmitz/Svevo), the artists' text brackets its materialization, if paradoxically. Fiction is made operative in the often abrupt and surprising, unpredictable connections inaugurated in *The Inadequate*, *trait d'unions* challenged time and again not only through the coalescence of articles

defining the artists' writing, but also due to the reader handling the book. The artists' text's understanding of fiction as concerning and concerned with matter, as initiated by the author and at the same time by cultural, social, and technical situations, clearly opposes Genette's (and Plato's) definition of fiction as simulation. Or rather, *The Inadequate* takes the consequences of fiction as simulation treating the referents as *revenants*, as Bourriaud formulates not fiction, but the fictional. The past is a collection of specters, ghosts returning in a plurality of often delirious forms, according to Bourriaud. Dealing with them, art reshapes what it encounters, he explains. The argument seems to follow Warburg's conception of the image unveiling a culture's spiritual tensions. For Bourriaud the procedure of integrating the real defines the fictional, as opposed to the fictive, the latter then being contrasted with reality. However, while Warburg saw the image as a trace and an organ of social memory, it being intricately linked with the human subject who defines herself in the face of the image (an the interval it hides), Bourriaud continues to take his distance from life understanding fiction precisely as "the current form of the modernist claim of autonomy." And, he adds, fiction represents "the will to not depend on a social context and, as a consequence, the power (among other things) to generate forms in a constructed space and time".[211]

In *The Inadequate* fiction is grounded in and actively reflects (on) the social, conversely. The avalanche of voices in which the liaisons through fiction results is traversed not only by the material (the book, the referents) and the technical (textual strategies, the binding), but by the social. This is where the agency of fiction can be found. Unable to reduce the artists' text to a single instance or individual, due to what I termed the encounters, the social construction is redefined in terms of what Deleuze and Guattari called an assemblage of enunciation, it not speaking "of" things, but speaking "*on the same level as* states of things and states of content" [emphasis in original].[212] The fragment is fractured from within in this manner. Or as Deleuze and Guattari once again formulated it studying Kafka's work as a form of minor literature: "The most individual enunciation is a particular case of collective enunciation."[213]

"To be a sort of stranger within his [Kafka's] own language"—the description suits the artists' text as well, and García's *The Inadequate* especially.[214] I am not the first to approach artists' writing inferring fiction as a minor form of writing.[215] The Inadequate invents and addresses a community within the given discourse of art taking a radical stance with respect to the institution of art. Or as García notes: "Radical psychiatry, radical politics, radical art: rage against the institution. But also… an uncompromising idea of truth" (MM1, 14; d14); and "the truth

about art might sound like: *radical artists profoundly mistrust the ideology of art*" [emphasis in original] (MM1, 19; d19). The multiplicity of voices of which this community is composed is its quasi-evident outcome, the conspicuous condition for its radicality.

Radicality, by Way of Conclusion

A recurring issue pertains to the radicality of the artists' writing: what does it enhance? This is a question lingering in the background of current research. Radical, but in relation to what? Voiced within this same institution of art it denounces, one could argue the radicality of García's writing is attenuated. From a metafictional perspective, a radical move means a break with existing forms and traditions. A veritable *radical* artists' writing would turn a blind eye to every response and contribution to existing (literary) forms.[216] Or, to abstract the proposition, "true" metafiction responds to the continuance of literary forms that are no longer adequate vehicles for the mediation of (social) experience. Too extreme or radical experiments in fiction would not only be unable to meet a present (literary) situation, thus taking the chance of reaching the "limits of metafiction" and to remain misunderstood.[217] Radical as the artists' writing claims to be, if it really were that radical it would also all but "convert … the negative values of outworn literary conventions into the basis of a potentially constructive social criticism". It would effectuate a "rupture aiming at existential change" that possibly is "a-signifying" instead of constructive, in other words. If it is believed that it aims toward constructive changes, García's *The Inadequate* can rather be characterized as gentle.[219] Its agency grounded in fiction, the artists' writing seems to oppose such a reading; fiction read as inhering the real as the world *with which* it writes counters a comprehension of the artists' text as gentle. If one wants to understand *The Inadequate* as radical, this is divulged in its dynamics, its oscillation between different entities (art, politics, psychiatry) with no determinate relation that is constructive of the text.[220]

In *The Inadequate* fiction has one foot in the real, while it forges liaisons using systems that already exist, be they art historical or social, literary, political, or psychiatric. Traversing these different domains and analyzing them as an ensemble, what Guattari called a meta-modelization, is formed and formulated. An instrument is generated—never rigid, varying according to a given problem or case—enabling the decoding of systems from a diversity of domains of which the collective is composed.[221] This is what fiction is, negotiates, and thus enables. If fiction is in good health, as García suggests, it is because it reorganizes systems apparently experienced as constraints.

3

"I." Or *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S.* by Josef Strau

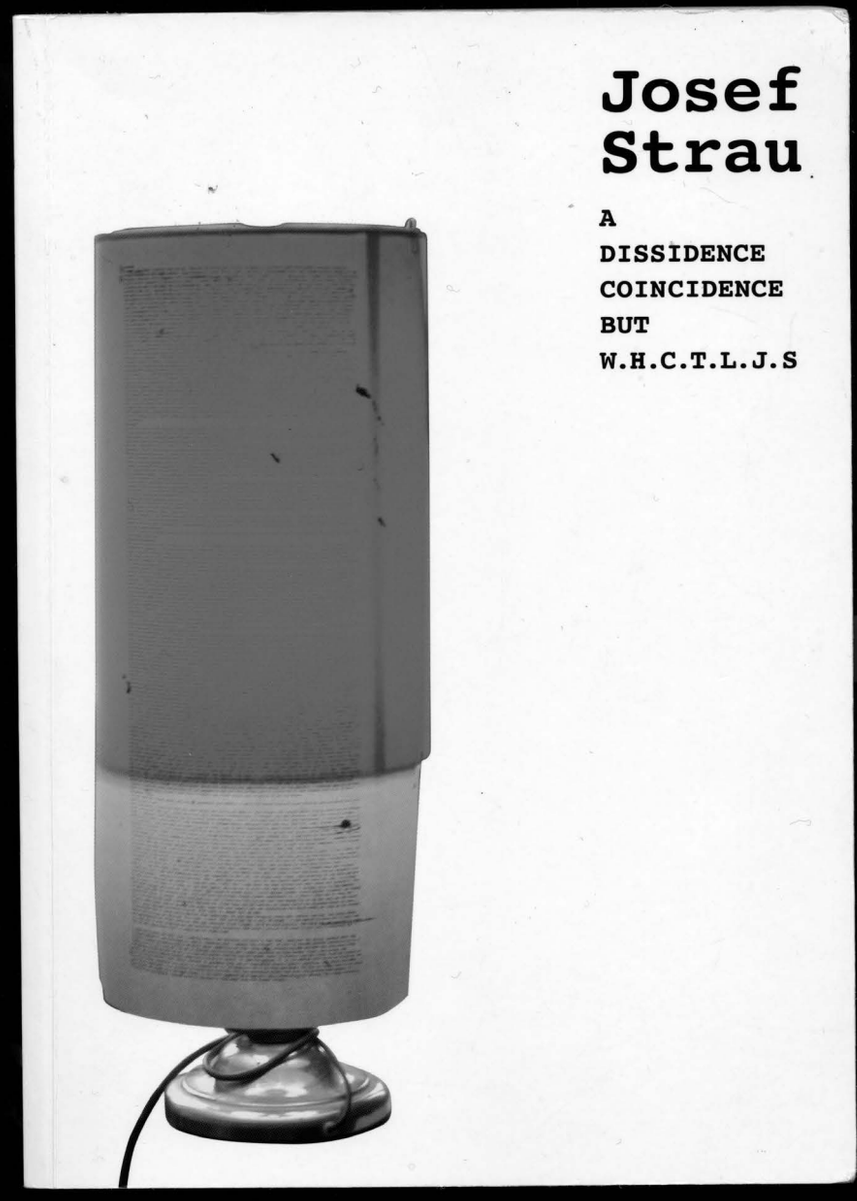

fig 3.1
Josef Strau, *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S.*, 2008. Cover.

Introduction

The writing can only be read if you turn the book upside down. The text is a calligram, its layout visually expressing the content of its sentences. In "the tabernacle on rosa-luxemburg-platz" Josef Strau discusses the tradition of the tabernacle and its many social, cultural, and historical references. The collective undertaking of building a tabernacle is underscored, its quick organization as a place for meeting.[222] Due to the shelter's practical function, the tabernacle is adverse to aesthetic considerations, "or even worse [to] considerations of taste." The tabernacle rather formulates "iconoclast theoretical implications," a connotation winked at by the calligrammatic text, its formal layout seemingly contradicting the iconoclast tendencies the tabernacle might articulate. Strau conveys his own involvement with the nomadic hut or non-building, both space and not space. Yet the collaboration required to manufacture the tabernacle, at once exploring alternative social situations and structures, is paradoxically communicated through the singular subject "I".

The tabernacle text is not unique in its use of the "I", the first person singular being common to artists' writings and contemporary autobiographical work in general. But if Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S.* in which the above story figures appears to be a catalogue with multiple authors, all texts are by Strau. Even the interview that opens the book simulates that it is with himself. It is made to read not like a "secondhand experience," a report on an exhibition, nor does it "bastardize or distort" an art that depends on its physical presence to be appreciated. *A Dissidence Coincidence* is "primary information" or rather, primary matter.[223]

The preceding chapter studied the form *of*, *in*, and *through* the artists' writing, focusing on Dora García's *The Inadequate* for its fragmentary form. I adopted the self-reflexive lens of metafiction, as it allows for the creation of a context (the words on the page) and a text (that which is communicated through those words), to examine how this form is a literature that becomes manifest to itself and thereby exposes a relationship between fragmentation and consciousness. German Romanticism endows the fragmentary form with urgency, naming it not ruin but seed. The fragment both enabled and performed auto-production that did not only concern the production of the text, but also pointed to the formation of the subject: the infinite capacity of the creating, poetic "I". *The Inadequate* is an assemblage in which "there is no individual enunciation. There is not even a subject of enunciation".[224] García is all but absent in the artists' writing, however, her presence simultaneously concealed and revealed. The artists' text with its multiplicity of voices has author play architect, organizing the text-as-constellation and project of

which it formed part. This interlacing of ideas, intellectual impudence, and fragmentary performance can be found in Romanticism as in Surrealism. Guy Debord took Surrealist André Breton as an example when leading the Situationist Internationale, sharing a "doctrine of *Geselligkeit*" as a means to unify the members of their respective collectives, as Fredric Jameson stresses.[225] A myth of communion does not contradict the figure of the isolated hero as the one who makes the community commune.

The question from this last chapter to be addressed in the current one is then how this strange, chameleonic auctorial presence relates to what seems like a more visible author's role in the artists' text. Strau's name dominates *A Dissidence Coincidence* and the writing is composed from the perspective "I". So how does the obstinate performance of the "I" function in the artists' text? Does it correlate with the author's position? Can it be conceived otherwise? Do the subject and the question of the subject resurface in *A Dissidence Coincidence*? The current chapter therefore taps into what was neglected in the last: the question of the subject, of subjectification.

I, the Author Contested

Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence* is chosen as case study given the prominent position taken by the author and his being cast in the first person singular. Strau's work in general is determined by the use of language and text. Use of the "I" in artists' writings is often controversial (and not only in artists' texts) given it insinuates that a reading of the work can only be realized through a "purely" auctorial point of view, contradicting the collective venture of the writing as with *The Inadequate*. The first person singular suggests that the reader is confronted with a genuine account, the "I" inviting the reader to associate the speaker or narrator with the author. It is precisely the psychology of production vis-à-vis the "objective" aesthetic judgment of the work and its communication that is discussed in Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence*. The "I" surges forth in the artists' text, Conceptual Art's and post-structuralism's advocacy of the neuter notwithstanding, regardless of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's understanding of the book as an assemblage that "as such is unattributable".[226]

The (re)appearance of the "I" "after" its ominous and multiple deaths, calls for inquiry into its guises and functioning in the artists' text that seems to reevaluate what literary theorist W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and philosopher of art M. C. Beardsley write of the intentional fallacy as the

"*fault* of writing the personal as if it were poetic" [emphasis added].[227] But the artists' writing also reconsiders structuralist linguist Emile Benveniste's statement that the "I" refers to the instance of discourse, wherein subjectivity is inherent in the very use of language. Subjectivity is the capacity of the speaker to posit herself as a subject through language. "'Ego' is the one who *says* 'ego.' That is where we see the foundation of 'subjectivity,' which is determined by the linguistic status of 'person'" (emphasis in original). Like indicators of *deixis* (this, here, now), personal pronouns do not refer to a concept nor to an individual.[228]

This reexamination of the "I" hovering between the neutral linguistic given as formulated by Benveniste and romantic manifestation of expression, is necessary, especially once the artists' writing is approached from an epistemological point of view. Part and parcel of artistic research participating in an increasingly discursive field, is the delineation of the potential and pitfalls of the author in the artists' text. This need to investigate the author anew, after it has been neutralized (declared dead even) by structuralist conceptions like Benveniste's, is corroborated by responses to recurring uses of fiction in artists' texts. Thus whereas curator Brian Wallis hails the use of fiction as a means of a singular resistance against reigning orders and an access to and acquisition of new forms of knowledge,[229] art historian Katherine Stiles wonders what it means to fictionalize the artists' thoughts. What does it mean "to deny the authenticity of the artist as subject of his or her own discourse," she asks, the intentional fallacy notwithstanding. Stiles continues: what does it mean to flatten out the difference between a text's linearity, its narrative, its argumentative structure, and the synchronicity of its pictorial representation? "When," she argues, "theory by artists becomes art, emotion is read to triumph over reason and knowledge".[230] That an argument can be built in a non-linear fashion as well has been conveniently forgotten here; that theory and fiction function as all but opposing realms as well. And since when can art be equated with emotion? Other relations between image and text, "emotion" and "reason and knowledge" can be considered. The preceding chapters tried to demonstrate as much through the writings of Keren Cytter and Dora García. Reconsidering the role of the author in Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence*, I seek to perceive the alliances forged between the artists' writing and the writer.

Researching the author's functioning in the artists' text I read Strau's work against the autobiography, investigating the latter's contradistinction to autofiction. Comparing *A Dissidence Coincidence* to autobiography and autofiction illuminates questions about the author and/as subject and individual regarding subjectification and individuation, self (*soi*) or selves, and the "I" in the artists' text. The heated debate between autobiography and autofiction is interesting for its sharpening of an understanding of fiction as seeping through the artists' text and the increasingly confusing effects of this, as the Stiles/Wallis discussion underscores.

Autobiography must be understood not as a finite product in *A Dissidence Coincidence*, but as a process. Many studies have been dedicated to what, due to the processual character of the artists' writing, can best be termed the autobiographical. What seems of importance to me regarding the artists' text, Strau's in particular, is that the autobiographical is: 1) a narrative unfolding from the now of the exhibition (and the construction thereof) toward the past and the future comprehending time as multilayered; and 2) a retrospective account and constructive and communicative report simultaneously that links the psychical subject composing the work to the social individual relating "it" to a group, if one wants to hold on to the distinction between the psychology of production of a work and its analytical so-called objective interpretation made by Wimsatt and Beardsley;[231] the processes of construction and evaluation are all but strictly divided in the artists' text, let alone in opposition to each other; 3) in the artists' writing, the autobiographical is an ongoing process, unfinished; and 4) the autobiographical is transdisciplinary in character. For analytical purposes my typologies of the artists' text-as-autobiography, or rather, the artists' writing as autobiographical, serve as entries into this investigation, overlapping and repeating themselves. But before getting into my research, I offer a brief description of Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence*.

A Dissidence Coincidence

At first glance *A Dissidence Coincidence* is a traditional monograph. While it is published on the occasion of an exhibition, the colophon reveals it also presents works from 2006 and 2007 exhibitions. Images of the artist's visual work are interspersed with texts. The first is presented as an ordinary interview, typically introducing the artist. But there is more to both this interview and *A Dissidence Coincidence* as a whole. Since contrary to a conventional interview in a catalogue (it even has a catalogue number) it is masked as, or understood as, a self-interview. The other texts are all forms of life writing,[232] that on closer inspection are excerpts resembling diary entries juxtaposed with psychoanalytical exercises, personal notes, and a part-historical part-autobiographical essay pivoting around questions of identity. Along with these forms of life writing, the images are not "regular" representations: they are cutouts from photographic representations of Strau's sculptural installations of

lamps; representations of representations (of representations), the lamps are flattened out. Rather than mimicking the three-dimensional stature of the sculptures, the pasted in pictures tend to become "textual" in this way.[233] And vice versa: the aforementioned essay presented as a calligram, for instance, the psychoanalytical performances experimenting with fonts, personal notes remaining unedited, inserting typos and orthographical errors. This diminished distance between text and image is underlined by the images' use of the borders of the book: paper edges cut off parts of the depicted sculptures, or the amputated lamp installations (cords dangling off the pages, switches divided in two) suggest they continue on the next page, or that lights might be turned on and off at will, beyond the limits of the physical book.

fig 3.2
Josef Strau, *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S.,* 2008. Lamp installations.

A Dissidence Coincidence can thus be understood as a personal journal, a scrapbook, an object to be used, unpaginated. The roughly cut-and-pasted photographs of the sculptures are reminiscent of cherished pictures collected in a diary. And if a general narrative can be distinguished in the otherwise fragmented text, it is one of soliloquies with the monologue as its subject, flows of thoughts and/as material,

ruminations on the construction of the exhibition (Strau's) and its consequences as the author experiences them. *A Dissidence Coincidence* performatively accounts for and is constitutive of the exhibition. As such, it is an autobiographical work, simultaneously reflecting on the autobiographical and its constructive tools, that is, the author or "I", writing and language, life.

Time, or from Now to Past and Future

At the time of the installation of the exhibition—Strau calls it a period of preparation and research—four books lie on the author's living room table. Page one of the book that precedes the interview explains: "The Dissident: A Novel by Nell Freudenberger; The Bible; Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth (Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954–1984, Vol. 1) by Michel Foucault; Die Krankheit zum Tode by Søren Kierkegaard (written under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus)." Together the titles make up the heading of the first text of the volume, "The Dissident Bible of Ethics, Die Krankheit zum Tode—An Interview." The conspicuous montage within the title correlates with the build-up of the exhibition and the interview itself, for which it serves as caption. It also blends in with the construction of the "I", or the realization that the "I" is multiple and constructed, as Strau presents it in *A Dissidence Coincidence*.

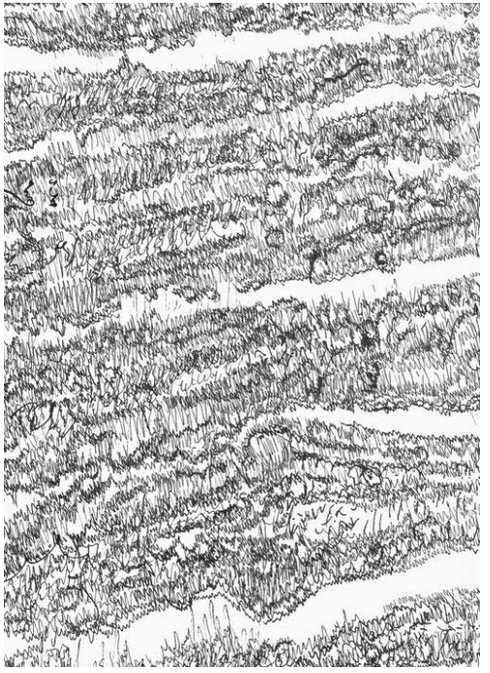

fig 3.3
Henri Michaux, *Dessin Mescalinien*, 1956. Drawing

The dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee is composed of questions and answers taken from a recorded interview, an e-mail exchange, and a discussion via SMS with curator Jacob Fabricius. The introductory lines warn the reader that the possibly confused text in which the edit results represents the author's way of talking and thinking, his stream of consciousness. In

the conversation Strau's discovery of the Surrealists' *écriture automatique* is referred to as a source of inspiration, next to the importance for Strau of poet Henri Michaux known for his psychedelic writings and sketches in which words and their (hand)writing form an insoluble whole.

These influences are mentioned alongside Strau's "failed" attempts to write a substantial theoretical text, efforts resulting in what looks like the record of an oral piece: "So I decided to do something else: I just write anything down, I write down what happens to me that day, what happened yesterday… So I started writing down the story that I was at a party the day before, and that I looked into a mirror and suddenly saw a very different face of myself." Reflecting on this, he continues in the interview: "So from that moment on I thought, okay this is a really strange phenomenon actually: What is this person who writes the text? Who is that? Who is able to write that? I mean, it's definitely somehow me and myself, but actually it is not …"

This episode becomes crucial in exploring other methods of text production, reminiscent of the Surrealists and Michaux: "automatic voices or inner voices of these almost schizophrenic situations"; the "sphere of theological writing"; "this 'speaking-tongue'—tradition [in which] the writer is only a messenger." Strau reads (Kafka, Kierkegaard), does research, and tests different forms of writing, literally in exploring handwriting and the movements of graphic lines, comparable to Michaux's *écriture automatique*; or in using Hebrew letters. His interest in forms of writing, as both matter and not matter, are motivated aesthetically, politically, and biographically. In the case of the Hebrew letters, for instance, Strau explains his aesthetic preference for the Hebrew snail-like *Lamed* over what he refers to as "the Modernist cold L." From a political point of view, the rationality of the Latin letters reminds the writer of the Roman Empire, and stories "which explain extreme evil power structures the society produced, which as well produced these most successful letter systems." The actual reason for his choice of Hebrew, however, results from what Roland Barthes would call the "biosphere".[234] It "was born … during the day of attending my father's funeral," when his older sisters told Strau that his father had learned Hebrew at a young age. The Hebrew letters became "a kind of after-image of my father's story." Both the visual letters and the story of the father they allude to are appropriated and transformed: "at home in Berlin just then Bernadette decided to start making serious steps to learn the German language," leading to the conclusion "to make parallel efforts to learn 'my' language soon" [emphasis in original].

The construction of the exhibition coincides with a growing understanding of the character of the "I" as a composite figure. The historical fuses with the biographical and artistic (the arrangement of the exhibition), alternating between an understanding of language as both *langue* and *parole*, all the while seeing the coming-of-age of the "I" carry on in parallel to the show's build-up. This genesis of the "I" is intimately linked with its social function, testified to by the form of the interview, in which Strau's interlocutor acts as the author's necessary other, which I discuss later. The "I" is a social individual, but also sees "its" individuality radicalized in becoming multiple in the artists' text.

The interview continues focusing on the title of the exhibition: the plurality of motivations behind the employment of languages and textual strategies in the exhibition is grounded in the coincidence: "a mysterious starting point." The coincidence is a method "to avoid the classic authorship." Strau explains, referring to the title of the book, *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S.*: "It doesn't mean, that it cannot be autobiographical, but I want somehow the reality which my works refer to, doesn't not come from me, but from the outside by coincidence." The "I" isn't discarded, but presented as if it were suffused with what surrounds it, be it historical material, sculptural (from language to lamps), or the fleeting normalcy of daily life. What is striking, however, in reading and rereading the aforementioned extract of the interview is that the "I" as a person seems to disappear. Impossible to pinpoint "I" as a spatiotemporal being, to delineate its human form to which consciousness and agency can be ascribed, and attach a meaning to it.[235] The "I" metamorphosizes in the exhibition or said reality, contaminated by the situation in which it finds itself. A hybrid, the "I" changes as the story progresses.

Momentarily positing the "I" as hybrid, a reading of *A Dissidence Coincidence* as autobiographical becomes problematic. In relation to the artists' text the autobiographical has to be understood as a process, from the now of the exhibition to the past, linking it to the future in a non-linear fashion; it is a retrospective chronicle, but also a constructive and communicative tale; as a process it is ongoing; the artists' text as autobiographical is transdisciplinary; it concerns writing of and as life, its constellation of moments and figures.

And yet, as a reader of *A Dissidence Coincidence* I am confronted with the writing as a writing. The question thus remains how this "I" as hybrid can (also) be textually constituted (Ricoeur) or produced (Foucault). For Foucault reflecting on the relationship between subjectivity and truth in "The Ethics as a Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," this what we now conceive as a multiplicity of the self in the artists' text fits with

what he termed care of oneself, expressed in "the arts of oneself" in the Greco-Roman culture of the first two centuries of the empire. Writing is then understood as an ascetic practice, an "exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being".[236] *Askesis* leading to the "fashioning of accepted discourses, recognized as true, into rational principles of action," writing as an element of self-training takes on an ethopoietic function: "Self Writing" argues it is an "agent of the transformation of truth into *ethos*," into that which has to be thought.[237] Perceived in this manner, taking care of oneself does not solely do away with the governing principle and its danger of dominating others, thinking of oneself here also implies that one thinks of others.[238] Referring to Greco-Roman thought, Foucault argues that the care of the self cannot tend toward an exaggerated form of self-love that neglects others or abuses one's power over others. Encountering the limits of life and/as society's coercive power formation(s), the other enables a process of recognition and formation of the self (ethopoiesis). Within the context of the construction of the "I" and/as text in the artists' work, it is important to note that the writing of self does not necessarily reject life nor is it a solipsistic activity. Or in the words of Deleuze commenting on the theme of the double as an interiorization of the outside, figuring in the later writings of Foucault: "It is not the emanation of an 'I', but something that places in immanence an always other or a Non-self".[239]

Further spelling out the (partly) textual construction of the "I" it is important to recognize the narrative, that mingling of consequence and consecution. The interview as a form seems to dismiss or at least endanger this idea, as does the appropriation of psychoanalytical discourse later in the book—or the poetic form of the calligram, for that matter. Without fully endorsing his hermeneutic approach, philosopher Paul Ricoeur's study of narrative identity might be fruitful in attempting to grasp the constitution of "I" or self (selves) in, through, or as text in Strau's writing. It also opens up an understanding of the function of time in the artists' work.

For Ricoeur, the constitution of narrative identity is closely linked to a theory of action: "Action is that aspect of human doing that calls for narration. And it is the function of narration, in its turn, to determine the 'who of action'".[240] Picking up on the notion formulated by John Locke in the seventeenth century of a dynamic identity and the temporal dimension of the self as well as of actions, Ricoeur states that while actions are projected onto characters in a narrative, it is the notion of emplotment (i.e., the construction of a plot) that produces a dialectics of a person's character as self (*ipse*, "one and the same" or selfhood, *ipséité*)

and same (in the sense of identical, or *idem*, sameness or *mêmeté*). The context for these two senses of identity, permanence in time argues that narration functions as a middle ground between action as descriptive and prescriptive.[241] Further, the "interconnection of events in emplotment allows us to integrate with permanence in time what seems to be its contrary in the domain of sameness-identity, namely diversity, variability, discontinuity, instability." This correlation between action and character functions as a "*poetic reply* provided by the notion of narrative identity to the aporias of ascription".[242] It also forms a transition between the ascription of identity to an agent who has the capacity to act and the imputation of identity to an agent who has the obligation to act (Ricoeur's theory of action and his ethical theory).

In *A Dissidence Coincidence*, the appropriation of other narratives, such as biblical ones, enables examination of the very possibility (or the necessity) of the convergence of lives, actions, and practices for the author/narrator initiating these narratives: "real experience obviously [is] a matter of lesser interest, as long as it does not become part of some work or a matter of discussing opinions." In Ricoeur's terminology, Strau's story would function as poetic reply to a lived and living constellation of practices, moments, figures, and forces, and their immanent question: "Who acts?" The overlap, possible relocation of fate awaiting Strau is not taken into account in Ricoeur's textual approach, however, the text being understood as separate and enclosed, having its horizon within itself. Ricoeur proposes an interconnectedness of events in narrative that dispel the variability of sameness-identity. In *A Dissidence Coincidence* different temporalities are combined: alluding to memories and dreams, Strau writes "and I dreamt 'there are many first times, when someone is in a difficult period,'" linking them to his uncle and father, to Schnitzler and Kierkegaard, his own childhood and his life. These experiences of time collide and diverge in the author's varied roles. He becomes a character in which history has contracted, redeployed through narrative. Strau is an author quasi-indistinguishable from the narrator and protagonist of the text.

