The time of reading: artists' books and self-reflexive practices in literature

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Leeds

School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies

January 2018

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This project proposes that the reading of an artist's book is one that may entail an experience that is distinctive to the medium, one that encompasses a shift of expectations of what a book is or does. That there is an awareness of the book held in the hands, and of its interactivity and deployment in time, and that this combination of tactile and cognitive negotiation of the mechanisms of the book's structure, sequence and content make for a particularity of engagement. As a dialogical relationship, coming from a personal and infinitely variable experience of the book by its reader/viewer, this is one that is inherently elusive and complex to analyse. In investigating the nature of the temporality of self-reflexive dynamics as an underlying characteristic of the medium, this thesis submits that the foregrounding of the synthesis in time of the mutable and the concrete may be an apposite and constructive approach to exposition and evaluation of this heterogeneous field.

The development of this research and the setting out of the enquiry has been undertaken through the production and methodology of my practice, which takes such auto-reflectivity as manifest subject. The thesis approaches the questions by means of the allusion to the occurrences and strategic use of self-conscious metafictional play in literature, not as a directly comparative study but by appraising the effect in terms of relational, and at times implicit association. Following an outline of the contexts of the critical study of artists' books and of structuralist and post-structuralist narratology and literary theory in terms of the specular, the main portion of the writing is in the form of self-contained sections, in each of which a range of figures and mechanisms are considered, forming an overall constellation of shifting interconnection.

In memory of my parents

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The time of reading

If the book as a primary medium in art practice is a signifying form, might the awareness of its material and dynamic qualities and emblematic cultural resonance lead to a self-reflexive process which is, to varying degrees, common to all artists' books? That if the engagement with these works may be one that encompasses a shift of expectations of what a book is or does, in the initial encounter and then in its reading and a recurring consciousness of holding the book, is this reflective movement in a space of time one that is intrinsic to the reader/viewer's experience? I propose that the identification and analysis of an underlying consciousness of manifestations of this dichotomy and synthesis of the mutable and the concrete, of idea and corporeality may be one means for a theoretical approach to exposition and study across this highly heterogeneous field.

A principal subject of my studio work is this time of reading - the time of the movement of the hand accompanying that of thought, and my book works manifest and investigate various aspects of this auto-reflexive cognisance in the encounter with and the assimilation of a book.

The premise of this enquiry is that the relational exploration of the temporal nature of meta-textual shifts in the negotiations of experimental fiction and that of the artist's book work might be a productive and apposite means of examining the self-reflexive in the medium. For this may be read as a corresponding time of consideration and reprise of the slippage from mimesis to the materiality of written language and from convention and assumption to the surprise and intrigue generated by many artists' books. This is a reading undertaken with reference to structuralist modes in the sphere of literary criticism, especially that of narratology and to post-structuralism's perspective that meaning is evasive and manifold.

My practice and research topic are thus closely interrelated, as one interleaves with and reflects the other through a multiplicity of referential and implicit interconnections. This constellation of possibility is also that of the library, with the gathered books embodying the same mutability of association.

The structure of the project and of the layout of the major part of this thesis takes the library as model; in this I notionally take down some books from the shelf, books with relevance to or the result of the last three years of reading and making. These books, one to each of the distinct portions, are either one of my book works, or representative of an exhibition or project that I have developed. In these sections or books there is analysis of a range of figures and mechanisms, with emphasis given to these strategies at different points in relation to the subject book or theme. The composition may be taken as being in itself an embedded exemplification of the subject of the study, reflexivity in the relations in the space of the book and the time of reading and in the movement from page to page and from book to book.

Artists' books

Throughout this consideration of the experience of the artist's bookwork, I will be using the descriptive and collective term of *artists' books* to refer to books made by artists as primary works, in which concepts have been developed and materialised in the most appropriate and effective form of the book, taking account of the material and dynamic qualities of a book and also of its emblematic cultural resonance.

This seems a straightforward encapsulation of a genre and a praxis, but I employ it with the appreciation that though generally used in the literature and documentation of the medium, this is a working appellation whose suitability has been and continues to be debated as part of the an on-going critical investigation of this very diverse area of art production. Read as semantically awkward or ambiguous, *artists' books* is at times either used with qualifications, or its application resisted, for to define and designate might be to confine and to exclude. And indeed such a category may be taken as open and inclusive - *books, yes made by artists but after all just books* and yet also as a means of specifying (especially within the genre) that they be a certain type of book by artists and not another.

A chronology or overview of artists' involvement with the book is also to some extent that of the book, for since the very earliest books (whatever their cultural and social

context) images have had a place on the page. Throughout much of this history the visual artist's part has tended to be one of complimenting and illustrating an existing written text. Though, not withstanding this arguably subordinate role, there is a productive potential in the third element that comes in the meeting of word and image. One mode of production and circulation, and of transformation in an age of Modernism and technical development, of these conversations by artists with writers and poets were the commissions by publishers and galleries throughout the first half of the 20th century. Yves Peyré writes in the introduction to his survey of such works "The meeting, at the heart of a book, of writing and of the visual has enriched these two modes of expression and raised their accord to an art in itself."[1] An art that he refers to as the *book of dialogue* and identifies as beginning between 1874 and 1876 with the collaborations of the poets Charles Cros and Stéphane Mallarmé with Édouard Manet. This relationship, and at times tension, of these two languages and in the movement from the one form to the other is a dialectic that may be seen to extend to other elements of these works, and to all artists' books, to materiality and idea, page surface and sequence, theme and structure, the interstice of printed text and significance.

Surveys of the medium, taking account of thematic subjects and historical context, and necessarily having to start somewhere or with something, tend to identify a point (or a book as indicative of that moment) when there was a shift from art in a book to the book as cardinal medium for art. As such production is the result of the impulse to experiment and to break away from tradition, much of it cannot but be associated with the Modernist avant-gardes of the first half of the 20th century including Russian and Italian futurism, Constructivism, Dada and Surrealism. And it is often a poet's work, again Mallarmé and his *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard*, with its fragmented typography and activation of the space of the page and

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[1] My translation of, "La rencontre, depuis lors constante au cœur du livre, de l'ecriture et du fait plastique a enrichi ces deux modes de l'expression et haussé leur accord à un art en soi." Yves Peyré, *Peinture et Poésie: Le dialogue par le Livre*, (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2001) p. 4.

of the book, which is cited as an exemplary innovative model.[2] The other period discerned as one of significant development (with several studies having a timeframe of 1960-1980) is that of the artist as sole originator and producer of the work, and book as concept materialised and independent agent. This is an activity read in relation to movements such as Fluxus, Conceptual Art and Minimalism and is one that reflects a high level of intermedia crossover, with influence and collaborative engagement between areas such as music, performance and poetry.

Writing on the medium of artists' books is published as reviews and articles in specialist and general art journals, in exhibition catalogues, as surveys, histories and theoretical studies, and online. Clive Phillpot has been writing appraisals and commentaries since the early 1970s when he was librarian at Chelsea College of Art, later to become director of the MoMA Library, where he founded the collection of book works. His essays have helped to delineate the medium, an identification that has contributed to an increased recognition and the development of other collections and initiatives. The only regular column discussing artists' books in the UK was written by Cathy Courtney and published in Art Monthly between 1983 and 2000, these consisted of reviews of books, exhibitions and occasional interviews with makers. The Book Arts research group at the University of the West of England, led by Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden, produce an online bi-monthly newsletter, the *Artist's Book Yearbook* published every other year and the bi-annual peer reviewed journal *The Blue Notebook*, in addition to surveys, manuals and guidebooks. The publication edited and designed by Chris Taylor and myself that accompanies the Contemporary Artists' Book Fair, documents the occasion's participants and its associated exhibitions and activities.[3] It also incorporates commissioned essays considering an extensive range of topics related to the medium in contemporary art practice, and its contextualisation and dissemination.

[2] "the most significant of Mallarmé's writings to both artists and writers of the twentieth century …" (Castleman 1994: 36), "For Mallarme and for many artists he inspired, the book was about space as much as form" (Bright 2005: 35) and "One signal work, Stéphane Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés*, defines this intuition [that of book as formal, analytic entity] of the whole.", Susi R. Bloch, 'The Book Stripped Bare' in *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, ed. Joan Lyons, (Rochester NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985) p.133.

[3] The annual Contemporary Artists' Book Fair, jointly coordinated by John McDowall and Chris Taylor, was first held in 1998; since 2007 the event and its associated programme of initiatives focused on the book have been undertaken under the title PAGES.

Articles appearing in magazines were early instances of the identification of the book as the embodiment of the current ideological moment, with a concomitant stress on the form being an alternative, democratically accessible space, aiming for independence of production and dissemination from both institutional and commercial spheres of oversight and association. This was an economic and social concern well reflected in the cheaply produced (mimeographed and Xeroxed oneself or printed off-set lithograph in large runs with low unit price due to the economy of scale) editions of simple booklets. The ubiquity of the format also suited to the documentary, information and instruction based art of the time. Consisting of photography and written language, of records of performed acts and the propositions of idea, the temporal or consecutive nature of books was and remains the best medium to not just convey but to be the work. Anne Mœglin-Delcroix notes that "such is the paradox of artists' book in this context […] that an art which by the means of the book notably, gains in conceptualisation what it looses in tangible reality, is not the case for books for which the meeting with art engenders an increased attention to its material reality".[4] These were moves toward a dematerialisation of the art object (as documented and anthologised by Lucy Lippard in *Six years…*) that were conversely realised in the material and physically interactive form of the book, the idea was released but the means of dissemination, in terms of object and signifier could not be ignored.[5]

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[4] My translation of, "Or, tel est le paradoxe du livre d'artiste dans ce context […] d'un art qui, au cours des annees soixante et soixante-dix, par le biais du livre notamment, gagne en conceptualisation ce qu'il perd en réalité sensible, est faux du point de vue particulier du livre, don't la rencontre avec l'art engender une attention accrue de la réalité matérielle." Anne Mœglin-Delcroix, *Esthétique du livre d'artiste 1960-1980: Une introduction à l'art contemporain*, (Marseille: Le mot et le reste, 1997/2012) p. 4.

[5] The complete (somewhat discursive) title which takes up the full front cover is *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972: a cross-reference book of information on esthetic boundaries: consisting of a bibliography in which are inserted a fragmented text, art works, documents, interviews, and symposia, arranged chronologically and focused on so-called conceptual or information or idea art with mention on such vaguely designated area as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth or process art occurring now in the Americas, Europe, England, Australia and Asia (with occasional political overtones) edited and annotated by Lucy R. Lippard.* Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997).

Anne Mœglin-Delcroix's *Livres d'Artistes* is the catalogue to the exhibition curated by her at the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1985, this was a presentation of the field at this time of the prevalence of concept, and her book was the first major text to be set out as a typology of characteristics. In 1997 her comprehensive study *Esthétique du livre d'artiste 1960 -1980: Une introduction à l'art contemporain* accompanied the exhibition co-curated by her at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Through the analysis of over 700 examples this thesis details the inception and development of artists' books through these two decades as integrated in the various tendencies of the time. Following her comment on the physicality of books Mœglin-Delcroix writes that a question underlying the research is why this experimental, avant-garde project in its breaking from the past has utilised such a traditional form as the book. One that she addresses in her elucidation of the means by which the books, in materialising ideas in such a succinct and accessible form, reflected and embodied these new ways to make art. So that the book rather than being solely the means was itself the form of the work, and that in the conceptualisation of the book, innovative approaches to its constraints and facilities led to these manifestations of radical procedures.

Some of the writing, contemporary and retrospective, covering this period and subsequent book works stresses as a fundamental aspect of these, the inexpensive and mass-produced nature of much of this production, drawing an unfavourable distinction with the books made in the tradition of limited editions, ones using fine print techniques which entail a restricted circulation. This is a perceived dichotomy remarked on by Stephen Bury "one characteristic of the artists' books is the constant problematic of uniqueness/multiple and expensive/cheapness" (Bury 2000: 22). Other than an artificially limited number to produce an impression of exclusiveness, amounts of books produced may be reduced by practical constraints such as complexity of construction or cost of materials. The facility, for example, of digital print on demand offers a relatively limited range of technical possibilities which may not to be appropriate for the realisation of an idea, which might, for example, involve cut-outs, atypical folds, print and paper qualities. Not withstanding that a general principle of wide dissemination is to be desired or might be intrinsic to a particular book's concept, equally liberating is that books can be easily made. I suggest that there is the spontaneity in the making of a book, in the process of inscription and folding, of trial and experience, even if only as one copy, for essentially the book -

that one book - is the work, it is self-contained and that work's full realisation is when in the hands of its reader/viewer.

In his preface to the 1985 *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* Dick Higgins writes that with the main focus of most of these books being an experience "*What am I experiencing when I turn these pages?* That is what critics of the artist's book must ask".[6] And this is not simple, to try to relate what a book does is to try to convey a unique event experienced in time, for generally this engagement is a haptic and intellectual interactive one and a myriad of factors such as selection, focus and references are subjective and variable.

Since 1995 several significant surveys and critical examinations have been published. In these reference to historical situation is made, however the methodological framework does not tend to be chronological but generic. Under the thematic headings of defined formal and conceptual concerns distinct examples or a series of works by a particular artist are gathered to demonstrate not comparative characteristic similarities but the complexity and openness evident in the variety of responses to and use of the book. These areas of focus investigate aspects such as that of the book in relation to subject, to modes of signification and its physical structure, highlighting the ways in which formal decisions of process may have been informed by the intent to propose new modes of reading. Although approaches to categorisation differ they all have description and analysis of individual book works at their core. I consider that it can be by means of a thorough and detailed formal description of a book work that it maintains (or at least initially presents) its open and objective potential to the reader of an account of that book and so may minimise the degree of interpretation.

Betty Bright's *No Longer Innocent: Book Art in America 1960-1980* (2005) is a wide-ranging history incorporating every aspect of the environment (and so the people) in which books are produced, circulated, read, exhibited, collected and talked about. Individual books are presented as exemplars and instances of a particular context of making or reception, under short sub-chapters with such headings as *In and Outside of the Atelier* and *Building a network*. Whereas *The Cutting Edge Of Reading:*

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[6] *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, ed. Joan Lyons, (Rochester NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985) p.12.

Artists' Books (1999) by Renée Riese Hubert and Judd D. Hubert takes a more formal and thematic approach, with subjects including the accordion format and satire. The overall content of the study is the exposition and detailed analysis of a relatively small number of selected works to give an ordered overview of the field that the authors describe as "characterized by a bewildering array of factors […] artists' books produce unexpectedly unwieldy and complicated variations on the idea of the book" (Hubert 1999: 7). Therefore process and frames of reference inform the setting of parameters that do seem to assist in the selection of examples and directing the focus of this study.

The title of Leszek Brogowski's *Éditer l'art: Le livre d'artiste et l'histoire du livre* (2016) (*Publishing art: the artist's book and the hi/story of the book* - my translation) encapsulates this complex work well, as it outlines the renewal of art's progressive possibilities through the medium of the book in the form of the ordinary printed book as experienced in daily life. Brogowski is an academic at Université de Rennes, he is the founder of *Éditions Incertain Sens,* a publishing project based at the University, and his book is structured around and takes as its examples the works produced by the press and those exhibited at the University's dedicated exhibition space *Cabinet du livre d'artiste*, which he co-ordinates. This is an activity that is reflected in and informs the dual aspects at the core of his treatise, that of the philosophy of art and of the practical and conceptual nature of the book and its cultural presence.

The scholar and artist Joanna Drucker's *The Century of Artists' Books* (1995) has the widest range of these, in terms of numbers of books examined and of the period covered. Drucker views the artists' book as an inherently 20th century practice and though most of the works surveyed are from the preceding twenty-five years, these are read in relation to significant precursors in a proposed historic progression, set out at the beginning of the study.[7] The first chapter's title, *The Artist's Book as Idea and Form*, indicates the work's project to elucidate the book as instrument, with close analyses giving accounts of the many and diverse ways in which these books

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[7] "given the role which artists' books have played in most aspects of modern and contemporary art, it is particularly important to recognise them as a form in their own right, not an incidental spin-off of other concerns." Joanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, (New York City: Granary Books, 1995), p. vii.

have been a part of and have reflected a wider art practice, with defined areas of focus such as physical format, visual or verbal prevalence and the correspondence of space for performance or exhibition.