In *A Dissidence Coincidence*, otherness isn't necessarily the negative other of selfhood, nor is sameness selfhood's dialectic counterpart, as Ricoeur holds.[243] No effort is made to assert a self-identical "I", uninterrupted by a discontinuous time (e.g., changes in mood, or other developments). The artists' text doesn't reestablish the much criticized sovereign subject in that sense. Rather, the narratological instance of the author is strategically used in order to scrutinize its limits and implications for the constitution of "the" author, negating its possibility as being complete. Investigating the conditions that allow the author to produce and be produced, an understanding of the author moves swiftly between a Ricoeurian

hermeneutic view on narrative's role in the constitution of the author and a Foucauldian genealogical practice that heeds details unnoticed in a linear conception of time. In both cases, encountering the limits of life (Foucault) and/or text (Ricoeur), the other, be it life or language as *parole* enabling the subject to take responsibility for his life, enables a process of recognition of the self. Or that is the claim. The other is constitutive of the formation of the self: a poiesis, or an ethopoiesis.

Two not unrelated questions result: 1) if the transfer takes place at all through an interaction with the author or its other, how are these transactions between entities that seem to share only a name, as in the case of the artists' text, handled?; and 2) furthermore, what are the conditions for this transmission? The "I" in Strau's writing is construed through its communication outside of the text: a confrontation with life as biographical, social, economical, and culturally given. It is my thesis that life influences "I" and its formation in the artists' text, the "I" being not exclusive nor developing in an exclusive way. "Its" genesis and history constitute a reciprocal process, born of complicity with life. Life, the borderline between text and their surroundings turn out to be malleable, flexible, and fluent.

The "I" is reconstituted time and again. Venturing into the "I" and the search for "it," encountering culturally recognized forms channeling personal events, Strau comes up with the questions: "What is this person who writes the text? Who is that? Who is able to write that? I mean, it's definitely somehow me and myself, but actually it is not …." This thinking out loud is reminiscent of how we recount life experiences. Telling stories is a daily activity,[244] a "babble" that underscores this common and trivial aspect of narration.[245] But the incessant stream of words encapsulating and emphasizing the idleness of talk, presents an unrestricted chatter that incessantly returns to itself, instead of being bound to outside forms and things. Perceiving the artists' text's use of language this way, *A Dissidence Coincidence* reformulates Conceptual Art's legacy of language as enabling conscious articulation of a concept. Strau's flux of sentences seem far removed from an aesthetics of administration[246] or that informational, documentary idiom providing a vehicle for ideas obscured by formal considerations.[247]

Language as non-referential and vacuous, repetitive, fleeting, and ordinary could be said to generate a blur in Strau's writing between its conditions and its production, the individual and the social, talk and action. And yet, a strict demarcation between so-called opposites cannot be drawn. The artists' writing is rather defined by what philosopher of language J. L. Austin terms the performative, something that is *at the moment of uttering being done by the person uttering*.[248] The speech-situation is made explicit; the use of the first person singular, in combination with a present, indicative, and active tense, also frequently used in *A Dissidence Coincidence*, further facilitates this: the text *does* what it *says*. And it says: I speak.

The conditions for language and its production are intricately interlinked, to the point of becoming indistinguishable. But their interlacing does not mean that what philosopher Paolo Virno termed background noise isn't appreciated, valued, even required in the socio-economical sense. Non-referential, idle talk has a utopian aspect to it.[249] Requiring no external legitimization, it resembles the simulacrum, omnipresent in capitalist society, participating in a (this) spectacular world. Due to its simulacral character idle talk is autonomous, Virno stresses. Within post-Fordist production, idle talk is "flexible, capable of confronting the most diverse possibilities (along with a good dose of *opportunism*, however)" [emphasis in original].[250] Recent debates on the valuation and legitimization of art have highlighted the importance of idle talk, "time spent in bars," for artists as entrepreneurs acting in their own material interest. Next to their education, idle talk generates knowledge, Diedrich Diederichsen states, providing for art's *constant capital*, the seasonal production containing art's *variable capital*:

> They [artists as entrepreneurs] create *Mehrwert* to the extent that, as self-employed cultural workers, they are able to take unpaid extra time and often informal extra knowledge away from other daily activities … and invest them in the conception, development, and production of artworks. The more of this extra time is invested the better. … The more they develop a type of artwork that calls for them to be present as continuously as possible, often in a performative capacity, the larger the amount of *Mehrwert* they create …. [251]

These are the consequences of an ugly synthesis (Diederichsen) of capitalism and an art that is said to be in need of discursive legitimization since Duchamp. Every work must create its own justification, being singular, urgent, and exceptional in and of itself. This is what the external legitimization (Diederichsen calls it art's punch line) entails. Strau's work could be read as an ironic comment or critique on idle talk as investment and legitimization. The prominent "I" in the questions above could then be comprehended as the intention of the artist that, besides the exceptional status of the artwork and advertisement strategies selling it as such, justifies the piece. However, the intentional fallacy looms large. The "I" is not a single individual, but a composite, an assemblage. And as Virno's less cynical reading of informal communication, grounded in a

re-evaluation of the spectacle attests,[252] idle talk points to the potential of language. In babble, it is not the *parole* but the *langue* that is mobilized, "the very faculty of language," Virno points out, "not any of its specific applications".[253] Without completely dismissing, or disagreeing with Diederichsen's analysis of surplus value in art, within the framework of the current research language understood as potentiality seems to apply: its obscured niches and margins, the possibility to subvert reigning laws, to coin (new) terms and rules. These procedures potentiality enable one to grasp the artists' text as simultaneously active (poiesis), political action (praxis), and life of the mind. Language as (symbolic) economic transaction and financial flow, all but absent from this constellation, the variability immanent in it prevents language from being integrated into a unilateral relationship between capital and art.

Virno refers to computer language as an example of the empirical importance of this faculty of language: what counts is "not so much 'what is said,' as much as the pure and simple 'ability to say'".[254] The capacity to say underlies (parts of) Strau's performative utterances recurring in the interview. Irony isn't absent from this simple capability to say. But what is interesting is that, as in computer language, the machine generating the flow of language participates in the indomitable stream of sentences and words. In *A Dissidence Coincidence*. the interview is composed of a recorded interview (at Café Voss, Berlin), an e-mail interview, and a series of SMS questions and answers (Malmö). Along with that, a set of rules has to be observed in the game played between the interviewer and interviewee: the e-mail interview has a response time of maximum five minutes per question; the SMS questions have to be answered within four hours. The machines and the way they are handled, making them obey the rules, mold the interview. Text is the material that is given shape through the devices, the interlocutors all but subservient to the machines (computers) that intervene in the process of the interview to allow for the cascade of language as material. The cultural codes and forms that structure life events are connected with machinic codes and their inventions. It is the degree to which they are technically (re)invented that produces the artists' text's singularity. Singularity: I wouldn't characterize the artists' text as autonomous writing (contra Virno), since it is brought about concomitantly through the machine and its invention, through the cultural codes and their (re)creation. But also through the individual ("I") and the social to (in) which the "I" is redirected each time and again. Questions concerning the agency of the artists' text point to these four directions simultaneously: "I" versus the social, culture versus technique. Responding to fears of walking into the trap of the intentional illusion (Stiles, Wallis) in the artists' writing, I contend it is not only the I that is hybrid and fluid in Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence*, but that its hybrid nature, its fluidity unveils itself if, and only if one adopts a transversal reading of the artists' text, taking into account the traversal of the different domains (both psyche and socius, both culture and technique) constituting it.

Retrospective, Constructive, Communicative

The composed character of the "I" and its polyvalent structure, the transversal reading "it" dictates, is conspicuous in the text entitled "the tabernacle on rosa-luxemburg-platz." Strau traces the importance of the earlier described lampshades incorporated in his sculptures back to his earliest memories, in which the inside of the lamp meant the "comfort of still living with just a few objects and giving to them too many qualities in my imagination." The writer describes the impractical position of the floor lamp behind his bed; he explains how he used to attach a green ribbon to the little metal chain that switched the light on and off. The decision to tie a piece of string to the chain was not a practical one, but an "effort to create a physical relation between me and the mysterious space within the lampshade, to make a kind of imaginary, but still physical ladder to this in between space of dream and reality." Strau's current choice to create lamps implies here an imperative to return to, or a recreation of that "mysterious space." The lamps constitute an incitement to revisit "the earliest pre-language state" in which an object could "stand in for the universe as a whole." This phase "in the middle of total irrationality" generates stories and new beginnings or laws. In Strau's argument this period of a dawning but not yet crystallized literacy is equated with an "awareness of the radical possibilities of … independence and freedom."

Strau's position is an ambiguous one. The potential and power of language are celebrated, the lamps symbolizing the "qualities of both written laws and written stories" in which the first stories and laws developed. But the installations also tend to seal and safeguard that both physical and imaginary "mysterious space," the "earliest pre-language state" governed by 'mere' sensory perceptions and unarticulated sounds. The "the tabernacle on rosa-luxemburg-platz" can be comprehended as an attempt to situate the individual "between" biological being and social individual. A double bind is inherent in the artists' text and the lamps: an oscillation takes place between "I" and the social, between psychic construction and objective evaluation. I propose to read the artists' writing not as an indelible option of either/or, but to conceive it as what Deleuze and Guattari termed a writing of "and".[255] The artists' text as calligram inserting the architectonic structure (tabernacle) and the

cultural tradition it describes (Sukkot, Feast of Tabernacles), supports this reading, reformulating the Romantic division between the sensible and reason: no return to nature is needed to heal the tension. In *A Dissidence Coincidence* bare life is not sealed off by instrumental reason, as Strau's apparent babble demonstrates—it is inclusive.

Strau's motivations for choosing lamps as material are multiple. His experiences of the lamp as a shelter align with the symbolical and practical function of the tabernacle in Judaism, central as it is to the feasts of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and the celebration a week later Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles). The coincidental overlap of these memorial days with those of Strau's exhibition encouraged him to forge the connection. Besides its religious meaning, Sukkot is of cultural importance, Strau stresses, picking up on the meaning of religion as a *religare*. Sukkot celebrates the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. In his retelling Strau puts emphasis on the Egyptians' obsession with architecture leading to social developments that caused the Jews, on which the Egyptians were dependent for the construction of their buildings, to be enslaved and oppressed. Fleeing from Egypt thus meant living without architecture and oppression. The exodus impelled the Jewish population to write a simple text applying to everyone equally and enabling them to regulate their society (laws). The flight also led to the first literary texts: they were histories describing events and containing dialogues, and reflecting "the difficulties the described characters sometimes have, when confronted with decisions and situations," Strau explains. To celebrate Sukkot entails leaving your house and other belongings for a tent or other temporary structure. But it also includes telling stories. Celebrating Sukkot commemorates the free and independent state, an alternative form of living together begun by the Jewish people. The members of this new society were told that the veneration of architecture but also of art objects could lead only to oppression and primitivism in social relations, Strau remarks.

The lamps made of cheap objects and texts can thus be read as an attempt to circumvent the politically and economically problematic status of the art object. Strau's installations introduce a comprehension of language and handling of text less explanatory or illustrative than Diederichsen's analysis presumes: text doesn't comment on or frame a visual art practice in the artists' text. (Re)inventing the calligram in *A Dissidence Coincidence* causing image and text to coincide, likening writing with reading in the lamp installations, as much as objects with writing, another state is sought for, perhaps less "*in* between" (things), but marking an incessant "between." One only has to "read" the hut-like structure echoing the tabernacle of which "the tabernacle on rosa-luxemburg-platz" speaks to experience the difference (between versus *in* between). As it goes with calligrams, the writing can only be apprehended once the book is turned around. And regardless of attempts to separate them, discern them as distinct entities, image and text are jumbled. So how can "representation" be delineated at all, what does it entail, and where is "it" localized vis-à-vis its conditions? In the calligram the break representation traditionally generates is obscured: the break inaugurating representation and the thresholds between various phases of representation: the sensible and its rules for creating the sensible. "The tabernacle on rosa-luxemburg-platz" accepts the consequences of schematic reasoning turning its rules inside out. It reformulates, even jokes about the scissions traditionally construing representation, and as a consequence of human consciousness as a "power to frame representations of things".[256]

Books and writing, like image and text, énoncé and enunciation, even lamps and texts in the case of Strau participate in the indomitable flux of the artists' text. "The tabernacle on rosa-luxemburg-platz" partakes in the profusion of fluxes *A Dissidence Coincidence* compounds. A comparison with the practices of Pierre Huyghe and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster can help situate that swift "liquid" functioning of the artists' writing, justified somewhat poorly as Strau's "trail of thinking" and "interrupted stream of consciousness." Once again, the words in *A Dissidence Coincidence* tangle easily and seem to undermine Conceptual Art's comprehension of language as documentation of idea. New (historical) models have to be found in order to grasp the complex understanding and use of language in the artists' text. It is necessary to think through Strau's interlaced sentences modeled after a machinic functioning and an "ability to say" (Virno) language thereby turning into poiesis, action, and life of the mind.

As with *A Dissidence Coincidence*, borders between installations are renegotiated in the practices of Huyghe and Gonzalez-Foerster. A recent exhibition of Huyghe (2014) saw walls removed and displaced, the radical interference with the architecture sharing in the show, deploying alternative spatial constellations and affecting the visitor in unexpected ways. It was unclear where the presentation started or ended. This indeterminacy was extended, for instance, in a wall text written by the artist himself in the form of a narrative fiction. Or through the use of perishable and living materials causing the installations to gradually disappear (*Untitled (Liegender Frauenakt)*, 2012). Gaps between traditional categorical distinctions have to be filled out, or imagined by the visitor herself. Separate works start to make sense when connected with each other. This leads to a need for speculations pervading the exhibition and directing the visitor's routes, a commitment enhanced by Edgar

Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1837) put on a pedestal: not only the status of the only novel written by Poe figuring in Huyghe's exhibition seemed unresolved, *Pym* also ends on a mysterious, obscure note stimulating "exciting conjunctures."

The work of Gonzalez-Foerster too can best be appreciated as a continuous work in progress, a readjustment and traversal of traditional limits of projects. Her performances are described as *apparitions*, designating ghostlike creatures, haunting specters resurging from (long) forgotten pasts: she stages inhabitations of roles from Bob Dylan to Vera Nabokov to Marilyn Monroe to Fitzcarraldo to Emily Brontë. In the films drawing on these stagings time, as well as space, is reconfigured, constantly contracting and expanding.[257] [258]

fig 3.4
Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Véra (*M.2062*), 2014.

Interestingly, and varying on the comprehension of the works of Huyghe and Gonzalez-Foerster in terms of relational aesthetics (Bourriaud), the artistic strategies and procedures of Gonzalez-Foerster especially are indebted to an exhibition exploring the relationships between art and *technology* (instead of Bourriaud's socius) some twenty years prior to Virno's investigations: *Les Immatériaux* (1985) conceived in 1985 by Jean-François Lyotard.[259] *Les Immatériaux* started from the premise that technological developments had led to a changed sensibility, an increasing impalpability, the feeling that so-called reality could not be controlled directly anymore: things had grown more complex. Reality had turned into a message, an image; you suddenly had to be able to handle a machine in order to function in life; matter turned out to be a specific, ingenuous, and specialized scientific formula; information appeared in digitized form composed of ones and zeros, it lacked any visible relationship to life. Lyotard's exhibition questioned the Modernist project of human emancipation. What made the exhibition unusual was its free floor plan where the visitor had to choose her own path (note the resemblance to Huyghe's approach). The catalogue or *Inventaire* consisted of a set of sheets the visitor could move around, forcing her to experience a more rhizomatic reading. Next to the book lay *Épreuves d'écriture*, composed of the notes by about thirty authors—a laboratory in which sociologists and lawyers participated, psychiatrists and philosophers, novelists and visual artists—reacting to each other's remarks regarding the conceptual starting points of *Les Immatériaux*, the then relative new invention of the word processor mediating the collective writing experience. In both catalogue and exhibition, as in the oeuvres of Huyghe and Gonzalez-Foerster, a liquid universe appeared, asserting and researching the consequences and effects, and the potential of what since *Les Immatériaux* has developed into an open and globalized, digitized realm. The exhibition *Les Immatériaux*, with its many and variegated interactions, and in which writing and text took such prominent places, seems to offer a precious model to comprehend not only the intricate exhibitions of Huyghe and Gonzalez-Foerster, but also the complexity of the artists' text.

Accordingly, the artists' text demonstrates less an attempt to steer the reader between a traditional understanding of the writing as the product of a unique, creative genius, and anti-individualistic collective demands. It must rather be understood as a fluid principle, holding a position of "and." The tabernacle is both building and not building. When asked how Galerie Meerrettich "was often formulated" and "what it really is" Strau's said he had the ambiguous structural state of the tabernacle in mind. I said, "it is as simple as that, meerrettich is a galerie, but at the same time meerrettich for sure is not a galerie." The situation worsened, however,

fig 3.5
Épreuves d'écriture, publication developed at the occasion of the exhibition *Les Immatériaux*, 1985.

Strau continues, since those same people then inquired into his own position: "so what are you, are you a gallerist or are you an artist?" An "obsession with identity, or of clean definitions, or simply a demand for purity?" Strau suggests somewhat surprised. Regardless of different relationships and "new sensibilities" provided for by technological developments, a nineteenth-century conception of the Author (still) circulates. Strau's work must rather be comprehended as a "between," a writing of "and," an articulation and actualization of language's potential, a confluence of domains.

Leiris and Process, Ongoing

Both in the interview and in "the tabernacle on rosa-luxemburg-platz" different temporalities coalesce into new combinations, the texts returning to memories and dreams—"… and I dreamt there are many first times, when someone is in a difficult period"—linking them to the lives of Strau's uncle and father, to Schnitzler and Kierkegaard, to the author's own childhood and adult life. *A Dissidence Coincidence* not only looks back at the author's life, but it underscores that his individual life is a construction as well, the texts mimicking the constructive aspect of his past placing emphasis on the textual creation in turn. The other is needed in order for the "I" to come into existence. "I" conceived of as participating in multifarious life, instead of as an atomized, punctual individual, the individual distinguishes itself more sharply only in correspondence with the other with whom he lives. Confronted with the other, the "I" is led back to a pre-individual phase (consisting of a biological basis and of language, according to Simondon) or a virtual stage ("réel sans être actuel, idéel sans être abstrait."[260]) forcing the "I" to articulate itself. And denying itself as one. The "I" grows; this unceasing development is a process with new situations presenting themselves. His (in this case) is a process of individuation. For Strau this necessary other is both the exhibition on which he works and the sociopolitical and economical issues confronted with during install; the other is the machinic intervention and reinvention, besides psychical ruminations. The other is the interlocutor in the interview, the visitors to Gallerie Meerrettich, the machinic devices involved in the dialogue, and it is the text in which the exchange results. All affecting the "I" and its constitution, they cannot be reduced to any one position. The impetus s plural could even be said to be *not* "other" as the polar opposite of "I", but rather *all* contributing to both "it" and each other.

Such an approach seems to contest a psychoanalytical view that argues in terms of *the* unconscious. Discussing the unconscious presupposes that *I* still exists—its plurality notwithstanding, *A Dissidence Coincidence* does seem to explore the efficacies of psychoanalytical methods, however, testified to by the psychoanalytical exercises inserted in the artists' text. The question is: how can they be comprehended? What does the psychoanalytical "work" in *A Dissidence Coincidence* entail? How does it function in the artists' text, which was not expressly predicated on Conceptual Art's understanding of language indebted to a post-structuralist approach, the latter's conception of writing in turn steeped in psychoanalytic apprehensions of the trace?

A series of texts is embedded in *A Dissidence Coincidence*, each one starting with the phrase "Once my therapist suggested that it was not so good for me to completely neglect any religious idea and narrative, since i seemed to be quite influenced by them from childhood. … i vaguely remembered that i had in fact loved some of the stories as a child, particularly the almost biographical story of the man who was patron to my name." These repeated preliminary remarks are set in the same font every time. Within the narrative, they function as incantations. The lines are followed by a recounting of the biblical story of Josef, the preferred descendent of Jacob, thrown in a well by his jealous, older, bullying brothers and sold to Midjanitic merchants, who resell him to Potifar, a courtier to the Pharaoh of Egypt (Genesis 37:1). Every rediscovery and translation of the biblical narrative—"i could, she suggested, just rediscover them, without necessarily believing in them. she herself was a non-believer"—is printed in another typeface, often on mottled pages, alluding to the publication as scrapbook, quickly filled with thoughts and jotted down insights. Compared to the analyst's repetitive suggestion for the "I" to revisit the Bible, the different fonts of the rereads correlate with the variety of stories in which they result. The speckled pages on which the texts are printed and the erratic writing—"Sorry, for the wrong letters"—after using Hebrew characters instead of roman type; deliberately filled in vowels; darker and lighter printed lines; padestrians instead of pedestrians, findin instead of finding, parfume instead of perfume—underline not only the materiality of the book, or the irreconcilable temporalities of living and writing autobiographical writing struggles with. Presented as mistakes, they refer to a materiality of the text, instead of the book. They paradoxically solidify the artists' text as multiplicity. The flaws account for an unstoppable spoken word, mediating the writing as babble or idle talk. The faults can simultaneously be read as consistent with an awareness of the rereads and translations corresponding with the Bible as we know it today, also a translation notably of the Old Testament from which the fragment from Genesis is taken. Thus the Hebrew letters are reminiscent of the original language of the Old Testament, the open forms of the vowels are filled up with ink, reminding us of their being

added to the text in the Greek translation (the old Hebrew alphabet consisted only of consonants); misspellings like "findin" bring to mind the popular languages in which the Bible was translated in order to expand its readership.[261] None of the biblical versions is certain, however, nor can the translations be relied upon. Perceived as chatter the text is untrustworthy. The artists' writing divulges an employment of language as premise it seems, its mode being ambivalent.

Although it is unclear whether the "therapist" is a psychoanalyst, the act of writing the different versions of the biblical narrative could be comprehended as the psychoanalytic task the text itself introduces. The exercises could be viewed as transcriptions of a psychoanalytic lesson (the indictment not to neglect religious ideas and narratives), duplicating the analyst's response to or explanation of the patient's demand. In that case, the writing would have a certain documentary intent: it reproduces the analytic gesture; the translation is used as a vehicle analogous to the psychoanalytic session. The artists' writing is neither referential nor innocent, however. Whereas it seems to seek (or pretends to seek) knowledge of the self, the question is whether it aims to know the *truth* about the self.[262] The artists' text seems less a copy doubly removed from the psychoanalytic session that aims at sincerity and veracity than a musing, erring thought. These ponderings manifest themselves in highly personal[263] reflections and remarks; they surface in grammatical faults, wrongly set letters and printing errors; they take the form of colored lettering. They are articulated as implicit or explicit comments on either the biblical narrative ("… let's try to be commentators"), the therapeutic session ("And so on:") or the text. What I call comments relate to the raw material, the fabula, or the text (Bal). Within a linguistic frame these would be said to concern the state of affairs (denotation or indication), the instance uttering the proposition, which is the domain of speech/parole (manifestation), and universal or general concepts, or the domain of language/langue (signification).

Autobiography Versus Autofiction

These reflections on the constitution of the "I", and the role psychoanalysis plays in this, are systematically inserted in Philippe Lejeune's discussion of autobiography in *Le pacte autobiographique* (1975). The operative force of psychoanalysis has been contested in the fierce debate that followed the rise of what became known as autofictional works.[264] These opposed themselves to Lejeune's graphic scheme of autobiography, distinguishing it from biography as well as from the novel. Autobiography, Lejeune states, is a "retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality".[265] The table he dresses is grounded in two criteria: the relation between the name of the protagonist and the name of the author, and the nature of the concluded pact, be it autobiographical or novelistic. The debate over the status of autofiction reacts to this scheme and the empty box the diagram leaves suggesting that the name of the author can impossibly be identical to the protagonist, the pact concluded simultaneously being novelistic: "Le héros d'un roman déclaré tel, peut-il avoir le même nom que l'auteur? Rien n'empêcherait la chose d'exister, et c'est peut-être une contradiction interne dont on peut tirer des effets intérressants. Mais, dans la pratique, aucun exemple ne se présente à l'esprit d'une telle recherche".[266]

Referring to his own novel *Fils* (1977), Serge Doubrovsky locates his work precisely in this gap in the diagram. The book is autobiographical in the sense that not only author and protagonist share their identity, but the narrator as well.[267] However, the cover indicating that *Fils* is a novel, also necessarily signs a novelistic pact with the reader, in Lejeune's terminology. A fictitious account of Doubrovsky's own life, *Fils* pertains to the place Lejeune judges a practical impossibility.

Doubrovsky gives two reasons for distinguishing his book as autofiction. Since he is a nobody, "l'homme quelconque que je suis," the life of whom is of no importance, he has to attract the reader's interest in another manner: the humble ones are not allowed to partake in history, but they can take refuge in the novel. "[l]es humbles, qui n'ont pas droit à l'histoire ont droit au roman." The second reason is on the level of the writing, Doubrovsky explains, since if one abandons logical, chronological discourse in favor of poetical detours, opting for wandering words, that is, which seem to precede things as they start to mingle with things, one automatically falls outside realist narration, tumbling into a fictional realm. "si l'on délaisse le discours chronologico-logique au profit d'une divagation poétique, d'un verbe vadrouilleur, où les mots ont préséance sur les choses, se prennent pour les choses, on bascule automatiquement hors narration réaliste dans l'univers de la fiction."[268]

Whereas the discussion concerning autofiction's position seems to pivot around the question of genre or "domain," an important and less visible part of it is centered on the role of psychoanalysis and its implications. *Fils* is in part a result of the psychoanalytic sessions Doubrovsky underwent. The novel allocates the analyst's role to the narrator. The distorted position enables the realization of the formation or invention of a life, as Doubrovsky states: if one looks at oneself in an analytical mirror, the so-called biography the cure unleashes is the "fiction" the subject

will gradually read as the "history of her life." That is what analytical construction entails: *fingere*, "giving form," fiction, which the subject incorporates.

It is precisely this twisted state of the instances and the ensuing fictional character of the writing that is interesting with respect to *A Dissidence Coincidence*. In the artists' text, what Lejeune would typify as the structural absurdity of the protagonist and author sharing a name is done away with through a more or less fluid connection among several layers. Thus the multiple experiences of time collide and diverge in the instance of the author who inhabits his role in various manners: son at the funeral of his father and artist composing an exhibition, gallerist of Meerrettich and writer of text. Strau becomes a character or a persona, in which history has condensed. Narrative redeploys this abridged story, be it in a fragmentary fashion, its pieces dispersed and coalescing in the work. As mentioned previously, Strau resurfaces as an author quasi-indistinguishable from the narrator and the protagonist of the artists' text. Due to this structural indeterminacy or what seems like a transient situation, the reader is never sure which position is true and sincere, which utterance she can rely on. Like other figures—the interviewer sharing his name with the Jacob who surfaces as a character in the biblical story—Strau as a unified person is dislocated and mixed up with others and is in the end a fiction. The single "I" reveals the psychical composition of the work as remedy and response to the still prevalent tendency to uncover the inner motivation of a work of art, its "truth" and hidden source. Simultaneously evaluating the psychoanalytical method as too stringent, forced, and forged, thus unreliable, the transcription of the "I" sessions in *A Dissidence Coincidence* verges on parody, answering Wimsatt and Beardsley's writing on intentional fallacy by combining composition and critique.[269]

For Doubrovsky, psychoanalysis enables him to think through this incessant shifting and confluence of roles. Like Lejeune in his analysis, Doubrovsky relies on the work of French Surrealist poet, ethnographer, and member of the Collège de Sociologie Michel Leiris, notably his *L'Âge d'homme* (1939), for which Leiris wrote a preface in 1946 entitled "De la littérature considérée comme une tauromachie." Lejeune and Doubrovsky come to divergent conclusions, however. What Leiris aimed for, according to Doubrovsky, was to clarify obscurities psychoanalysis had pointed out to Leiris before, when he underwent a cure as a patient.[270] The act of writing Leiris proposed can be formulated as starting from the psychoanalytical experience, but only to pursue that experience, possibly to exceed it. The experience of the spoken word (*parole*) becomes experience of (autonomous) writing: "[E]lle se situe non dans le cadre, mais dans un au-delà d'une expérience de parole, devenue expérience (autonome) d'écriture".[271]

Leiris's work is markedly post-analytical, holds Doubrovsky. It testifies to the many metonymic splits of the "I". In contrast, Lejeune's argument posits that the text and the author remain strictly separate. There is a prominent disparity between poetry's mystical perspective and autobiography's aim to outline the appearance of an individual according to Lejeune. It is difficult to imagine the poet converting and applying his poetical discoveries, theories, and techniques to autobiographical aims. Poetry can be a subject like any other, but it cannot dictate the production of a text. Either poets write their autobiography, them being deprived of means like musicians and painters on such occasions, or they don't write an autobiography at all.[272] The resources common to poetry and autobiography in the elegy or the confession, for instance are to no avail, Lejeune continues: although the first person singular, the retrospective account and the pact with the reader can be traced in autobiography, the universal subjectivity of lyrical poetry differs from the one in autobiographical discourse: in most of the cases the "I" of poems is an "I" without reference, a position that can be occupied by anyone: "c'est le 'prêt-à-porter' de l'émotion".[273] In Leiris's work psychoanalysis, like ethnography, is the scientific element allowing for a twinning of poetry and autobiography, as Lejeune maintains.

Whereas psychoanalysis enables the metamorphosis of the author, which is multiple, in the case of autofiction, as later defenders of the genre advocated,[274] it becomes a stumbling block for the constitution of the autobiographical "I" for Lejeune. *A Dissidence Coincidence* rather uses psychoanalysis as a model. Psychoanalysis is a method enabling one to visualize the author's multiple roles and functions, (implicitly and explicitly) reflected in the textual forms. As with Strau's psychoanalytical exercises, they seem to allow for experimentations with what linguist Roman Jakobson termed literariness, the techniques and strategies effectuating the transformations of the word into the poetic work. Consider the following passage, taken from the psychoanalytical exercises, reflecting on the opening words of Genesis 37:1, "Jacob dwelt":

> "Jacob dwelled" means that if you want to tell a great story, you have to tell it quick, like automatique, but you have to bring up some fact on the beginning like "Jacob dwelt" and then the whole space of telling opens to you, like here the story that the whole space of the josef story opens to Jacob and after the real thing of "Jacob dwelt" it is turning into some stranger greyer space, which could be fiction or true.

The remark contains a poetic observation of the construction of the artists' text. It reflects on "Jacob dwelt" as a technical strategic device, a trope, part of a highly constructed fabulation, and the capacity of this same formula to become a concrete mise-en-scène in which Jacob is a character. It thus thinks through the specificity of the formula as a rhetorical strategy and narrative enactment, a double disposition to which the writer seeks to relate. Strau's text continues: "Or like Jacob came to the door and he brought a chocolate bar and just started trying to write, that I remembered that Kierkegaard wrote many things and that he wrote with different names, like for example 'Fear and Tremblin'."

The implicit reflection on Jacob transformed into a character seems to correlate with an implicit reflection on the author's relationship to action and creation: with textual mediality, comprehended as performative. The writer acts out and tests the borders and possibilities of "the whole space of the josef story," asking after the limits and the agency of the text. The non-hierarchical juxtaposition of the phrases, connected through the word "and," demonstrates the simultaneity of the acts. This leveling of sentences facilitates a strategic gliding of perspectives, although the exact relationship between the points of view remains unstable and obscure: they overlap and leak into the other, becoming diffuse. Following Deleuze, Strau's sentences "stutter" or "stammer." Different elements are arranged in varied constellations.[275] *A Dissidence Coincidence* thereby refers to itself. Thus Jacob transforms from a full-fledged character in the biblical story into a so-called person knocking at the door just when "I" starts to write. Narrative levels are transgressed. What Gérard Genette termed a "narrative metalepsis" takes place, a "taking hold of (telling) by changing level".[276] While the transcription of the analysis starts with a general remark on textual beginnings, it gradually moves to the "concrete" situation of the author setting off to work on that transcription. The relationship between the levels of narration obscures, making us wonder which layer contains which: the frame of the analytical session seems to disintegrate, the characters in the biblical narrative acting on a level identical to the author's who was supposed to study them. As a reader of Strau's text you lose sight of the hierarchy of Genette's levels that assert "any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed." Levels are inverted in the artists' text, suggesting "if the characters in a story can be readers or spectators, then we, their readers or spectators, can be fictitious," in Jorge Luis Borges's words.[277]

Writing and Transdisciplinarity

The continuous shifting of levels demonstrates that the shaping of the autobiographical process as ongoing, unsure, and unsecured, is reflected in the form of the artists' writing. Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence* takes the shape of a diary, a personal scribbling, as the speckled pages and typos show. It babbles. Daily parlance determines the textual pace for reader and writer alike. But Strau's writing as autobiographical is also transdisciplinary: the lamp installations are integrated in the text, diminishing distance between text and image, making strict distinction obsolete. This intermingling of categories is further elaborated on in the position Strau takes as both author and reader, narrator, and narratee. In the final part of the text describing his reading of Kierkegaard, for instance, Strau recounts how the philosopher rewrote the biblical story of Abraham offering his son:

> After four times I decided that this must be the whole book now. … I closed the book and gave up. But I thought about it permanently and I thought I understood, why Kierkegaard is so great, and why so much admired by some of his fans and followers. But he did not tell it again and again, he did it just until when I closed the book. All together repeated the same story in different versions just four times to express his obsession probably.

The passage echoes Strau's own rewrites. It also lingers on the ambiguity of the *act* of writing and the author's position. While Kierkegaard might be the important author, the reader—the one who closes the book—is the performer of the text. On the one hand, the artists' writing adheres to "traditional criticism," if we turn to Barthes, explaining the work through its author ("to express his obsession probably"). On the other, it explicitly points to the reader as where the multiplicity of the writing finds its place: the reader disentangles it (instead of deciphering as a structuralist approach to traditional criticism would have it) adhering now to Barthes's second "new criticism," declaring the death of the author.[278]

In *A Dissidence Coincidence*, the reader is "life and kicking," as is the writer, circumventing traditional authorship. The ambiguity is expanded on in the observation with which the sixth rewrite ends. The paragraph is added onto (or so it pretends) the core part of the text ("Later, when already working on the exhibition … I read some commentaries on Josefs story … saying: …"). Strau quotes the "rashi commentary" (the comments on the Torah by the French medieval rabbi Rashi) on scripture's extensive elaboration of certain settlements in favor of other communities. The

artists' text seeks to offer a historical reason for the text's insistence on "Jacob and his generations," next to a reading of the Bible as a construction of figures and tropes. The commentary Strau cites compares the preference for and apparent importance of a repetitious return of Jacob in the Bible to "a pearl that falls into the sand": "A person searches in the sand and sifts it with a sieve until he finds the pearl, and when he finds it, he casts away the pebbles from his hand and keeps the pearl." He continues: "But I must say, when I read this, I had already all the pearls on the strings, had already fixed some on the lamp shades, but did not really find the reasons for what I was doing. So the better for me, better for the objects as well." The "I" opening up the text to multiple readings rewrites and overwrites them, leading to what presents itself as a quasi-allegorical text.[279] But it also, once again, draws a connection between positions and spaces the author himself characterizes as "mysterious," and which I have termed under-researched and obscured in relation to the artists' text in general: a world *between*, or an intra-active realm.

This particular area "between" is activated in the artists' writing, using psychoanalysis as a model, or rather, a testing ground. *A Dissidence Coincidence* lures the reader into a psychoanalytic comprehension of the book, appropriating an interpretation of the author or Author in a traditional sense of the term, planting the origin of the work in his mind. Strau's recourse to psychoanalysis can be read back in the prevalent references to the therapist. The sessions with her, transcribed into textual regressions structured as a *mise en abyme*, lead to childhood memories, dreams, and reconsiderations of parental relationships—essential psychoanalytic themes. The sheer repetition of rewrites of the biblical narrative of Jacob referred to above could be distinguished as compulsive behavior, a manifestation of the power of the repressed, thus of the unconscious, from a Freudian perspective.[280] The rewrites' repetitive pattern could be said to hark back to a Surrealist-inspired *écriture automatique*, strongly influenced by Freud's theories.[281] But if it is true that the artists' text is mostly interested in psychoanalysis as a *technique* for the writing of the self, rather than in the analytical aim to arrive at, thus to "produce" a clear-cut and "true" image of the self, how does it distinguish itself from a Derridean conception of writing, based on an analysis of Freud's observations? If the machinic prevails in the artists' text, why does *A Dissidence Coincidence* stick to the "I", thereby alluding to a person endowed with consciousness and agency that Derrida's concept argues against?

In *A Dissidence Coincidence* psychoanalysis enables reflection on what I would mark as the "impossible possibility" of a constitution of a self. And of the Author, by extension. Or as it is pointed out in the double

negation in the earlier referenced passage of the interview:

> *JF*[282]: *But also when you look at your installations, it seems like something has happened by coincidence…*
> JS: I try to avoid the classic authorship, and this also is relatively similar to older art works I made…. It doesn't mean, that it cannot be autobiographical, but I want somehow the reality which my works refer to, doesn't not come from me, but from the outside by coincidence….

The repeated denial of a purely subjective or inner source of the writings ("It doesn't mean, that it cannot be autobiographical," "doesn't not come from me"), thus re-marking the subject simultaneously undoing "it" as the sole unified, sovereign, total, and true self, is intertwined with the persistent allusion to (and quest for) an outside or an other likewise multiple as "the" self. This ongoing and discontinuous inward and outward movement, from and towards an "I" creates a riddle that *A Dissidence Coincidence* seems determined to resolve or "resolve," tongue-in-cheek: if a single atomized "I" does not exist the search for "it" is vain, and fictitious at that.

Like the fluctuating perspectives and roles, the double negation ("It doesn't mean, that it cannot be autobiographical," "doesn't not come from me") could be read as the impossibility of reducing the voice to what (the one who) utters it. It sustains a distance, which Blanchot terms a narrative voice or the neutral: "for the neutral is … the greatest distance governed by dissymmetry and without one or another of its terms being privileged." The narrative voice does not reveal, nor does it conceal in an optical manner, thus remaining "outside the light-shadow reference that seems to be the ultimate reference for all knowledge and all communication." The narrative voice suspends the attributive structure of language as well, "the relation to being, implicit or explicit, that is immediately posed in language as soon as something is said".[283] However, if the neutrality of the voice is inscribed in *A Dissidence Coincidence*, the question arises as to why it has recourse to the "I", instead of, as Blanchot proposes, a third person singular, a *he*. Pertaining to the first person singular, the artists' text asserts, as with Blanchot, the equivalence between the narrative act and the transparency of a consciousness, firstly. Secondly, holding onto the "I", Strau's writing maintains the "primacy of an individual consciousness that could only in the second place, and even secondarily, be a speaking consciousness".[284] The question must be asked whether the implementation of the "I" signals a re-appropriation of the presence of experience, which, theoretically, is negated by "the letter." Another option would be that the "I" does not act out an attempt to rejoin a lost presence, but that it rather varies with the neutrality of writing Blanchot

termed the voice. The artists' writing would probe, question, revoke, and reinvent the textual neutrality as a distance, thereby putting into doubt whether the text is the place where reader and writer meet only to part ways. Reinserting the "I" while maintaining a textual distance, the "I" referring to an integral and integrated "I", the transparent, atomized "I", has to be redefined. It would need redefinition in terms of a composed subject and social individual.

Strau squares the circle of what will temporarily be described as the simultaneous constitution and destruction of the "I" having recourse to psychoanalytic sessions. This is done not in order to reconstruct a clear-cut image of a self, as was said in the above. The meetings with the therapist are among the many occasions that provide instruments forging liaisons between instances, domains, or worlds, due to the metalaptic narrative never arriving at what Lacan would call the Real. In the artists' writing, psychoanalytic technique, underlining, with Lacan, the importance of speech, demonstrates and puts into play the very construction that a person is. The text wittily "materializes" the presumed false question of the "I", and thus of authorship. The fluency of the textual materialization, its processual character implicated and underlined, the "I"'s relationship to the outside is brought to the fore. Witness the questionnaire as a mode, a model exemplifying speech and communication. Think also of the awkwardness of the "supposed situation" the analytic session entails, the analyst facing the analysand, the interview mimicking that same one-on-one relationship.

From a more textual perspective, the textual procrastination or what Derrida called *différance*, poses the question of the status of the text within a broader world, a Lacanian Real, or, in linguistic terminology, regarding a state of affairs. The question is prompted by the absence of a centralized perspective, conspicuous in the title of the interview. The interviewer Jacob plays a double role as a character in the biblical narrative; the borders between texts, instances, and representational strata are transgressed. Withdrawing from a sharp distinction between instances, *A Dissidence Coincidence* performs an overlap of instances and levels, resulting in what could be comprehended as a condensed or overdetermined text. The question remains where, exactly, to locate this text "without borders," in which the difference between foreground and background tends to disappear. Or, with Derrida and prior to the former question, it should be asked whether "the" artists' text could be localized at all. And if so, where can "the" author or Author be situated, where is the "I"?

A redefinition of the "I" results in the intertwining of a composed subject and a social individual it seems. What is formulated anew is not

so much the first person singular, as a consequence, but the notions of difference and distance instead. Remember that Derrida, deconstructing consciousness and presence, posited a deferral or *Nachträglichkeit* operative at the level of writing. Derrida's early texts notably observe writing's implicit difference, or a différance, the well known a of différance articulating the initial spatial and temporal distance writing always already possesses, according to Derrida. Derrida's now famous remarks on representation being always already deferred, draw on an analysis of Freud's observations. In his early text "Freud and the Scene of Writing" (1967), for instance, Derrida reads into Freud's conclusions that horizontal translations of dreams and vertical translations of the unconscious can impossibly be made; he takes seriously Freud's attempt to construe a machine that both describes the psychical content and is an element in the machine. Derrida thinks through the relationship between psyche, writing, and spacing in order for the metaphor of writing that Freud introduces to work as an unmantling of consciousness and a deconstruction of presence that he himself undertakes. Derrida borrows from Freud the concept of the trace [*Spur*], and radicalizes it.[285] For Freud, it is pathbreaking [*Bahnung*] in enabling a supplementary delay and a reconstitution of meaning. The trace is an impression never perceived or consciously lived. The Freudian trace and (in Derrida's radicalized version) the archi-trace allow for a deconstitution of what Derrida sees as the philosophical closure of an experience in which "the word [*mot*] is lived as the elementary and undecomposable unity of the signified and the voice, of the concept and a transparent substance of expression".[286] The trace borrowed from Freud, then, is "the erasure of selfhood, of one's own presence, and is constituted by the threat of anguish of its irremediable disappearance, of the disappearance of the disappearance." Consequently, the "subject" of writing does not exist if we mean by that some sovereign solitude of the author. The subject of writing is "a *system* of relations between strata" instead [emphasis in original].[287]

Deducing from the analogy of the functioning of perceptual and psychic apparatus with the mystic writing-pad, offering both a perpetually available innocent surface and an infinite reserve of traces, Derrida (after Freud) comes to perceive writing as a machine. What is opened up here is the question of technology in relation to writing. For Derrida "writing… is *techne* as the relation between life and death, between present and representation, between the two apparatuses. … In this sense writing is the stage of history and the play of the world." Freud, then, "*performed for us the scene of writing*" [emphasis in original], Derrida meaning by "scene" the "scene/stage of the world." In this sense writing goes on all the time, independent of its linguistic articulations. However, like the mystic writing pad, the machine does not run by itself: "abandoned to itself,

the multiplicity of layered surfaces of the apparatus is a dead complexity without depth." The machine, then, "is death and finitude *within* the psyche" [emphasis in original]. This dead time within the presence of the living present is what is called arche-writing.[288]

Whereas the metaphor of writing as a machine seems to comply with *A Dissidence Coincidence*, its derivation from Freud's concept of the trace does not. The current artists' text's machine is predicated on a digital device and unrelenting open source, multidimensional, work in process, it never closing down, but *without* its being dead. What is lacking in the artists' text is a Derridean distance, and a difference between polarities: the artists' writing conceived as a multiplicity does not inhabit a dual world shuttling between life and death, presence and absence. Unfolding, redistributing an "and," it is both: reading and writing immanent in publication and/as lamp (and vice versa); the artists' text is not posited *in* between, it *is between*. And incessantly so. As a consequence, "I" does not pull out of the "system of relations" the artists' writing compounds. "I" is transparent, not in the idealist sense of the term, but in its ability to articulate and generate ever new liaisons. The connections do not designate a one-way street, they comprise multilateral relationships (plural), intimately linked with their surroundings, be they historical or personal, political, social or economical, technical or cultural. This is what composes the ecology (or rather: ecosophy[289]) of the artists' text. Or in Strau's words: "I want somehow the reality which my works refer to, doesn't not come from me, but from the outside by coincidence."

Derrida's conception of writing similarly falls short of explaining the insistence, persistence or survival of the "I" in the artists' writing. Both *A Dissidence Coincidence*—exhibition, publication—and "I" entail processes of individuation, rather than writing only creating connections of exchange and redistribution between what is "always already." Testing its productive force, *A Dissidence Coincidence* both realizes and poses the question of its realization in the face of and through the author's position and role. While Jacob/Josef was thrown in a pit by his brothers who despised his stories and interpretations of dreams, the stories and dreams still survived. In the artists' text, not only the stories and dreams continued to live, but also Jacob/Josef.

Conclusion

In *A Dissidence Coincidence* the "I" is produced time and again: in every new situation, aspects, be they social or technical, political or cultural, combine and collaborate in the construal of the "I". The "I" is not a starting point, but a confluence of domains and question marks. As writing, the artists' text partakes in the mechanism of production: it is no neutral force, it leaves an imprint much like the typewriter, stamping each letter. Designating the artists' text as *writing* an important proviso must be made: although the term is tainted by its Derridean employment, the concept of *writing* has to be enlarged in the context of the artists' text. Deducing writing from a psychoanalytical method, after Derrida, the term connotes a reduction of social facts to psychological mechanisms. This reduction is absent from the artists' text, however—Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence* in particular. A more transversal reading intermingles the biographical with the cultural, the political with the technical without the artists' text being drastically framed or curtailed. The "I" of the artists' text reveals itself as polyphonic, heterogeneous, and collective in the end. The "I" cannot be regrouped and put in a linguistic, universal grid; the artists' text doesn't concern a linguistic "I". Strau's "I" is affected differently. A writing *with*, the "I" is shared.

4

Aritsts' Text and Poetical Intricacies:

Matthew Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck — Everything Has a Name"

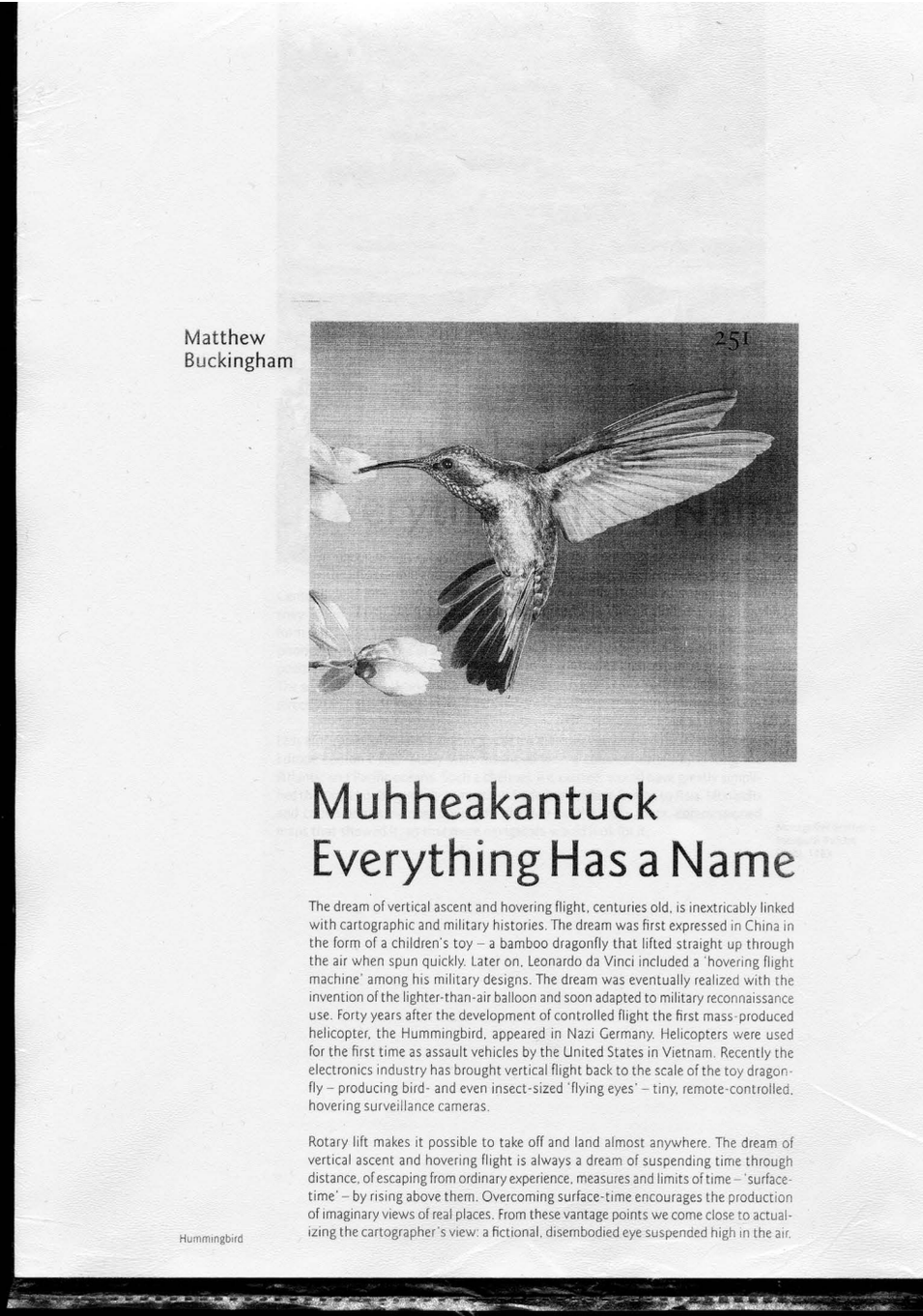

fig 4.1
Matthew Buckingham, "Muhheankantuck – Everything Has a Name," 2005, 2007, 2008. Covers.

Introduction

Phrases are punctuated with details based on historical facts, connecting the text to an outside world the unusual spacing and delineation of the material seems to deny, and which reciprocates the intransivity of language. In the last essay of the booklet in which "Muhheakantuck – Everything Has a Name" figures, critic and curator Simon Sheikh reminds us that "There is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice".[290] Earlier editions of "Muhheakantuck" consist of radically different textual designs, begging the question: what does the artists' writing want to communicate? If the text is born of complicity with an editorial board and the design of a publication, to what extent is it dictated by them? To what degree does the artists' text influence and affect its context? The current chapter scrutinizes, probes, and elaborates on the structure in artists' writing. Textual borders prove permeable in Josef Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S* enumerated in the last chapter, allowing for a passage between text and its context. The structure of the artists' writing is more contested the further the artist takes it; so how can interactions between text and the external environment be understood once its contents surpass the traditional boundaries of the publication? Several contemporary artists experiment with the limits of writing and text: publishing in cyclical fashion, in different venues, with alternative forms that often verge on poetry, understood within the framework of this research as an inherent questioning and continuous search of (its) form. Matthew Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck – Everything Has a Name" is just one such a work.

Literary critic Marjorie Perloff discussing poetry in a digitized age has termed a "text existing in various states (e.g., print and digital, or print and recorded voice) without any variant being *the* authoritative text" as "differential".[291] This is a reaction to a globalized world in which different idiolects, dialects, and speech registers meet. The "differential" responds not only to globalization but also to changes in contemporary culture: modes of distribution caused by what Perloff calls the "digital revolution". [292] Questioning the role of technology in shaping poetry's language differential writing echoes the rhizomatic structure of a digitized world. It borrows textual strategies inherent in this structure—citation, appropriation, copying, and montage—and is concerned with the status of information (versus referentiality) provided by the unstoppable digital machine. It does not necessarily want to stipulate *that* a procedure like citation permeates poetry, it is rather interested in *how* textual strategies in poetry evolve.

For my research on contemporary artists' texts, differential writing and the more recent extension of the concept, conceptual writing, are of interest. The differential seems to respond to questions of the text's distribution, not only economical but in terms of its sensibility in a world that seems to have grown more technologically and politically entangled. While the artists' writing seeks ways to cope with an abundance of "information," the increased traffic of input/output in a digitized world defined by quantity rather than quality, it also demonstrates attempts to find alternative forms that correspond to an extremely demanding and changed world order, without succumbing to it. Conceptual writing explicitly refers to the reliance of poetry that came into existence with "the rise of the Web"[293] on "visual" Conceptual Art as its foundation, "a way both to signal literary writing that could function comfortably as conceptual art and to indicate the use of text in conceptual practices".[294] Conceptual writing has several definitions. I will use Perloff's formulation, which is more specific than Dworkin's. Reflecting on poet Kenneth Goldsmith's work, Perloff states that what is at issue in conceptual writing "is to relate the stated conceptual germ . . . to the text itself".[295] While conceptual writing continues to think through the consequences of digital revolutions for poetry, (mainly) its production, it finds solace in Conceptual Art. Thus Goldsmith, at the fore of conceptual writing, explicitly models his thoughts after Sol LeWitt's "Paragraphs on Concpetual Art" (1967) and "Sentences on Conceptual Art" (1969) stipulating that "ideas alone can be works of art." For Goldsmith, "by swapping LeWitt's visual concerns for literary ones, we can adopt 'Paragraphs' and 'Sentences' as roadmaps and guidelines for conceptual or uncreative writing".[296]

While the differential offers an apt perspective on what in relation to Dora García's work especially could be called a tentacular writing, fragmented both *as* a work and the text atomized from within, the question arises as to whether the artists' text, Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck" as case study here, can be approached as conceptual writing. While the multiplicity within the artists' text betrays a quest for form, artists' writing seems grounded not so much in Conceptual Art per se, as with conceptual writing, but in the *crisis* between 1960s and 1970s poetry and visual art. Unlike conceptual writing and its immanent unrelenting trust in Conceptual Art, "Muhheakantuck" is more critical. It chooses its precursors as strategically as conceptual writers, but without reducing itself to one period. "Muhheakantuck" analyzes the "things" that are said or made, connecting them with the discourse that embeds those *énoncés* in the context in which they were uttered: the archive is read under an archeological method that tries to dismantle *énoncés* and their contexts. The search for the status of matter vis-à-vis language and writing, or the question of language *as* matter is not unusual in relation to the contemporary artists' text. It defines its situational sensibility, and is the

basis for the crisis between poetry and Conceptual Art, differentiating the treatment of the subject in each.

My choice of Buckingham's work is motivated by writing being a constituent part of his practice, as with my previous case study subjects. It is also inspired by the artists' text's staggered release over the course of four years, and my initial surprise at the variation among the phases in publications: "Muhheankantuck" figured in a compilation of texts resulting from an educational project, in an academic journal, and in a small anthology gathering writings concentrating on knowledge production. This left me asking: how do the different contexts correlate with or otherwise affect Buckingham's texts? How does the writing inspire and restructure its surroundings? With "Muhheakantuck" (or its three versions), Buckingham, a visual artist pursuing a PhD, broached the question of the status of writing within artistic research. The ongoing debate over the artists' text's supplementary status and the conditions that have to be met for its acknowledgment, observing academic standards that is, have been deemed essential from the perspectives of the institutions involved (art schools, post-academic institutions, universities). I wondered how they transpired in the text as a text, how the textuality of the text complies with the reflexivity it seeks, and in what way the text and writing find, *through the very process of writing, in writing*, a rhythm, sensing the freedom to experiment and deploy thoughts.

It could be argued that an (art) historical awareness is implicitly or explicitly immanent in the artists' work. Familiar with Michel Foucault's archival research, for instance, the various modes for "*les mots*" to refer to "*les choses*," contemporary artists are conscious of variants of meaning historically contained in "just one word." Acquainted with different readings of images versus texts, the question arose how artists would put this knowledge to work. Or to reframe the argument, hadn't the earlier mentioned digital revolution led to a breakdown of the boundary, not only between "verse" and "prose," but also between "creator" and "critic"?[297] And if so, how did contemporary artists' writings discover and profit from an opened rhetorical field?