A reflexive turn

These and other writings investigate some of the manifold states and characteristics of artists' publications and the means by which they function in themselves and in the world. From the multiplicity of work produced, examples of books and topics of specific concerns have been selected for scrutiny, with attention given to distinct features of the various interdependent material and conceptual constituents of the work and to the different approaches to production and to contexts of dissemination. These include instances of books self-referentially taking as their principle concern diverse formal qualities of the book, or the phenomenology and conventions of reading and publishing, or the appropriation and manipulation of diverse forms of literature, these are topics that will be also addressed in this thesis.

The subject here though, in terms of the focus of my studio work and of the interrelated research questions, is not so much any one such element in the making and reception of artists' books but what I propose may be considered as intrinsic to the experience of each work and of the genre as a whole - that there is a particular awareness on the part of its reader of the book held, and that this phenomenon in which the book reflects back on itself through its reader is the movement of an unanticipated temporality of reading, a self-reflexive movement in a space of time.[8] My practice is in the main comprised of the making of individual books, the subject and mechanism of each of these, and so an underlying concern of my work, is this moment of shift and of looping on the turn of the page.

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[8] A space of time in the sense that Michel de Certeau makes a differentiation between place and space, that "*space is a practiced place.* Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text", Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2011), p.117.

In reading any printed book there is a coming together of the physical and the intellectual, as pages are turned and the signs of written or pictorial language assimilated. Generally however consciousness of the materiality and *objectness* of the vehicle is fleeting and incidental - the book is opened, occasionally a previously read line might be sought, a passage may be underlined, a corner turned down or a bookmark inserted, the book put down or away.

Books by artists are, I suggest, not simply this support of content but are in their cohesive (or intentionally disordered) entirety a text. This could be understood to be the coming together of what I will refer to as theme and structure, with the structure being the material composition (and with this its dynamics of sequence, juxtaposition and correlation) that realises and conveys the idea and subject of the book, the theme. Therefore the reading may start even before the book is opened, from the physical appearance and tactility, the size, shape, binding method and cover material. Though, perhaps before any of these aspects, a reading commences with the fact that it is a book. The book is a ubiquitous cultural artefact and any initial approach and possible future engagements and interpretations may well take into consideration its symbolic and constitutive *bookness*. Given that the form of the book has been chosen as primary and signifying medium for a work of art, that book cannot but incorporate reference to itself, in itself and as one of innumerable other books, to whatever extent this is acknowledged or made manifest.

Further to this underlying specular condition the degree to which other self-reflexive processes whether explicitly evident or suggested, and brought into play or not by the reader of an artist's book, will always be highly mutable, varying from one book to another, from one viewing to a subsequent one. This *noticing* of the book might occur through an appropriation or subversion of conventional styles and formats of publishing, presenting content in either appropriate or incompatible layouts. The book may be the alternative space (to the gallery for instance) for system-based process works, or for information and documentary projects comprising of lists or series of photographs. Attention is drawn to the material substance of the book and to its dynamics when these are used as metaphor and analogy, echoing or in an allusive relation to its topic. The space of each page and from page to page may also be activated in its incorporation into concrete/visual poetry. As an encounter

with the unexpected or a locus for ambiguity, books by artists in proposing the question of what is a/this book or how does it function, are very much open works.[9]

An example of these interrelationships of subject with formal content and structure could be one of Ed Ruscha's books in which several of these formulations are encompassed. In the 1960s and early 1970s Ruscha, a painter and printmaker, also produced a number of books which were commercially printed in runs of up to several thousand copies. Many of these consisted of black and white photographs, taken by the artist, forming a typology in each book - for instance some collect a feature of the urban landscape of Los Angeles such as apartment buildings, palm trees, real estate opportunities. As is the case with many artists' books none of these (apart from a title, date, imprint) carry any paratexts such as an introduction or back cover précis.[10] The covers are plain white with the titles (often including a definite or an unspecified quantity - *twenty-six*, *some*, *various*) printed in unserifed capitals spread across from edge to edge.

His 64-page book *Nine Swimming Pools* comprises of nine colour photographs of outdoor swimming pools and followed by one (non-sequitur) of a broken glass, these are distributed apparently at random among the remaining blank pages. I find that going through the book it is the presence of all these unprinted pages that tend to intrigue, and so to be more engaging and animated than the deserted pools. Of his books Ruscha has said that they "had an inexplicable thing I was looking for, and that was a kind of a *Huh?"* (Ruscha 2002: 65) Could this be taken to be a quality of

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[9] Every work of art may be considered an open work, that regardless of its precision and completeness, and of its maker's focussed objective, each of its readers will have her/his own response, having their own "culture, set of tastes, personal inclinations, and prejudices. Thus, his comprehension of the original artefact is always modified by his particular and individual perspective." (Eco 1989: 3) and that "The possibilities which the works make available always work within a given field of relations." (Eco, 19) Some works though, are made in a more intentional and substantial way to be interpreted and constructed by their performer/audience, evident in the form of, for instance, isolated re-combinable units or incomplete elements.

[10] The reasons that in the main these primary works do not have prefaces, explanations and summaries are varied, but in part it may be considered that they are self-sufficient works and the reader/viewer's experience and reading should not be pre-empted or influenced. Though in some cases such technical, background or other contextual, or additional information will be an integral element of the work.

the elusive or the incomplete in that the book cannot quite be placed, in terms of what it is or says or does, and so in a way is salient in its unsettledness?

Such a foregrounding of the medium in books by artists, which I propose is to some extent notable in all of these works, has of course been inherent to the Modernist project and throughout all disciplines, but books may be seen as distinctive in that there is a directness and intimacy in the engagement that results from the interrelationship of physical contact and intellectual assimilation, as one reflects the movement of the other - a movement of implicit relations in the space of the book and the time of its reading.

The material book consists of its succession of (usually) bound pages, when closed it has a determined compact volume, the space of the book is the space between its pages and as the book is opened and these pages are turned, that space becomes an infinitely mutable one - as page succeeds page from hand to eye to the imagination. This space of the book is the temporality of the book, for books are the incidence and the experience of time. There is the duration of reading (the time given to the book) and there are the compositional temporal elements of the work, such as the divers inherent factors intended to establish (or at least invite) a narrative development or a definitive time span, or maybe to forestall any such serial and consequential progression. In addition to its own physicality each page in this concatenation of sheets might carry written language, graphics or photographs, in a proposed sequential or narrative progression but also as collections and inventories or repetitions or blank and illegible expanses. The substance of one page is carried over to the next in the memory as knowledge of the previous informs the reading of the following, a process that is cognitive and physically interactive and the tempo of pause, reprise and omission indeterminable, being a protean negotiation between book and reader.

Literature

Might this movement, and therefore temporality in the space of the book of a self-conscious subjectivity in the reader/viewer and in the read that I propose as an

inherent quality in artists' books, have correlations with that of the writing of a fiction that accentuates and questions its ontological position by means of diverse auto-reflexive strategies? Procedures of intertextuality and of meta-criticality in which the structure of the fractured or disrupted chronology of the text (as opposed to the linearity of the story) is made evident and brought to the fore, a loss of transparency leading to an abiding or momentary perception of the motion of the written and of the reading as distinct from that of the narrated in that writing. And so might these manoeuvres from unseen to seen be an appropriate and constructive means of investigating equivalent shifts between the intangibility of reading in terms of the assimilation of the signified and of a return to and awareness of the material object in the experience of book as primary art form?

It may be said that self-consciousness has always been a feature of art, that it is its very artifice that makes for an awareness of its ontological situation as interstice between thought and language and the world which it would attempt to give a semblance of, and so it incorporates, to varying degrees, reflections of and on itself. In addition to novels overtly concerned with the writing, reading, thinking about other (at times imagined) novels, all literary fiction as language cannot but refer to itself, and narratives encompass their own narrational strategies and constructions.[11] Modernity, in an age of uncertainty, manifested instances of a more explicit foregrounding of the medium and then a perspective that stable representations were no longer possible led to further more conspicuous and auto-sufficient self-reflexive practices.

The concern of the Russian Formalists was the study of literary texts in and of themselves, and with the medium being a linguistic one, their focus was on the semantic features that constituted poetic language. Theirs was not a hermeneutic inquiry into the meaning or the wider contexts of a piece of writing but the strategies or *devices* by which the texts functioned. One of their principle notions, as advanced

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[11] Linda Hutcheon writes that "What we today refer to as this kind of literary formalism has always existed, the more modern textual self-preoccupation differs mostly in its explicitness, its intensity, and its own critical self-awareness. This progression is likely connected to a change in the concept of language, as Michel Foucault has suggested." Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 2013), p. 18.

by Viktor Shklovsky, was that of defamiliarisation - to make things harder to see or understand, to subvert expectations and so surprise productively. Taking the principle that the art or literariness of the work may be in the obscuring of a pragmatic communicative facility by means of "the deformation not of language but of events and happenings in the process of their verbal representation" (Steiner 2014: 45) - and thus by making strange to make new. Another major formulation by Shklovsky and his colleagues was that of *fabula* and *syuzhet.* Fabula or story refers to the events told about, in their chronological consequential state in a notional reality and *syuzhet* or plot is the constructed form of their narration, these may be out of temporal order with stress given variably to constituting elements, and with differing rhythm, points of view and voices - this is the text as read on the page. Though seemingly implying a teleological order of the telling of what is to be told, a post-structuralist position would be that there is no hierarchy of precedence, plot is not necessarily the means of telling a pre-existing story, instead it may well lead to a story, for instance in Jean Ricardou's view "to compose in this way is not to have the idea of a story, then to arrange it; it is to have a mechanism, then to deduce a story from it" or the difference may be indistinguishable - that the strategy is the story.[12]

Books are experienced in time, and they are an experience of time - there is the moment of reading and there is the constitutive temporal aspect of the work. Generally engagement with the medium involves an assimilation of a consecutive series of pages carrying a materially imposed linear field of printed text. In the case of literary fiction this is a written one, setting out a narration of events through the temporalities of story and plot, of signified and signifier. Narratology is an area of semiotics that considers the relations between identified mechanisms of narrative, treating these as distinct linguistic objects, and Gérard Genette's Structuralist method in particular aims to name and analyse all the elements and mechanisms that constitute the form. In his *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Genette presents a detailed evaluation of the functions and interaction of these devices; this study of narrative as a "linguistic production" is set out under themes such as *order*,

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[12] My translation of, "composer un roman de cette manière, ce n'est pas avoir l'idée d'une histoire, puis de la disposer; c'est avoir l'idée d'un dispositive, puis d'en déduire une histoire." Jean Ricardou, *Le Nouveau Roman* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978), p. 39.

duration and *frequency*.[13] The instance of these particular temporal constructions as encountered on the pages of a novel may in a way be mirrored and rendered more complex in the time and movement of the reading, as factors such as pace, selection and review by the readers in their negotiation of and reflection on the text come into play.

This is an aspect of the act of reading that Roland Barthes described as *lire en levant la tête*, the times when ideas and associations come to mind - a reading interrupted but then returned to.[14] That this mutability would be intrinsic to the condition of all texts being intertexts, that in a multiplicity of ways they derive from and encompass other texts, that books come from other books. An interlacement or intertextuality that encompasses an understanding that all language is constructed from a near limitless network of signifying codes and systems and that meaning is found in relation to context of use and the explicit or allusive (or unintended) derivation or incorporation of one literary text from/in another.

This is a conversation of texts that is non-chronological, the piece that suggests and informs another could have been written later, and so as outlined by Mikhail Bakhtin in his formulation of the dialogic principle, the more recent work may influence a preceding one. Of the limitless possibilities of associative interconnection in the composition of a written text and in its reading Bakhtin argues that "The novel comes into contact with the spontaneity of the inconclusive present; this is what keeps the genre from congealing. The novelist is drawn toward everything that is not yet completed." (Bakhtin 1982: 27). The polysemy and the continuous present of the reading of open works such as these is also that of Barthes' *scriptible* (writerly)

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[13] "The temporality of written narrative is to some extent conditional or instrumental; produced in time, like everything else, written narrative exists in space and as space, and the time needed for 'consuming' it is the time needed for crossing or traversing it, like a road or a field. The narrative text, like every other text, has no other temporality than what it borrows, metonymically, from its own reading." Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in* Method, (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press 1983), p. 34.

[14] "Has it never happened, as you were reading a book, that you kept stopping as you read, not because you weren't interested, but because you were: because of a flow of ideas, stimuli, associations? In a word, haven't you ever happened *to read while looking up from your book*? Roland Barthes, 'Writing Reading' in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. by Richard Howard, (Berkeley and Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 1989), p. 29.

texts.[15] These are ones that Barthes opposes to the *lisible* (readerly) that use established signifying codes and a transparent style of rhetorical stratagems and literary conventions - with these the reader is the recipient of a determined unchanging meaning. In contrast, the *scriptable* unsettles the reader's expectations by self-consciously calling attention to its own constructedness, interrupting the possibility of a realist representation and disrupting the flow of even anachronic narrative structures.[16] This self-reflexivity is one that enables the reader to be the producer of the text and of its signification, in the now of the present moment of the text's reading - a text that writes itself in that reading.

There have always been works of literature that have incorporated evident (or implicit) mechanisms of self-referentiality, with exemplars in the early modern period such as *Don Quixote*, or *Tristram Shandy* which Viktor Shklovsky describes as utilising the device of laying bare the device.[17] This emphasis on discourse over that of fabula (when the reader becomes aware that the fiction is cognisant of its own artifice) has taken differing forms historically in a wide diversity of works. But it is with the meta-criticality that came with post-structuralism that this writing of a fiction that investigates and theorises itself through its practice came to prominence. Although such a programme may be thought of as isolated from the world in its self-regard, as Linda Hutcheon emphases in *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox,* a life-art connection is affirmed rather than eroded or broken

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[15] These are texts that may be perceived to always be in the present of their reading/making, which Barthes proposes is "the writerly text is *ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages." *S/Z* trans. by Richard Miller Basil, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), p. 5.

[16] "Anachrony - a discordance between the order in which events (are said to) occur and the order in which they are recounted." Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, (Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press 2003), p. 5.

[17] Though this could be seen as a highly partial reading of Sterne, whose interests and humour encompass much more than the purely formal. "Sterne was a radical revolutionary as far as form is concerned. It was typical of him to lay bare the device. The aesthetic form is presented without any motivation whatsoever, simply as is." Victor Shklovsky, 'The Novel as Parody: Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*' in *Theory of Prose*, trans. by Benjamin Sher, (Normal IL and London: Dalkey Archive Press 2015), p. 147.

by the metatextual in continuing to give an active place to the reader.[18] In addition to which these are written texts, ones that cannot but entail a degree of allusive figuration and so have some mimetic association to and raise questions about a quotidian reality as well as to its own operations.

Within theoretical and critical studies the designation generally employed for texts which through manifold strategies and constructions actuate the consciousness that the reader is reading is metafiction, though metanarration is used by some commentators either alternatively or to distinguish specifically narrative on narration rather than on fiction. The metafictional tendencies that I will make particular reference to, include diverse procedures of fragmentation and conditions of contingent ambivalence, these are considered in correlation to the devices of *mise-en-abyme*, metalepsis and re-iteration and with conditions such as palimpsestual layering and stasis.

One of the diverse mechanisms which may lead to a text's self-reflection, and so to an acute or considered moment of paused connection for the reader is, for instance, that of diegetic ambiguity. Such a condition of confusion and dislocation of ontological states would be that of mutually exclusive alternatives, options that do not supersede each other but co-exist, *sous rature*.[19] One in which significance may co-occur with the infinite shifting interpretive possibilities in a play of indeterminacy and unreliability. Other means by which the movement of reading and the materiality of language may be foregrounded, with regard to semantics and to the physicality of words on the page, might include disrupted syntax and unconventional typographic layout, the reiterated parataxis of loops and repetition and the presences and absences of omissions, the under or overstated, the unreliable copy and of the uncompleted.