Studying the text as text, retracing the textual strategies in Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck" the artists' writing is read with poetry: the artists' text's very formal intricacies (spacing and delineation, or the handling of what in relation to modern poetry, starting with Stéphane Mallarmé's utilization of the space of the page in his poem *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard* (A throw of the dice will never abolish chance, 1897) has been called the blanks and the blacks), urges compared analysis. A juxtaposition of Buckingham's work with poetry allows me to look closely at the artists' text's various versions—their implications and effects. How do they affect the reader? Later editions given over to the formal considerations, while earlier ones seem less concerned by them? How is the space of the page used as a graphic and signifying agent? And how can the weight of the images in "Muhheakantuck's" various editions be understood in relation to these formal choices, given a traditional predominance of the image in poetry since Ezra Pound had defined it the essence of the poetic in 1913, an image being "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant in time," a "radiant node or cluster … from which, and through which, and into which, Ideas are constantly rushing"?[299]

In delving into the operative force of the artists' text by wedding it to poetry, this chapter touches on a recent upsurge in poetry in the context of contemporary art.[300] How can the artists' text be situated within this advance in poetry, and conceptual writing specifically? Magazines more or less explicitly dealing with poetry proliferate,[301] while events are organized assembling poetical endeavors in the museum.[302] Examining the functioning of Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck" I try to (re)trace and formulate the relationship between a changing face of poetry vis-à-vis visual art. I am interested not so much in "Muhheakantuck's" syntactical constructions, but the functioning and status of the single word. Concentrating on the word I suggest a nuanced approach to the contemporary artists' writing, differing from the syntagmatic predilection immanent in Conceptual Artists' work largely due to convergences with post-structuralist thought. Witness its preference for serial presentations and sequential constructions (LeWitt's aforementioned "Paragraphs" and "Sentences," for instance). What is generally imagined as the intimate liaison between contemporary artists' writings and Conceptual Art, and its profuse use of language, is put to a test.

Engaging in the crisis between poetry and visual Conceptual Art, I examine the work of poet Francis Ponge who prolonged the study of the word, his writings simultaneously being an overture to what I think of as the dynamics of the artists' text. His understanding of poetry and what he termed his *descriptions-définitions-objets d'art littéraire* offers a rich perspective on prevalent comprehensions of the materiality of the word; articulating the word's materiality as an intellectual reconfiguration, Ponge's poetical endeavor proposes a different address to the status of the artists' text.

I begin discussions of the crisis between poetry and 1960s and 1970s Conceptual Art, in an attempt to position the artists' writing in relation to conceptual writing and the distribution of the text. I then take up the

archival *travail* immanent in the artists' writing, explaining the formal particularities of "Muhheakantuck" as a historiographical method,[303] though I prefer to regard this as a poetical undertaking as well, instigated by an interest in historiography. Understanding "Muhheakantuck's" formal specificities as poetical decisions enables a nuanced perspective of the situational sensibility of the artists' text. Finally, I try to localize the image in the artists' writing, tapping into the relationship between text and image. But before pursuing these issues, I will outline the current object of my research.

Matthew Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck – Everything Has a Name" (2005, 2007, 2008) consists of three versions: as part of the publication *Experience Memory Re-enactment* (2005); in the journal for art criticism and theory *October* (2007); and integrated into the reader *On Knowledge Production: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art* (2008). Each differs from the one before, especially in the compartmentalization of text. The different approaches to textual blanks and blacks, dealing with language and the space of the page in another manner, it is impossible to describe "it." "Muhheakantuck" cannot be pinned down as a unique, complete, and coherent work. The editions share their story, however, or the main strands of thought, the principal being about the Dutch East India Company in the Hudson River waterway and the land that surrounds it. In the early seventeenth century, at the moment of the twelve years' truce (Het Twaalfjarig Bestand, 1609–1621) agreed on by Holland and Spain after forty years of war, Henry Hudson was employed by the East India Company to look for a new passage to Asia. The corporation not only profited from peace to colonize land, it also (mostly) took advantage of the credit systems and expanded loans from the newly founded Bank of Amsterdam. No testimony of Hudson's experiences survives, Buckingham recounts. Hudson's captain's log is destroyed 200 years after the event. The explorations are known "only" through the "minor" writings of Robert Juet, one of Hudson's crewmembers. The Northwest Passage remaining undiscovered at the time, "the river that became known as the Hudson was not discovered" either, as Buckingham states in one of the 2008 text's paragraphs: "it was invented and re-invented" instead (22).[304] The Lenape or Leni-Lenapi ("meaning people, or common people, or real people," translated as "we the people" and occasionally referred to as "Americans" [22]), the land of whom was colonized by Hudson, called the river Muhheakantuck, meaning the river that flows in two directions. With the passage unfound, the Dutch became interested in the fur trade, creating the foundation of an intricate system of exchange and initial investment in the area.

The 2005 version of Buckingham's text ends here, concluding by postulating the abstraction of history and contrasting its grand narrative with the *petit récit* of particular stories. The other two editions delve deeper into the case, their "sole" difference being the way the texts are separated, their treatment of images, and the inclusion of a bibliography (in the 2008 version). In the 2007 and 2008 edition, the writing is interspersed with factual information like, "In 1656, 80,000 beaver skins were exported to Amsterdam. By that same year the Dutch estimated that 90 percent of the Lenape had died from imported disease" (28). Both narratives come to an end in the massacre of the Lenape and their neighbors under Dutch command.

The recounting of this cruel history alternates with reflections on the means with which representation is constructed. Thus each version begins with a musing on the "dreams of vertical ascent and hovering flight," which is "a dream of suspending time through distance—of cutting one's self off from ordinary measures of time—'surface time'" (17). This surface time is "arbitrary *and* systematic." It is agreed upon, and, like a line on a sheet of paper, whether drawn by the text's "me" or the first European mapmakers, it "limits our imagination, keeping this place in one spot and not another" (17). Or, "Our bodies are frameworks with which we create abstract thought and systems of categories" (33). The narrative continues its reflections on perspective, switching between thoughts on the use of the helicopter by the US army in the Vietnam War to forms of script. Like the aircraft, writing formulates a "limit of understanding," "and a limit for speaking about the past" (33). Thus "the unknown is more than an occasion for possibilities, it is a provocation that propels us on a journey, a route of unknowing, in which we experience many of the ways that we do *not* know something" (33).

The first 2005 text is the less developed of the three. The writing is shorter, its narrative less complex, interweaving fewer arguments. Its composition of distinct paragraphs as solid blocks shows up its more discursive character, each block initiating a related but slightly different subject. The accompanying images are highly illustrative: a photograph of a hummingbird symbolically indicates the "first mass-produced helicopter" of the same name, a picture of Wampun belts and strings accompanies the explanation of the Lenape's reconfiguration of beads as monetary currency. Against the 2007 version, the 2005 text is especially replete with images. The 2007 version bears the Seal of the City of New York as its only image, situated at the end of the text, a line drawing in black and white that returns in the 2008 edition. Two more images are inserted in the 2008 edition: the first shows a double-frame enlarged image from Buckingham's film of the same title; the second presents a production

still of that film. Each image occupies a full page. The 2008 images relate to the text differently from the 2005 edition in which the images break-up the narrative. This strategy is absent from the 2007 text that is presented as a continuous narrative, the only formal intervention being indented lines separating paragraphs. The 2008 edition also distinguishes itself from the other two through its strongly fragmented writing. Separate paragraphs are composed of at most four sentences, the complete text amounting to eighty-eight distinct paragraphs in total. And unlike the other two it includes a two-page bibliography.

Broodthaers, or the Crisis between Poetry and Conceptual Art

In the introduction, "Muhheakantuck" was referred to as possibly a differential writing, existing in various states without one version as "the" authentic text, and characterized as having a situational sensibility of its own, affecting and being affected by its context, acting upon its environment and being acted upon. The different versions of "Muhheakantuck," divided both in space and in time, could be perceived from yet another perspective that links the previous stances. "Muhheakantuck's" multiplicity allows it to unfold gradually over several years; the writing, *through* its very writing, seems to invent a way to catch the process in the middle. The concrete details, numbers, and figures added to the later editions exemplify this development; the statistical enumerations also more strongly articulate the axis around which the story rotates: the quest for a method to associate the words with the things they feign to designate, to link the discourse to the story it tells, and its relationship with an actual situation.

Putting to work its processual function is something Conceptual Art never succeeded in doing. Language wasn't conceived as an operation, it was a medium. LeWitt's call for the idea as work of art in his "Sentences on Conceptual Art" (1969), without a need for it to become physical, are to no avail.[305] Underlining that "35. These sentences comment on art, but are not art," shows he treats his manifesto nevertheless as art. Art historian Lucy Lippard, advocate of Conceptual Art, bitterly formulated the paradox or trap within which the projects she supported had fallen, concluding that Conceptual Art's predilection for material as "secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or 'dematerialized'", had resulted in an alternative "informational, documentary idiom." Its vernacular had provided a vehicle for "art ideas that were encumbered and obscured by formal considerations" at the time. But Conceptual Art hadn't been able to "avoid general commercialization." Whereas "Xerox sheets" and "words spoken but not recorded," for instance, had pretended to free Conceptual artists "from the tyranny of a commodity status and market-orientation," three years later they were "selling work for substantial sums".[306]

The dismantling of materiality and its simultaneous affirmation can be ascribed to the paradox of language as both matter and not matter, and the potential for diverse textual procedures immanent in this very ambiguity: it is as if Conceptual artists were insufficiently aware of the potential of language, its implicit nuances. Whereas Conceptual Art's recurrence to forms of serialization and the presentation of works in sequences, based on syntactical structuring, had seemed an apt "linguistic" reply to both the self-reflexivity of modernist artworks and the status of the object at the time, it wasn't taken into account that this very "ephemeral" structure could function as an object in its own right, becoming "unique." The so-called fleeting word that had pretended to replace the stable, saleable object had revealed itself as not unassailable after all. "De-materialism emphasizes materiality like silence in a song". Or in the words of Buckingham, and in parallel to John Baldessari's tribute to LeWitt singing the latter's "Sentences," that had been "hidden in the pages of catalogues for too long": "In every silence there is a presence. Silence is not passive" (31).

Although comparable ambivalences and double binds can be traced in poetry of the time, concrete poetry of the 1950s and 1960s intended to retreat from an all too oppressive reality and the imposition of the image in advertisement and media; visual poetry used the graphic space as a structural agent turned into the image they criticized.[308] Conceptual Art's surrendering to the market economy is attributed to its problematic relationship with its poetical colleague in the work of once poet Marcel Broodthaers. He casted his last volumes of poetry in plaster putting them on a pedestal (*Pense-bête* [1964]). This first of Broodthaers's works as a visual artist contains the kernel of the critique of what he perceived as Conceptual Art's hypocritical neglect of art's materiality. Broodthaers commented upon his switch from poetry to visual art incorporated in *Pense-bête* stating that "I, too, wondered if I couldn't sell something and succeed in life. . . . The idea of inventing something insincere finally crossed my mind and I set to work at once. . . . What is it? In fact, only some objects".[309]

Broodthaers's artistic answer to Conceptual Art's conceit can be understood as the manifold presentation of language, allowing for multiple usages with different efficacies. Language games pervaded both art and its institution; Broodthaers borrowed his material from them. He utilized language both as instrument (in his "open letters," for instance)

and as performative action (the installment of his Museums). His remarks on art as commodity and Conceptual Art's failure to address the problematic status of the art object were polemical and direct, as he wrote in an open letter of April 1968, for example: "The language of forms must be united with that of words. There are no 'Primary Structures'". They became a speech act in what art historian Benjamin Buchloh termed Broodthaers's "Industrial Poem" *Téléphone* (1969), an embossed plaque inscribed with the sentence "Je suis fait pour enregistrer les signaux. / Je suis un signal. Je Je Je Je Je Je Je Je / Objet Métal Esprit Objet Métal Esprit." Explicating multiple levels of reading, *Téléphone* left Buchloh to rhetorically wonder: "Was this what Broodthaers meant in the 'press release' inaugurating his *Département des Aigles* of his *Musée d'Art Moderne*, promising that 'poetry and the plastic arts shine hand in hand'?"

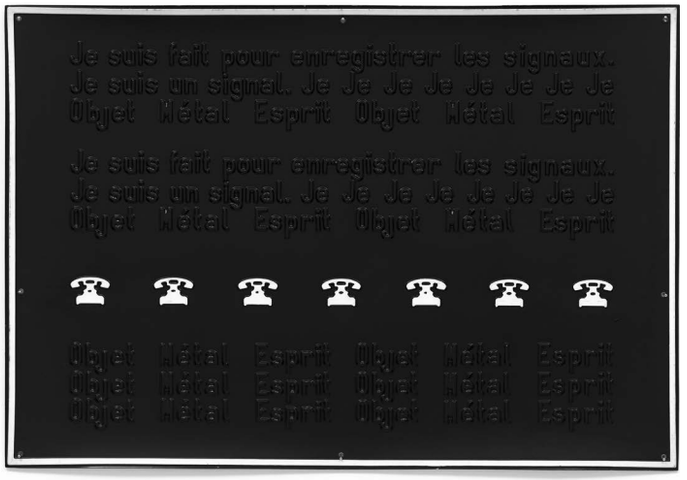

fig 4.2
Marcel Broodthaers, *Telephone (Téléphone)*, 1969.

Contemporary artists' texts are familiar with Conceptual Art's problematic relationship with materiality. Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence* bespeaks a historical awareness in writing that quite literally argues for and incorporates an attempt to circumvent the art object, much like Conceptual Art. Unlike Conceptual Art,[311] however, Strau demonstrates the boundaries between disciplines as porous, opening up to polyphony. In Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck," the multifarious contextual situation is turned inside out. What is brought to the fore, and what has been neglected in Conceptual Art, is the function of the text. "Muhheakantuck" scrutinizes and performs the potential of language as *operation*, clear in the multiple versions, rendering the function *of* language inherent in language. Derrida famously declared the end of the book as depository for institutional representative, and secondary writing.[312] His laborious overturning of what he analyzed as a logocentric Western tradition into a grammatology or science of writing in the 1960s had led artists at that time to rephrase writing's contextual restrictions, transforming them into conditions enabling aesthetic decisions. Think of Dan Graham's magazine piece *Homes for America* (1966), which combined writing and photographs that rely on mass cultural forms of publication. While the grid-like format of the artists' text embraced the common and popular reproductive means of the period, its writing, providing a critical analysis of suburban tract housing, ironically mimicked the sociological report.[313] In its stead, the contemporary artists' text initiates a conception of language that is not necessarily opposed to the tradition post-structuralism disputed. Nor does it fight against a Derridean arche-writing. It rather chooses and appropriates its ancestors (plural) in a non-linear fashion. Time and again it invents alternative forms of meeting the situation in which it finds itself. Diverging from Graham's *Homes for America*, the several versions of "Muhheakantuck" are not finalized forms. This incompleteness forces the reader into a curious position in that she cannot visualize the text "Muhheakantuck," it lacking definite and determined outlines. There is a *Muhheakantuck*-ness to it: the central theme of the story can be recounted, the places where it appeared can be pointed out, but the very serialization suggests that "it," or the research underpinning it, continues. We could potentially meet "it" elsewhere, "beyond" 2008 that is, study it as an articulated thing at another time, another place. The several publications are actualizations of ongoing research. Or they are events: the publications acting like screens that make "something issue from chaos, and *even if this something differs only slightly*" [emphasis in original].[314]

"Muhheakantuck's" method is grounded in the very paradox that language is both matter and not matter, private and public, processual and ongoing. Buckingham realizes his research repeatedly and differently each time, resulting in work for which "not all concretisms . . . are equal".[315] The awareness of these various forms of concretion is what contemporary artists' writings learned from Conceptual Art: Graham's way of using language is distinct from Joseph Kosuth's definitions and analytical propositions turned into works. Robert Smithson's documents reporting on projects taking place beyond the museum walls vary with respect to Carl André's "hylotheistic" approach to language as matter.[316] André's poetry is interesting in this context as he seems to breach the syntagmatic reign of Conceptual Art. "Not a writer of prose," his works weaken the common view of the strong interrelationship between Conceptual Art, post-structuralism and syntactical construction. André intended to arrest the reader's attention to the actual existence of the

single word, instead of the sentence ("Whole poems are made out of many single poems we call words"). A word, then, is not "dematerialized," in his view. It rather signals the political and ethical primacy of matter in a world marked by the circulation of replicas. And by an overload of advertising images designating them, persuading you to buy: submitted to a cautious visual organization, distributing them on the page, André's words solidify, forming an image that does not necessarily refer to an external reality.

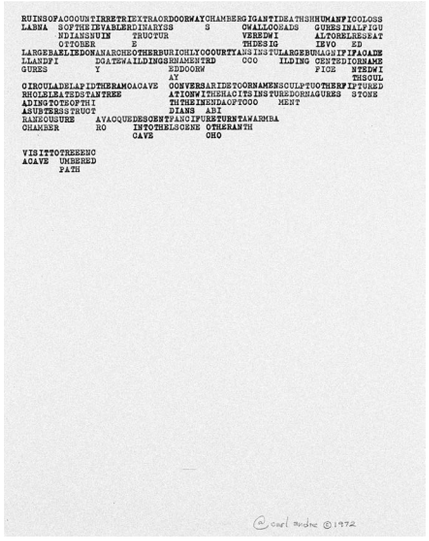

fig 4.3
Carl André, *ruinsof…*, 1975.

André's concern for the visuality and tactility of language and replacing an anthropomorphic perspective were passed over by the majority of those involved in Conceptual Art at the time (and in the context of its ultimate reception). Negating meaning through an interest in paradigmatic construction (in lieu of syntactical ordering), André's understanding and use of language are antithetical to common conceptions of language associated with Conceptual Art. His involvement with poetry, like Vito Acconci's or Graham's initial attempts, was regarded as derisive experimentation. According to Kosuth, the concrete poetry of the time was "a formalization of the artist's material"; it undermined an art that should be general, without busying itself with "aesthetic categorical gerry-mandering".[318] Or as art historian Liz Kotz wrote: "a reliance on rather quaint illustrational or pictorial modes … left much concrete poetry [of the time] out of touch with changing paradigms in the visual arts and the wider conditions of language in modernity".[319]

This so-called gap between poetry and visual art in the 1960s and 1970s is also a point of connection, however, especially once the broader context of Conceptual Art projects and poetical endeavors is taken into account. Central to poetics of the twentieth century, according to Perloff, is a Duchampian "art as a question." This is what transformed "both visual and verbal language." What should be rendered art, according to Duchamp in Perloff's view, are "the things that are art—which is to say, the realm of the mind as well as the eye, the realm of ideas and intellect as well as visual image".[320] The fact that art shouldn't be retinal, like painting, led Duchamp to exhibit "things" that weren't considered art, like the first readymade, the *Bottlerack* (1914), a household item used for drying washed jars. Perloff ranks the *Green Box* (1934), composed of notes or copies thereof and a drawing, among those works that made do with retinal art. The *Green Box* contained a series of "proto-language poems," like the following: "Identifying *To lose the possibility of recognizing 2 similar objects*—2 colors, 2 laces, 2 hats, 2 forms whatsoever to reach the Impossibility of sufficient *visual* memory, to transfer from one object to another the *memory* imprint.—Same possibility with sounds; with brain facts".[321] The abolishment of similarity and memory about which the textual shard speaks would result in a concentration on the *thisness*, on the nominalism of each thing, Perloff comments. This sheer possibility defines the artists' text "Muhheakantuck."

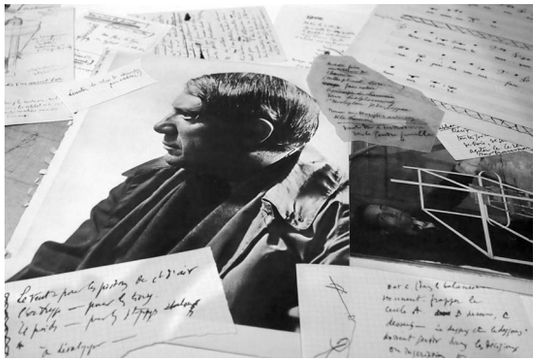

fig 2.9
Marcel Duchamp, *Green Box*, 1934. Photo: Salomé Roodenburg.

Regardless of the differing historical receptions of the period, recent empirical research has demonstrated that what Conceptual Art and poetry shared were experiments with language as material or not material. Language was ambiguous, layered, diversified from the inside, and to be looked at from the outside. These experiments with the equivocal nature and potential of language found a home in the artists' magazine. These magazines, mostly created, produced, and distributed by unofficial circuits and reacting against the institutionalized art world, were materialized encounters. Thus an artists' publication such as *0 to 9* not only invited artists and poets to contribute to the magazine, it also reflected the "shared social spaces in which they became acquainted with one another and exchanged ideas: coffeehouses on New York's Lower East Side, alternative spaces and galleries opening in SoHo." *0 to 9* was initiated by then poet Acconci and poet Bernadette Mayer and it was born out of a juncture of Conceptual Art and experimental poetry (in the words of Mayer: "we didn't want to be surrounded by 'regular' poetry," adding, "there was little reason to write poetry at the same time and not do something else, like be what they called a conceptual artist."). Named after Jasper

Johns's stencil paintings from the mid-1950s, the magazine was published six times from 1967 and 1969. A mimeographed, hand-assembled, stapled publication, *0 to 9* very much emphasized the magazine's materiality, and the materiality of language. It defined itself as a vehicle for action, relying on the magazine's spatiotemporal existence, instead of on its two dimensionality. Thus the cover of number 5 consisted of a crumbled, then flattened sheet of paper, the final jacket of number 6 was intentionally left blank, stressing its ability to register movement and time.

Reflecting on this artistic circle's social concern in the materiality of the magazine, a firm rebuttal of poetry and its interest in materialism and concreteness such as Kosuth's seems strange. What was overlooked at the time is what Duchamp formulated in his notes on the *Green Box* (1934), the assembled writings on his Large Glass: "This *plastic being* of the word / (by literal nominalism) differs / from the *plastic being* of any form . . .". [326] The contemporary artists' writing is based on this difference and the concomitant different functioning of the word vis-à-vis "any form."

Combining conceptual writing and the artists' text, "Muhheakantuck" arrives at processual writing. It doesn't rely on a conceptual kernel, from which its versions diverge, as conceptual writing does. The core of the text varies along with the development of the research. The different versions are logical consequences of this ongoing process. Alongside a poem like Goldsmith's *Traffic* (2007), for instance, the book-length twenty-four-hour transcription of New York radio station WINS's city traffic reports at ten-minute intervals on the first day of a holiday weekend,[327] "Muhheakantuck" doesn't have a defined form. The process isn't documented: it is realized in the artists' text. The contemporary artists' text *as* text thus escapes (or tries to escape, or feigns an escape, acknowledging that capitalism devours and absorbs "everything in its path—including any critique of capitalism".[328] It avoids the trap in which Conceptual artists had walked into by

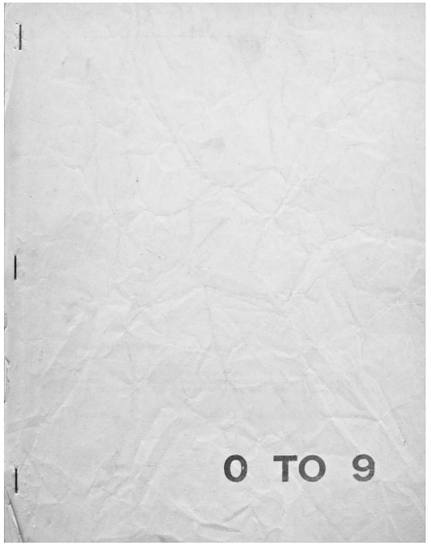

fig 4.5
Vito Acconci and Bernadette Mayer, Cover of *0 to 9*, no.5, 1969.

using language as a medium. The question now becomes: how is this textual strategy realized in artists' writing? Or, how does it translate its acknowledgment, learned from studying the manifold use of language in Conceptual Art, that not all concretisms are alike?

The Archive and History

Reading "Muhheakantuck" in conjunction with poetry is motivated by the different forms of concreteness of the various versions of the Buckingham's text: the 2005 edition is divided into cautiously separated paragraph blocks; the 2008 edition presents a radically fragmented narrative; and the 2007 version renders that narrative continuous. The very form of the artists' text, its handling of what in relation to modern poetry has been termed the blanks and the blacks,[329] verges on what in previous chapters has been referred to as fragmentation. Whereas the form of the fragment reflects on the singularity of the artists' text (chapter 2) and on the question of the subject and of subjectivation (chapter 3), it also divulges the scission at its core: "between poetry and philosophy, between the poetic word and the word of thought".[330] The poetical fragment, exemplified by the work of the Jena Romantics, was not only born at the moment of crisis defined by the Romantics, it represented the attempt at poetry in search of knowledge and philosophy in search of representation.[331] It is precisely this balancing out of epistemological and poetical material force that is central to the artists' writing.

Alternative and alternating modes of reading are intrinsic *to* Buckingham's editions. But what springs to the eye most are the formal variations *between* the versions, instigating dissimilar approaches. The editions read differently due to the alternative rhythms imposed by their forms. The conspicuously fragmented 2008 edition, and its consequences for lineation, the text's division in blanks and in blacks, requires another type of reader's attention: the silences the text demands form the content; and likewise, the content needs a specific form. The broken down narrative shatters representation. As of Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács's writing on the novel, fractured representation has an alienating effect on the reader, due to its contrast against empirical lived reality.[332] The blanks of the artists' writing would thereby demand the reader fill up the text with her imagination, or invite her to cover the text with her own story. The fissured character of the writing urges her to construct it, the schemata created by returning themes (silence, words, language), words ("air, land, water, light"), figures, and details ("more than 23,000 Lenape died in that time. . . . During these same years 7.5 million Germans died in the Thirty Years War") paradoxically directing the reading. The narrative

effect violated and subverted undermines representation of a temporal process. Forced to combine the dissociated elements or poetic sequences in one's own manner, one tends to construct an image of "reality" not necessarily corresponding to the state of affairs. This is where the problem begins, according to Lukács. The blanks generating fragments deny historicity, affording the possibility to "escape into irrational reverence for mythic images," as art historian W. J. T. Mitchell explains elaborating on the "threat" of what could be considered as those "dangerous blanks".[333]

Historicity negated by fragmentation, reveals the continuous narrative of the 2007 version all the more. Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck" is, or rather is introduced as, the transcription of the voice-over of a 38-minute color 16 mm film projection with sound. The film was first exhibited in *Watershed: The Hudson Valley Art Project*, Dia:Beacon, New York, an exhibition curated and organized by Diane Shamash and Minetta Brook in 2002, according to a first footnote to the text. The 2007 edition appeared in the journal *October*. It was preceded by an essay titled "The Artist as Historian" written by art historian Mark Godfrey. Like the details included on the provenance of the artists' text, the dyad Godfrey-Buckingham is an interesting one. They encompass categorizations both the content of the artists' writing and its previously published version deny.

In his article Godfrey addresses the question of historical research and representation he understands as central to contemporary art. Following a short survey of the diversity of historical representations in photography and film in general, he turns to Buckingham's practice. Buckingham investigates various histories, creating his very "own language," according to Godfrey, that language based on three devices: first, the division between image and text; second, each distinct part (image or text) is internally fractured; and third, special installation methods that underscore the importance of history. In analyzing seven Buckingham works including "Muhheakantuck," Godfrey concludes the artist is also a historian. Buckingham does not research only historical subjects, but also their mediums and forms, and his work contains a methodological freedom and creativity, without sacrificing rigor. Through his work the artist critiques master narratives, distancing the work from postmodern practice coined by philosopher Jean-François Lyotard for whom deconstruction is starting point instead of result. The artist-as-historian generates new ways of thinking about the future.

Although I endorse aspects of his contentions in relation to "Muhheakantuck," Godfrey's argument has some serious drawbacks. What is curious and striking about both the art historian's account and, more interestingly, the form of Buckingham's writing, is that what is held in place is what philosopher Gotthold Lessing in *Laöcoon: An Essay Upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting* (1766) called a "bequemes Verhältnis," a convenient relation or homology between, poetry as a temporal art and painting as a spatial art.[334] Like Lessing, Godfrey divides Buckingham's work into text and image, time (reading) and space (looking), passive and active (the passive viewer that needs to be activated). The subsequent presentation of Buckingham's text as a continuous narrative is suddenly suspect: why doesn't the text demonstrate the purported "methodological freedom and creativity" of the artist-as-historian? The textual continuity, coherence, and fullness rather stress the chronological sequence proper to a historiographical record honoring the original occurrence of events. It is precisely this linearity that "Muhheakantuck" criticizes and opposes. Instead, the artists' writing is presented as a narrative that "strains to produce the effect of having filled in all the gaps," as American historian of literary criticism Hayden White would have it. It puts "an image of continuity, coherence, and meaning in place of the fantasies of emptiness, need, and frustrated desire that inhabit our nightmares about the destructive power of time."[335] If the artist is a historian free of scholarly rules and using text in his installations that shifts between registers, as Godfrey suggests, the question arises as to why he is turned into, or turns himself into, such an authoritarian figure on a textual level. The form of Buckingham's discourse seems to emphasize or illustrate the art historian's thesis: this artist is a historian, and a serious one, doing rigorous work. This idea of both the historian's and the artist-as-historian's work constructed by Godfrey, has the narrative fullness of Buckingham's writing presented as a Lukácsean "discourse of the real." It is precisely this accepted linear discourse of the real "Muhheakantuck" tests and, implicitly and explicitly, disputes. Fantasies of emptiness, desires for the unknown is the writing's driving force and central theme. Witness the quest for the Northwest Passage enabling an "easier way to sail from Europe to Asia," drawn on maps commissioned by the "courts and monarchs in Europe," and of which "no one knew whether or not it [the passage] existed" (18). Or consider the following: "One of the first steps in learning a new language is to hear the silence between the words. / Words are convenient and silence can be uncomfortable. / What feels familiar is actually unknown—because we think we already understand the things that are familiar to us" (30–31). Upholding the boundaries between text and image, time and space, active and passive voice, the artist is substituted for the historian, and the historian in the modernist tradition at that. Here Buckingham doesn't speak "his own language." He speaks Godfrey's.

Buckingham's writing can be perceived in another manner, as (re)opening and furthering the debate of the status of the artists' text. Taking my

analysis of the Buckingham-Godfrey relation one step further, the 2007 version of "Muhheakantuck" illustrates the art historian's discourse underscoring that position's argument and ideological position. The traditional hierarchical distance and distinction between framer and framed, the art historian commenting on the artwork, digging up its meaning, is reinstated. The hierarchical division among tasks implicitly undermines Godfrey's statement that deconstruction functions as the artists' writing ground. Since aren't these precisely deconstructivist strategies and textual techniques causing the difference between creator and critic to become vague? The Buckingham-Godfrey argument does not arrive at a form to validate this argument.

The categorical distinctions already prevalent in Aristotle's *Poetics* are maintained: it is the historian's task to articulate particular facts, in contrast with the poet, who expresses universal truths (1451b).[336] "Muhheakantuck" is interspersed with facts ("After 14 epidemics the number of Lenape living in what the Dutch called New Netherland was reduced from more than 24,000 to less than 3,000" [28]). The artists' writing thus rubs shoulders with a historical endeavor. But it can be compared to Conceptual Art as well, and its predilection for facts, numbers and measures, lists, definitions, and catalogues. Witness Stanley Brouwn's work, which since the 1970s took his own physical measures as starting point. But whereas Brouwn disputed the coded lengths by creating his own, Buckingham seems to try to find a new artistic procedure, mediating among institutions. The artists' writing is poetic, as Perloff formulates, poetic discourse being "that which can violate the system, which refuses the formula and the binary opposition between 1 and 2".[337]

What appears as historical research is used and mingled with textual studies, engaging with institutional requests that enact a situational sensitivity. Remember that "Muhheakantuck" was published in a critical reader produced by a smaller art institution (2008), in an academic journal (2007), and in a collection that resulted from an educational collaboration (2005). The artists' writing taking into account the paratextual conditions translating them into aesthetical decisions, it responds to the institutions. The process of transcription is a narrative process as well, however. It is *récriture*,[338] a citation that reveals the failure of designation. If the *process* of citation implies a loss of meaning, citation itself reminds the reader of the impossibility to name. Or vice versa, the repetition inherent in citation signals a desire to name. In Buckingham's writing, the very unfamiliarity of the Western reader with the word *Muhheakantuck* alludes to this dual movement of impossibility and desire. The meaning in the tongue of the Lenape is the Western translation,

a description: the river that flows in two directions. The physical impossibility implicit in the name reveals the difficulty to denote it. Or as Buckingham writes: "The river that became known as the Hudson was not discovered—it was invented and re-invented" (22).

"Muhheakantuck" demonstrates an attempt to name and the failure immanent in that same attempt, a view the transcriptions and their different versions support. The recontextualizations are textual strategies, efforts to reframe the writing's self-reflexive research. They consider the implications of writing and naming. Buckingham notes: "Everything has a name, or the potential to be named, but who does the naming when the unknown is falsely assumed not to exist?" (19) The artists' text not only traces history's blind spots, or the unbridgeable distance between the "*visible*" and the "*dicible*," the "things" and the "words" applied to them, Buckingham's is also a poetical quest to name. What thus seems at stake in the artists' text is not only what Lucy Lippard admitted as Conceptual Art's defeat: the breakdown of the barriers between the art context and "those external disciplines." Michel Foucault's argument that writing is a quest for words and things to find their common essence can be reversed: Buckingham's writing seems to acknowledge that the single word, like the single discipline, is shattered from within.

The artists' writing, its multiple versions and the ongoing research they imply a textual procedure, Godfrey's clear-cut distinction between time and space, between the passive position of the onlooker versus the active one, needs to be reconsidered as well. Or framing the artists' writing as a transcription, the text-image dichotomy is held in place. Crossing the boundaries between disciplines, underlining "Muhheakantuck's" poetical search, this text-image polarity seems invalid. As poet Vanessa Place painstakingly phrased as a historical impasse, "the problem is words are images and images are words".[339]

The Image Again

If the interest in figures and facts seeping into Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck" manifests an attempt to ground the artists' writing, an effort to "denote the real directly," signifying it, thereby expelling the signified from the tripartite structure of the sign (sign = *signifiant* + *signifié*), (Barthes "Reality Effect"), its mathematical grandeur also marks the unimaginable, the unassignable. If meaning operates and "unfolds under the sign of the 'real'",[340] the statistical details bringing about a "reality effect" are nuanced or mined by the texts' designs. The fragmented 2008 version conjures images, the blanks emphasizing a logic immanent

in text and reading *en soi*. The textual spacing also stresses the writing's interest in silence: "Whenever something is said there is also silence" (30), as Buckingham observes.

The artists' writing pivoting around questions of representation ("Our bodies are frameworks with which we create abstract thought and systems of categories" [33]), its narrative sets it apart from Conceptual Art's "informational, documentary idiom" (Lippard), or what Buchloh termed its "aesthetics of administration." Its inspiration does not rely on a need to mime "the operating logic of late capitalism and its positivist instrumentality in an effort to place its auto-critical investigations at the service of liquidating even the last remnant of traditional aesthetic experience." Buchloh continues: "In that process it [the aesthetics of administration] succeeded in purging itself entirely of imaginary and bodily experience, of physical substance and the space of memory, to the same extent that it effaced all residues of representation and style, of individuality and skill".[341] Imagination, physical substance and memory, representation, and skill: they are not only the subject of Buckingham's writing, they decide its form. "Muhheakantuck's" numbers are an "adorable detail"[342] serving another account.

The single name, subject, or discipline dissected in the artists' text can be considered an archeological method. This conspicuous approach is expanded on in the 2005 version especially. Whereas the 2007 edition used indentation to separate sentences and stances, giving the text a staccato appearance and feel, the earliest version of "Muhheakantuck" is divided into paragraph blocks or distinct larger paragraphs that elaborate on single details. Images are provided, illustrating what the text deploys. Thus the first text block explains the "centuries old" "dream of vertical ascent and hovering flight." It meanders between Chinese toys and Leonardo da Vinci's inventions, moving from lighter-than-air balloons to helicopters. Whereas the writing moves from the historical implications of one concept (flying, hovering flight) to the sequence framed by a photograph of a hummingbird, the stratification of "just one word" is always underscored.

As stated earlier, "Muhheakantuck's" last two installments in particular sustain what in relation to Lessing's *Laöcoon* was termed a *bequemes Verhältnis*, "a convenient relation" or homology between poetry as a temporal art and painting as a spatial art. The fact that the text is a transcription (2007) and a voice-over of a film (2008) secures this pact. This information is not only a disclaimer, it separates text and image, time (reading) and space (looking), passive and active (the passive viewer that needs to be activated in his installations). However, the different uses of imagery demonstrate that they do not so much *issue from* the artists' text's status as from the voice-over. "Muhheakantuck" has to be perceived as *also* film and voice-over, or what Perloff would call a "differential" work, "in which no single version necessarily has priority".[343] The *alternate* media of "Muhheakantuck" press on this point: Perloff again, "*knowledge* is now available through different channels and by different means".[344] Knowledge is not exclusive to film or text, time as opposed to space becomes an incoherent basis for the differentiation between text and image.[345] In his study of the problem Mitchell strives for an organization of time in a *coherent* image to replace notions of spatiality regulated by systems of oppositions proposing the use of a *tectonic* "to suggest the global, symmetrical, gestalt-like image that is generally associated with so-called spatial effects." A later study replaces this with *image/text* or *imagetext*. The substitution of terms might shift the relationships between time and space, but the underlying conditions are not challenged. Existing orders are preserved.

His theory straining to respect a historical tradition, Mitchell's analysis also perpetuates structural spatiotemporal divisions. Based on a conservation of these age-old lines of demarcation, the proposition includes a possible revision of the equally age-old comparison between poetry and painting—the latter classical debate pushing off from the statement ascribed to Simonides of Ceos (6th century BCE) that painting is "mute poetry" and poetry a "speaking picture." At the other end of the spectrum, it is framed by Horace (1st century BCE) in his *Ars Poetica*: "ut pictura poesis" (as is painting, so is poetry). Horace emphasizes the correspondence between painting and poetry writing, "poetry is like painting because both have as their subjects existent reality and both are limited in their mimetic adequacy to that reality".[346] Mitchell's imagetext conceives the concept of medium (visual or verbal) as a heterogeneous field of representational practices. Imagetext as a term and concept is recommended "for its persistence as a theoretical tradition, its survival as an abiding feature of poetics, rhetoric, aesthetics and semiotics." He explains his aim as follows: "It is this [theoretical] tradition that gave us the models of interartistic comparison, and that opens the possibility of other relations between texts and visual images, and the de-disciplining between visual and verbal culture".[347] Looking for an appropriate descriptive language to analyze the function of the specific forms of heterogeneity, Mitchell proposes we delve into "the representation itself, and the institutional metalanguage—an immanent vernacular, not a disciplinary theory—of the medium to which it belongs."[348]

Although I agree with Mitchell's suggestion, it doesn't seem radical enough in relation to the contemporary artists' writing. Whereas

Mitchell's theory looks like an alternative for Horace's claim, it insufficiently takes into account Simonides's statement. Comprehended as personifications of painting and poetry, Simonides's attempt to "overreach the boundaries between one art and another" is also an attempt "to dispel (or at least mask) the boundary between art and life, between sign and thing, between writing and dialogue". Even read as a description, instead of personification, Simonides's figure (painting is "mute poetry" and poetry is a "speaking picture") investigates also the ontic mode of the subject matter of aesthetic signs, natural or arbitrary. Contrary to that, Mitchell concentrates on an "attack" of the definitions of the *genres* of poetry and painting, since, as he posits elsewhere, these definitions are marked by ideologically motivated acts of exclusion and appropriation that tend to reify some "significant other".[350]

Discussing the work of Francis Ponge in relation to the artists' writing, the next section will elaborate on ways to bridge the gap between word and world, Ponge's method serving as a possible "alternative" to Mitchell's, which tends to homogenize discourse whereas the artists' text is diffracted and diffracts. *In* and *through* its versions, "Muhheakantuck" articulates the heterogeneous, inventing a means to articulate the disparate and dispersed. Foregrounded as a process, the artists' writing is a heterogenesis. Reframing itself each time, taking the context into account, putting its medium (language) to work, formulating different strategies and techniques. A manner to gain access to the artists' writing is through a transversal approach, taking into account the different contexts that helped shaping it, be they museal (2008 version) academic (2007 version), or related to an art school (2005 version).

The image plays a role in this construction. Holding that the diffracted 2008 text elicits images isn't a way to state that they are imposed on the reader's mind from without. Framing the artists' writing as also poetic discourse, it is a manner through which to understand words as images as well, not only in the materialist sense borrowed (and proved untrustworthy) from Conceptual Art, but also in a more imagistic ("direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective")[351] formulation. This doesn't imply, I hasten to add, a return to a Poundean image poetry defining the image in 1913 as the essence of (its) poetry. A 1960s (art) world struggled with the status of the object due to commercialization and a tightening grip of the economic market, as we already saw. The image likewise revealed itself far from innocent in this spectacular world.

Poetry was challenged by a *videation* of culture.[352] As a consequence the image was deconstructed by poets, analyzed as deceptive (e.g., John Ashbery), replaced by words (e.g., Eugen Gomringer), or emphasis was placed on syntax (e.g., Gertrude Stein). Techniques were invented to relate otherwise to the poem. In *How To Read* (1931) Ezra Pound had distinguished "three kinds of poetry": "MELOPOEIA, wherein the words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing of trend of that meaning. PHANOPOEIA, which is a casting of images upon the visual imagination. LOGOPOEIA, the dance of the intellect among words," that is, it employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes into account "a special way of habits of usage, of the context we expect to find with the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances, and of ironic play. It holds the aesthetic content, which is peculiarly the domain of verbal manifestation, and cannot possibly be contained in music or in plastic. It is the latest come, and perhaps most tricky and dependable mode".[353] One could argue that poetry turned from phanopoeia to logopoeia, and rightly so.[354] What is of interest in relation to the artists' writing, or "Muhheankantuck," is that "plastic" or "music" aren't excluded, and are taken along in the process of writing. It is their very combination or heterogeneity that makes up the work.

Ponge, by Way of Conclusion

This is how French poet Francis Ponge forges an interconnection between "disparate but particular elements."[355] Grounded in a shared familiarity with and elementary knowledge about things, his "descriptions-definitions-objects of literary art" (*descriptions-définitions-objets d'art-littéraire*) try to circumvent prior classifications nevertheless, thereby being more sensible, more striking and enjoyable. Ponge's poems and proems, he states,

> sont donc des descriptions-définitions-objets d'art-littéraire que je prétends formuler, c'est–à-dire des définitions qui au lieu de renvoyer (par exemple pour tel végétal) à telle ou telle classification préalable entendue (admise) et en somme à une science humaine supposée connue (et également inconnue), renvoient, sinon tout à fait à l'ignorance totale, du moins à un ordre de connaissances assez communes, habituelles et élémenaires, établissent des correspondances inédites, qui dérangent les classifications habituelles, et se présentent ainsi de façon plus sensible, plus frappante, plus agréable aussi.[356]

His poems try to transform the word that names the thing in the thing named, and in the singularity it contains. Singing the singularity into being, it makes an effort to overturn prevalent modes of living, action,

and thought. This movement immanent in the poem, and "impossible"[357] poetical strategy leads to a work that seemingly resists interpretation. Ponge's writings hover between theoretical treatise and poetical play, between personal scrapbook and poème en prose. Avoiding categorization, it makes them intractable. This is also due to the "mere" daily objects they discuss rendered both too close and familiar to attain the singularity and propriety of the object (soap, a towel, a table, an orange, a fig), and judged unmanageable for a poetical and philosophical tradition striving for truth.

The "unassignability" of Ponge's poems concerns their object and subject simultaneously, they cannot be split up. The textual strategies they apply to deal with this mingling of wor(l)ds, and the acts of resistance the writings both imply and circumvent are inherent in the artists' writing as well. Both Ponge's and Buckingham's works pivot around the text-image divide, thereby violating the system, refusing the formula and the binary opposition between 1 and 2.[358] Both writers invent ways to deal with the concrete, kept at bay for too long and still seeping into writerly practices and theoretical concepts alike. Witness Mitchell's approach. The question arises as to how the unassignable is realized, and paradoxically so, since doesn't the very concept resist nomination? Ponge's entry into the unassignable might enable an understanding of the artists' writing's operative force, its dynamics.

"Muhheakantuck" is at a far remove from the clear-cut syntactical distribution of the text adhered to in post-structuralism and Conceptual Art. Signs are not what they seem ("In the Lenape language there is no article corresponding to the English word "the." Speakers of Lenape reveal the position from which they speak and express their relationship to what they speak about. Without "the," there is no way to experience our world and not become part of it." [33]). "Muhheakantuck's" reader is not so much brought to a standstill by the writing, but she firmly holds onto it due to an absence of the referent, and given the text's resistance to classified knowledge words imply ("What feels familiar is actually unknown—because we think we already understand the things that are familiar to us" [30–31]). In order to see and communicate with the unknown, Ponge argues, one should understand and teach art to resist words (*résister aux paroles*).[359] Picking up on the particularity of things, letting this leak into language, enabling transitions or passages between words and things, brings about new relationships. Unexpected meanings are revealed or discovered, reinventing both the world and the word, the latter conceived as analogous to things: "PARTI PRIS DES CHOSES *égale* COMPTE TENU DES MOTS."[360] To participate in things equates with a taking into account of words. A liaison based on analogy, it generates

textual circularity. The circular movement can be traced in the artists' text. Looking at "Muhheakantuck" more closely, one becomes conscious of the repetition of themes and phrases not only dispersed throughout the text, but also and especially in the writing's beginning and ending. Consider "Muhheakantuck's" final sentences:

> It's easy to forget that it is the eye that makes the horizon. / In the dream of vertical ascent and hovering flight we glimpse the cartographer's view: a fictional disembodied eye suspended high in the air. But as soon as we follow one line, or one river, and not another, a journey emerges, even if it's only a dream. And of course that journey unavoidably becomes a story. Spaces that have been abstracted, once more become particular places (33).

And the first:

> The dream of vertical ascent and hovering flight seems to have first materialized in China in the form of a toy—a bamboo dragonfly that lifted straight up in the air when spun quickly. / The dream of vertical ascent and hovering flight is a dream of suspending time through distance—of cutting one's self off from ordinary measures of time—"surface time" (17).

Instead of understanding the circularity immanent in Buckingham's work as a post-structuralist closed circuit, it can be apprehended as open-ended also. Due to the histories (pre-texts) it intends to reframe, "Muhheakantuck" allows for multiple readings. "New" words provide writing not only the unknown a more familiar expression could not possibly fathom, they also lend language a "strange" rhythm or flow, much like first experiences (vertical ascent and hovering flight), unexpected facts (numbers), and stories (Juet's diary). Nameless meanings can be discovered, thus disturbing and rupturing the regular course of events.[361] Relationships between words and things are not simply reversed, but redirected and redirecting, mutated and mutating, caught in the process of being reinvented. One could say that it is important not to homogenize the ecology of the artists' text; understanding the environment of the writing as an analogous relationship to the text in fact imparts continuous variation. The three versions of "Muhheakantuck" nurture this idea with their differing approaches in content and design. The title *Muhheakantuck* marks the text's heterogeneity and lack of fixity. "What unfolds in a story—what really *happens* in a story—is language," a language imbued with matter, be it situational or textual, if these can ever really be separated.

Conclusion

Conclusion

This research was spurred by the rise in the last decade of artists' writings: what I define as texts written and produced by visual artists. It takes the artists' text as its material, examining their potentially convoluted nature and finding a method with which they can be addressed. In being confronted with these writings I arrived at a few initial observations: the awkward, forced institutional position of artists' texts stood out, hovering in space between counter and pedestal, between bookshop and exhibition room. Artists' texts were marked by a lack of critique on the part of readers and theorists. By and large, scientific journals, (art) magazines, blogs, and newspapers alike seemed to pass over the writings by Jill Magid, Josef Strau, Gerry Bibby, Dora García, Keren Cytter, Jeremiah Day, Melvin Moti, Matthew Buckingham. Uncategorized, artists' texts were difficult to find, let alone acquire. Classified as novels, theoretical publications, and artists' books, catalogues, magazines, and grey literature, they have been labelled essays, poetry, readers, and any combination of the above. They have been published by art institutions, galleries, small presses, academic or literary publishing houses, or in collaboration with these organizations. Artists' texts developed in the lee of institutional discourse. *Fremdkörper,* or alien elements, they interfere with that discourse, counter it and circumvent it at the same time. This research aims at a method to approach the heterogeneous, nomadic, and unassignable artists' text.

My dissertation is premised on the observation that an awareness of the text *as text* is inherent in the artists' writing, unfolding against the backdrop of post-structuralist thought underlining the discursivity of knowledge and a Conceptual Art that posits the linguistic definition alone as the piece. The question arises whether 1) Conceptual Art can be read differently and 2) whether other histories can be divulged that enable an alternative comprehension of and approach to the artists' text. I turn my focus to the propositions inherent in the texts of artists. Reading the artists' text with textual strategies in its employment of narrative (chapter 1), its handling of form (chapter 2), the author's position (chapter 3), and its use of the word (chapter 4), the compared analysis of these textual procedures has led me to a set of characteristics that inscribe the immanent variations in the artists' text. By means of a theoretical patchwork, I find it possible to grasp these categorically defiant strategies implicit in artists' writing. In tandem I seek a method with which to approach the writing as subject and object.

Not interested in qualifying the artists' text as a *genre* due to the reductiveness of the term, I concentrate on the function of artists' writing: the productive force. Production is not only understood in terms of the economy of production, that is, printing, time, work, etc., but as a form of life, a compound of social, political, and cultural operations closely linked to their environment. These elements surface in artists' writing at different intensities, overlapping with each other and bleeding into each other. The extent to which the artists' writing inhabits a particular constellation, and treads its more or less intricate paths, can be understood when read in a transversal manner, that is, taking into account its crossing of different domains (mental, cultural, social and political, conscious of its material environment), as the four case studies demonstrate.

In order to study the textual function of the artists' text, central themes are singled out: the first chapter investigates narrative construction through Keren Cytter's *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters* (2008); the second chapter considers the form in, of, and through Dora García's *The Inadequate* (2011); the third chapter examines the author in *A Dissidence Coincidence But W.H.C.T.L.J.S.* (2008) by Josef Strau; and the fourth chapter takes up the function of the word in Matthew Buckingham's "Muhheankantuck – Everything Has a Name" (2005, 2007, 2008). The elements that emerge in this research demarcate the different densities, pace, and speed of the texts under review and provide a rubric to evaluate their place in the constellation of artists' writing—and the constellation itself.

Materialization, or Embodiment of Textual Means and Design

The artists' text explicitly relates to language as matter and not matter. While Conceptual artists, the first to conceptualize language as material and means, failed to bypass the problematic status of the object as commodity in capitalist society by the very employment of language, their works all but pulled out of the market they criticized and abhorred, more recent artists' writing acknowledges Conceptual Art's double bind and so-called defeat. Consciousness of art's culpability initiated the invention of alternative strategies to forge liaisons with the (a) world art couldn't (or didn't want to) flee. Instead of valuing a (post-structuralist) textual distance vis-à-vis a world, artists' writing bridges gaps between word and world through a direct relation with the *referent* who rewrites it, instead of using "purely" textual references that following post-structuralism epitomized a world always already postponed and forever out of reach. Thus historical sources are not used as irrefutable (textual) facts (Walser, Von Trier), but are valued as (coincidental) encounters, rumors, hearsay, and *faits divers*. Explicitly not grounded in textual solidity, what might be perceived as an unstable universe of the artists' text is created. In artists'

writing a word is always also a world: it is a wor(l)d steeped in potentiality, an obstinate refusal to display its textual capacities, thereby showing a mastery of its material.

As a result the difference between writer and reader in artists' writing has changed vis-à-vis Conceptual Art's and post-structuralism's address, likewise between text and image. Images are not integrated in writing explaining the text, for instance. Every one-on-one relationship is staved off. The artists' writing is rather conceived as a collaborative work. Elements colliding, its components (referents) are activated to varying degrees: transcribing them (Buckingham's "Muhheankantuck"), rewriting them, or translating them. Witness Walser's story "Der heiße Brei" in García's *The Inadequate*. These are insistently *textual* procedures, their variations affecting the artists' writing's participants in multivalent ways.

The artists' text often marks the position within which it finds itself. Both technique and speech is actualized as the writing is often performative: the different editions of "Muhheankantuck," for example, demonstrate the extent to which the textual form contributes to its performative character; the first two versions, being more descriptive, reporting on a state of affairs. Although a sensate thinking (*aisthesis*) permeate the texts I examine, each generating an onto-epistemological realm (we *know*, because "we" *are* of this world), what the different editions underline is that not all concretisms are created equal.

Narrativity, or Unearthing the Conceptual Kernel

The artists' text describes a narrative line regardless of its fragmented form. Fragmentation has to be understood, then, not so much as a break-up of a narrative, but as complicit in a dispersal of sense instead. Distribution of sense takes place both between bits and pieces of the artists' text, and textual strata that might construe an insoluble whole. Reformulating connections between parts of text that seem intractable and "impossible" at first sight, narrative as *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* is redefined, the confusion of consecution and consequence, reading what comes *after* as *caused by*, is formulated anew. In the artists' writing, narrativity is redeployed starting from a conceptual kernel. This heart of the artists' text can be formulated as an immanent question, relocated in author (Strau) or character (Basaglia, Strau), in history (Buckingham), and/or anecdote (Cytter), disentangled through rewriting, appropriation, translation, the insertion of incomprehensible language, indention, or erasure. While they point out the materiality of the text *as* text, they also secure the communication of a narrative path.

Fiction: Speculation

The artists' text employs fiction to construe relations where logic cannot; it is the artists' writing's inconspicuous *trait d'union*. While fiction is inherent to Conceptual Art's foregrounding of the idea, extending its transient and ephemeral character, it also functions as a means to exploit the unknown (Buckingham), mysterious (Strau), or fantastical (Cytter). The agency of fiction in the artists' text inheres in fiction's capacity for speculation. Predicated on the *between* (García), the *perhaps* (Cytter), fiction is a means to gain knowledge. In this manner, fiction contributes to the artists' text as simultaneously action, praxis, and life of the mind.

World as Immanent in the Artists Text

The artists' text writes with the world in which, or rather, with which it lives. It generates a wor(l)d, based on its own erring thoughts, thereby leaving unexpected and unimaginable, unassignable (Buckingham) tracks. The artists' text situates itself expressly in the world we call real, from which it only apparently drifts away, designating, through the use of fiction, among other tools, what is not (yet) actualized. It does not denote the real directly, however. Performative, expressing what it states, it points at itself as life and lived through form. The artists' writing explicitly refers to the context from which it emerges and of which it forms a constitutive (and incessantly constituent) part—for instance, the exhibition and technical devices contributing to textual genesis in Strau's text. A multiplicity, an assemblage of enunciation in which worlds coalesce, meet only to part ways—the artists' text is an intra-active realm. The artists' text rearticulates language and text understood as functioning, incessantly experimenting with and nuancing reigning laws and discourse. Through this procedure artists' writing expresses its artistic research, its processual functioning as an operative force is underlined.

Reading artists' writing in a transversal manner, taking into account the multiplicity of domains that brings it about. The artists' text that is paradoxically *thick* and unassignable, radical in its effort to unhinge previous classifications of writing, yet "gentle" in the way it affects the institutional discourse to which it is both strange and actively responds. Grounded in empirical research that argues from the experience of external influences (impressions and reflections), and employing a conceptual orchestration enabling one to trace the function of the artists' text, this study allowed me to draw a line around writings that are strangely untimely, disconnected, and out of joint. From this position, adhering to time while keeping a distance from it, the artists' text acts

on a world (heterogeneous, composite) with which it (continues to) write. Acting on and affecting (this) world in multiple ways, several questions emerge as to the effect of this agency.

Thus concentrating on the text as text of the artists' writing, reading, comparing and analyzing its strategies with literature, mostly postmodern literature, the question arises as to how its function can be perceived in light of recent developments in literature. Defined as involved in a world it simultaneously helps to build, it would be interesting to investigate how this method of engagement and creation percolates up into a world with which the artists' text was (initially) held to be intimately linked: literature. Thinking-with-literature, reading artists' writing *through* textual strategies, the question imposes itself if and how these strategies themselves are changed in the process and resonate in that "other" domain. My research, both regarding its object and its method, underpinned by the conviction that the artists' text and literature aren't mutually exclusive, points to the implications of such an approach for the literary discipline with which the artists' text is related in this study.

Another question issues from this somewhat contrived isolation of the artists' text from the (still often) visually oriented art world that brings it forth. The artists' text as a manifold abundance of relations leaves it open to an examination of its affect within an institutional frame, which my study sets it apart from. As the artists' text resists categorization, my question concerns how its willingly *erring life* of and in writing can be understood by traditional art institutions attuned to safe objects and the safe keeping of them. This question taps into the (un)translatability of an artwork (the artists' text) into the language (the art institution's) it reshapes. To what extent can the changes the artists' writing brings about be accounted for in an institutional context given its mode of relations aren't exclusive to an institution's audience? Keeping in mind this paradoxical life of the artists' text that is embedded in an art world it simultaneously debunks we have to (continue to) reconsider institutional frames.