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[18] "I would say that this 'vital' link is reforged, on a new level – on that imaginative process (of storytelling), instead of on that of the product (the story told). And it is the new role of the reader that is the vehicle of this change." (Hutcheon p. 3)

[19] Jacques Derrida employed the typographic means (a line through a word) of placing signifiers *sous rature* - under erasure, to show that a term was paradoxically required and rejected or that no meaning could be attached to it.

A library

The reflexive mode (a reflection in and of the book) of my practice is itself in a way doubled, for the work in general and each of books I produce is concerned with not only the bibliographic in terms of the associative and material properties of the book and the mechanisms of its assimilation but also in the relation to and the incorporation of distinct pieces of literature. In each case this is the selection and the taking up of a literary work for a specific characteristic of that text in terms of a particular aspect of its narratological or linguistic and syntactic structure, its conceptual project, and this (with some of the books) in conjunction with certain material elements of a printed copy of that same work or of a general feature of the physical form of books.

The content, material substance and dynamics of my books therefore allude to and echo their hypotexts, in correlations of formal and thematic coherence and connection. As with the reflexive moment in the space of the turn of the page, in the taking up and repositioning of other books, together with their procedural strategies the work proffers an analogous movement in the space from book to book. Michel Foucault writes that beyond a book's material form "its unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse."[20] This is an intertexuality of possibilities of reference, juxtapositions and readings that may be modelled as a constellation, such mutable constellations of association within the book and between all books are also that of the library.

In his essay on Gustave Flaubert's *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* Foucault proposes that the book expands the space that other books may inhabit, that "In writing *The Temptation*, Flaubert produced the first literary work whose exclusive domain is that of books: following Flaubert Mallarmé was able to write *Le Livre* and modern literature is activated - Joyce, Roussel, Kafka, Pound, Borges."[21] We learn in the

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[20] Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 26.

[21] Foucault, Michel, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press 1977), p. 92.

essay that all the fantastical characters and creatures that appear to the saint in a complex structure of nested scenes have come not from Flaubert's own reverie but his extensive and rigorous research in other books and numerous libraries. These figures and images from myth, literature and theology are ones that may be recognised and their archival sources traced, and so Flaubert's work is a composition in self-conscious relationship to these previous texts, and that this relationship is to the fore in the text.

My studio work and the research subject cannot but be closely interweaved, as one appositely incorporates and reflects the other, and so the constellational model of allusive interconnections and reference and of the correlations of book and library, of book as library, informs the arrangement of the following portion of this thesis. This is comprised of distinct sections/books; the order of these is not chronological or consequential but that of a chance contingency, such as that of books on a shelf, whether that of alphabetical sequence or the serendipity of use and return. This is an a-chronology of all reading, one work may inform or resonate with another not necessarily in the order of their reading, nor that of their date of writing/publication - Stendhal influenced by Proust, as Roland Barthes suggests.[22] This is a material layout and a conceptual premise that references and embodies the relational nature of the enquiry. These parts are individually composed around one of my book works, or a book exemplary of one of the exhibitions or collective projects that I have curated. They include detailed descriptions of these and of other books, this is in an attempt to give the works a degree of objective place in relation to the inevitable subjectivity of interpretation, and also so that the time and movement of the writing runs to some extent alongside that of the examples cited.

Each of these sections considers and investigates different techniques and modes of auto-reflexivity in literary fiction in concert with proposed instances of equivalence in the experience and temporality of artists' book works, and with facets of these looping, reprising and overlapping throughout.

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[22] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the* Text, trans. by Richard Miller, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 35-36.

Marque-pages, Nathalie Sarraute and the time of the space of the text

In life as in art events and the world are perceived, understood and represented as manifestations in space and in time, therefore in movement. In critical literary studies and philology varied analytical approaches have been taken to the place of these two elements, and to their interaction, in the construction of narrative. In terms of space, for instance, Gérard Genette pointed out the distinction between notions of space as applied to the signifier and to the signified within a discourse. In relation to the novel he categorised four differing spatial types: that of linguistic referents to space, the spatiality (material trace) of the written text, the gap or space-between as in figuration or rhetoric, and the intertextual space in which all literary works exist, with its infinite possibilities of interconnection.[1]

Mikhail Bakhtin in his formulation of the *chronotope* proposed that the two elements of space and time were inseparable, that "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole." (Bakhtin 1982: 184) He continues to describe this materialisation and coalescence as a process in which "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movement of time, plot and history." (Bakhtin, 184) Texts could be studied and read as representing the/a world in line with these variable time-space compositions, and so be defined in regard of genre, according to their attributes and arrangements. For example a narrative would necessarily be specific in geographic location and chronology if it were one of historic reference, and not be if such determinates were not pertinent, or were antithetical to an abstracted situation of events depicted. Bakhtin suggested that genres, especially those manifested in novels, did not simply relate events but originated explorations to apprehend new fields of experience through the multifarious potentialities of the chronotope, where the main spatio-temporal strands of a work meet and are the locus for dialogues - that they are a way of thinking.

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[1] Gérard Genette 'Espace et langage' in *Figures I*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966) and 'La littérature et l'espace' in *Figures II*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969).

What occurs when the cohesion and equilibrium of this matrix of space and time, one which forms the narrative foundation of a depicted world, is unbalanced? For instance, if the temporal element (whether it is narrative time or discourse time) is overly prolonged or is fragmented, might it lead to a reflexive negotiation of its own duration, or to an acute awareness of the space in that fiction, or of the physical space of print, page and book. It may be that these material bibliographic components of typography, layout and volume would inform the temporal field of the events described or that of their narration.

The book *Marque-pages* (*bookmarks*) has evolved from a project brief to make a drawing a day for seven days. In response to this I produced a trace of my reading in the form of a rendition of the shadows cast in and by an open book, the left-hand section shading a series of recto pages. The position and shape of each of these shadows was traced, marked out and the area stenciled in powdered graphite onto sheets of blank paper, producing a faint indexical imprint of light and of a moment in time. Reproduced and bound, the seven pages/objects are interleaved with Japanese tissue paper, as each of these thin translucent sheets are turned, the seen-through shadows fade and disappear, and then re-appear distinctly on the now exposed printed page.

The book I was reading was the novel by Nathalie Sarraute, *Vous les entendez?* (*Do You Hear Them?*).[2] This was in a way a form of double reading, one being that of the written narrative, and also, at times, the consideration of the transient effect of light on the material book in my hands. In all her writing Sarraute endeavours to make apparent with language the extremely subtle sensations barely expressed or perceived in quotidian life, reactions that she calls *tropismes* - sub-surface movements in the relations or the misconnection between people. *Vous les entendez?* sets out the reiterated thoughts and disparate imaginings of a father, who whilst discussing a stone sculpture with a friend, is perturbed by the sound, and possible signification, of his children's laughter heard coming from upstairs.

The novel is written in the present tense and is also in a narrative space of a sustained present moment - any movement is that of the writing, and through that,

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[2] This was the first edition (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1972).

the indefinable movements of the tropisms at the limit of our awareness that Sarraute wishes to convey. In the preface to her collection of critical essays, *L'ère du soupçon* (*The Age of Suspicion*), she writes "One had to also decompose these movements and to deploy them in the consciousness of the reader as with a slow motion film. Time was no longer that of real life, but that of inordinately expanded present."[3] This apparent suspension and dilation of time is partly an experience of the blurring of any distinction between what might be *real* or conjured up by the father in his crisis of insecurity, and the repetitions and variations on these.[4] The ambiguous state is not only related but also assumed by the third person narration as that perspective shifts, taking on the voice, point of view and hypothesised thoughts of different characters.

The indeterminacy is accentuated by Sarraute's extensive use of ellipses, leaving thoughts and observations in unresolved abeyance, interrupted and rapidly moving on to the next. It is due to these reiterations that the discourse time is by far of longer duration than that of the *external* event, and yet this is a simultaneous narration in that at each moment it coincides with these voiced *inner* impressions. The diegetic time of the story is not stated or clearly evident, but can be surmised to be a matter of a few minutes, in a book of 223 pages. As a succinct fabula becomes an expansive text or *récit*, and conversely the flow of many words is continually cut off and reprised, the loss of impetus of the temporal field of the story is confounded with the means of its narration - leading to a spatial awareness.[5] This is a consciousness of the textual space of language in the form of print on the page and

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[3] My translation of, "Il fallait aussi décomposer ces mouvements et les faire déployer dans la conscience du lecteur à la manière d'un film au ralenti. Le temps n'était plus celui de la vie réelle, mais celui d'un present démesurément agrandi." Nathalie Sarraute, *L'ère du soupçon* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard 1987), pp. 8-9.

[4] "The shift from real to imaginary can be almost imperceptible; we only realise it has taken place when we are suddenly struck by the improbability of what we are reading." Sheila M. Bell, *Portrait d'un Inconnu and Vous les Entendez? by Nathalie Sarraute,* (London: Grant & Cutler Ltd 1988) It is the imaginary or *sous-conversation* that is to the fore throughout the novel, subsuming dialogue, story and description, making the distinguishing of this from a surface *happening* the more problematic.

[5] *récit* as in Genette's formulation of *histoire* being the events, *récit* the representation in language of that story and *narration* the act of recounting - in Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1972), pp. 71-76.

pages in a book, the place of reading assimilated with the physical domestic locale of the events, thoughts and feelings so evasively narrated.

The layout of Samuel Beckett's novel *Comment c'est* (*How It Is*) presents short units of two to seven lines of unpunctuated lower case text. Each of these consist of short phrases, clipped utterances with very marginal concomitant relationship or development, the same non-sequential breaks occur from one paragraph to the next, as if one single block of print had been arbitrarily divided. The narrator is crawling, dragging himself, in the dark across an endless and featureless expanse of mud - this is what the voice describes as well as reminiscing on a past, different, life. The actuality of the writing and of its reading is this voice. The voice and its printed rendition is fragmented, separated by spaces of silence, pauses between snatches of thought coming to mind and gasps of breath being taken, a manifestation of the fracture of the recounting as well as that of the story told.[6] And also that of an unreliability of that narration, for the voice suggests on occasion that what one is reading is only the latest of many versions, or that it is the report of another voice heard or that the whole is a fabrication. Equally uncertain is the duration of the narrated events and that of their telling, as no temporal indications are given, apart from 'before' or 'after' Pim (another human presence briefly encountered).

With Beckett's text it may be considered that it is the spatial configuration of the page that is conveying a temporality, one that is undependable and disarticulated. As Ursula Heise writes, "Under the impact of this linguistic and visual staccato, time turns into a parameter that no longer applies to either the act of narration or the narrated events, but only to the narrative itself as a textual artefact."[7] In which case, as text reflexively becomes time, it is the voice and the reading that is adrift in an

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[6] Maurice Blanchot took up the fragmentary form of his fiction, in works such as *L'attente, l'oubli*, as well as in his critical writing including his review of *Comment c'est*, reprinted as 'Les paroles doivent cheminer longtemps' in *L'Entretien infini* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard 1969), pp. 298-300. Of this Leslie Hill writes that "[Blanchot] responded instead to the unruly, disconcerting strangeness of Beckett's writing by transforming his own critical commentary into a hesitant and inconclusive dialogue" Leslie Hill, *Maurice Blanchot and Fragmentary Writing: A Change of Epoch* (London: Continuum 2012), p.18.

[7] Ursula K. Heise *Chronoschisms: Time, Narrative, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), p.148.

indefinite durational field constituted of alternations of utterance and silence, as the "narrative stages its own dissociation from any imagined or inferred time dimension." (Heise 1997: 174) For, having no other reference points but within itself, as words tumble after words and page follows page, the book refutes the possibility of any structured temporal principal, and yet is itself a palpable expanse of time.

Marque-pages is a materialisation of the intangible, elusive and ephemeral nature of shadows and tropisms. Through its genesis in the reading of the book and the book, and its physical form and content it coincides the temporal non-specificity of both. The suspension of time in a convergence of a narrated space and a material one is also evident in the book *Forest* by artist Daniel Gustav Cramer. In the written story a man is walking through a forest, possibly he is lost; there is an implied impression of disquiet. The short text, that would be about the length of three pages is repeated through the 12 page pamphlet, starting mid sentence on the front cover and stopping with an uncompleted one on the back cover. Though the order of the *récit* is unchanged, in each reiteration it is divided into differing paragraphs, with paragraph breaks occurring in different places, hence the circular repetition is not immediately obvious, and so the reader only gradually becomes disorientated.

The displacement of a book's structural chronotope of a sequence of pages by that of a visually re-presented event is also exemplified in Richard Long's book *Labyrinth: local lanes walks*. The book is composed of one hundred black and white vertical format photographs printed full-bleed, each of these depicts one of a series of country lanes, viewed/photographed from the same position of someone standing in middle of these. The lanes and the framing of the images are very similar, in perspective each of the paths narrow as they recede into the distance and all disappear around a curve or into mist. Any expected progression along the path and around the bend on the turn of the page is frustrated, as the reader finds her/himself back in the same place, though on a slightly different lane, caught in a temporal loop.

Artists' book works re-present the experience, or the imagining, of the movement of a subject through a space in manifold ways. That occurrence and its spatio-temporal trajectory may have been the passage through a landscape or the performance a staged action. A recording of some form might have been made, for instance by

means of objective and indexical documentation such as photography or other physical trace, or a more allusive notation of experiential awareness. The event and its context are transposed and to some extent translated from a then of the activity to the now of the book, from one place and time(s) to another, and from one subject to another, the reader/viewer.

The space of the book (of a codex) is that of a succession of leaves, of recto and verso pages, if an event is visually reported, say with photography, the continuum is divided into distinct instances to be set out through the book's concatenation of pages. This establishes a complex interrelationship between photos and the physical structure and layout of the book, it may be that a discursive consequentiality from image to image indicates the temporal course of the event reproduced, or that through the form of the book this flow is disrupted. Anne Mœglin-Delcroix suggests that "one can not define *a priori* a book as essentially, even exclusively, temporal on the grounds of it having a material series of pages which induces an order of reading which is necessarily that of their succession", and thus that the time of the book is the time its reader gives to it, an engagement that need not be a linear one.[8] This may also encompass a reading of the space of a book as well as any printed content, the leafing through and viewing of one page and/or another, and that this mutability includes the interstice between these. Gérard Genette contends that *récit* is in itself atemporal, that it is always in the moment with narrative time being the time of its telling, and that this discourse's duration can not be ascertained, as the act of reading is subjective and infinitely varied.[9] That as "written narrative exists in space and as space," its temporality is conditional on "the time needed for *crossing* or *traversing* it," it is therefore a time it acquires from its reading.[10]

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[8] My translation of "On ne peut définir a priori le livre comme essentiellement, voire exclusivement, temporel sous prétexte que la suite matérielle des pages induit un ordre de la lecture qui est nécessairement celui de leur succession." Anne Mœglin-Delcroix, *Esthétique du livre d'artiste 1960-1980: Une introduction à l'art contemporain* (Marseille: Le mot et le reste, 1997/2012), p. 258.

[9] Even within the story years can pass in a few words and a day take up a whole book, or that no chronological markers or context is given.

[10] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press 1983) p. 86, cited by Heise, p.151.

Unreliability, *Giornata prima* and the synthesis of book and library

Thinking of conceptual and material correlations between books and libraries, between page and pages and book and books, manifesting the intangible mutability of selection, interpretation and construction in reading. May the gathering of books in a library, and the contingencies of their acquirement, placement and use, be seen to embody the same manifold possibilities of (often unanticipated) connection and reference of reading, a reading that is infinitely variable, one that is echoed and enacted in the movement through the architectures of covers and of shelves?

To complement the historic display in the exhibition *Locating Boccaccio in 2013* and to highlight the author's continuing significance, thirteen artists were invited to make new books in response to Boccaccio or to any of his writings, my contribution to the project was the bookwork *Giornata prima*.[1] The book reflects the pleasure and also the unreliability of storytelling, as story follows story from teller to listener/reader over time from one version to the next. It consists of reproductions of one page in (physical rather than numbered) sequence from each of the editions of *The Decameron* as encountered in the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, the Main Library University of Manchester and my own shelves. The first page was copied from the first book, the second from the next and so on whether the edition was in English or Italian, the books were taken in order from left to right, from shelf to shelf, top to bottom. The format of each of the editions (dating from 1883 to 2006) varies in layout, typeface and page size, and so the procedure leads to substantial disjunction in narrative, as well as visual, continuity, as the text jumps forward and back, with repetitions and elisions, sometimes skipping several stories at the turn of a page. The process was continued from one book to its neighbour, and then from one

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[1] The exhibition, held at The John Rylands Library in Manchester, commemorated Giovanni Boccaccio's 700th anniversary, it was curated by Rhiannon Daniels, Guyda Armstrong and Stephen Milner. The displayed books, from the library's holdings and as loans from private collections, ranged from early manuscript versions to 20th century editions, these were set out within themes such as *Boccaccio as Mediator*, *Innovations in Print* and *Censorship and Erotica* tracing the material dissemination and the influences of Boccaccio's work.

library to another until the end of the first of the ten days of storytelling was (in due course) reached, and 36 pages had been collected.

In Boccaccio's *The Decameron* one hundred stories are told within a framing narrative. Fleeing the plague seven young women and three young men spend two weeks in a country villa, to pass the time, every evening of ten days (excluding Sundays and two days of housework) each of them tells a story. Though the overall narration describes the groups other activities in short introductions and conclusions to each day, it is the stories and especially the connections between these, their reiterated themes and elaborations, the variations and turnabouts that form the substance of the work. Boccaccio appropriated and adapted the plots for most of the tales from stories originating in Persia, India, Spain, France as well as Italian and Latin literature, and from local oral sources, further contributing to the play and inconsistency of his storytelling. This unsettledness has been made even more complex by the variance of successive translations, and of translations from translations and by the errors and amendments that accumulated in the writing out of manuscript copies and then in the cutting of wood blocks and the typesetting of successive printed editions. In addition to accidental and idiosyncratic changes, the work was, due to its anticlerical and erotic elements, one of the most censored texts in Italian literature.[2] Thus, in reading *The Decameron* now, as at any time throughout its 700-year history, one is reading *the*, and yet also any one of countless other *Decamerons*.

This is unreliability inherent to narrative and to its narration, as it is recounted (whether orally or inscribed) the text is materially altered through slips in recall and transcription or intentional revision, gradually evolving over time and (re)telling. Within the world of a fiction and at the moment of reading of any particular manifestation of that world in language, there is no other standard or reality to compare to, in a way no different or original version. Not only that these

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[2] Ugo Rozzo writes that "the case of the Decameron has been the most closely studied episode of literary expurgation, both because of the importance of the text and because of the great complexity of the changes made, as evidenced by the numerous and important critical studies published in recent years." Rozzo continues to give several references to a range of such studies. Ugo Rozzo, 'Italian literature on the index' in *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy*, trans. Adrian Belton, ed. Gigliola Fragnito, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 219-220.

transformations may not be evident but also that propositions in fictional narratives are considered from the ontological point of view of that work/world.

A reader though may be questioning and pro-active one, being so through their experience of past reading and present engagement, and the bringing to mind of a unique personal intertextuality of reference. So that the work might be seen as "*heteronomous*, existing both autonomously, in its own right, and at the same time depending upon the constitutive acts of consciousness of a reader." (McHale 1987: 30) The fiction she/he is reading might also be a writing that strategically undertakes to reflect the impossibility of stable representations through its own formal strategies of uncertainty. This is a principle of post-structuralism, that meaning is evasive and multifarious, that a text has no one meaning. The perspective of Jacques Derrida's critical procedure of deconstruction is one of destabilisation, to suggest that significance is not in the text but co-occurs with the infinite shifting interpretive possibilities. In such a play of indeterminacy a story may, for instance, be composed so as to be told/read in fluctuating equivocal ways and so remain always ambiguous. One mechanism for such ambivalence is that of mutually exclusive alternatives, options that do not supersede each other but co-exist.

In Robert Pinget's novel *L'Apocryphe* the narrator, or perhaps it is a manuscript read by that narrator, relates and reiterates, in fragments, a series of events with subtle slippages and differing renderings of facts, as with a continually revised work in progress, or as Pinget has written "what is said is never said for one can say it differently".[3] Like a piece of music, in his *Passacaille* a situation is also conveyed over and over with variations. Jumping haphazardly forward and back in time, the narration, or a narrator's consciousness, moves from one account to another conflicting version. I propose that in both these novels, as the inconclusive and recursive text reflexively falls back on itself, it is the act of their exploratory writing and the sound of a voice that is at the fore of the reader's attention, and that reader therefore becomes an active co-producer in the elaboration and sifting through of possibilities, to a/one resolution of the work.

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[3] My translation of "*ce qui est dit n'est jamais dit puisqu'on peut le dire autrement*", Robert Pinget, *Quelqu'un*, (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1965), pp. 44-45.

Such self-erasure, or contradictory editing also occurs in Robert Coover's short story *The Babysitter*. In this an event is continuously retold in loops of self-contradictory disparity (interspersed by equally fractured narratives heard from a television in the background), with any possibility of causal development or genre identification constantly cut-off. As Patricia Waugh writes "Nor can the reader naturalise the contradictory alternatives through a modernist reading in terms of shifts of consciousness, or epistemological shifts, say of, 'reality' to dream […] the story can only be the 'reality' of itself." (Waugh 1984: 138) Such writing in which one proposition is subverted by the next, in which "everything and nothing happens at same time" (Vanderhaeghe 2013: 31) may be read as a fiction under erasure, a self-cancelling oscillation disrupting sequential linearity, a movement that could be apprehended synchronically as a palimpsest with all the layers equally visible.[4]

The state of vacillation that may be experienced in the reading of these texts between the 'reality' of itself and that of the world of the reader and in the movement of the negotiation of their unreliability may be exemplified in the project of *post-exoticism*. The writer Antoine Volodine has stated that he wanted to produce a foreign literature in French, not foreign from another country but from a place of fiction. He is the author of books published under his name (not his given name) and under that of several heteronyms, these are not simply pseudonyms but persons that have individual lives, writing styles and preoccupations, they are the subjects existing in, and makers of each others' books.[5]

They write about and are of that imagined world, identified by Volodine as *post-exoticism,* an intentionally ill defined yet, in details, realistically described alternate

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[4] Jacques Derrida employed the typographic means of placing ~~signifiers~~ *sous rature* (under erasure) to show that the term is paradoxically required and rejected, that it is necessary but its meaning challenged or that none could be attached to it.

[5] Pseudonyms are usually a fabricated or appropriated name by which to conceal the identity of the author of a particular work or series. Heteronyms though, identify an individual with a biography, a distinct personality and literary output. Fernando Pessoa (1888 -1935) instigated and wrote through more than 70 heteronyms - poets and essayists, many knew each other, read and critiqued each other's, and Pessoa's, work.

time and place.[6] This is a region of post-catastrophe totalitarian control, these writers are hunted or imprisoned rebels and their works embody a shifting indeterminacy for self-protection, so as not to be caught but also so that the writing (theirs and Volodine's) not be recuperated and traduced by the existing oppressive order/established orthodoxies.

This subversive undependability consists of elements such as fragmentation and overlaps of narrative, as primary descriptions merge with 'fabricated' ones. This initiates an alterity as resistance, one with which "Such chaotic textuality not only endeavours to disconcert and challenge the reader but also engages the determinisms of mainstream literature, its ideologies and formal paradigms." (Hippolyte 2006: 160) There is uncertainty as to time, location and identity - references to the *renaissance* and the *2nd century* are not of our history, geographic settings are and are not quite of this reality and names can change, be false or codes for underground groups. This allusive and elusive otherness also incorporates neologistic literary genres such as *shaggås*, *entrevoûtes* and *romånce*. However some of these fictions' authors' books are published and available in bookshops and libraries, and in turn these titles are included in much larger lists of *post-exoticism* writing - a bibliography as fiction.[7]

Mary Ellen Carroll's book *Without Intent* is comprised of over two hundred black and white photographs printed one to a page and cropped to the edges. Each depicts an urban landscape - all include streets, sidewalks, buildings, people, cars and the stripes of pedestrian crossings. Many of these photos are blurred, shaky or askew. The degree to which the images are out of focus varies, with some consisting solely of an amorphous fog, and with the extent of the angled tilt of the jolted frames also differing substantially. To compose her book Carroll walked the length of Broadway

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[6] As with Coover's story, Volodine's primary writings resonate with many genres concurrently, that of "science fiction, novel of terrorism, social realism, magic realism, political novel without any of these references been able to define them." Lionel Ruffel, *Volodine post-exotique*, (Nantes: Éditions Cécile Defaut 2007), p. 74.

[7] In *Le post-exotisme en dix leçons, leçon onze* for instance, 72 authors and 343 books are listed. The book has two title pages, one with Volodine's name, and the next with his and seven other contributing 'authors', presenting another paratextual manifestation of indeterminacy. Antoine Volodine, *Le post-exotisme en dix leçons, leçon onze*, (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1998).

in Manhattan, taking a photograph every time she crossed a bisecting street or avenue. This systematic project was deliberately subverted though, for the camera was mounted on her back, and so she had no control of what was in shot, nor of focus or steadiness. The contrived factor of unreliability through process invites the book's reader/viewer to experience the dynamism of walking and of serendipity in a city like New York, as turning from page to page the expectations of the book's reiterated present of again another street is unsettled by the formal disruption to the image's clarity.

Mise en abyme, Georges Perec's *"53 jours"* and the mirror effect

At the time of its first publication in 1852 Herman Melville's *Pierre: or, The Ambiguities* was excoriated for what was perceived as the novel's dubious morals, its incoherent technique and narrative, and its apparently self-contradictory critiques of the genres and themes which it encompassed.[1] It was Melville's dissatisfaction with the tropes and style of past and contemporary fiction that led him to not only pastiche these but to have his eponymous character endeavour to write a novel (the protagonist of which was also a writer) as he was doing. This doubly embedded examination by Melville of Pierre's, and the narrator/author's, struggles to write a/this book, shifted the narrative from a conventional recounting of successive events to one with a self-consciousness of the present moment of the writing.

My book's title, or encapsulation, *A list of something in Herman Melville's 'Pierre: or, The Ambiguities'* in turn reflects on this self-reflexive actuality and on the ambivalence that is one of the many complex, and prescient themes in Melville's novel.[2] The content is the title's manifestation, the inventory of the occurrence of the word, as established in a concordance to *Pierre* in which the full line of the incidence of every word is given - *something* appears 89 times. This forms a consistent compilation and yet a serendipitously and conversely (maybe) disordered narrative, one that itself mirrors the title's self-sustained loop of indeterminacy.

Jacques Derrida's essay *La Dissémination* is a detailed commentary on Phillipe Sollers's book *Nombres,* though the work by Sollers appears to be influenced by

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[1] General readers at the time were puzzled by the book's metaphysical enquiries, favouring Melville's earlier adventure stories, and literary reviews included terms such as 'unfocussed', 'meandering', 'redundant', 'inconsistent' and 'flawed'.

[2] That Melville's work could be viewed as anticipating concerns regarding the stability of representations and the concomitant meta-critical conspicuous foregrounding of medium.

and to remark on Derrida's analysis.[3] This is a paradoxical state in which each work presents as a preface *and* a review of the other, being mutually embedded with neither emerging as a preceding nor a subsequent text. This dovetailed simultaneity of a self-contained and self-reflecting *mise en abyme* is one also encountered in the artist's book *Transition: Dissolve* by Flavio Trevisan (2017). The first double spread is of the title page on the right and the bibliographic colophon on the left, on progressing through the book these pages repeat, gradually fading from an initial black of the type to imperceptibility. A reverse process occurs from the back of the book to the front (again steadily lightening); a photograph of hands holding open a (blank) book is printed across both pages so that the gutter of the book corresponds with that of the represented book. One series of depictions is superimposed on the other, any movement from page to page by the reader and changes in density of image are counteracted by the repetition - the effect is one of suspended time within its multiple levels of duplication and self-consciousness.

In literary and other media theory *mise en abyme* refers to instances when an embedded representation in a text, one situated on a different narrative level, in some way reflects a part or element of the main diegesis. An instance of *mise en abyme* may be, in its simplest manifestation, that one nested element mirrors the encompassing narrative, such as a play in a play, a painting in a painting. These are shifts in perspective that tend to be readily identified and assimilated, or they may be the highly convoluted and interwoven embedded layers of repetitions and variations, and of indeterminacy of representational status as in the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet. In all such cases there is, as Susan Hayward proposes "a reduplication of images or concepts referring to the textual whole", and so "a play of signifiers within a text, of sub-texts mirroring each other."[4] This reflexivity may be manifest as a

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[3] Philippe Sollers's book (subtitled *novel*) undertakes to eliminate representational mimesis by means of a four square permutation of three imperfect and one present tense(s), a system that not only eradicates any possible subject of narrative and conventional literary expression but overturns and submerges the text itself in its own process of construction, erasure and expansion. Derrida's text assimilates and subverts Sollers's mechanistic project by adding an extra unit to the formula. *La Dissémination* first appeared in Critique n° 261-262, 1969 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993) and *Nombres* was published by Seuil in 1968, (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2000).

[4] Susan Hayward, *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), pp. 219-220.

synecdoche of the main story, one that resembles in some way the primary fabula, it may also include that reflection in itself or it may be as a nested miniature version of the ensemble, one that also encompasses itself. This last state is characterised by Lucien Dällenbach as *aporetic*, that of "a sequence that is supposed to enclose the work that encloses it", this suggests the possibility of a continuing series of stories within stories, frames leading to further frames.[5] The term *mise en abyme* originates in heraldry, but as Mieke Bal points out "in literature, however, we have to do with infinite regress in the medium of language", it is "not the totality of an image, but only a part of the text, or a certain aspect" (Bal 2009: 62) that is reflected, and so one should bear in mind that the analogy is not ideal, though I suggest that it is this imprecision that may make for an effective model of the mutability in such auto-reflection.

Although the movement from one of these specular levels to another may have a disruptive effect on a linear flow of reading, and lead to a destabilisation of meaning, unlike the event of metalepsis, the principle relationship is more one of similarity and reflection than of transgression or disorientation. This mirror effect, in which the overall narrative or a succinct part of it is reprised within itself (not only in the explicit form of a story in a story or of a commentary on the composition), is also the representation and enactment of process, a self-aware operation of enunciation and of the reading/writing of the text. This process is one of recursion, as the procedure instances in its manifestation the procedure itself. This may be seen as a reflexive mechanism that consistently foregrounds the artifice, and the intertextual nature, of all texts, and so of language.

The book *Places* by artist Gilles Picouet is a large format 24 page pamphlet comprised of black and white photographs printed full bleed. Taken at different locations in Paris, each image depicts a gathering of objects, such as damaged furniture and builder's detritus, placed by the curb so as block the area that a parked car would occupy. Some these obstructing assemblies seem to be there to reserve that space, whilst others may be awaiting collection. Each of the photographs were

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[5] Lucien Dällenbach *The Mirror in the Text* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1989) p. 35. Dällenbach suggests that a pluralistic definition might be that "a mise en abyme is any internal mirror that reflects the whole of the narrative by simple, repeated or 'specious' (or paradoxical) duplication." (Dällenbach, 36).

printed on either side and across the sheets of paper that when folded form the book, though without the normal imposition, so that when these were interleaved and stapled together the result is a series of double page spreads that juxtapose two halves of different scenes.[6] The book in its material form may be experienced as embedding and duplicating the structural event represented in the documentary photographs.

This allusive mirroring through the physical substance and construction of the book is also found, maybe in a more metaphorical aspect of correspondence, in Simon Cutts's *The Waterfalls of New Hampshire in Winter*. Held within a plastic cover, on the front of which is the title, is a pad of paper (notebook like), the reverse side and fore-edge of each sheet is printed blue, the facing surface appears very pale blue, this might also be printed or be the result of show-through from the back. This small stack is glued along the top edge with a clear glossy adhesive. On the front of every leaf is the text '*a perfect bound block of blue paper*', this is in a small font size, placed centrally towards the base of the page and in a vertical column: *a perfect - bound - block - of blue - paper*.