Footnotes

Introduction

1 Goddard 2012.

2 Salvador Dalí, *Journal d'un génie*, 1964; Theo van Doesburg, founder, editor, and regular contributor of the journal *De Stijl* launched in 1917; Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1911; and Henri Matisse, *Jazz*, 1947.

3 Stepping away from traditional art (i.e., painting and sculpture), the comprehension of the visual is nuanced in Conceptual Art. I am aware of this differentiation, sometimes even problematization of the visual in Conceptual Art. However, for reasons of clarity quotation marks indicating this distinctive use of the visual will be left out. And although one of the strands of my argument pivots around the highly disputable visible—invisible divide, prolonged in the traditional image—text dichotomy and its disciplinary consequences, for reasons of clarity I will momentarily keep the distinction intact. In subsequent lines the quotation marks will be left out.

4 Lawrence Weiner entertained the view that "language is red paint," of which Schwarz explains "language is an object like any other, in principle interchangeable and useable, which states facts and can be wielded, without any distance from material reality, as a mere marking" (Schwarz 2007: 181).

5 "Language to be looked at and/or things to be read" (Robert Smithson qtd. in Flam 1996: 61).

6 Kotz 2007.

7 Osborne 2013. For a more historical reading see Wall 2006; see also Krauss 2000.

8 This PhD research begun in 2011 is grounded in my earlier research into the increasing production of artists' writings, which interviews Netherlands-based visual artists who write including Maria Barnas, Keren Cytter, Nicoline van Harskamp, and Falke Pisano. This research was funded by the Fonds BKVB, currently Mondriaan Fonds.

9 Peter Osborne writes the problem of categorization is "*the* problem of contemporary art criticism" [emphasis in original] (Osborne 2013: 102).

10 *Father, Can't You See I'm Burning?*, de Appel arts centre, Amsterdam, 2014.

11 *Object, The Undeniable Succes of Operations*, SMBA, Amsterdam, 2008.

12 Such was the case in Jeremiah Day's exhibition *LA Homicide*, Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam, 2010 and the publication *The Lowndes County Idea—Two Conversations* by Jeremiah Day with Hasan Kwame Jeffries and Fred Dewey.

13 Barthes 2005: 211.

14 I am well aware of the different understandings of post-structuralism, varying from Jacques Derrida's in *Of Grammatology* (1997 [1967]) to Michel Foucault's in *The Order of Things* (1970 [1966]) and Roland Barthes's in *Mythologies* (1957). Influenced by most of them, my understanding of post-structuralism in this research departs from what I see as their common denominator: a differentiation of the binary opposition dominant in structuralism, which argued for a scientific study of structural patterns, based on language, immanent in culture. Next to that, post-structuralists started to study the discursive basis on which structuralists's binary

distinctions of culture fed. The specific case of Roland Barthes's studies and their influences on Conceptual Art is interesting, due to the special commission and inclusion of his essay "The Death of the Author" (1967) in the artists' magazine-in-a-box *Aspen 5 + 6*, where it figured among works by Dan Graham, Sol LeWitt, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Merce Cunningham, and Morton Feldman, among other artists. See also Allen 2011: 43–67.

15 Lippard 1973: 263.
16 Derrida 1997: 158.
17 The terms "artists' text" and "artists' writing" are used interchangeably. For a precise analysis of the artists' text alongside writing see chapter 3.
18 Jakobson 1973: 486.
19 Jakobson 1960: 1. See also Genette 1991: 1–29.
20 Think of Julio Cortazár's novel *Hopscotch* (1963), its chapters commenting on the writing of the novel.
21 Lyotard 1979.
22 The term is borrowed from Guattari, looking at the unconscious as a broader investment of processes within the setting of the hospital. My concept of "transversality" denotes thinking through enunciation along multiple platforms and in various domains, along both political and social lines, leading to an understanding of enunciation as assemblage. For instance discussing "The new aesthetic paradigm" in *Chaosmosis*, Guattari refers to individuals finding themselves "enveloped by a number of transversal collective identities or . . . situated at the intersection of numerous vectors of partial subjectivation. . . . The individual's psychism . . . was connected to a range of expressive and practical registers in direct contact with social life and the outside world" (Guattari 1995: 98–99).
23 Barad 2003.
24 Rancière 2007: 43.
25 Id. 45.
26 Id. 45, 46.
27 Rancière 2010: 211.
28 Rancière 2009: 12.
29 Id. 13.
30 Id. 17, 19.
31 Id. 48-49.
32 "La grande explosion schizophrénique où la phrase s'abîme dans le cri et le sens dans le rythme des états du corps" (Rancière 2003: 55).
33 Rancière 2010: 211.
34 Guattari 2000: 50.
35 "While [ecosophy] shares with traditional ecology a concern for biological species and the biosphere, ecosophy also recognizes 'incorporeal species' that are equally endangered, and an entire 'mental ecology' in crisis: 'How do we change mentalities, how do we reinvent social practices that would give back to humanity—if it ever had it—a sense of responsibility, not only for its own survival, but equally for the future of all life on the planet, for animal and vegetable species, likewise for incorporeal species such as music, the arts, cinema, the relation with time, love and compassion for others, the feeling of fusion at the heart of the Cosmos?'" (Guattari 2000: note 2, 71).
36 Guattari 2000: 28.
37 Rancière 2010: 218.
38 Guattari 2000: 56.
39 Id. 51.
40 Id. 51.
41 See also Goddard, itself an exception. Introductions are often the only critical reflections on artists' texts. See Wallis; see also Stiles. Further exceptions include Lerm Hayes 2015. Recent art critical reflections on artists' writings, some more journalistic, others theoretical: see Miller; Penny, and the ensuing e-flux conversation.
42 Osborne 2013.
43 Named after the Declaration of European Ministers of Higher Education, Bologna, June 19,1999.
44 See, for instance Lesage 2009; see also Slager 2015.
45 See, for instance, Birnbaum and Graw 2008; Diederichsen 2008; Crary 2013; Lütticken 2013.
46 Or as the title of an early publication reads: *Now What? Artists Write.*
47 Lesage's argument revolves around this premise.
48 Goddard underscores the intimate view on the artist and his work the artists' writing provides.
49 Vervaeck 1999; Hutcheon 1988.
50 Genette 1997.
51 Todorov 1970.
52 Hutcheon 1988.
53 Id.
54 Lyotard 2011; Jameson 1972 and 1991.
55 Barthes 1977 "Death of the Author".
56 Hutcheon 1988.
57 Scholes 1979.
58 Blanchot 1993; Agamben 1992.
59 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Harries 1994.
60 Hutcheon 1984; Waugh 1984.
61 Austin 1975; Barthes 1975; Guattari 1989 and 2000.
62 Perloff 1994 and 2010.
63 Derrida 1997; Barthes1977 *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes.*
64 *The Book Lovers* (David Maroto and Joanna Zielinska, ed.) claims the genre of the 'artist's novel,' for instance. See also www.thebooklovers.info.
65 Roberts and Allison 2002.
66 Kotz 2007; Perloff 2002 and 2010; Buchloh 1990; Lippard 1973.
67 Godfrey 2007.
68 Mitchell 1986; Pound 1931.

Chapter 1

69 In my research I largely follow Mieke Bal's terminology in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2009), indicating narrative text, story, and fabula. "A narrative text is a text in which an agent or subject conveys to an addressee ('tells' the reader) a story in a particular medium. . . . A story is the content of that text. . . . A fabula is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors." 5.

70 Barthes 1975: 8.
71 Derrida 1997.
72 Barthes 1977 "From Work to Text": 155 – 164.
73 In my understanding of postmodernity, I am indebted to Jean-François Lyotard's comprehension of postmodernity as an "incredulity toward metanarratives," born of a crisis in the legitization of discourse. Language understood as a composition of heterogeneous elements, instead of a modern homologous system, postmodern knowledge is acquired through an acknowledgment of this incommensurability and of a sensibility to language's differences: consensus cannot be reached in what Lyotard termed the postmodern condition. In a postmodern condition, language is performative. Its efficiency is revalued (Lyotard 1984: xxiii–xxv).
74 Derrida 1997: 158.
75 Guattari 2000.
76 Deleuze 2004: 17.
77 Deleuze 2004: 72.
78 Genette 1997: 2.
79 Jameson 1991: 88. See also Vervaeck 1999: 22–30.
80 Krauss 1985: 211; Barthes 1977 "Rhetoric of the Image": 32-51.
81 Barthes 1977 "Death of the Author": 142-148.
82 Kotz 2007: 63-64.
83 Jakobson 1973: 486.
84 Kosuth 1993: 35.
85 Gérard Genette called this intermediate stage between paradigmatic and the syntactical, between poetry and prose "diction." "The litearture of diction is literature that imposes itself essentially through its formal characteristics . . . without excluding amalgams and blends" (Genette 1991: 21).
86 See Deleuze 2004: 46. The recent interest for the work of Raymond Roussel is remarkable, namely in his *Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres; Impressions d'Afrique*. See for instance the exhibition *Locus Solus*. *Impressions on Raymond Roussel*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid 2011-2012.
87 See Lyotard 1984: 10; see also Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* § 65–84.
88 Lyotard makes three observations in relation to language games. "The first is that their rules do not carry within themselves their legitimation, but are the object of a contract, explicit or not, between players . . . The second is that if there are no rules, there is no game, that even an infinitesimal modification of one rule alters the nature of the game, that a 'move' or utterance that does not satisfy the rules does not belong to the game they define. The third remark . . . every utterance should be thought of as a 'move" in a game" (Lyotard 1984: 10).
89 Linda Hutcheon cites Roland Barthes: "'What takes place' in a narrative is from the referential (reality) point of view literally *nothing*; 'what happens' is language alone, the adventure of language, the unceasing celebration of its coming" Hutcheon 1988: 124.
90 Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 118.
91 Tzvetan Todorov would ascibe the story's affect to its fantastical element. Whereas *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* rubs shoulders with the fantasy genre, I would consider the experience of doubt differently in relation to the artists' text. "Le fantastique, c'est l'hésitation éprouvée par un être qui ne connaît que les lois naturelles, face à un événement en apparence surnaturel" (Todorov 1970: 29). According to Todorov's definition of the fantastical the indispensible element of doubt about the events' interpretation could be impersonated and felt by a character (id. 37, 38). In the case of Cytter's text Tibor Klaus Trier could perform this role par excellence. From a conceptual point of view, however, the conditions for his behavior lie elsewhere.
92 See Jameson 1991: 209.
93 Hutcheon 1988: 34, 49.
94 Owens 1980 "Allegorical Impulse Part 1": 74.
95 Id. 72.
96 Grounded in Walter Benjamin's concept of allegory, Peter Bürger comes up with the following schema: "1) The allegorist pulls one element out of the totality of the life context, isolating it, depriving it of its function. . . . 2) The allegorist joins the isolated reality fragments and thereby creates meaning. This is a posited meaning. . . . 3) Benjamin interprets the activity of the allegorist as the expression of melancholy" Bürger 1984: 69). See also Owens 1980 "Allegorical Impulse Part 1"and "Allegorical Impulse Part 2"; Place and Fitterman 2009.
97 I am refering here to Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the "and" in language, making language stammer through a multilinguality (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 98–100).
98 Jameson 1991: 209.
99 Hutcheon 1988: 153.
100 Id.
101 Bryant 2008.
102 ameson 1991: 155.
103 See Agamben 2000; see also Agamben 2014.
104 Or according to one of the many descriptions of assemblage by Deleuze and Guattari: "semiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding . . . that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of different status. *Collective assemblages of enunciation* function directly within *machinic assemblages*; it is not impossible to make a radical break bwteeen regimes of signs and their objects" [emphasis in original] (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 7).
105 Here I delved into Saul Kripke's important study *Naming and Necessity* (1981). A detailed approach to language being beyond the scope of this research, Kripke's work enables an understanding of the functioning of names and the referential potential of the artists' text.
106 Hutcheon 1988:153.
107 Jameson 1991: 135.
108 See Hegel qtd. in Jameson 1991: 139.
109 Borrowing the term from Gilbert Simondon, I am mostly interested in the dynamic between internal and external space as referred to in Deleuze 2004: 116–135. This movement is constitutive of the transindividual for Simondon and immanent in the way language is employed in the artists' text.
110 I use the term "text" when referring to the text in contradistinction to the drawing; the term "narrative text" designates the narratological layer as opposed to the story and

fabula. See footnote 1.

111 The original pictures in Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark* were drawn by Henry Holiday; they were wood block engraved by Joseph Swain.

112 Bürger 1984: 73–82.

113 Genette refers to these conventions as Seuils, "thresholds of interpretation." *Sueils* is the title of his book in English translated as *Paratexts*. The complete introductory paragraph on paratexts reads: "Paratexts are those liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader: title, forwards, epigraphs, and publishers' jacket copy are part of a book's private and public history." Unpaginated.

114 "The letters that form me and that you see—the moment you try to read them as naming the pipe, how can they say that they are a pipe, these things so divorced from what they name? This is a graphism that only resembles itself, and that could never replace what it describes" (René Magritte cited in Foucault 1998: 187–203).

115 Foucault 1998: 189 -195.

116 In this respect it is interesting to note that Stéphane Mallarmé conceived his grand *Livre* as a performance (Scherer 1978). I return to the issue of performance and performativity in the artists' writing in subsequent pages.

117 Hutcheon 1988: 134.

118 Qtd. in Lippard 1973: 75.

119 Lyotard 2011: 3. Hutcheon singles Lyotard out as "the one analyst who has consistently addressed the question of reference". Hutcheon 1988: 150.

120 Lyotard 2011: 93.

121 Vervaeck 1999: 17-19 and 89.

122 Deleuze 2004: 10.

123 Hutcheon 1988: 69.

124 Derrida 1997: 158.

125 Hutcheon discusses the problem of difference in the chapter "Decentering the Postmodern: the Ex-centric" arguing, "What has been added most recently to this list of 'enabling' differences is that of ethnicity" (Hutcheon 1988: 71).

126 Lyotard argues that "opposition is the condition for the preconscious system, including for temporality, to exist; difference is the threat of its impossibility" (Lyotard 2011: 151). Although I do not necessarily endorse the introduction of the non-conscious to determine the limits of the system accounting for opposition, not for difference, separating opposition from difference is valid for my further analysis, as will be demonstrated subsequently. The possibility and potential of what Lyotard calls "the other space" or figural space enables my reading of the artist's text.

127 "The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us" (Barthes 1975: 142–148).

128 Barthes 1977 "Death of the Author": 142 -148.

129 Barthes 1977 "From Work to Text": 155 – 164.

130 See "Reading and the Division of Labor" Jameson 1991: 131–153.

131 Barthes 1977 "From Work to Text": 156.

132 Jameson 1991: 145.

133 See Jameson 1991: 126-144; see also Foster 1998: ix-xvii.

134 Robbe-Grillet 1961: 137.

135 Jameson 1991: 144.

136 "Non seulement le livre déplut et fut considéré comme une sorte d'attentat saugrenu contre les belles-lettres, mais on démontra de surcroît comment il était normal qu'il fût à ce point exécrable, puisqu'il s'avouait le produit de la préméditation: son auteur - ô scandale! - se permettait d'avoir des opinions sur son propre métier" (Robbe-Grillet 1961: 10).

137 Jameson 1991: 210.

138 Van Wesemael 2011: 107.

139 Jameson 1991: 144.

140 Vervaeck 1999: 17-30.

141 "Modernism, at least as a tradition, has 'won' - but its victory is a Pyrrhic one no different that defeat, for modernism is now largely absorbed" (Foster 1998: ix–x).

Chapter 2

142 Or, in the words of Jean Verrier, realism's introverted mimesis passes into a modernistic procedure, in which "realistic story trappings are reduced to an allegory of the functioning of the narration": "On a passé de l'oeuvre *dans* l'oeuvre à l'oeuvre *sur* l'oeuvre, puis à l'oeuvre *par* l'oeuvre" (qtd. in Hutcheon1984: 12).

143 About the role of chance and the impossibility to apportion it (unlike potentiality), see Deleuze 2004: 69–77.

144 Another volume in *The Inadequate* entitled "tentacular" is included in Dora García, *Mad Marginal Cahier #4. I See Words, I Hear Voices*, 2015.

145 Barthes 1977 "Introduction": 94.

146 Scholes 1979: 124 – 125.

147 Hutcheon 1984: 4, 46.

148 See, for instance, Blanchot 1993; Agamben 1992; and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988.

149 Blanchot 1993: 359.

150 "To write by fragments: the fragments are then so many stones on the perimeter of a circle: I spread myself around: my whole little universe in crumbs; at the center, what?" (Barthes 1977 *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*: 92–93). See also Barthes 1977 *Lover's Discourse.*

151 Hutcheon 1984: 15, 18.

152 Cahier #1 called *From Basaglia to Brazil* was released in 2010. It has been collated into Cahier #2, *The Inadequate*, on the occasion of García's participation at the Spanish Pavilion of the 54th Venice Biennial (June 4 –November 27, 2011).

153 Hereafter the *Mad Marginal* (MM) project is referred to by its full title, and the cahiers as Cahier #1 and Cahier #2.

154 See http://theinadequate.net.

155 The location of the Cahiers is indicated here by their place within *The Inadequate*, followed by page number. If applicable, the digital (d) version page number is included.

156 Eco 1989: 17.

157 Deleuze 1996: 7.
158 Waugh 1984: 88.
159 Barthes 1977 "Introduction": 95.
160 Siegelaub 2016: 190.
161 LeWitt 2016: 120.
162 Harries 1994: 43.
163 Id. 45.
164 Waugh 1984: 42.
165 Bourriaud 2002:15.
166 Id. 31.
167 Bishop 2004: 51–79.
168 Hutcheon 1984: 15, 20, 24, 25.
169 Waugh 1984: 18, 90.
170 Id. 26.
171 Id. 66, 79.
172 Derrida 1997: 142.
173 Id. 144.
174 Id. 149.
175 Derrida 1982: 207–272.
176 Derrida 1997: 143.
177 For an inspiring understanding of this Baumgartian comprehension of aesthetics see Kaiser 2011.
178 See also Dolphijn and Van der Tuin 2012: 124–125.
179 Fineman 1989: 56–57.
180 Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 141.
181 "The pencil and the self-invented stenographic script allowed the purposeful, uninterrupted, introverted, dream-driven hand movement that had become indispensable to his creative method" MM2 32.
182 Qtd. in MM2 32.
183 Agamben 2000: 89–103.
184 Out of order photographs are made into notes and then plates. Of the *Large Glass* Duchamp wrote twenty years after the fact that it was "a wedding of meantal and visual reactions" and an "accumulation of ideas." He argues that "some ideas require a graphic language if they are not to be violated: this is my *Glass*. But a commentary [made up] of notes may be useful, like the captions that go with the photos in a Galeries Lafayette catalog. This is de raison *d'être* of my *Box*" (qtd. in Schwarz 2007: 723–724).
185 "Wandering, amateurism, pilgrimage, foreignness, travel. Avoid the centre. What do I want to talk about?" (MM2; d28); see also, Walser 2013: 53–109 and Sebald 2015: 69–100.
186 Georges Batailles conceives the formless as follows: "A dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus *formless* is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only *formless* amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit" Bois and Krauss 1997: cover page.
187 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988: 52, 63.
188 Id. 39–58.
189 Enumerating several "literary schools" (German Romanticism, Surrealism, Anglo-American New Criticism, Formalism) through which he demonstrates an interest in the fragment, Jameson distinguishes between the first two as canonizing the fragment as genre, and the latter two, as continuously reworking it as it functions in a larger practice (e.g., Ezra Pound's ideogrammatic practice in the *Cantos*, Victor Shlovsky's single-sentence paragraphs) (Jameson 1972: 47–48).
190 Schlegel 1971: 89.
191 The complete *Athenaeum* fragment #77 reads: "A dialogue is a chain or garland of fragments. An exchange of letters is a dialogue on a larger scale, and memoirs constitute a system of fragments. But as yet no genre exists that is fragmentary both in form and content, simultaneously completely subjective and individual, and completely objective and like a necessary part in a system of all the sciences" Schlegel 1971: 170.
192 Qtd. in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988: 49.
193 Blanchot 1993: 151–170.
194 Id. 359.
195 Id. 307.
196 Id. 309.
197 Id. 81.
198 This is how Deleuze and Guattari rephrased this position vis-à-vis the fragment: "Comment produire, et penser, des fragments qui aient entre eux des rapports de difference en tant que telle, qui aient pour rapports entre eux leur propre difference, sans reference a une totalite originelle meme perdue, ni a une totalite resultante meme a venir?" (Deleuze and Guattari 1973: 50).
199 Original French: "La transformation de la parole en une oeuvre poétique, et le système des procédés qui effectuent cette transformation" [translation by author] Jakobson 1973: 486.
200 Jakobson 1960: 350–377.
201 Genette 1991: 21.
202 Id. 7.
203 Barthes 1977 "Third Meaning": 68.
204 Id. 55.
205 In a similar vein, in the same series, the reader is confronted with a gravestone of one Leopoldo Popper. The name is reminiscent of the philosopher of science Karl Popper. But like the first name, the dates marking K. Popper's lifetime do not correspond with that on the tomb.
206 Barthes 1977 "Third Meaning": 67.
207 Barthes 1977 "From Work to Text": 155-164.
208 Waugh 1984: 142–143.
209 Scholes 1979: 124 – 138.
210 Kotz 2007: 265.
211 Bourriaud 2012: 47.
212 Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 87.
213 Collective enunciation is characteristic of minor literature, whose other traits deterritorialize language and the connection of individual to political immediacy (Deleuze and Guattari

1986: 84).
214 Id. 26.
215 Wallis 1987: xii – xvii.
216 Waugh 1984: 7.
217 For example, Andy Warhol's novel *a, A Novel* (1968) conveyed a "dull experience," Nathalie Sarraute's novel *Between Life and Death* (1969) did not manage "to catch much life in [her] formal nets" (Scholes 1979: 124–138).
218 Guattari 2000: 11.
219 Pleading for a "more gentle deterritorialization," Guattari warns against "dissident vectors [that] have become relatively detached from their denotative and significative functions and operate as decorporealized existential materials." He continues: "… as experiments in the suspension of meaning they are risky, as there is the possibility of a violent deterritorialization which would destroy the assemblage of subjectification" (Guattari 2000: 45).
220 Rockhill qtd. in Lerm Hayes 2015: 19.
221 Guattari, 1989: 27ff. See also Guattari 2000: 37, note 22, 78; Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 79–80; and Peter Pál Pelbart, "Schizoscenia," in *The Inadequate*'s Cahier #1 refers to Guattari's "collective agencies of enunciation" (MM1, 189–199).

Chapter 3

222 "The tabernacles are the little huts with a minimum amount of physical protection, built as quickly as possible, dedicated to the life without burdens of property and slave labour, made as yearly reminders of the pleasure of eating, drinking, reading and talking together and having abandoned house, home and life of oppression" (Strau "tabernacle").
223 The references are to Seth Siegelaub's famous differentiation between primary and secondary information, catalogues and books becoming primary information in Conceptual Art, which, undergoing abstraction, no longer depends on its physical presence. "When information is primary, the catalogue can become the exhibition" (Siegelaub 2015: 190).
224 Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 79.
225 Jameson 1972: 47–48.
226 Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 4.
227 Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946: 477.
228 Benveniste 1971: 223–230.
229 Wallis 1987: xii – xvii.
230 Stiles 1996: 1 – 9.
231 Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946: 468–488.
232 Life writing is understood as "forms of analytical and reflective writing that take 'self' or 'selves' as their focus." It includes "all 'genres' of life narrative." It is an "intellectual enquiry that wishes to consider the role of narrative and the formation of identity" (Besemeres and Perkins 2004: vii–xii).
233 The next chapter delves deeper into text-image relationships extending possible historical frames.
234 Barthes 2010: 282.
235 Taylor 1985: 97–114.
236 Foucault 2000: 282.
237 Id. 209.
238 "If you take proper care of yourself, that is, if you know ontologically what you are, if you know what you are capable of, if you know what it means for you to be a citizen of a city, to be the master of a household in an oikos, if you know what things you should and should not fear, if you know what you can reasonably hope for and, on the other hand, what things should not matter to you, if you know, finally, that you should not be afraid of death—if you know all this, you cannot abuse your power over others." And on the question "Thus it is a care of the self that, in thinking of itself, thinks of others?," Foucault resolutely answers: "Yes, absolutely …" (Id. 288–289).
239 Deleuze 2004: 98.
240 Ricoeur 1992: 54. Further distinguishing an action from an event, Ricoeur argues that events happen, actions are what make things happen. What "happens" relies on an observation, a constative utterance, which might be true or false; what is "made to happen" is neither true nor false. It makes an assertion of accomplished actions true or false. Consequently, it is the motive, the intention that demarcates actions from all other events (Id. 61).
241 Id. 119.
242 Id. 140, 147.
243 Next to a dialectic of selfhood and sameness, and a dialectic of selfhood and otherness, Ricoeur describes a detour of reflection by way of analysis to study a hermeneutics of the self (Id. 17).
244 De Certeau 1984; Freeman 1993; Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001.
245 "So I realized that actually this text, subconsciously included as a subtext, is a kind of theoretical problem, but in this quick diary way I wrote, I was not at all intending that. I also realized that there is some kind of second person within me which is capable of telling these stories very quickly, and actually very perfectly. The grammar and everything was really perfect, while all my theory texts always had to be edited, to much actually" (Strau).
246 Buchloh 1990.
247 Lippard 1973.
248 Austin 1975: 60.
249 The appreciation of babble is reminiscent of its personification as Raphael Hythloday in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Hythloday meaning "nonsense peddler" or "expert in idle talk."
250 Virno 2004: 91.
251 Diederichsen 2008: 35, 36. Marx's understanding of *Mehrwert* as part and parcel of capitalist economy is contrasted with *Mehrwert* as "bonus" that characterizes "artistsic *Mehrwert*" as well.
252 Virno marks the double nature of the spectacle as the specific product of a specific industry, the so-called culture industry, it being at the same time human communication as an essentiel ingredient of productive coopertaion in general in post-Fordist society Virno 2004: 60.
253 Id. 91.
254 Id. 91.
255 Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 98.
256 Taylor 1985: 98.

257 "I have a dynamic relationship with the past. It interests me when it's like a possible future, when it's used like it is in science fiction, not when it's treated like a necrophilous memory" (Gonzalez-Foerster qtd. in Gonzalez-Foerster and Lavigne 2016: 27).
258 Gonzalez-Foerster similarly integrated the architecture in the exhibition, painting the entry a fluorescent pink, the color repeated at the end of the exhibition hall.
259 Millet 2016: 42–55.
260 Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 27.
261 Frye 2004: 10.
262 Researching *parrhesia* as a form of "speaking freely" coinciding with speaking the truth, Foucault refers to the Delphic principle as offering technical advice. The Delphic "Know yourself" meant "Do not suppose yourself to be god" or "Be aware of what you really ask when you come to consult the oracle." The artists' text rather seeks a relationship of oneself to oneself. However, the pejorative meaning of parrhesia as unrestricted chattering applies to Strau's writing. See Foucault 1983 and Foucault 2000.
263 The reader is still witness to the artist preparing and researching for the Malmö exhibition.
264 On autofiction as a form of critique for (conceptual) visual art, see De Bloois 2007.
265 Lejeune 1975: 4.
266 Id. 31.
267 Or in Doubrovsky's words: "[n]on seulement auteur et personage ont la même identité, mais le narrateur également: dans ce texte, *je*, *c'est encore moi*."
268 "Autobiographie? Non, c'est un privilège réservé aux importants de ce monde, au soir de leur vie, et dans un beau style. Fiction, d'événements et de faits strictement réels; si l'on veut, autofiction, d'avoir confié le langage d'une aventure à l'aventure du langage …" (Doubrovsky 1988: 69); see also Darrieussecq 1996: 369–380.
269 Wimsatt and Beardsley specify that composition is psychical, evaluation is objective, used to support the argument here for a multifarious *I*. Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946: 476.
270 Doubrovsky's original reads: "élucider … certaines choses encore obscures sur lesquelles la psychanalyse, sans les rendre tout a fait claires, avait éveillé mon attention quand je l'avais experimentée comme patient" (Doubrovsky 1988: 61–79). See also Leiris 1946: 13.
271 Leiris qtd in Doubrovsky 1988: 66.
272 In the words of Lejeune: "La poésie a chance de n'être plus alors qu'un sujet parmi d'autres, et non la règle de production de texte. … ou bien les poètes écrivent leur autobiographie, et ils se trouvent aussi démunis que le sont musiciens ou peintres en pareilles circonstances, ou bien ils n'écrivent pas d'autobiographie du tout."
273 Leiris qtd. in Lejeune 1975: 245.
274 Colonna 2004: 72.
275 Deleuze 1998: 107-114.
276 Genette 1982: 235.
277 Qtd. in id. 236.