Such reflecting mechanisms, at play in numerous artists' book works, of material and conceptual coincidence and repetition in the space and dynamics of the book are particularly self-consciously recursive when a book presents a procedural eventuality, and is also the means of that procedure's enactment, so that in itself it embodies the process of its actualisation. *Play in Six Acts* by Elisabeth S. Clark consists of six books, each is the script or score for its own performance, as Clark writes, "it performs its intention (the play itself) in the act reading and the turning of its pages", and as well as its formal and linguistic composition, and its sound, being activated by its reader, this *play* may be performed as an ensemble piece for an audience.[7] Daniel Jubb's *Bookcase* is also to be performed, though solely for and by its reader. The book is the size of a paperback novel and functions as a flipbook. On its 64 recto pages is a sequence of photographs showing someone opening a

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[6] Except for the middle one which having no intercalating folio, is the one complete image.

[7] From the artist's website - www.elisabethsclark.com/Elisabeth_S._Clark/Play_in_Six_Acts.html [accessed 9 February 2017].

bookcase, selecting a book, leafing through it, replacing it on the shelf and closing the doors. There is a moment of synchronised coalescence in this animation as the represented subject's action is mirrored and embedded in the self same movement by this other book's viewer, as the pages are flipped through - there and now, then and here.

Georges Perec's novel *"53 jours"* (*"53 days"*) begins as an apparent detective mystery story, as the narrator investigates the disappearance of a novelist, only having as (unreliable) clue his unfinished manuscript. Perec's book is formed of two parts, the second mirroring and deconstructing the first, and consists of multiple diegetic layers, of texts embedded in texts. Georges Perec died before completing *"53 jours"*, having written most of the first half and leaving extensive notes, schemas and references outlining the remainder. All of these, usually unseen, traces of his working procedures are included in the published form of the novel, inviting its reader in turn to attempt to correlate and construct a possible (for is any work ever definitively finished) meaning and conclusion.[8]

The first part, *53 jours*, of the book recounts how the protagonist searches for clues in the missing writer's incomplete novel, titled *La Crypte*, which is not only situated *en abyme* but closely mirrors the primary story, as a character investigates a disappearance by referring to a mystery novel *Le juge est l'assassin* which in turn echoes elements from the two previous plots, and which is itself based on a thriller, *K comme Koala*. Following the negotiation of this complexity of potentially infinite regress, of story nested in story each reflecting, or refracting, the others, the reader discovers in the second half that the whole of the first section is itself the manuscript of a novel *"53 jours"*.[9] In the context of the (generally) linear progress of reading and of expectations of a cohesive consequential narrative, such instances of *mise en abyme* can elicit a dislocation of temporal contiguity, as Brian McHale writes, "[it] is

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[8] The book and this developmental material was edited and prepared for publication by Harry Mathews and Jacques Roubaud, friends and Oulipo colleagues of Perec. The substantial appendices are organised and indexed by physical description and location of the notebooks and files as left by the author in 1982. Georges Perec *"53 jours"* (Paris: Éditions P.O.L. 1989) and Paris: Éditions Gallimard 1994), *"53 Days"* is translated by David Bellos (Boston, MA: Verba Mundi David R. Godine Publisher 2015).

[9] Accounting for the quotation marks in the title of Perec's book, as it refers not to this novel but to another novel (in a novel).

another form of short-circuit, another disruption of narrative hierarchy" (McHale 1997: 125). This moment when the reader realises that the story up that point was a *fiction*, in the sense of being embedded in what had become (for now) the primary narrative and that it was the manuscript of a novel, is one of retrospective revision.

This second part is titled *Un R est un M qui se P le L de la R*, an abbreviation of the phrase by Stendhal 'Un Roman est un Miroir qui se Promène le Long de la Route' (*a novel is a mirror carried along the road*).[10] Though, rather than reflect the/a reality of the world, Perec's novel mirrors its own process of composition. At the core of this is a "metadiegetic, digressive, and reflexive structure through which the narrative progresses" and on whichever level it is located, it "proceeds by commenting on similar overlapping narratives." (Sirvent 1999: p.173) This is a process of play and intertextual juxtapositions within the main fabula and the various nested sub-levels, as one narrative and book alludes to and incorporates another, and multiple representations are intercalated, redoubling aspects of each other. This interconnected and shifting textual space also incorporates explicit and unnamed references to numerous extradiegetic sources, such as Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* and other crime fiction, as well as to Stendhal, who wrote *La Chartreuse de Parme* in 53 days. Working through the tropes of genre and the code of the work's own methodology, these procedures of rewriting or (re)construction, of the genesis of text from text are reflected in the intertwined intrigues and false paths of the convoluted investigations, and these, in a reflexive loop, form the unstable model for the making of *"53 jours"*.

Perec was a member of the Oulipo group of writers who employed formal constraints and system based strategies to generate new writing.[11] Though with this book, rather than an exploration of such mechanisms, albeit still within the play of language and of puzzles, I see Perec's principal concern being the inconstancy of memory and of what may or may not be dependably known, of the interlacement of life and fiction. It is by means of a similar overlapping and correspondence of

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[10] In *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830).

[11] Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle (Workshop for Potential Literature), founded by poet Raymond Queneau and mathematician François Le Lionnais in France in 1960.

different enunciations that a known but not always readily spoken of event and experience gradually emerges in his autobiographical and fictional *W ou le souvenir d'enfance*. In this work two texts alternate, one consisting of fragmentary and imprecise recollections of a wartime childhood, the other an allegory of an isolated regime based on Olympic ideals. In a prelude to the book Perec writes that it is their coming together and informing of one another "that could make apparent what is never quite said in one, never quite said in the other, but said only in their fragile over-lapping."[12]

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[12] *W or The Memory of Childhood*, (London: Vintage Classics, 2011).

Gatherings, evolving re-iteration and Hanne Darboven's *Information*

The exhibition *More is less is more: artists' books as collection/accumulation* which I curated presented a selection of artists' books in which the work's meaning comes from the practice of collecting distinct items or from the volume and continuity of material accumulation of pages and printed content, without these necessarily having a consequential or narrative progression.[1] These books comprise of sets and series that might be simply an exposition of *this* and *this* and *this*, with the consecutive order of pages being co-incidental to the nature of the book, rather than *this* and therefore *this*. The conceptual premise and constitutive temporal aspect of each work may be inferred in the allusive association from one object to another, or suggested by the tangible mass and quantity of its content, or in the movement or the stasis of reiteration and parataxis. The material (at times exhaustive in its escalating abundance) re-presented in these books could be taken to be principally evidence of the methods and intention enacted in their gathering and writing out, be it selective criteria for the collecting of images or procedural systems of inscription.

Some of the books on display are the results of systematic projects of documentation, such as the photographs (taken by the artists) in Bernd and Hilla Becher's *Water Towers* and Roni Horn's *Another Water*. The Becher's long-term programme had been the recording in photography of industrial buildings and structures, many no longer active. These are always shown in series (winding towers, blast furnaces), one to a page in monographic books or displayed framed on walls, in which case they are arranged in grids. In these typological groupings the similarities in construction according to purpose and yet slight variations between examples within each category is subtly apparent. To best show this, the photographs were shot on overcast days so that the flat light would cast no shadows that may have obscured details.

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[1] The exhibition was held at The Tetley, Leeds 7 - 22 March 2015 as part of the PAGES series of exhibitions and events *Collections and Collaborations* in conjunction with the 18th Contemporary Artists' Book Fair.

It is the infinite variations of light reflected and refracted on and through the surface of the river that are crucial to Roni Horn's studies of the Thames. All of these colour photographs were taken at the same location over a year, shot from above onto one stretch of river, but of course always of different water. The texture, tones and colours in these change considerably from the moment to moment of each photograph and so also from page to page. The block of all the other pages under any one of these may connote the unseen swirling mass of tidal movement below this surface. At the base of the images (which are printed full-bleed on double page spreads) on a narrow continuous white band, 832 numbered notes, anecdotes and quotations from films and literature on the subject of water, the history of the Thames and on this book itself run from the front cover through the whole book and end again on that cover.[2] In regards to the work Roni Horn states that "the image is the first of the form, the viewer is the second, and the voice the third", a form which is that of an interrelating triangulation of reading.[3] One which is, as the artist's note implies, fleeting - an evanescence highlighted by her use of 'voice' rather than 'words', this is a choice that may also bring to mind all the people whose lives have been connected to the river throughout its history.

Kaddish by Christian Boltanski also gathers photographs, mainly of people (some are of household objects), it is apparent that these were taken in the period of and around the Second World War, discernable in the style of dress and uniforms and qualities of the photography. The book is in fact comprised of photographs of photographs, images that have been collected from newspapers, bureaucratic records and family albums. They are all black and white and often are blurred or have evident halftone dots due to having been selectively enlarged from group photographs or from small printed images. Apart from the title the only written text in the book are the headings of the four sections: *Menschlich*, *Sachlich*, *Örtlich* and *Sterblich* (Humanity, Materiality, Locality and Mortality). The book is large (27 x 21 cm in format) and contains 1,148 photographs printed full bleed, one to a page on a thin paper. The contrast to the touch of the fragility of the pages and the physical weight and mass of the book mirror the ephemerality and yet the *being there/being*

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[2] Number 467 for example reads "These notes, rootless, flowing one into another, are precipitation: the fugitive reactions of perception."

[3] Interview with Lynne Cooke in *Roni Horn*, (London: Phaidon Press, 2000), p. 20.

here attendance in the images of the each life, and of the fact of the past and of the oppressive sense of loss from the collective gathering of so many, unknown, portraits. As Roland Barthes proposes, "a reality in a past state: at once the past and the real" (Barthes 1993: 82), in that a photograph ratifies what it represents, gives certainty to its having existed. In a chapter entitled *Collection/recollection,* Anne Mœglin-Delcroix writes "It takes the time of the reading for the collective aspect of death in Boltanski's books to impose itself, the inexhaustibility of the natural world with [herman] de vries."[4] Here Mœglin-Delcroix is speaking of the duration of reading, when significance may come from the effect of magnitude, as page after page is turned, a piling-up rather than sequential development.[5]

Hanne Darboven's work consisted of writing out. Using her own complex systems of transcription, she transliterated texts such as calendars and literature into calculations, words and graphic marks. Her subject was time, the time it took her to work through the procedural series, transforming time into space. The process is one of implementing these exacting rigorous systems and yet the works are also "deeply personal, since they record the passing of her time and the experience of its passing" (Drucker 1995: 353). These rhythmic progressions and permutations were inscribed onto numerous sheets of paper, forming archives of diagrammatic notation; the original sets of these were exhibited on walls or in box files, and some also reproduced in the form of published books. These material coextensive traces might then be discerned as being converted back into time by the viewers/readers in their assimilation and (re)construction of the work, "*a thinking along* with the work of art itself" (Kaak 2000: 13), a re-reading that may either be the time given by them to it or an apprehension of its intrinsic temporality, evidenced through an impact of the physical scale and quantity of the produced material.

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[4] My translation. "Il faut le temps de la lecture pour que s'impose l'aspect collectif de la mort dans les livres de Boltanski, le caractère inépuisable de la nature chez de vries" Anne Mœglin-Delcroix, *Esthétique du livre d'artiste 1960-1980: Une introduction à l'art contemporain*, (Marseille: Le mot et le reste, 1997/2012), p. 259.

[5] Inspired by the highly elaborate early 15th century illuminated manuscript book of hours *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry,* de vries sat in one spot in a wood taking photographs around him. The resulting book *les très riches heures de herman de vries*, of 131 black and white images, reflect his own modest, yet rich hours.

Given the essential temporal aspect of Hanne Darboven's work, and its form of gradual variations and repetitions, music seems to have naturally become a significant element of her practice. She developed further systems to convert her additive numerical series into musical scores. One such composition is *Wunschkoncert*, its 1,008 pages are divided into four parts (*Opera 17a, 17b, 18a* and *18b)* - the steadily progressing sequence of reiterations and barely perceptible transformations are to be performed on double bass.[6]

Of the more basic means of marking out time that Darboven employed (as she did with the poem *Atta Troll* by Heinrich Heine) was to write/spell out the number(s) of words in each line - *einszweidreivier einszweidreivierfünfsechs einszweidreivier*.[7] Another was a looped continuous line of u-shaped arcs, a kind of imitative writing, which is simply that of the track of the motion of the act of writing without the signifying linguistic code of an alphabet. The book *Information* is comprised entirely of this repeating and yet always changing wave writing. Running horizontally along 18 thin printed lines (as in a notebook) from the top to the base of each of 35 recto pages, each of Darboven's drawn lines begins at the left, just in from the gutter and then is cut off at the fore-edge. The drawing is regular but for the minor inevitable variation in width and shape and in the weight of the line as the pencil wears down slightly and is sharpened. Apart from the artist's name and the publisher's imprint, the cover presents a grid with each box numbered from 1 to 35; the title *information* is at the lower edge of the first (blank) inside page. There is no explicit indication of the relation of the grid/numbers to the script, apart from the amount of pages in the book, though it may be seen as supplying a limit or be the score, and the content (the information) being the realisation of that project. Although repetition may be a basis of movement and yet also of stasis, I suggest that the reiteration of arcs, lines and pages that are the embodied time of *Information*'s making is that of a process of continuance, the material effect of a time span which is not a definitive quantifying one but that of an experience.

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[6] A recording of *Opus 17a* could be listened to in the exhibition. As was Tom Johnson's *The Chord Catalogue* - all 8,178 chords possible in one octave arranged methodically up the chromatic scale, and *Vexations* by Erik Satie, whose instructions for the performance of this three-line score for piano, is that it be played/repeated 840 times.

[7] *Atta Troll after Heinrich Heine in: Number Words (counted words) written down again*, (Luzern: Kunstmuseum, 1972).

In her stated wish to write of the immediate, of the now of her subject and the now of the reader in works such as *The Making of Americans,* Gertrude Stein produced a disjunctive syntax formed of loops of repetitions, repetitions with very slight variations. In her words, "each time, and I did a great many times, say it, that somebody was something, each time there was difference just difference enough so that it could go on and be present something."[8] This is repetition as difference, and may be understood as a movement of shifting and uncertain development, a process of change and of becoming as also proposed by Gilles Deleuze - that change comes with the repetition of difference.[9] In *The Making of Americans* "the infinitely variable repetitions are not only what make one *one*, but also what make one available to the other […] relations are made through correspondences of repetitions." (Lorange 2014: 211), for Stein's essential subject in this epic fictional history of two families over three generations, is the vitality and variety of existence.[10]

This attempt at an encompassment of all human character and of its liveliness is conveyed in the rhythm and movement of the writing, a movement that in its prolonged reiterative concatenations forms a continuous present. In her questioning of the state of narrative Stein has referred to natural counting, that of *one and one and one and one* in which temporal progress is disrupted in the return to each occurrence, and attention given to the moment. The reader is repeatedly brought back to the now of the book by the looping repetitions of, in *The Making of Americans*, not so much nouns (their use is limited) but the progressive present aspect of verbs - people are constantly doing and feeling. There is a dislocation of

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[8] 'Portraits and Repetition' in *Lectures in America,* (London: Virago Press, 1985) p.177.

[9] This is a unsettling of progressing linearity, of such disruption of causal effect Deleuze writes, "Destiny never consists in step-by-step deterministic relations between presents which succeed one another according to the order of a represented time. Rather, it implies between successive presents non-localisable connections, actions at a distance, systems of replay, resonance and echoes, objective chances, signs, signals, and roles which transcend spatial locations and temporal successions." *Difference and Repetition*, (London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p. 83.

[10] The book is epic in size at 904 pages, and in its appropriation of an established genre, prevalent in 19th century fiction, that of the family saga.

the text that, as suggests Alyson Brickey "eschews linearity in favour of a more dynamic conception of time and history inflected by a sense of ongoingness and simultaneity."[11] Another reflexive aspect of the novel is the narrator's (who is not quite Stein) numerous, and extended, comments and considerations on the process of (its) writing, cutting into the overall flow of the fiction.

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[11] Alyson Brickey, 'A text in process: The Progressive Aspect in Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans*' in *English Languages: History, Diaspora, Culture* Vol 3, University of Toronto, 2012), p. 2.

Escapade and the materiality of words

The artists' alliance AMBruno facilitates the development of individual and collective practice and creates varied opportunities to publish, show and disseminate book works. For some in the group the form of the book is the appropriate medium to realise a particular aspect of their artistic work, for others it presents a means to experiment and to extend their usual working methods. New books are produced to a set theme; previous object/subjects have included *Black Circle* - a solid black circle to be taken as a formal/literal, metaphoric or any other referential subject, and *One-fold books*, books made to this essential, most basic form of a sheet once folded. In 2016 a call was made for submissions of proposals for new books for which I established the subject brief of: *words - that this may be a consideration of any aspect of the materiality of written language and of its relation to the space of the page and the space of the book.*

Language on the page is specifically material, it is thought and the sound of speech made matter and it is the ink of handwriting or printing, it has body. Throughout the history of the written text, the concrete aspect of this inscription has, to varying degrees, been a consideration, realised through the choice of style of characters and the design of page layout. Notwithstanding an intention to be aesthetically agreeable and appropriate in graphic style to their subject and to the context of dissemination, it is generally the communication of the linguistic content and not its agent that is of primary concern. These physical marks are perceived and yet overlooked, for as signifier of meaning they are transparent. This is a loss of visibility or perhaps more of a negligibility of presence that occurs in time, as the words are discerned and then immediately superseded in consciousness by their assimilated message. Could this oscillating play between the seen and not seen, between the word as a thing and the word as component of semantic signification, provide a distinctly productive model of the reflexive slippage that may be encountered in the time of the book, in the movement from the physical to the intangible and back? I consider such manoeuvres in the indeterminate to be exemplified in Gertrude Stein's prose poems *Tender Buttons* (1914), in these there seems to be an unsettling to and fro'ing between the word present on the page and the alluded to subject.

This work's fractured syntax and uncomfortable juxtapositions do not so much present a mimetic description of the *objects*, *food* and *rooms* of its three sections but rather evoke aspects of these ambiguously, through associations of sound, rhythm and repetition from one word to another.[1] This is an independence that Charles Bernstein refers to as *wordness*, "I find the work satisfying, self-sufficient. It makes me want to savor its words more than account for them", and this self-sufficiency of word and work is one that does not exclude the world, for language is always of the world.[2] The dynamism of each word and in the movement from word to word, succinctly enacted in *Tender Buttons*, may also be experienced in the much more extensive writings of Stein such as *The Making of Americans*.

The loss of transparency that came with Modernism, leading to a foregrounding of the medium included the manifested physicality of written, of printed language. In her comprehensive study of typographic practice in the early 20th century, Joanna Drucker writes that experimentation in print was an ideal means of exploring the inter-disciplinary nature of the avant-garde approaches to the visual and to the literary; that "the relations between form and expression, between matter and content, were assumed to depend largely on the capacity of the image, the poem, the word, or the mark to *be*, to exist in its own right on an equal stature with the tangible, dimensional objects of the real world." (Drucker 1994: 49) This was a correspondence of the place of representation and of actuality that relied on the notion of materiality. With this not only did words elide graphically into image and image into sound and sound into word, as seen in Concrete Poetry and Futurist typography, they could essentially be material to be moved about - accumulated, re-ordered or erased. When the narrative and grammatical cohesion of a written text is lost and consequential progression disrupted, words may become quantity - amassed and yet also isolated. These new formations can become open to manifold possible readings, readings that may take account of the disjunctive contiguity of

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[1] Gertrude Stein *Tender Buttons*, (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1991), p.54.
   CHICKEN
   Alas a doubt in case of more go to say what it is
   cress. What it is. Mean. Potato. Loaves.

[2] Charles Bernstein *A Poetics* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) p.143, quoted in Astrid Lorange, *How Reading is Writing: a brief index to Gertrude Stein*, (Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), p. 83.

words or be an appreciation of the procedures employed. Methodologies for selecting and arranging these gatherings of words encompass the use of chance processes, the imposition of rules of constraint or of system-based selection and ordering; the source material to be manipulated in these various ways is often appropriated writings - found texts in literature, news media or advertising.

In the 1960s, and since, language in its many forms has been a key medium for artists with documentary and information based practices; others though utilised language as material, words as objects disconnected from their signifying role, except self-reflexively of themselves. Liz Kotz feels that the period is now too far removed for her to assess the extent to which these strategies formed effective resistance to "the larger systems of publicity and propaganda that used words and images to create fantasies of consumption and falsify reality."[3] In reference to Carl Andre's view that the use of matter as matter rather than as symbol was a political course, she writes that "we cannot presume a firm divide between matter and representation", implying that language/words (as in Andre's poems) can never be entirely striped of meaning. In her book Kotz proposes that the concern with the materiality of language at the time was in part in reaction to developments in sound, video and other recording media - much of the work she surveys is in the form of scores, of open instructions and prompts for performance and action. I suggest that, in addition to an element of indeterminacy, it may be in the dialectic of the material and of the temporal and experiential nature of such open works (in which the reader/viewers are collaborators in the making) that resistance may be enacted.

In books, there is also always the page. The leaves that form a volume, and the surface of their two sides, are not just a physical support for the thingness of words but are in themselves texts, texts to be read. For in the handling of a book may be experienced the size and proportions of the sheet and the tone, weight and texture of the paper, all qualities that contribute to a reading of the work. Pages might remain blank, and so may have eloquence, whether constituting the whole book as with herman de vries' *wit white* or interspersed amongst others, in these cases the

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[3] Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art*, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2007), p. 4.

pages may be seen as not so much an absence of content than an open plane, an active field of consideration.[4]

A complex visual relationship is potentially established once words appear on the blank (*blanc* in French meaning both unwritten on and white) paper. This is interdependence and interaction constantly in play between the graphic marks of ink on the page visible in the contrast of dark on light and the surrounding space. A white which is not a neutral ground but active as it defines and groups letters with gaps between words and lines, and separates the blocks of writing from the edges with margins. A body of text such as this tends to be read in a regular pattern, left to right, or right to left, back and down to the next line, the ease of reading facilitated by unobtrusive typography. Or the scanning of these single planes of vision which are the page, may be a more directed one with a design utilising, for instance, a mixture of typefaces and variations in character size as seen in newspaper layouts.

An exemplar of the use of these typographic strategies, and of space as a proactive element with a poetic rather than commercial intent is Stéphane Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard* (*A throw of the dice will never abolish chance*). Joanna Drucker proposes that this text is "the demarcating point from which modernity, as a radical rethinking of representational strategy within the field of poetics, comes into being" (Drucker 1994: 51). In Mallarmé's poem/book the time and movement of the reading is a variable and it is in the hands and eyes its viewer/reader, for the expected formal conventions of print and layout of that time (1897) were disrupted. Lines and words (which are set in lower, title or uppercase) seem to have been strewn haphazardly, staggered diagonally and taken across the central divide from verso to recto pages. Some pages present as few as four words, or just one in the case of *n'abolira,* for the key/title phrase, in a large uppercase font, is split and distributed through the book. Another line that is dispersed across several pages is *nothing - will have taken place - but the place - except - perhaps - a constellation.* I propose that this tentative reference to the spatial extent of page and the scattering of words could be read as reflexively alluding to the lack of figurative or iconographic connection between the described and the configuration of the

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[4] herman de vries' *wit white* was reprinted by Zédélé Éditions in Brest in 2012. The artist describes this entirely blank book as "the superabundance of white, containing all possibilities, for words impose limits and determinations".

words on the page and to the ontological break between the narrated (storm, shipwreck) and the visual and material presence of the medium of book, paper and print.

The sixteen books by seventeen artists (one being a collaboration) produced for the AMBruno *words* project demonstrate diverse means and approaches to the subject, such as annotation, lists, redaction and sound.[5] In my view, considering that the genesis of the project was the written, it was notable that a wide variety of book structures and formats, some very innovative, were employed. Two of the books highlight the passage between the ephemeral act of reading and the definitiveness of the inscribed word on the page by disassembling these into their constituting letters. Egidija Čiricaitė's *MUG CUP KNIFE LADLE* manifested this by means of multiple translucent overlays of words (taken from reading primers) in the form of permutations of letter grids. The poem by Wallace Stevens which articulates a space of reading and of contemplation, and the coming together of reader and book, is the genesis of the work by Ximena Pérez Grobet, *WORDS: The house was quiet and the world was calm*.[6] In this every occurrence of each alphabetical letter in that poem is set in their original positions on a separate page, and each page is bound to a narrow concertina spine in order that they too fall as if loose in the space of the book's unfolding.

Made in collaboration with Sophie Loss, our book is *Escapade*. Our starting point was François Rabelais' evident enjoyment of words, his play with language creating a complex and rumbustious world. As one of his translators points out "For his material he resorted to books quoting, parodying, assembling, contrasting, and mocking authors great and small, famous and obscure." And often "he merely strings his narrative together on a series of *thens* and *ands*; and his sentences are sometimes so rich in half-related dependent clauses that his true meaning is in danger of escaping his reader."[7] For our book we took a portion of the written text

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[5] The set of *words* books were first shown at the 19th Contemporary Artists' Book Fair, held at The Tetley, Leeds, 5 - 6 March 2016.

[6] Wallace Stevens, *The house was quiet and the world was calm* in *Selected Poems*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 90.

[7] J.M. Cohen's Translator's Introduction to *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, (London:Penguin Classics, 1955/1972) p.19. Rabelais also relished lists and would fill pages with exhaustive

from chapter 56 of *The Fourth Book of Pantagruel*, the excerpted passage's diegesis is the moment that the cries of a past sea battle, having been frozen in winter into coloured pebbles of ice, are heard again as they now thaw. Spoken words/sounds materialised, words as things handled by the ship's crew.

In *Escapade* one line extends out of the text block of the first page, across the margin and overleaf, and on through the central divides from page to page, an unbroken single line that may be seen as a manifestation of the continuity of the flow of reading. Though this reading might be distracted by the awareness of an upside down line running below and parallel - whether to give attention to this or to continue? The words' signifying lucidity, already eroded by this break from conventional print layout, is more definitely disrupted when the line reaches the folded inner edge of the book's last page and collapses into a disarray of concertinaed letters. To proceed the text turns around and over and retraces its course forming a reverse boustrophedon, an action in print emulated by the reader in turning over the book in their hands.[8] Arriving back at the initial page the words once more rotate 180 degrees and return to a contained order.

The indeterminacy or doubling in perception of word as sign or as object, and their *matter-ness* is exemplified in Robert Smithson's *A Heap of Language*, a drawing/piece of writing in pencil. The accumulation of 152 words and phrases which are all associated with linguistics such as *monosyllable*, *dialect*, *alphabet* are set out as a shallow pyramid, with *language* at the top. The title of the work, given in the press release as *LANGUAGE to be LOOKED at and/or THINGS to be READ*, echoes its self-reflexive nature, that of being in and of language. It may be that it is the figure of the stack, of words pilled up that make for their ambiguous status of "a sustained parataxis" as writes Richard Sieburth of the work, also quoting Theodor Adorno in his essay on Holderlin that "parataxis was the salient feature of the poet's modernity, the principle of montage or *spacing*: one thing after another without […]

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enumerations of foods, animals, games, and books, fictional books with often absurd and satirising titles.

[8] Boustrophedon, from the Greek - turning as oxen plough, is a written form common in the ancient world in which every other line is reversed, the characters mirrored. A 'reverse boustrophedon' has the writing the correct way but the lines are turned over, as in *Escapade*.

syntactical coordination or subordination", that one sees a bundle, from which words may be picked out.[9]

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[9] Richard Sieburth, 'A Heap of Language: Robert Smithson and American Hieroglyphics in Robert Smithson' in *Robert Smithson*, Ed. Eugenie Tsai and Cornelia Butler, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004), p. 222.

Arno Schmidt's *Zettel's Traum* and the relational mutability of the fragment

Just as a library card catalogue is a physical, *en abyme*, model of the library, the organisation of and the cross-reference between slips of paper and cards recording ideas, citations and facts may be seen as an embodied manifestation of the multifariousness and intertextuality of reading. Walter Benjamin writes of Stéphane Mallarmé owning "a working instrument for poetry in the form of a card file" (Benjamin 2006: 117). He himself used cards and scraps of paper extensively, noting thoughts, copying references, cutting and pasting and rearranging, keeping all the material on the move. Benjamin's unfinished *Passagen-Werk* (*Arcades Project*) was always intended by him to comprise of a large number of quotes and excerpts from a great variety of sources juxtaposed, but with a minimum of analysis and comment, a project of literary montage.

This apparently paratactic accumulation of fragments was also the form of his earlier *One-Way Street* (Benjamin 1928), one that took as model the chance encounters with the wide diversity of textual signs visible on an urban street, and the fractured plane of Dadaist photomontage. Benjamin's strategy was that of a mutable constellation, "Presentation as indirection, the roundabout way – this then, is the methodological character of the tractatus. Renunciation of the unbroken course of intention is its immediately distinguishing feature."[1] With no directed point of view, the readers make their own paths and connections between spatially and thematically set apart objects - one is constantly looking around. In a contemporary revue of *One-Way Street* Ernest Bloch writes, "One goes along quite cheerfully. Then something disturbs us. Then something moves us against our will. It gleams, sharp and strange, seems to be something great, then just to the side, becomes

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[1] Walter Benjamin, *Origen of German Trauerspiel* cited in relation to *One-Way Street* by Michael W. Jennings in his introduction to the work (Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street* trans. by Edmond Jephcott, (Cambridge MA: The Bellnap Press, Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 5.

something wholly different."[2] I propose that this would also be a very apt expression of the unexpected and subversive quality that may be come upon in artists' book works.

The exhibition *The Card Index as Writing Machine* consisted of my selection of artists' books, works of poetry and of sound, each of these having their genesis in the act of sifting through and the bringing together of indexical signifying fragments of written, aural or pictorial data.[3] All the works retain the discreteness of these objects in the diverse configurations of their final form, there is an invitation for meaning to be assembled by the reader/viewer/listener as with a construction kit, with connections being made from one item to another, and maybe patterns, rhythms and resonances perceived across the whole.

The index cards that are the means of performed, and often printed, dissemination in the work the Russian poet Lev Rubinstein, are an exemplification of this as a physical form that reflects process and leads to an aleatory reading. Each card carries a separate short passage, sentence or phrase. These texts are collaged from found material, disparate overheard scraps of conversation, verse and stage directions, which reflect playfully on diverse modes of quotidian discourse.[4] In performance Rubinstein reads through the stacks of note-cards - shreds of speech, caught arranged and printed, now uttered again. More self-reflexively, each loose card in his *Thirty-five New Pages* has only a page number as title, printed next to which a superscript number refers to a footnote, these in turn refer back to the card in a series of conjectures and suggestions as to a potential (yet unwritten) content. These are loops in time, with the card held in the hands being the material crossing

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[2] Also cited by Jennings in Benjamin, 2016, p. 7) from Ernst Bloch 'Revueform in der Philosophie',(*Vossische Zeitung* August 1928), p182.

[3] *The Card Index as Writing Machine* was held at The Tetley, Leeds as part of the PAGES series of exhibitions and events *archives and office, stationery and document* 7 - 23 March 2014 in conjunction with the 17th Contemporary Artists' Book Fair.

[4] Another gathering from the everyday in the exhibition is *Événements 09* by the sound poet Anne-Marie Chaton; his material is the most ephemeral of printed matter - the text of train tickets, retail and café receipts and packaging. In this performance he overlays the recitation these cut-ups of inconsiderable documents, with a series of repeated newspaper headlines, the 'events' of the work's title.

point in an enactment of words re-heard or references followed and contemplated - temporal articulation of and through the object.

Janna Ullrich noticed that there was sameness to cinema publicity images, a limited variety of standard compositions were always employed. Gathering from online sources, she started collecting and collating these by series into a database, of the typologies she established, 'man or woman sideways' was made into her book *Coverment.* She cropped the photos to frame the faces and with one to a page, staggered all the pages so that they themselves formed the cover of the book giving an abbreviated view of the whole. This also acts as a spur to flip through and so animate the sequence of different actors and very similar poses. Heads set at subtly differing angles progressively turned, and now turning, always looking at the camera/reader, who then in the time of the handling of the book become subject.