278 Or in Barthes rhetoric, "… it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (Barthes 1977 "Death of the Author": 148).
279 Bürger 1984: 68–73. See also Owens 1980 "Allegorical Impulse Part 1" and "Allegorical Impulse Part 2".
280 See, for instance, Freud's "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," analysing the motives for compulsive behavior of, for instance, the child playing roughly. Jacques Derrida referring to Freud defines repression as that which "neither repels, nor flees, nor excludes an exterior force; it contains an interior representation, laying out within itself a space of repression" (Derrida, "Freud" 196–231); see also Derrida *carte postale*.
281 The Surrealists' fascination for Freudian visions can be seen in André Breton's book *Les Vases Communicants*, in which dreams play an important role. However, Freud responding to Breton's work found some serious "inconsistencies."
282 Jacob Fabricius (JF).
283 Blanchot 1993: 386.
284 Id. 383.
285 Derrida also finds the notion of the trace [*Spur*] in Nietzsche. (Derrida 1997: 70); see also Derrida 1979.
286 Derrida 1997: 20.
287 Derrida 1978: 285.

Chapter 4

288 Derrida 1997: 68.
289 See introduction in this dissertation, note 35.
290 Sheikh 2008: 192.
291 Perloff 2010: 131. See also Perloff 2002: 21 – 44.
292 Perloff 1994: 3.
293 Goldsmith 2010: xvii.
294 Dworkin 2010: xxiii.
295 Perloff 2010: 149.
296 Goldsmith 2011: 128.
297 Perloff 1994: 17.
298 Van Dijk 2011: 406.
299 Ezra Pound qtd. in Perloff 1994: 55.
300 Holmqvist 2013; Penny 2016.
301 Bryson and Cytter 2013 - 2014; Fusco 2008.
302 LUMA 2014.
303 Godfrey 2007.
304 Subsequent quotations refer to the 2008 version of "Muhheakantuck – Everything Has a Name."
305 "Ideas alone can be works of art; they are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical" (Lippard 1973: 75).
306 Id. vii, 263–264.
307 Place and Fitterman 2009: 49.
308 Perloff 1994: 114–119.
309 Qtd. in Buchloh 2000: 65–118 and Schwartz 1987: 57–66.
310 Qtd. in Buchloh 2000: 95. "Primary Structures" here refers to the post-minimal and proto-conceptual works in the exhibition of the same name in 1966, organized by Kynaston McShine for the Jewish Museum, New York.
311 Thus Lucy Lippard writes "Conceptual art has not, however, as yet broken down the real barriers between the art context and

those external disciplines—social, scientific, and academic—from which it draws sustenance" (Lippard 1973: 263).

312 Derrida 1997: 6–26.

313 Kotz 2007: 214–215, 219.

314 Deleuze 1993: 76. "Events are produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity, but only under the condition that a sort of screen intervenes." And: "… the screen makes someting issue from chaos, and *even if this something differs only slightly*". Deleuze's exposition examines Alfred North Whitehead's definition of the event, juxtaposing it to that of Leibniz. The former involves extensions, intensities, individuals or prehensions, and eternal objects or "ingressions," the malleability, fluidity, and relationality, I consider processual.

315 Perloff 2010: 52.

316 Mavridorakis 2014.

317 Meyer 2005.

318 Kosuth 1993: 35–36.

319 Kotz 2007: 138.

320 Perloff 2002: 83–84.

321 Qtd. in Perloff 2002: 90–91.

322 See Robert Smithson's press release *Language to be Looked at and/or Things to be Read* (Dwan Gallery, June 1967). The rather cryptic text stipulates the impossibility of words corresponding with their object: "My sense of language is that it is matter and not ideas—i.e., 'printed matter'. R.S. June 2, 1972" (Flam 1996: 61).

323 Allen 2011; Philippot 2013. The contemporary magazine "for and about experimental art writing" *The Happy Hypocrite* reprinted the "seminal magazine or journal" that inspired it, *Bananas* (no. 2, 1975) in its first issue (78–98).

324 Allen 2011: 69.

325 Precursor to the copy machine the mimeograph was invented by Thomas Edison in 1876. Because of its speed cost effectiveness, it enabled the dissemination of poetry in the 1960s (Id. 72–73).

326 Qtd. in Perloff 2002: 90–91.

327 See http://eclipsearchive.org/projects/TRAFFIC/traffic.html; see also Perloff 2010: 146–165.

328 Place and Fitterman 2009: 32.

329 Van Dijk 2011: 407.

330 Agamben 1992: xvi.

331 *Athenaeum* fragment 116, reads "[romantic poetry] tries to and should mix poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism…" (Schlegel 1971: 175).

332 Lukács 2006: 56-59.

333 Mitchell 1986: 97.

334 Qtd. in Mitchell 1986: 98–99.

335 White 1980: 24.

336 "The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose.… The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular" (Aristotle *Poetics* 1451b).

337 Perloff 1994: 189.

338 Perloff 2010: 7.

339 Place 2009: 70.

340 White 1980: 8.

341 Buchloh 1990: 143.

342 Place and Fitterman 2009: 25.

343 Perloff 2010: 131.

344 Perloff 2002: 40.

345 I here agree with W. J. T. Mitchell's argument that there is not only a "wide variety of ways that time may be organized and represented through spatial form in literary works," spatial form is also "no casual metaphor but an essential feature of the interpretation and experiencing of literature" (Mitchell 1980: 271–299).

346 Steiner 1982: 8. See also Mitchell 1986.

347 Mitchell 1994: 100.

348 Id. 101.

349 Steiner 1982: 5.

350 Mitchell 1986: 112.

351 Pound 1954: 3. Ezra Pound's complete definition of imagism reads: "In the spring or early summer of 1912, 'H. D.,' Richard Aldington and myself decided that we were agreed upon the three principles following: 1. Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective. / 2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation. / 3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome".

352 Perloff 1994: 74.

353 Pound 1931: 25, 26.

354 Perloff 1996.

355 I am referring to Christine Brooke-Rose's translation of Pound's ideogrammic method, "it is a juxtaposition of disparate but particular elements, as in (supposedly) the Chinese ideogram." "The ideogrammic method," Pound wrote, "consists of presenting one facet and then another until at some point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register." Both Pound and Ponge find a method to reinvent poetry, language, and the world (Ponge) (Brooke-Rose 1971: 8, 5–6).

356 Ponge 1961: 16.

357 "[La chose] demande l'impossible, elle demande cela même qui est impossible, elle le demande parce que impossible et parce que cette impossibilité même est la condition de possibilité de la demande" (Derrida 1984: 15).

358 Perloff 1994: 189.

359 "l'art de ne dire que ce qu'on veut dire, l'art de les violenter et de les soumettre. Somme toute fonder une rhétorique, ou plutôt apprendre à chacun l'art de fonder sa propre rhétorique, est une oeuvre de salut public" (Ponge 1967: 157).

360 Ponge models his thoughts after Lucretius's *De rerum natura* (1st century BCE): "Voici quel est à peu près mon dessein: je voudrais écrire une sorte de *De natura rerum*. On voit bien la différence avec les poètes contemporains: ce ne sont pas des poèmes que je veux composer, mais une seule cosmogonie" (Ponge 1967: 177). For Lucretius, writing appears in things, it is things, not being different from things. Homologous to things, writing cannot be called a metaphor. "But it was Nature

gave the tongue its different sounds to say, / And expedience
that formed the name of things—much the same way /
We see infants driven to point their finger and to reach /
At what they want to show, precisely from their lack of speech"
(Book V, 1028–1080). However, language can simultaneously
be perceived as a metaphor, according to Lucretius, since
it exceeds life, or vice versa. Writing balances the two
asymmetrical and symmetrical construing a new relation
between the word and the world: "All through these lines of
mine, you see, / Many letters that are shared by many words—
and yet / You must confess that words and lines from this one
alphabet / Have sundry sounds and meanings. Letters only have
to change / Their order to accomplish all of this—and still the
range / of possibilities with atoms is greater" (Book I, 823–828).

361 Lucretius: "When bodies fall through empty space / Straight
down, under their own weight, at a random time and place /
They swerve a little. Just enough of a swerve for you to call /
It a change of course" (Book II, 217–220). The swerve is thus
a differential of matter, happening "in a time smaller than
the minimum thinkable time, so that it has already happened
in the smallest time that can be thought." The clinamen
maintains and preserves; it reverses the irreversible: falling.
Indicating a direction, it introduces the first indication of sense.
See also Deleuze 2004: 291–320.

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Object, The Undeniable Success of Operations, SMBA, Amsterdam, May 25–July 6 2008.
LA Homicide, solo exhibition with Jeremiah Day, Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam, Sept. 4–Oct. 10, 2010 and the accompanying publication The Lowndes County Idea – Two Conversations by Jeremiah Day with Hasan Kwame Jeffries and Fred Dewey.
Locus Solus. Impressions of Raymond Roussel, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Oct. 25, 2011–Feb. 27, 2012.
L'Informe: mode d'emploi, curated by Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, May 22–Aug. 26, 1996.

Pierre Huyghe, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Sept. 25, 2013–Jan. 6, 2014.
Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster: 1887–2058, K20 K21 Düsseldorf, Apr. 23–Aug. 7, 2016.
Les Immatériaux, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Mar. 28–July 15, 1985.
Karl Holmqvist, *Give Poetry a Try*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Mar. 16–Sept. 8, 2013.
Poetry will be made by all! LUMA Foundation, Zurich, Jan. 30–Mar.30, 2014.

Extra Image Credits

Page 38, **fig. 1.3** Hanne Darboven, *Sechs Bücher über 1968 (Six Books about 1968)*, 1968. Soft cover, photocopy (Xerox). 6 books with 365 pages each. 27.6 × 21.5 × 5 cm each. ©Hanne Darboven Foundation, Hamburg/ VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2017.

Page 61, **fig. 2.2** Seth Siegelaub, ed., *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner [Xerox Book]*. New York: Seth Siegelaub and Jack Wendler, 1968. Paper plate offset (offset-printed from a photocopied manuscript), glue-bound, dust jacket in Mylar, 213 × 278 mm, 307 pp. (n.p.), 150 b&w ill. Courtesy Stichting Egress Foundation, Amsterdam.

Page 66, **fig. 2.5** Sophie Calle, "Chambre avec vue"/"*Room with a view*", 2003. One framed text, one framed b/w photograph. 50 × 50 cm (text), 170 × 130 cm (photograph). © Sophie Calle/ADAGP, Paris, 2017. Courtesy Galerie Perrotin.

Page 71, **fig. 2.6** Robert Walser, Microscript 215, recto, undated. The Microscripts consist of 526 pages of varying sizes, on which Robert Walser wrote poetry and prose with a pencil in tiny handwriting during the last decade of his productive years. Courtesy Keystone/Robert Walser-Stiftung/Str.

Page 60, **fig. 3.4** Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster M.2062 (*Fitzcarraldo*), 2014. HD video, special projection, hologram, pepper ghost effect, computer, amplifier, speakers, special foil screen, lights, curtains. 500 × 300 cm (projection screen), 8 × 20 m (minimum size of space). Duration 15:00 min approx. (sound). Edition of 3 (DGF 235). Courtesy: the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin. Photo: © Stefan Altenburger.

Page 134, **fig. 4.2** Marcel Broodthaers, Telephone (*Téléphone*), 1968. New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Painted vacuum-formed plastic plate. 84 × 119 × 0.5 cm. Partial gift of the Daled Collection and partial purchase through the generosity of Maja Oeri and Hans Bodenmann, Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III, Agnes Gund, Marlene Hess and James D. Zirin, Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis, and Jerry I. Speyer and Katherine G. Farley. Acc. no.: 661.2011.© 2017. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

Page 136, **fig. 4.3** Carl Andre, RUINSOFACCOUNTIRRETRIEXTRAORDOORWAY-CHAMBERGIGANTIDEATHSHHUMANFICOLOSS, 1975. From the Yucatan portfolio. Colour Xerox, 27.9 × 21.5 cm. Courtesy the artist; Paula Cooper Gallery, New York; Texas Gallery, Houston; Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Angeles.

Page 138, **fig. 4.5** Vito Acconci and Bernadette Mayer, *Cover of 0 to 9*, no.5, 1969. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (88-S1201 no.5). © Vito Hannibal Acconci.

English Summary

The Artists' Text as Work of Art

For the purposes of my research, I define the artists' text as that written and produced by visual artists. Since the 2000s, there has been an increasing amount of this specific kind of writing. Its obscure relationship to art institutions and systems troubles the question as to how such writing can be approached. In order to clarify its position, I isolate four texts by artists, studying the singularities of the texts as texts, while seeking entrance to each.

While there is a growing surplus of late, the artists' text is not a new form. In the 1960s and 1970s text was often central to making artwork. One reason for this was the influence of post-structuralism on Conceptual artists, who borrowed from it the idea of text as a neutral means. This purview allowed them to adopt text to bypass the problematic status of the art object in a commercialized world. It turned out, however, that text couldn't be used in this manner. So, in their approach to text contemporary artists—learning from their predecessors in Conceptual Art who ultimately found the text just as susceptible to commoditization as the object—closely adhere to a more sensitive awareness of the world in which these texts function. My research analyzes what happens in such texts published since the 2000s. Separating them from their wider visual context, I formulate an alternative to the text-image dichotomy that still dominates approaches to such work. Empirical research is thereby combined with a theoretical orchestration, enabling an examination of how the artists' text functions *as a text*.

Four works and associated questions offer case studies to investigate textual strategies:

1) Keren Cytter's *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters* (2008): How does narrative develop in the artists' text? This analysis involves a reading through postmodern literature and consideration of referentiality.
2) Dora García's *The Inadequate* (2011): What form does the artists' text take? Departing from this work I study the productivity of the fragment through metafiction.
3) Josef Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S.* (2008): What does the author's role consist of? How can the "I" be understood against the background of autobiography, taking into account autobiography's position vis-à-vis autofiction?
4) Matthew Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck – Everything Has A Name" (2005, 2007, 2008): How does the word function? Trying to arrive at an approach less governed by syntactical constructions—dear to post-structuralists—Buckingham's work is read through the lens of poetry.

Narrative Threads and Referential Explorations: Keren Cytter's *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-four Chapters*

Intertextual references and metatextual comments mark the title of Cytter's work. Although this title employs postmodern textual strategies and recalls post-structuralist thought (manifesting an awareness of the text's construction and a diminished distinction between creation of and reflection on it), *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* (2008) is also characterized by references to a world external to the text. Studying the narrative of the artists' text, I analyze the construction of referentiality to possible otherworldly realms. To this end I delve into the role of imagination, function of images, and position of the reader. In addition, the discontinuous writing typical of postmodern literature is taken as a starting point.

The a priori mention of what the work deals with ("the seven most exciting hours") and how it is organized (in "twenty-four chapters") could be considered a postmodern gesture due to its self-conscious and obvious observation of the text's construction. However, the difference between "word" and "world" isn't problematized as it would necessarily be within that vein of postmodern literature given its predilection to expose the "ultrathin" text-as-text. Instead what I call a "torsion" takes place in the artists' text, enabling the transformation of the once negative (that is, barren and gaping) postmodern width into a dynamic and fruitful one. Under the premise that a narrative text has several layers, *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* tests the limits of each by transgressing boundaries (metalepsis) and becoming ambiguous. Ambiguity is created through the use of imagination and doubt to connect signs, giving an alternative meaning to that which was taken for granted before.

The myriad possibilities and potential textual strategies see language as material in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*. Differentiation and a multivalent rhythm gives it an openness, while the material and conceptual possibilities of "just one word" are examined, recalling Fluxus events. Whereas a postmodernist use of language isn't completely absent from Cytter's writing, the imagination and fantastic are also reevaluated. Forging liaisons between the artists' text and an extra-textual world suggests a transversal approach—that is, linking multiple domains (mental, cultural, social, political, economical, and a mixture of these)—in Cytter's work. Rather than a postmodern concentration on a textual rule (a word), a singular more expansive cosmos is created, surpassing textual strictures (a world).

The question then is how this increasingly tangible world is expanded on in the relationship between text and image. The drawings *en soi* already inquire into the exclusivity of textuality whose conceptual kernel—madness—unfolds rather differently in the images. We can conclude that the artists' text has a certain *thickness* that allows for naming the visible. Whereas post-structuralism excluded visibility from participation in language's game, the contemporary artists' text seems to reintroduce it. The thickness inherent to the artists' text is a thickness of the writing process as material, unfolding as the narrative develops.

Due to a lack of traditional boundaries "between" text and image, the reader is activated, distinguishing herself from the postmodern reader in which the time of reading is limited to the time of the text—in Cytter's work the time of reading is not fixed. Analysis of the reader's role reveals the importance of chance and imagination to artists' writing. This is confirmed in the way the reader in Cytter's work is fleshed out, her having a life and opinions of her own.

Formal Experiments in Dora García's *The Inadequate*

Many artists' texts are compiled or collectively authored works. The second chapter inquires into the ways these writings can be understood with García's *The Inadequate* (2011) as case in point. Two cahiers encompass varying forms of contributions written by authors from diverse disciplines in Italian, Spanish, and English. In the artists' text, a quest to find form, in form, and a discussion about form is often inherent. *The Inadequate* rubs shoulders with the literary notion of metafiction wherein critical perspectives on fiction are inserted in the story that reflects upon that very form. I study how the relation between fragmentation and self-reflection is (re)formulated in the artists' text. Two characteristics of metafiction are my points of departure: first, the striving to show that obsolete conventions still function; second, how the barrier between creation and critique gradually fades. How do these aspects relate to the varying forms in which the fragment presents itself in García's text?

The fragment's various appearances suggests a certain textual indeterminacy, while the handling of referents reveals that the artists' text is more strictly curated. *The Inadequate* is an interplay of chance encounters. Chance is what marks the "real" actual fragment, as remainder. The actual fragment does not correspond to the strict textual frame in which it is integrated. *The Inadequate* squares the circle in translating the conditions of the encounter through textual strategies, simultaneously lending the writing its rhythm. The text and subjects discussed are placed

on an equal footing, causing "word" and "thing" to merge.

The fragmentary in (of) the artists text bears similarity to the eighteenth-century *non-finito*: a work *created* as unfinished, and not an actual fragment. But it is also comparable to contemporary art practices in which dialogue and participation contribute to the realization of projects, steeped in the "event" or process. The artists' text can be thought as continuous exchanges between and participation of several aspects (that is, situations, individuals), relations that are "lived through" on a textual level thus nuancing them. Referents are appropriated, expressed in the use of text as material. This is a form of "sensate thinking" in which reflection is intimately connected with the *aisthetic* experience. An onto-epistemological approach to the artists' text in terms of wor(l)ds seems appropriate, in which knowledge of the world is bound up with "our" necessarily taking part in it.

Alongside the fragment as remainder and the constructed fragment, the fragment surfaces as a mixture of life and work in *The Inadequate*, grounded in a Romantic vision. García's text also, in its interplay between life and work letting the referent (Robert Walser in this case) return in several contributions, connects these contributions to generate an extended *mise en abyme*. This structure gives the artists' text a speculative tinge; the metafictional principle that wants to break with conventions is turned inside out, providing a critique of Romantic fragment-based writing. In the artists' text external connections—not internal links—between fragments are forged. The "between" is investigated: an intra-world is created; non-hierarchical juxtapositions are developed: a writing of "and."

In order to bring about equivalencies ("and") fiction is used. Traditional views on fiction are contested in the artists' text, however. Thus knowledge is engendered by fiction, and vice versa—knowledge results in fiction. Distance between fragments is bridged through fiction. But *The Inadequate* also provokes a shock, caused by inconsistent (fictional?) meanings. An aversion to complete understanding dominates the artists' text—a striving for what cannot be named. The objective of this gesture is not unreadability, which is a reproach made when strict textual separations between fragment and frame are not observed. *The Inadequate*'s fragment connotes the unreadable and thus reflects on itself: in the artists' text fragmentation is performative, joining the act of fragmentation to criticism of its effects.

In García's work fiction is connected to the world, reflecting (on) the social basis from which the writing surges forth and "with" which it is

constructed. The artists' text is thus a form of minor literature, which offers alternatives to a dominant (linguistic) order. If we call the artists' text radical, that would be due to its liaisons between "worlds" (cultural, social, political, material), ensuring that none is more prevalent than another letting them act on an equal textual plane.

"I." Or *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S.* by Josef Strau

The use of the "I" is frequent in the artists' text. Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S.* (2008) is such a work. It presents itself as a monograph, but the first person singular voice makes one ask after the position of the author, especially given the text's tendency towards collectivity, it inhabiting a multiplicity of perspectives. The "I" of the artists' text can be situated between a neutral linguistic given and a Romantic manifestation of expression. The "intentional fallacy," mixing up the personal and poetic, looms large, however. The artists' text seems to ask whether analytical observation and psychological construction can (and have to) be separate. I analyze the function of the author comparing "it" to the autobiographical "I" in relation to the autofictional first person singular.

Due to its processual character, its pertaining to process as a method, the artists' text must be considered autobiographical (instead of autobiography). The text-as-autobiographical privileges four aspects wherein the autobiographical: 1) understands time as composed of multiple layers; 2) is an at once retrospective, constructive, and communicative report linking the psychical subject to the social being who communicates the work to a group; 3) is ongoing, and; 4) is transdisciplinary.

The incoherent and constructed aspect of time is already present in the text that opens *A Dissidence Coincidence*, "The Dissident Bible of Ethics, Die Krankheit zum Tode – An Interview." The montage within the title correlates with the text's structure, which reflects the artist's thinking and speech pattern while obscuring who or what is speaking. This structure enables for changes in perspective. Coincidence is the "mysterious starting point," an alibi, a motivation, but also a way to avoid authorship. Due to its discontinuous element, a consistent human form existing in time and space, having consciousness and agency cannot be identified. In the artists' text the "I" is a hybrid of points of view. The question is then why "I" as a textual given returns. The "I" could be said to form itself in the process of writing, thereby internalizing an outside world ("self-writing"). "I" could be comprehended as a narrative identity,

with the first person singular understood as a poetic reply on actions in the narrative. The "I" as an author transforms into a character, in a story he narrates, testing the borders of authorship. The other to which "I" relates and articulates itself, whether life or text, thus contributes to the formation of self ("ethopoiesis" or "poiesis").

This understanding of the "I" corresponds to the text's tendency towards relentless babbling. Strau's work displays striking similarities to the exhibition *Les Immatériaux* (1989), for which the machine (the rise of the computer, in that case) and its (linguistic) possibilities likewise function as a starting point. If this comparison offers a historical alternative to Conceptual Art, a coming to terms with contemporary artists' writing, it also justifies a transversal approach to it, which links varying domains (cultural, political, personal, mental).

The somewhat ironic reference to psychoanalysis in *A Dissidence Coincidence* further taps into the role of writing in constructing the "I." The text communicates a therapy session, and the writing can be regarded as an extension of the treatment. This handling of text can be realigned with the debate between defenders of autobiography vis-à-vis the writers of autofiction. Whereas art and science (psychoanalysis understood as a science by both parties) are strictly separate domains for the "autobiographists," they cannot be isolated from each other for the supporters of autofiction. Although Strau's work seems to share autofiction's point of view the therapy and writing being entangled, it also opposes it by explicitly doubting whether psychoanalysis is a means leading to a better understanding of "the" self, since the existence of a unique, coherent, and assignable "I" cannot be sustained. Strau's writing is largely interested in textual experimentations that lead to the transformation of the colloquial "word" into a poetical "work," endowed with "literariness," that is. The passages between work and word become fluid, porous and malleable, instead of based on difference and distance. In the artists' text writing does not come to a halt, it rather continuing endlessly.

The Aritsts' Text and Poetical Intricacies: Matthew Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck — Everything Has a Name"

Contemporary artists' writings probe frontiers in writing and text. Buckingham's "Muhheakantuck – Everything Has a Name" (2005, 2007, 2008) is such a work, being written in three phases with as many forms. To what extent is this variety reflected in the text's functioning? Can "Muhheakantuck" be considered "differential" writing, a text in multiple stages without a single official one? Is it a form of "conceptual writing" in which the form is brought back to its conceptual kernel? To distinguish function and position in the artists' text, "Muhheakantuck" is analyzed and read through poetry. The role of the word is emphasized, simultaneously testing an alternative to a focus on syntactical constructions preferred in Conceptual Art. The first part of the chapter looks into the crisis of poetry in Conceptual Art. The second part concentrates on "Muhheakantuck" as historiographical work and/or poetically inspired. The third part examines the position of images, concluding with an investigation into the work of French poet Francis Ponge who viewed writing as "descriptions-definitions-literary art objects."

The multiple versions of Buckingham's work can be understood as attempts to catch the process in its middle, something Conceptual artists never succeeded in doing. While their informal and documentary manner sought to avoid the market (to no effect), it also (unjustly) opposed concrete poetry. Marcel Broodthaers's work can be perceived as concretizing this paradox. Contemporary artists' writing shows an awareness that not all concretisms are equal, however.

The several versions of "Muhheakantuck" exemplify this realization, their varying materializations allowing for different readings. The historiographic approach that contextualizes the second version (2007) notwithstanding, Buckingham's writing testifies to textual experiments that render his writing close to poetical discourse, breaking down reigning binary systems (artist-art critic; text-image, in terms of artists' writing).

The image-text dichotomy can be explored through Horatius's claim ("*ut pictura poesis*" [as is painting so is poetry]) and Simonides's comparison between poetry and painting. Horatius sought to bring poetry and painting onto equal footing, them both aiming to depict reality. Simonides's, pleading for painting to be "mute poetry" and poetry a speaking picture, was an attempt to overreach the boundaries between one art and another, simultaneously trying to undo the demarcation between art and life, a position more relevant in relation to artists' writing.

It is pertinent then to consider the possibility for language to deal with the object directly through a conscious manipulation of textual matter. Next to intellectual considerations foregrounded by Conceptual artists ("Logopoeia"), "plastic" ("Phanopoeia") and "musical" ("Melopoeia") elements play their role in artists' writings, in Buckingham's specifically. The work of Ponge epitomizes this junction. In line with his poetical strategies, "Muhheakantuck's" materiality can best be understood as at once context specific while staying close to the plasticity of the text.

Conclusion

This research is prompted by the recent growing production of the artists' text, and a desire to consider how we might comprehend this category. Their hybridity causes these texts to remain *Fremdkörper*, foreign bodies in a discourse that (partly) brought them forth. An awareness of the text inherent to artists' writing is something this research uncovered in Conceptual Art through which the artists' text is often perceived, it simultaneously looking for an alternative approach to them. Focusing on text-inherent propositions, I analyze and compare artists' writing in terms of narrative development (chapter 1), textual form (chapter 2), the role of the author (chapter 3), and poetical experiments (chapter 4). Writing is researched as subject and object at once.

Not interested in genre, which affixes artists' writing while remaining unresponsive to the dynamics that fall outside, I research the *productive force* of these texts. Productivity, here, is understood not solely in terms of economy, but as interplay between the social, political, and cultural elements connected to the situation in which artists' writing finds itself. These texts can best be grasped in a transversal manner, due to their making of liaisons among multiple domains, namely:

1) Materialization, or embodiment of textual means and design: language is both material and not-material. It shows awareness of historical usages of language in Conceptual Art in particular. Dichotomies (text-image, reader-writer) are turned inside out, resulting in a form of sensate thinking, an "aisthesis" connecting sensuous perception and reflection.
2) Narrativity, or unearthing the conceptual kernel: narrative prevails, even if fragmentation dominates. It is grounded in a conceptual kernel, which can be formulated as a question regarding the position of the author (chapter 3) or of history (chapter 4). Safeguarding the text as text also enables communication of and in the text.
3) Fiction, speculation: fiction is used to question the unknown (chapter 4), the mysterious (chapter 3) and the fantastical (chapter 1). Its "agency" is in its speculative capacities; it is a means to acquire and produce knowledge. In this respect, fiction is action, political life, and "life of the mind."
4) World as immanent in the artists' text: the text is written "with" a world in which it appears. A "wor(l)d" is created in this way: the context in which the work is located is expressed, the artists' writing is performative. Experimentation with textual registers (among other textual strategies), unveils the productive force of artists' writing as artistic research.