Another instance of a concrete structure manifesting shifting and revising variations within repetition is experienced in the work of poet and writer Roger Lewinter. Starting from his premise that the full stop delimits and fixes an author's intention (and so to some extent that of the reader's expectations) but that the potential of language, made of manifold connections, is infinite, Lewinter's practice consists of a continuing elaboration of a single unfinished phrase. There is an implicit indication (in the layout and punctuation) that the order of the words and phrases in his book *qui -dans l'ordre -au rouge du soir- des mots-* have been, and will be, assembled and re-assembled in repeatedly changing combinations. A second iteration of the printed text is given (slotted next to the book's back cover) in the form of a separate unbound section, containing another, slightly modified, arrangement of the book's content. The near infinite possible combination of these words and of language may be experienced in the temporal and spatial margin between book and insert.

For some writers the methodical and yet serendipitous nature of the card index may not only be that of a mutable resource of reference and reminder but the primary and crucial method of composition, a process suggesting a less prescribed approach to the work's reading. Arno Schmidt, wrote out and filed innumerable note cards, each with just a few words, brief inscriptions of inner and self-consciousness reflections, descriptions of landscape, quotations from and references to literary,

scientific, historic and multifarious other sources.[5] These jottings and his thoughts on these jottings and on his own past writing, form an expansive intertextual database from which material was synthesised to produce works combining colloquial speech, neologisms and citation interweaved into books of experimentation indefinable by genre.

One of Schmidt's last works is the novel *Zettel's Traum* (Schmidt 1970) - *Zettle* is a piece of paper, and *traum* a dream.[6] This was an expansive project inspired, Schmidt states by James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*; the large format book of 1,493 pages was formulated from the material on over 130,000 index cards.[7] Though the framing narrative is that of five characters discussing over a period of twenty-five hours the work and translation of Edgar Allen Poe, *Zettel's Traum* is an extremely complex metatextual critique of accepted modes of representation in literature in which "Any attempt to trace a prime origin inevitably leads to pluralities of meaning and extended contingencies. Schmidt does not consider obedience to the imitative claims of mimesis and mimetic representation as a desideratum" (Langbehn 2003: 6). Thus the polysemy of the work may challenge how reading is thought of - in its play of the conscious and unconscious, of text and intertext, in a merging into fiction of a multiplicity of interwoven citations and references and in the adoption of differing language styles.

The book's labyrinthine and subversive fractured narrational structure is mirrored by its typographic layout. It is set out in three columns to a page, not uniform blocks of

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[5] Though erudite, innovative and auto-reflexive, much of Schmidt's fiction is informed by and addresses the barbarity of Germany's then recent past and of the conservatism of the Adenauer era. Writing in Germany from the late 1940s to 1979, the work is "Constructed as dense intertextual webs, Schmidt's narratives convey the sense of a historical and literary depth that remains unparalleled in postwar German literature." Volker Langbehn, *Arno Schmidt's Zettel's Traum: An analysis*, (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2003), p. 3.

[6] *Zettel's Traum* - was written and first published as a typescript facsimile, (Karlsruhe: Goverts Krüger Stahlberg, 1970) and subsequently in transcribed form (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer S. Verlag, 2004). Translated into English by John E. Woods and published as *Bottom's Dream*, (Normal IL and London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2016).

[7] 3,200 of the cards are reproduced and transcribed by the Arno Schmidt Foundation and can be viewed at - www.arno-schmidt-stiftung.de/Archiv/Zettelarchiv.html

text but sections of different length and shape that intercut with each other, and with blank spaces and some appropriated images such as illustrations and diagrams. Though there is a fluid play between these, in the main the central part consists of the protagonists' discussions, to the left are quotes from Poe and discursive references to his life, and on the right citations from, and notes and comments to other (principally literary) texts.[8] Font sizes vary, and typographic symbols are used idiosyncratically as a form of figuration, the syntax is also unconventional and includes the extensive use of a form that Schmidt devised and called *Etym* - the re-drafting of a word, based on etymological sources and on homonymy, to show underlying significance and multiple meanings.

Photographs show Schmidt at work sitting surrounded by an arc of card file boxes, as if an organist at the keyboard, this process of engaging the manifold possibilities of gathering and arrangement, selection and rearrangement, central to the development of the work, are manifest in the material array of the finished piece and an inherent characteristic of the text.

The activity of production (and of reading) of these works by writers, artists and poets, an experience of intellectually and of physically handling words and images and of juxtaposing and arranging differing elements may be encompassed by the notion of *bricolage.* Claude Lévi-Strauss adopted this French term for casual do-it-yourself assembling, into the context of structuralism and anthropology, that myths draw on an existent store of components, constantly recombining these into new configurations and meanings.[9] For the author of the work this might be taken to be a process of experimentation, of testing various settlements led by the materials and by the generativity of language, as it may be in turn for the work's viewer/readers negotiating and building from a synchronic field of (perhaps) tentatively associated distinct objects.

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[8] David Hayman writes on *Zettel's Traum* in his introduction to the anthology *In the Wake of the Wake* that "Its three columns function […] to provide a tension or flux of signifiers or blocks of signification that virtually destroys linearity or at least impedes movement through, as opposed to across the text." David Hayman, *In the Wake of the Wake* (Madison WI and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), p. 22.

[9] *La Pensée sauvage* - Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans. anon. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

The unturned page, *Sure I'm sure* by Ida Applebroog and film in stasis

The poem *La Vue* by Raymond Roussel consists of a description, a meticulously precise description of the photographic view of a seafront as depicted under a glass lens set in the top of a pen nib holder.[1] This miniature seaside scene is delineated over more than 2,000 lines in impossibly precise and exhaustive detail, each element and event of the busy resort is related as the narrator's eye scans around and focuses in on areas of the minuscule image. So that not only the beach, road and sea and all the people playing, strolling and sailing are specified but a name being written in a notebook and the flame of a cigarette being lit on a distant boat are reported with equal precision. Though the narrator speculates on what a person may be feeling or thinking, no story is pursued, all is a single stilled moment reproduced, of this Alain Robbe-Grillet writes "the child is eternally holding its stick over the oblique hoop, and the foam of the motionless wave is about to fall …". Yet the poem's subject might be taken to be the description of the act of describing/inscribing, of visualising and narrating, and that as Robbe-Grillet suggests, "sight here is *imaginary* sight."[2] In this case it may be a form of doubling of the real, in which every movement is caught and held in suspension, in a clear, lucid frozen instant.

Brought together by a common interest in the medium of the book, the coalition of artists, AMBruno, produce new books in response to given themes, either as an integrated part of their ongoing work or as autonomous pieces.[3] The resulting interpretations and final works are diverse but have the thread of the originating subject running through the displays of gathered books, as a conceptual

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[1] *La Vue* was first published in 1903, and later re-issued with two similar descriptive poems, *Le Concert* (a hotel's letterhead) and *La Source* (the label on a bottle of mineral water).

[2] Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'Riddles and Transparencies in Raymond Roussel' in *Snapshots and Towards a new novel*, (London: Calder and Boyars, 1965), p.102.

[3] The group, though having a core of regular participants is made up, at any one time, of the artists engaged with a particular project; it was formed in 2008 and is principally co-ordinated by Sophie Loss.

underpinning and/or in their formal structure and visual contents. As a new initiative, a printmaking project was established for which I was invited to set the brief, this proposed the production of an editioned print with in mind the title *Stills*, that of a distinct instant of a cinema film still(ed). The call suggested that participants' work could be based on, for example, a single film frame or perhaps on their own memory of a film seen, or imagined. The outcome was a set of twelve prints by twelve artists, employing a variety of processes including screenprinting, photography, linocut, embossing and etching.[4]

Some of the reoccurring and interrelated concepts and themes in evidence in these works of individual approaches to time, memory and of the watching and assimilation of film include re-enactment and the staging of affinities, traces in absence and presence and layered historical and personal temporalities. Their moments in stasis on a single plane of vision may be seen to be a materialisation of the intangible and ephemeral experience of viewing and recollection. Yet conversely although having a definitive physical presence might they be perceived not as invariable and fixed but as embodying and activating all the temporal and subjective possibilities immanent in the experience of cinema?

Just as with cinema, books are a time-based medium, they are experienced in time and this is an engagement that is physically interactive as the book is handled and pages are turned. Though these pages are usually bound in a series of consecutive leaves, factors such as pace, selection, review make for a reading that is infinitely variable.[5] This may be seen as particularly the case with some artists' books that have no intended or evident consequential linear order, and therefore engage as a crucial aspect of the work the participation of an active reader as co-producer.

So what happens when books are exhibited under glass, books that are sometimes closed though more often fixed open at a single spread, untouchable in a vitrine? Their display at one selected opening stalls the possibilities of movement through

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[4] The suite of prints was first shown at the London Art Book Fair at the Whitechapel Gallery, London on 26 - 28, September, 2014.

[5] Unlike the viewing of film that does not usually (before the advent of digital means of reception) have the physical interventional possibilities of engagement with books.

and any correlative reading of the work, the innate stillness of the printed content is reflexively echoed by that of the open double pages, an immobility emphasised by the lack of possibility of turning the page. Although not physically accessible to its viewers to find their own lines and rhythms of formal and thematic coherence through each individual book, there is possibility of reading each page and across from verso to recto of the given opening.[6] In addition the presence of the block of closed pages on either side of these stilled instants are the witness to the unseen but potentially to be imagined, or conjectured, preceding and subsequent content.

I propose that there is an analogous relationship between these pages isolated from the flow of the book/reading and the points of time excerpted from memory or from the film reel in the *Stills* prints, as well as with instances of movement within stasis in literature. For as with the films of Yashiro Ozu, whose codas of still shots that are time, this may be a space for consideration of the preceding and the anticipation of the forthcoming.

The codas (comprised of unmoving views of objects, interiors and landscapes) are intercalated in the narrative drama of the film, and in that pause they constitute time, that of permanence within change, and are opportunities for contemplation. As Gilles Deleuze wrote in relation to these, "each is time, on each occasion, under various conditions of that which changes in time" (Deleuze 2013: 17), that these are direct-images of time as opposed to the indirect ones, or movement images of montage, they hover between the character and the narrator, outside of a subjective or an objective view. These he designated as free-indirect images, adapting the literary term of free-indirect discourse in which there is ambivalence as to whether it is direct or reported speech or thoughts.[7] Deleuze sees in these that the form of change is time, the object has duration making time and thought visible. In his study of Ozu Donald Richie suggests, "it is emptiness that gives meaning to the action that

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[6] When several books are exhibited together, whether in one or several vitrines, the juxtaposition of pages and of books also invites manifold dialogic possibilities.

[7] Free-indirect discourse is a technique extensively used in modernist writing by, for instance, James Joyce.

went before. This meaning, however, is one that the spectator must supply"
(Richie1974: 174), and therefore these paused moments establish a space for
reflection.

The suite of *Stills* prints includes Lydia Julien's black and white silver bromide
photograph *5A (The Temporary Object of My Affection)*, which integrates on the
same indexical plane several signifying elements. On the left of the print is a
woman's face, as if she was lying on her side, the head possibly resting on her
forearm. This face is cut off by the edge of the paper just below the eyes, eyes that
look out directly out at the viewer. This image is slightly blurred, parallel horizontal
lines that constitute a television picture can be seen, and snugly framing the face on
the lower right is a rounded corner, common to TV screens of the past. Sharper in
definition, running the full width of the print along its bottom edge are the sprocket
holes, coding lines and arrows and one frame number (5A) as found on 35mm
photographic film. Also evident, in their magnification, are spots and scratches of dirt
and damage to the negative. Of the genesis of the work Julien writes "Recently I
found a huge stash of negatives pictures I had taken from the TV, which were nearly
25 years old. Often the object of my affections or a film I was obsessed with is seen
through still after still after still".[8]

On this single surface layers of media are combined - a cinema film via television
broadcast to another analogue support of the photograph, with the sprocket holes
and chemical process forming an apt connection. This palimpsest is indicative of
and incorporates a complex of temporal levels. The period of the making of the
feature film, the time of its subsequent transmission on television and the moment of
its photographing by the artist. The rediscovery of the negatives more than twenty
years later, scuffed and dusty, the moment of selection, of enlargement and printing
of this section of film(s), and now the present of viewing the image and meeting of
this gaze from the past.

The work by Sophie Loss, *Factum no.24*, is a combination of digital print and
embossing. The image of a crumpled sheet of paper lies printed on the surface of
the supporting paper, including the shadow cast by its irregular edge. This
representation comprises of the intricate network of shadows and highlights defining

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[8] From unpublished project documentation, 2014.

the creases and folds of the crushed sheet and also, intermingled with these, the diffuse shadows of an image previously printed on this surface; though difficult to resolve, this scene, in black and white, appears to be that of a room. A rectangular line embossed into the paper runs partially around the image, from the pointed top left corner down that side then after an angle *under* the print and horizontally across the top and down the right side. The artist states, "In Jean-Luc Godard's film *Les Carabiniers* a cinema spectator attempts to touch the projected image, only to pull down the screen - both the screen and the paper are sites of collapsed illusion".[9] The two soldiers in Godard's film are duped by their inability to differentiate between the world and its representations - they are delighted with their spoils of war, their hoard of picture-postcards. The printed image is extracted from a sequence in *Les Carabiniers* set in a cinema (visited by one of the mercenaries) at which another film is being shown which comprises of the embedded narrative of a woman taking a bath. This image depicts the moment of the screen's and the vision's disintegration, this is in turn crumpled and then re-presented, establishing yet another semblance of reality.[10] The reproduced folds and shadows reflexively allude to the multiple layers of imposed and exposed simulacra, a *mise en abyme* of superficial projections. Whereas the substance of the three-dimensional material form of the crumpled paper is an illusionistic representation, the now vacant site of the screen and of its disrupted projection is rendered physically in the form of the embossed frame.

My own contribution to the project is *Eclipse field*. An image (a frame from Michelangelo Antonioni's film *L'Eclisse*) is blind-embossed, imprinted without ink, into the paper, it is visible solely by means of the shadows cast by the relief of the intaglio impression revealed, as in a film's projection, by light. At the end of the film, the exposition of an existential crisis slows into a near silent review of a few environmental details (principally of building sites) and then becomes still, an entropic winding down having correlation to the print's immobilisation into paper of

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[9] From unpublished documentation, 2014.

[10] Gilles Deleuze writes of *Les Carabiniers* that "Godard makes each shot a description which replaces the object, and which will make way for a different description, so that instead of organically describing an object, we are shown pure descriptions which are unmade at the same time as they are outlined." *Cinema 2: The Time-Image,* trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, (London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p. 46.

the moving image of the figure of Monica Vitti. The film's *mise-en-scène* of sparsely occupied urban spaces reflect an erasure of affect, an impassivity and an indiscernibility of differentiation between the subjective and objective which is, at the end, reduced to a white field of absence.

These two prints seem to embody what may be perceived as a vacillation and indeterminacy between movement and the immobilised image. Raymond Bellour in his essay *The Film Stilled* describes the moment in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* when a young boy touches the surface of a projected film of a face as one of an "impression of fixed movement", that the face "appears at the same time very close and very far away, still with a type of movement that is difficult to pinpoint" (Bellour 2002: 143). He continues by contextualising this in the film's preceding montage of animated and/or stilled images and the mechanisms that constitute them.

Judy Goldhill's photograph is a complex composition of vibrant bands of colours and manifold planes and surfaces, a young and an older woman sit together but separate, each at the centre of two equal halves of the image. Two white furled awnings, one behind each, accentuate the couple's ambiguous relationship, the title *All About Eve? All About My Mother*, appears to confirm an implicit drama in the situation.[11] The work conveys not the re-enactment of a specific scene but that of an ambience, of a resonance, it is the staging of the affinities and antagonisms between fiction and life, and across generations. Gilles Deleuze writes of Joseph Mankiewicz's use of flashbacks, flashbacks that do not support a linear causal progression but are as forking paths. These are the subjective moments of different characters, "It is in the present that we make a memory, in order to make use of it in the future when the present will be past" (Deleuze 2013: 53) - as such they are not reports of the past but are memory as a function of the future.