A transversal approach to the artists' text can result in paradoxical situations. They can be perceived as radical (opposing unilateral discourse) or moderate (reacting on (artistic) discourse). Based on empirical research and within a conceptual frame, I draw a line around the artists' text that is "untimely": at odds with the time in which it is situated and to which it reacts. In my attempt to respond to the function of the artists' text through my research, several questions I intend to pursue have emerged: is my approach relevant to recent developments in literature, to which these texts are close and from which they borrow? In returning to the artificial isolation of the artists' text—since the artists' text rather lives an uncategorized and "erring" life—how will I answer this paradox of institutional frames and the need for their reformulation?

Nederlandse samenvatting

De kunstenaarstekst als kunstwerk

In het kader van mijn onderzoek definieer ik de kunstenaarstekst als een tekst geschreven en geproduceerd door een beeldend kunstenaar. Vooral sinds de jaren 2000 verschijnen er steeds meer van deze specifieke werken. Hun onduidelijke institutionele positie leidt tot de vraag hoe ze kunnen worden benaderd. Om een duidelijker zicht te krijgen op hun positie isoleer ik een viertal teksten en bestudeer ik de eigenheid van de tekst *als tekst*. Zo wil ik tevens tot een benaderingswijze komen van de kunstenaarstekst.

Het fenomeen 'kunstenaarstekst' is niet nieuw evenwel. Met name in de jaren '60 en '70 van de vorige eeuw zijn tekst en schrijven bewust ingezet bij het maken van werk, mede onder invloed van poststructuralistisch gedachtegoed. In navolging hiervan hanteerden Conceptueel kunstenaars tekst als een neutraal medium waarmee de problematische status van het kunstobject in een vercommercialiseerde wereld moest worden omzeild. De poging bleek tevergeefs. Hedendaags kunstenaars leerden van hun voorgangers. Uit recenter geschreven werken spreekt een bewustzijn van het functioneren van de tekst, en het besef dat deze zich ook in een buitentekstuele wereld begeeft. In mijn onderzoek analyseer ik wat er op het niveau van de tekst gebeurt in hedendaagse kunstenaarsteksten, gepubliceerd sinds de jaren 2000. Door ze (tijdelijk) van hun visuele context te isoleren formuleer ik een alternatief voor de beeld-taal dichotomie, die de benadering van kunstenaarsteksten nog altijd bepaalt. Middels een combinatie van empirisch onderzoek en een theoretisch instrumentarium onderzoek ik het functioneren van de tekst *als tekst*.

In vier case studies worden de inherente tekstuele strategieën geanalyseerd en bevraagd:

1) Keren Cytter's *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-four Chapters* (2008): Hoe ontwikkelt zich het narratief? In een vergelijkende analyse met postmoderne literatuur onderzoek ik hoe referentialiteit werkt.
2) Dora García's *The Inadequate* (2011): Wat is de vorm van de kunstenaarstekst? Vertrekkend vanuit dit werk analyseer ik de productiviteit van het fragment door het te lezen met metafictie.
3) Josef Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence* but W.H.C.T.L.J.S. (2008): Wat is de rol van de auteur? Hoe kan de 'ik' worden begrepen in het licht van de autobiografie, met name gezien de positie van de autobiografie in relatie tot autofictie?
4) Matthew Buckingham's "Muhheankantuck – Everything Has A Name" (2005, 2007, 2008): Hoe functioneert het woord? Ik poog tot een andere benadering van de kunstenaarstekst te komen, minder

gedomineerd door syntactische constructies, die geliefd waren onder poststructuralisten. Hiertoe wordt Buckinghams werk gelezen met poëzie.

Narratieve lijnen en referentieel onderzoek in Keren Cytters *The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Trier's Life in Twenty-Four Chapters*

Al in de titel van Cytters werk komen intertekstuele verwijzingen en metatekstueel commentaar voor. Hoewel hiermee lijkt te worden voortgeborduurd op postmoderne tekstuele strategieën en poststructuralistisch denken (de structuur van de tekst wordt benadrukt; het onderscheid tussen kunstwerk en de reflectie erop vervaagt), wordt *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* toch ook getekend door verwijzingen naar een buitentekstueel universum. Door het narratief te bestuderen poog ik de constructies van referentiële verwijzingen te analyseren. Daartoe onderzoek ik de rol van verbeelding, het functioneren van beelden en de positie van de lezer.

Het bij voorbaat, in de titel en expliciet benoemen van wát gelezen wordt ('de zeven spannendste uren uit het leven van meneer Trier') en hóe dat in de tekst zal worden behandeld (in 'vierentwintig hoofdstukken') zou je kunnen bestempelen als postmodern. Maar in tegenstelling tot de voorliefde voor het blootleggen van het ultradunne tekstuele oppervlak in postmoderne literatuur, wordt het verschil tussen 'woord' en 'wereld' in de kunstenaarstekst niet geproblematiseerd. In het kunstenaarstekst wordt wat ik een draaiing (*torsion*) noem gecreëerd. Hierdoor transformeert het ooit postmoderne, negatieve, gapend lege gat tussen termen in een vruchtbare en dynamische plek. Uitgaande van de verschillende vertellagen die in een narratieve tekst te onderscheiden zijn, kun je dan ook constateren dat hun grenzen in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* worden getart. Dit grensoverschrijdend mechanisme (metalepsis) resulteert in een ambigue tekst. Ambiguïteit ontstaat doordat verbeelding en twijfel als middel en onderwerp worden ingezet om verbindingen tussen tekens te creëren, waardoor elke vanzelfsprekende betekenis wordt ondermijnd.

Het benutten van de mogelijkheden en het potentieel van tekstuele strategieën duidt op een beheersing van taal en tekst als materiaal in *The Seven Most Exciting Hours*. Nuances worden aangebracht; een ritme komt tot stand in de kunstenaarstekst, waardoor er openheid in ontstaat: de conceptuele en materiële mogelijkheden van een enkel woord worden onderzocht, in navolging van Fluxus-events. Terwijl een typisch postmodern tekstueel spel niet volledig afwezig is in Cytters werk, vind je erin

ook een herwaardering van de verbeeldingskracht, met name van het fantastische. De brug naar een buitentekstueel gebied die zo wordt geslagen, resulteert in een transversale (*transversal*) benadering van de kunstenaarstekst. Op deze manier wordt rekenschap gegeven van de uiteenlopende domeinen (mentaal, cultureel, sociaal, politiek, en mengvormen van deze) die erin doorsijpelen. In plaats van een postmoderne concentratie op tekstuele dominantie (een *word*) wordt zo een eigen, weids, almaar vertakkend en groeiend universum neergezet (een *world*), dat het tekstuele regime overstijgt.

De vraag luidt vervolgens hoe deze steeds tastbaardere wereld wordt uitgewerkt in de verhouding tussen tekst en beeld. Middels de tekeningen *en soi* wordt een exclusief tekstuele wereld al bevraagd: de conceptuele kern van *The Seven Most Exciting Hours* (waanzin) ontvouwt zich erin op een alternatieve manier. Je kunt hieruit concluderen dat de kunstenaarstekst is behept met een zekere dikte (*thickness*), waardoor het zichtbare wordt benoemd. Waar poststructuralisten visuele aanwezigheid eerder uit het taalspel hadden geweerd, daar lijkt de kunstenaarstekst haar opnieuw te introduceren. De dikte van de kunstenaarstekst betreft het schrijfproces, opgevat als materiaal, dat zich ontwikkelt al naar gelang het verhaal evolueert.

Doordat zo traditionele tegenstellingen 'tussen' tekst en beeld worden genuanceerd, wordt de lezer geactiveerd. Zij onderscheidt zich van een postmoderne lezer (voor wie de tijd van het lezen verknoopt blijft met de tijd van de tekst), aangezien de tijd van het lezen in Cytters werk niet wordt vastgelegd. Analyse van de positie van de lezer onthult het belang en de herwaardering van toeval alsmede van verbeeldingskracht in de kunstenaarstekst. Dit beeld wordt bevestigd in de verbeelding van de lezer in de kunstenaarstekst: ze houdt er een eigen leven en mening op na.

Formele experimenten in Dora García's *The Inadequate*

Een groot aantal kunstenaarsteksten behelst gebundeld werk, of werk geschreven en geproduceerd door een collectief. In het tweede hoofdstuk onderzoek ik hoe dit soort kunstenaarsteksten kan worden begrepen uitgaande van García's *The Inadequate*. Hierin worden in twee cahiers meerdere en uiteenlopende artikelen samengebracht, geschreven in het Italiaans, Spaans en Engels door auteurs afkomstig uit een veelvoud aan disciplines. In de kunstenaarstekst lijkt sprake van een zoektocht náar vorm, ín vorm en een discussie óver vorm. *The Inadequate* is hiermee schatplichtig aan wat in literatuur metafictie heet. In metafictie worden kritische perspectieven op fictie verwerkt in de fictie waarop deze

fictie zelf reflecteert. Ik bestudeer hoe de relatie tussen fragmentatie en zelfreflectie in de kunstenaarstekst (opnieuw) wordt geformuleerd. Daartoe worden twee karakteristieken van metafictie als uitgangspunt genomen. Metafictie streeft ernaar verouderde maar nog altijd geldende literaire conventies bloot te leggen. Daarnaast laat het zien hoe de scheidslijn tussen kritiek en creatie vervaagt. Hoe verhouden deze twee metafictionele principes zich tot de verschillende vormen waarin het fragment zich voordoet in García's tekst?

Lijkt de diversiteit van het fragment in *The Inadequate* aanvankelijk een zekere vrijblijvendheid te suggereren, uit de omgang met de referenten blijkt dat de kunstenaarstekst met een meer dwingend karakter is behept. García's werk is een samenspel van toevallige ontmoetingen. Toeval is wat de ontmoeting deelt met het 'echte', eigenlijke fragment, als overblijfsel. Het fragment-als-rest staat echter op gespannen voet met het stringente tekstuele raamwerk waarin het moet worden geïntegreerd. In *The Inadequate* wordt dit opgelost door de condities van de ontmoeting te vertalen in tekstuele strategieën, wat de tekst bovendien een specifiek ritme verleent. Tekst wordt zo gelijkgeschakeld met het onderwerp dat wordt besproken, waardoor 'woord' en 'ding' versmelten.

Het fragmentarische in (van) de kunstenaarstekst lijkt nog het meeste op het achttiende-eeuwse *non finito*: een werk *gecreëerd* als onaf, en dus geen fragment in de eigenlijke zin van het woord. Maar het vertoont ook gelijkenissen met hedendaagse kunstpraktijken waarin dialoog en participatie worden ingezet bij de totstandkoming van projecten, en die gebaseerd zijn op het 'event' of proces. De kunstenaarstekst kan als een continue wisselwerking en samenwerking tussen meerderen (personen, situaties) worden beschouwd, waardoor ze op tekstueel niveau (opnieuw) worden 'doorleefd' en zo genuanceerd. Referenten worden toegeëigend, wat zich uit in een behandeling van tekst als materiaal. Dit is een werkwijze die je *sensate thinking* zou kunnen noemen, waarbij denken onlosmakelijk verbonden is met de zintuiglijke beleving van dat waarop wordt gereflecteerd. Een benadering van de kunstenaarstekst in termen van *wor(l)ds*, of begrepen als een onto-epistemologisch werk lijkt hier geëigend. Vanuit dat perspectief wordt kennis over de wereld gekoppeld aan het gegeven dat 'we' er deel van uitmaken.

Naast het fragment-als-rest en het geconstrueerde fragment, verschijnt het fragment als een mengeling van leven en werk in *The Inadequate*. Deze behandeling van het fragment lijkt gebaseerd op een Romantische visie erop. Maar García's tekst werkt de samenvoeging van leven en werk uit door de referent (hier: Robert Walser) in afzonderlijke bijdragen terug te laten keren en deze te verbinden, waardoor een verlengde *mise en abyme* wordt geconstrueerd. Een speculatieve noot wordt zo aan de tekst toegevoegd: het metafictionele principe dat wil breken met conventies wordt omgekeerd, een werkwijze die getuigt van een kritiek op het Romantische fragmentarische schrijven. Want in tegenstelling tot de Romantici worden externe (in plaats van interne) links tussen fragmenten gelegd. Het 'tussen' (*between*) wordt onderzocht: een 'intra-world' wordt neergezet. Er is sprake van non-hiërarchische juxtaposities: een schrijven van 'en'.

Om gelijkwaardige verbintenissen tot stand te brengen ('en') wordt gebruik gemaakt van fictie. Traditionele opvattingen over fictie worden in de kunstenaarstekst echter betwist. Zo maakt fictie kennis mogelijk, en andersom: kennis resulteert in fictie. Maar in *The Inadequate* wordt ook een 'schok' tot stand gebracht, veroorzaakt door niet-consistente (fictionele?) betekenissen. Een aversie tegen volledig begrip overheerst. Het doel van deze handeling is echter niet 'onleesbaarheid', iets wat een niet strikt doorgevoerde metafictionele scheiding tussen tekstueel raamwerk en fragment wel wordt verweten. In *The Inadequate* draagt fragmentatie de connotatie van het onleesbare met zich mee, en wijst zo naar zichzelf: in de kunstenaarstekst is fragmentatie performatief: fragmentatie (de handeling) wordt gekoppeld aan een kritiek op haar effecten.

In García's werk is fictie niet losgezongen van de wereld, maar reflecteert ze (op) de sociale basis van de ontmoetingen waaruit de tekst voortkomt en *waarmee* het kunstenaarsschrijven is geconstrueerd. De kunstenaarstekst is hiermee een vorm van 'minor literature', een schrijven dat alternatieven biedt voor een dominante (taal)orde. Als je de kunstenaarstekst 'radicaal' zou willen noemen, dan is dat omdat deze als 'minor literature' verschillende 'werelden' (cultureel, sociaal, politiek, materieel) op gelijkwaardige wijze met elkaar verbindt, dus zonder dat één prevaleert.

'Ik'. Of *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S.* van Josef Strau

Het gebruik van 'ik' komt veel voor in kunstenaarsteksten. Josef Strau's *A Dissidence Coincidence but W.H.C.T.L.J.S.* (2008) is zo'n werk. Het doet zich voor als een monografie, maar alle teksten zijn in de eerste persoon enkelvoud geschreven. De vraag luidt wat de positie is van de auteur, vooral gezien de neiging naar collectiviteit door het veelvoud aan perspectieven dat terugkeert in de tekst. Het 'ik' van de kunstenaarstekst bevindt zich tussen een neutraal linguïstisch gegeven en een Romantische manifestatie van expressie. In het gebruik ervan ligt de 'intentional fallacy' echter

op de loer: zodra je 'ik' zegt wordt het persoonlijke gemakkelijk met het poëtische verward. In de kunstenaarstekst lijkt te worden bevraagd of analytische observatie en psychologische constructie moeten (en kunnen) worden gescheiden. Op deze kwestie zal ik ingaan door het functioneren van de auteur te analyseren en te vergelijken met het autobiografische 'ik', en met name de verhouding ervan tot een autofictionele eerste persoon enkelvoud.

Vanwege het procesmatige karakter van de kunstenaarstekst kan deze het beste beschouwd worden als autobiografisch (in plaats van als autobiografie). In deze kunstenaarstekst-als-autobiografisch is een viertal aspecten van belang, waarin het autobiografische 1) tijd beschouwt als bestaande uit meerdere lagen; 2) moet begrepen worden als een retrospectief verslag, dat tegelijkertijd constructief en communicatief is: het werk lieert het psychische subject aan het sociale individu dat het werk overbrengt aan de groep; 3) een voordurend proces ('ongoig') is en 4) transdisciplinair.

Het perspectief op tijd als gelaagd komt reeds naar voren in de titel van de tekst waarmee *A Dissidence Coincidence* aanvangt, "The Dissident Bible of Ethics, Die Krankheit zum Tode—An Interview". De montage van de titel correleert met het geconstrueerde karakter van het interview dat erop volgt. De enigszins warrige tekst komt overeen met de manier waarop de kunstenaar spreekt en denkt, zo wordt gesteld. De structuur van de tekst maakt interne en externe perspectiefwisselingen mogelijk. Coïncidentie wordt als 'mysterieus startpunt' genomen voor de verspringende tekstuele structuur, als een alibi, een motivatie, maar ook een methode om traditioneel auteurschap te vermijden. Door deze discontinuïteit kan een 'ik' als consistente menselijke vorm bestaand in tijd en ruimte, en behept met bewustzijn en 'agency' niet worden aangewezen. In de kunstenaarstekst is 'ik' een hybride verzameling van gezichtspunten.

De vraag luidt vervolgens waarom 'ik' op tekstueel niveau toch zo frequent wordt gebruikt. Je zou ervan uit kunnen gaan dat het 'ik' zich al schrijvend vormt en de relatie tot een buitenwereld internaliseert ('self-writing'). Daarnaast zou je de 'ik' kunnen opvatten als een 'narratieve identiteit'. 'Ik' moet dan begrepen worden als een poëtisch antwoord op handelingen en acties die het narratief vertaalt. 'Ik' als auteur transformeert zo tot een karakter in zijn eigen verhaal, waarvan hij eveneens de verteller is. De narratologische instantie van de auteur is gebruikt om de grenzen van de auteur te verkennen, met andere woorden. De ander, of het nu het leven is of de tekst, draagt zo bij aan de formatie van het zelf ('ethopoiesis' of 'poiesis').

Dit begrip van het 'ik' sluit aan bij het onophoudelijk 'gebabbel' waartoe *A Dissidence Coincidence* neigt. Strau's werk vertoont hiermee opvallende gelijkenissen met de expositie *Les Immatériaux* (1989), waarvoor de machine (destijds: de juist opkomende computer) en de (talige) mogelijkheden ervan eveneens als uitgangspunt fungeerden. Wordt hiermee een historisch alternatief geboden voor Conceptuele kunst om grip te krijgen op de hedendaagse kunstenaarstekst, de vergelijking met de machine legitimeert tevens een transversale benaderingswijze van het werk, waarin uiteenlopende domeinen (cultureel, politiek, persoonlijk, mentaal) met elkaar worden verbonden.

De ietwat ironische verwijzing naar psychoanalyse in *A Dissidence Coincidence* haakt in op de rol van schrijven bij de constructie van het 'ik'. De tekst vertaalt de therapeutische situatie, schrijven kan eveneens gezien worden als een verlengstuk ervan. Deze behandeling van tekst komt terug in het debat tussen de verdedigers van autofictie en de belangenbehartigers van de autobiografie. Voor de autobiografen zijn wetenschap (psychoanalyse) en kunst gescheiden, voor de autofictonele auteurs zijn poëtische en wetenschappelijke analyses daarentegen niet los te koppelen van elkaar. Schaart Strau's werk zich onder deze laatste zienswijze, toch kan psychoanalyse in de kunstenaarstekst, in tegenstelling tot haar functie in autofictie, niet opgevat worden als gericht op een beter begrip van het zelf. Strau's werk lijkt vooral te worden bepaald door tekstuele experimenten die de transformatie bewerkstellingen van het dagelijkse 'woord' (*word*) in een poëtisch 'werk' (*work*), ofwel *literariness*. De overgangen tussen woord en werk zijn hier vloeibaar geworden, poreus en kneedbaar, in plaats van gebaseerd op verschil en afstand. In de kunstenaarstekst leidt schrijven niet tot een impasse, maar gaat het altijd door.

Kunstenaarstekst en poëtische procedés: Matthew Buckinghams "Muhheankantuck – Everything Has a Name"

In hedendaagse kunstenaarsteksten worden grenzen van schrijven en tekst afgetast. Matthew Buckingham's "Muhheankantuck – Everything Has a Name" (2005, 2007, 2008) is zo'n werk. Het werd in drie fasen en even zovele vormen gepubliceerd. De vraag is in hoeverre deze verscheidenheid haar weerslag kent in het functioneren van de tekst. Kan "Muhheankantuck" als differentieel worden beschouwd, als een tekst bestaand in meerdere edities zonder dat één versie de officiële is? Is het een vorm van 'conceptual writing', een wijze van schrijven waarbij de conceptuele kern wordt teruggevoerd op de tekst zelf? Om de positie en het functioneren van "Muhheankantuck" te bepalen wordt

de kunstenaarstekst geanalyseerd en vergeleken met poëzie. De nadruk ligt op de rol van het woord, waardoor tevens een alternatief voor de voorliefde voor syntactische constructies van Conceptueel kunstenaars wordt getest. In het eerste deel van dit hoofdstuk ga ik in op de crisis tussen poëzie en Conceptuele kunst. Een tweede deel concentreert zich op "Muhheankantuck" als historiografisch werk dan wel poëtisch geïnspireerd. Vervolgens wordt de positie van beeld in de kunstenaarstekst bestudeerd. In een conclusie ga ik in op het werk van de Franse dichter Francis Ponge, die zijn eigen schrijven opvatte als 'beschrijvingen-definities-literaire kunstwerken' (*descriptions-définitions-objets d'art littéraire*).

De meerdere versies van Buckinghams werk kunnen worden gezien als pogingen het voortdurende proces op heterdaad te betrappen, iets wat Conceptueel kunstenaars nooit is gelukt. Terwijl Conceptueel kunstenaars middels hun informele en documentaire idioom (tevergeefs) trachtten de markt te mijden, zetten zij zich tevens (ten onrechte) af tegen concrete poëzie. Het werk van Marcel Broodthaers kan worden gezien als de concretisering van deze paradox. De hedendaagse kunstenaarstekst getuigt, evenals Broodthaers' werk, van een besef dat niet alle vormen van concretisering hetzelfde zijn.

In "Muhheankantuck" blijkt dit bewustzijn uit de uiteenlopende edities, die immers meerdere leeswijzen mogelijk maken. Ook in een historiografische benadering van de kunstenaarstekst moet het tekstuele experiment dat erin tot stand komt worden meegenomen. Middels dit tekstueel experiment weet de kunstenaarstekst zich verwant aan een poëtisch discours, dat (eveneens) heersende binaire systemen wil doorbreken (kunstenaar-criticus; tekst-beeld, in dit geval).

Gaan we in op de tweespalt tekst-beeld, dan kan deze historisch gezien worden begrepen middels Horatius' claim 'ut pictura poesis' (zoals schilderkunst, zo is poëzie). Voor een beter begrip van de kunstenaarstekst is Simonides' vergelijking tussen schilderkunst en poëzie echter relevanter. Terwijl de laatste pleit voor schilderkunst als sprakeloze poëzie ('mute poetry') en poëzie als een sprekend schilderij, poogt het namelijk de grens tussen disciplines te slechten, en eveneens die tussen leven en kunst. Dit is van belang in de benadering van de kunstenaarstekst.

In het verlengde hiervan lijkt het steekhoudend de concretisering van taal in de kunstenaarstekst te zien in het licht van de mogelijkheid het 'ding' direct te behandelen door een bewuste manipulatie van taal als materiaal. Naast intellectuele overwegingen, belangrijk voor Conceptueel kunstenaars ('Logopoeia'), spelen ook 'plastieke' ('Phanopoeia') en 'muzikale' ('Melopoeia') aspecten een rol in Buckingham's tekst. Het werk van Ponge neem ik als voorbeeld. In lijn met zijn tekstuele strategieën kan materialiteit in "Muhheankantuck" het best worden begrepen als context gebonden en tegelijkertijd tekstueel van aard.

Conclusie

Dit onderzoek komt voort uit de recente opkomst van kunstenaarsteksten, en uit een verlangen een manier te vinden hedendaagse kunstenaarsteksten te benaderen. Hun hybride voorkomen maakt dat zij *Fremdkörper* blijven in een hedendaags discours, terwijl ze hier (mede) uit zijn ontstaan. Deze dissertatie vertrekt vanuit de gedachte dat een bewustzijn van de tekst *als tekst* inherent is aan het kunstenaarsschrijven. Ze bevraagt de Conceptuele traditie tegen de achtergrond waarvan hedendaagse kunstenaarsteksten vaak worden beschouwd. Ik concentreer mij op tekstuele strategieën inherent aan de kunstenaarsteksten, maak vergelijkende analyses en bestudeer zo het narratief (hoofdstuk 1), de vorm (hoofdstuk 2), de rol van de auteur (hoofdstuk 3) en poëtische experimenten (hoofdstuk 4). Schrijven wordt als subject en object onderzocht.

In het definiëren van een genre ben ik niet geïnteresseerd evenwel. Dit fixeert immers de kunstenaarstekst en komt niet tegemoet aan de dynamiek van het schrijven. Ik onderzoek daarentegen de *productiviteit* van de kunstenaarstekst, waarbij productie niet alleen als een economisch mechanisme moet worden begrepen, maar ook als een samenspel tussen sociale, politieke en culturele operaties, nauw verbonden met de situatie waarin de tekst zich bevindt. De kunstenaarstekst kan het beste op een transversale manier worden benaderd, omdat zo de verschillende domeinen waarin de kunstenaarstekst beweegt in ogenschouw kunnen worden genomen. Vier kenmerken kunnen worden genoemd die terugkeren in de kunstenaarsteksten die ik heb onderzocht.

1) Materialisatie, of belichaming van tekstuele middelen en ontwerp: taal is materiaal alsmede niet-materiaal. Hieruit blijkt een historisch bewustzijn van het gebruik van taal, met name met betrekking tot Conceptuele kunst. Heersende dichotomieën (tekst-beeld, lezer-schrijver) worden binnenste buiten gekeerd, waardoor een vorm van 'sensate thinking' ontstaat, een 'aisthesis' waarin zintuiglijke waarneming en reflectie verbonden zijn.
2) Narrativiteit, of het blootleggen van de conceptuele kern: de kunstenaarstekst kent een narratief, zelfs als fragmentatie de overhand heeft. Eraan ligt een conceptuele kern ten grondslag, die kan worden geformuleerd als een vraag gekoppeld aan bijvoorbeeld de positie van

de auteur (Strau) of geschiedenis (Buckingham). Wordt zo de tekst als tekst veilig gesteld, het maakt ook de communicatie ván en ín de tekst mogelijk.

3) Fictie: speculatie: fictie is een manier om het onbekende (Buckingham), mysterieuze (Strau) en fantastische (Cytter) te onderzoeken. De 'agency' van fictie ligt besloten in haar speculatieve capaciteiten. Fictie is een middel om kennis te verwerven en te produceren. In die zin draagt fictie bij aan de kunstenaarstekst, opgevat als actie, politieke praktijk en 'life of the mind'.
4) Wereld als immanent in de kunstenaarstekst: de tekst wordt geschreven mét de wereld waarin deze zich voordoet. Een 'wor(l)d' wordt zo gecreëerd: de wereld waarin het werk kan worden gelokaliseerd wordt uitgedrukt: kunstenaarsschrijven is performatief. Erin wordt, onder meer, frequent geëxperimenteerd met tekstuele registers, waarin de productieve kracht van de kunstenaarstekst als artistiek onderzoek schuilt.

Wanneer je de kunstenaarstekst op een transversale manier benadert, kan dit tot paradoxale posities leiden. De kunstenaarstekst kan worden gezien als radicaal (zich afkerend van een al te eenzijdig discours) en meer gematigd (reagerend op datzelfde (kunst)discours). Door empirisch onderzoek en een conceptueel raamwerk te creëren, heb ik geprobeerd een lijn te trekken rondom de kunstenaarstekst die vreemd 'untimely' is, uit de pas lopend met de tijd waarin hij zich begeeft en waarop het schrijven reageert. Als antwoord op dit functioneren van de hedendaagse kunstenaarstekst duiken verschillende vragen op. Allereerst vraag ik mij af of, en zo ja wat mijn benaderingswijze van kunstenaarsteksten zou kunnen betekenen voor recente ontwikkelingen in literatuur, waaraan de kunstenaarstekst verwant is en waaraan tekstuele strategieën zijn ontleend. Ten tweede moet worden teruggekeerd naar mijn kunstmatige isolatie van de kunstenaarstekst, immers de kunstenaarstekst leidt een 'ongecategoriseerd' en 'dwalend' leven. Om tegemoet te komen aan het paradoxale leven van de kunstenaarstekst vraag ik mij af hoe institutionele kaders telkens opnieuw kunnen worden geformuleerd.

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