Sure I'm sure is a book from one of the three series of small, stapled pamphlets that Ida Applebroog produced between 1977 and 1981, each set is printed in lithography in a monochrome - black, brown and blue, all the books have the subtitle *A*

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[11] The artist writes "I have restaged my mother's favourite film, *All About Eve*, with my youngest daughter and mother, so as to create some effectual tension between them. Taking the film's theme where an apparent ingénue insinuates herself into the company of an established, but ageing actress I have re-imagined the film's narrative." Extracted from unpublished project documentation, 2014.

performance.[12] In the books a single image is repeated, backing shadows emphasise the flatness and cut out nature of the plainly drawn figures. The scenes are framed by, and so observed through a window, in *Sure I'm sure* this has tied back curtains and a partly pulled down blind. This point of view combined with the dramatic frozen position of the figures and the bareness of the setting, may give the uncomfortable impression of not only theatrical spectatorship but of a complicit voyeurism.

In the scene a woman is lying down, by her a standing man is taking off his jacket, the stillness is intensified by its repetition, accentuating the tension of the situation. The book's first seven pages are blank; the images appear on the next two double page spreads, so that their duplication is evident without or before turning the page. Following these for are two blank pages except for the words 'I THREW IT AWAY' in small capitals near the bottom left of the recto, then another two images, after these 'SURE I'M SURE in a larger size in the centre of the right hand page, then four more images. As one goes from page by page the appearance of the words, of a voice, does not bring any relief to the tension, nor when the last picture is reached on the verso of the back cover is there any resolution.[13] To the contrary this layout, without the full stop of a customary blank reverse to the cover, may imply a reprise, a circular return to the start, or to stasis.

As with Applebroog's books, the *stills* prints, though each a single image, are made up of and read through manifested layers of time, a palimpsest of manifold overlapping connections, exemplifying the ever-variable complexity of temporal awareness that is memory, that memory is not of the past but is the present moment of its (re)inscription. This is duration, which as Henri Bergson proposed, is a condition of constant flux as memory updates and accumulates, and that the visualising of movement is achieved by means of assembling sequences of

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[12] These are: Galileo Works in 1977, Dyspepsia Works (which includes *Sure I'm sure*) in 1979 and the Blue Books in 1981.

[13] Betty Bright writes that Applebroog's books "implicate the reader in a private crisis or loss, in a language of brooding inevitability that weighs down the figures, like a heaviness of spirit" (Bright 207), that the story behind them "turns on what is meant as opposed to what (little) is said" *No longer Innocent: Book art in America 1960-1980,* (New York City: Granary Books, 2005), p. 209.

immobilities.[14] In Roland Barthes's view the filmic could only be apprehended through the film still, or one of these immobilities, that this time for consideration should be under the control of the viewer, that it be a *scriptible* rather than a *lisible* time. This may also present a means of approaching the question of books fixed at one opening in cases and of their reading(s).[15]

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[14] "I cannot escape the objection that there is no state of mind, however simple, which does not change every moment, since there is no consciousness without memory, and no continuation of a state without the addition, to the present feeling, of the memory of past moments." Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by T.E. Hulme, (Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing, 1999), p. 40.

[15] That "the still throws off the constraint of filmic time […] for written texts, unless they are very conventional, totally committed to logical-temporal order, reading time is free; for film, this is not so, since the image cannot go faster or slower without losing its perceptual figure. The still, by instigating a reading that is at once instantaneous and vertical, scorns logical time", Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, trans by Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 67-68.

Metalepsis, the disruption of literary ontological boundaries and *In-octavo*

In written fiction, as well as other media such as film, theatre and painting, there have always been instances of intentional transgressive shifts from the level of narration to that of the narrated, and within a story between one diegesis and to another. In narratology the phenomenon and its strategic use is identified as metalepsis, first named (after the rhetorical device) and analysed by Gérard Genette in *Discours du récit* (1972).[1] The term encompasses the various ways a boundary between worlds or represented realities is breached.[2] These "theoretically mutually exclusive zones" are categorised by Debra Malina as ones "of (extra-textual) reality, the fictional frame (extradiegetic level), the main story (diegesis), and the story-within-the-story (hypodiegesis)".[3] The crossing over of one into the other, from the sphere of the reader/author to that of the teller and the told, or the frame-break of story within story may have a disorientating effect, diverting from the reader's immersive experience of a consequential narrative flow.

These are mechanisms that initiate conditions of defamiliarisation and ambiguity, and if the intention of the work, and of the poetics of the study of that writing, is to foreground "ontological issues of text and world, it can only do so by exploiting general ontological characteristics shared by *all* literary texts and fictional worlds,"

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[1] Gérard Genette *Narrative discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press 1983), pp. 234 - 237.

[2] In their introduction John Pier and Jean-Marie Schaeffer write that to understand metalepsis in narratology one should remember that "in general, all narrative text is a narration of events and consequently it is organised on two clearly separated levels: the level of narration and that of the events narrated." My translation of "en général que tout récit est une narration d'événements et que par conséquent il s'organise en deux niveaux clairement séparés: le niveau de la narration et celui des événements narrés."*Métalepses: Entorses au pacte de la representation* eds. John Pier and Jean-Marie Schaeffer, (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales 2005), p.11.

[3] Debra Malina *Breaking the Frame: Metalepsis and the Construction of the Subject* (Columbus OH: Ohio State University Press 2002), p.1.

here Brian McHale is referring to the analysis of postmodern fiction as set out in his survey of the subject.[4] His study utilises the model of a change of the dominant, from the epistemological one of questioning what and how something is known of modernism to an ontological one that engages with "problems of *modes of being*" (McHale 1987: 10) in postmodernist works. Though his is an examination of a particular moment and of the move from modernism to subsequent exercises in indeterminacy and ambiguity, I suggest that such slippages that might trouble the stability of the reader's relation to the literary work are in the nature of fictional narrative and have been manifest to varying degrees at all times.

A differentiation could be made between a rhetorical metalepsis, one on the level of discourse in which, for instance, an author intrudes into the fictional world or vice versa; this synchronicity of narration and story tends to highlight the artifice of the fabula by interrupting mimetic semblance. Lawrence Sterne, for example, in *Tristram Shandy* plays on the mismatch of the elapse of the time of the story and that of the writing/reading as he/the narrator leaves characters suspended in mid movement whilst he digresses, returning to them pages/hours later.[5] The other, potentially more disruptive form is an ontological metalepsis that occurs within the story, when there is not only movement but also a blurring of demarcation between intradiegetic levels, leading to the confusion and dislocation of different focalisations and between one or more embedded narrative events. When these inter-contained events have an indeterminable position in regard to narrative frames, and appear to be self-sufficient it may produce in the reader a sense of the "unacceptable and insistent hypothesis that the extradiegetic is perhaps always diegetic and that the narrator and his narratees - you and I - perhaps belong to the same narrative" (Genette 1983: 236) This undermining of the ontological status of the narrative and reading subject is one experienced within the diegesis of the story by the protagonist

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[4] Brian McHale *Postmodernist Fiction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1987), p. 27.

[5] Victor Shklovsky thought of *Tristram Shandy* as "the most typical novel of world literature" (Shklovsky: 2015 p. 170), Patricia Waugh concurs, considering it as the prototype for contemporary metatextual fiction as it "bases its metafictional subversion on the laying bare of the most fundamental set of all narrative conventions: those concerning the representation of time." Patricia Waugh *Metafiction*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1984) p. 70. And also I, and others (for instance Drucker 1995: 33 and Bright 2005: 35), would suggest an important forerunner of the artists' book.

of Muriel Spark's *The Comforters*, who is self-consciously aware of being a character in the novel, of being written as the story progresses.

An *octavo* is an average size book format (typically 20 to 23 cm in height), sheets are printed with 8 pages each side, folded 3 times to make sixteen-page signatures, all the sections are then gathered, bound and cut.[6] In France until the late 1960s new books were often still sold uncut, with the publishers Les Éditions de Minuit continuing to issue some fiction titles untrimmed until the 1980s - it was for the reader to separate the pages joined regularly by the folds at the head and fore-edge. The opening up the book was undertaken in a variety of ways, from carefully cutting with a sharp blade to running a finger through, resulting in a neat edge or ragged with shreds of curling paper, evidence of the owner/reader's inclination or the location(s) of reading and of, in some cases, abandoned reading. The diverse methods utilised to do this may be considered as another one of the material traces that books acquire of their reading, marks which might be very evident or be imperceptible. Occurring contingently as pages are turned and spines bent, be accidental damage of bumps and stains, or deliberate additions such as annotation and underlining.

I have one such untrimmed and unread book, *Dans le labyrinthe* by Alain Robbe-Grillet; first published by Les Éditions de Minuit in 1959. My bookwork, *In-octavo* reproduces the first sixteen pages of this novel, printed on paper to match the tone and texture of original. The printed text of the first page, middle spread and last page of this section are shown in full, but on the ones joined by a fold, only the words glimpsed, as if the leaves were teased open, are printed with the rest of the pages left blank. The shapes of these remaining areas of visible written text vary, from a wedge at lower outside corners to a small arc at tail edge, depending on whether the folds were only at the top or at the top and the outer edges.[7] The folds were then cut through so as to give a slightly rough edge, the sewn signature is

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[6] To form a codex, a multi-section book of sewn folios bound in either a soft or hard cover, or if a single folded folio, a pamphlet.

[7] In the process of making, the area of discernable text was defined by spraying black into the openings of a sheet of folded paper (ink substituted for light), this area was then digitally replaced with the words of the novel.

presented loose in a card cover with name, title and date in a style/layout suggesting but not copying the imprint's design.

Here the disruption in the reading experience is not between diegetic levels within the signifying language of the words but from the written to the materiality of the physical text of the page and the book. Just as readers may become aware of linguistic status whilst reading/negotiating a meta-fictional work, with *In-octavo* a consciousness of holding a book in their hands may arise as the linear discursiveness of type gives way to the a-temporal field of the perceived lacuna of eclipsed text.

Artist Pierre Bismuth's book *Alternance d'éclaircies et de passages nuageux l'apès-midi* consists of colour photographs of a small Paris square and entrance to a Métro station, these are printed full bleed one to a recto page in a landscape format book. Each of the fifty-two images depicts a lively scene as people walk past the unmoving camera/viewpoint. The repetitions with variations in the flow of pedestrians, and of light (at times sunny, at others overcast) imply a regular series of snapshots taken over a period of time. Though the reader may gradually notice, and be disconcerted, that a few of these passers-by are the same, in exactly the same position (including a man in the foreground, blurred and caught in mid step) in every photo, and so on every page. Two different temporal forms, one a sequential progression of flux and the other the same stilled single instant seem to, impossibly, meet in one reiterated plane of vision.

Bearing the pen name of Anita M-28, *A Rearranged Affair* by Sally Alatalo is a small *pocketbook* format paperback; leafing through it the book at first appears to be a romance novel as published by such imprints as Mills and Boon. The pages are numbered in order, as are chapters, but at the top of every leaf, recto and verso, is a different title, titles as might be expected from the genre: *Reluctant Mistress*, *The Trusting Heart*, *Elusive Paradise*. The material quality of the sheets also varies, with the paper of some pages more yellowed than others, and with a few having red edging. Alatalo's project was to separate all the leaves from 188 different books, and to collate them back, one from each, into 188 new books.[8] The fact that these had

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[8] The source books were Harlequin Romances, which reprinted and distributed Mills and Boon in North America.

been written to a set formula and length made this not only physically possible but implied that any one of the new settlements could be read through with only the regular yet numerous jumps in names, occupations, historic and geographic settings perhaps having a discomfiting effect on the book's new readers.

These two books encompass the same and difference from page to page, and each of those pages is not only another (possible) world but contains the ambiguous state of an otherwise excluded middle within itself, the movement from one level to an/other(s) may also be the moment of awareness of that threshold.[9] Dora Garcia has produced an edition of two thousand books, each one an exact reprint of a 1969 paperback of Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*, an exact copy and yet each one is printed reversed. The front cover, the back cover and every page of the book is a mirror image of the original - or rather perhaps it is a mirror, as Dora Garcia says "a sort of switch that turns the space around", I propose that this switch, and its embodiment in Garcia's book, is a succinct exemplification of the reflexive shifts between meta-textual zones.[10]

Though any source text (story and untrimmed book) would have served as material for *In-octavo*, Robbe-Grillet's novel's nested, and unreliable, descriptions of events (and its title) make it a particularly apposite hypotext. During a war, a soldier wanders through a ruined and snow-covered city, he has something to deliver, but can not find his way, houses and streets all look alike to him. His loss of orientation in this labyrinth is also that of the reader as the space of geography and that of the book are confounded. The novel presents a material reality, describing objects, speech and locations in methodical detail, and yet the chronology is scrambled, with events not only occurring out of temporal sequence but repeatedly re-occurring with variations, never quite the same. This instability is further confused by the metalepsis of different levels of embedded representations enfolding one another,

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[9] Though, in literary work, propositions are assessed through the logic of that fiction's semiotic constructs, paradoxical states may also be imagined, ones that both exist and do not exist concurrently, contradicting assumptions of an excluded middle between true and untrue possibilities.

[10] Dora Garcia in conversation with Sonia Dermience and Jan Mot, October 2002 www.edbprojects.com/2003/04/exhibitions/archive/dora-garcia-190403-240503/ [accessed 11 January 2017].

as, for example, a description of the scene depicted in a framed engraving on the wall is gradually animated to become the primary diegetic event encompassing the 'reality' that had included the initial description of the room with the hanging picture.

Alain Robbe-Grillet was one of the principal authors associated with the *nouveau roman* in France. Not a movement as such, this was the adopted term for the work of a group of writers who were critically perceived as having in common the wish to undertake a self-conscious writing that challenged accepted traditions of narrativity and of the novel. Published in the main by Éditions de Minuit, authors such as Michel Butor, Robert Pinget, Nathalie Sarraute and Claude Simon, employed distinct, and evolving, procedures that by various means disrupted or repositioned formal conventions and expectations of the fictional form.

In his critical study *Le nouveau roman* Jean Ricardou (a writer of speculative fiction himself) concentrated on the processes and conceptual configuration of the writing, his analysis indicated that the exploration of and working through diverse strategies and mechanisms was a prevalent aspect of the disparate writers' methodologies.[11] An index titled '*Problèmes et notions'* listed defined topics such as 'parenthetical projection', 'referential symmetries', and 'paradoxal entity' and instances and the function of these were examined in the context of individual novels.[12] The study includes the reproduction of numerous manuscript diagrams made by the authors; it is notable and symptomatic of the structural complexity of much of the writing that such elaborate schemata were necessary for their composition. The graphics set out the relationships of different strata, interrupted streams and frames of interconnected diegetic levels, and just as with a graphic music score, this may be discerned as a drafting in space of the temporal field of the work.

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[11] Jean Ricardou, *Le Nouveau Roman*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978).

[12] My translation of, *projection parenthétique*, *symétries référentielles*, *entité paradoxale,* Ricardou, p.186.

The palimpsest, *Of time: fermata* and the anticipation of retrospection

One of two Kodak Brownie 127 cameras bought second-hand, for use in response to a project invitation, had a roll of exposed colour film inside. I do not know how long it had been there but possibly since the late 1970s or early 1980s.[1] The film was processed successfully, with just some fading and glare in patches where the colour layers had separated. The photographs seem to have been taken on one occasion in a residential garden, with a common feature being red roses. Four of these show a young boy and, I presume, his father and grandmother, the other, unseen, person is the photographer, the mother perhaps. My book *Of time: fermata* is composed of six of these found photographs which have been set one to a series of consecutive recto pages, with the opposite pages blank.[2] In place of the inner title page is one of staves as found in music manuscript pads, and in format and paper quality the book resembles published sheet music, in particular that of Edition Peters. On the last page is a short written text outlining the source of the images and closing with '…*held in an indeterminable temporal suspension, forming a twofold pause of the photographed moments stilled and their time in abeyance.*'

The book forms a companion piece to my earlier film *Of time: tremolo.* For this a printed copy of a photograph (*Immigrant children, Ellis Island, New York* by Brown Brothers 1908) has been filmed for the specified 101 seconds of the project.[3] Any slight variation in the environmental natural light is barely perceptible. The

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[1] *Only The Sunny Hours: Contemporary Photography with a Brownie 127* is a project initiated and coordinated by Cally Trench.

[2] "A fermata (also known as a hold, pause) is a symbol of musical notation indicating that the note should be prolonged beyond its normal duration or note value would indicate." - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fermata

[3] *101 NY: a video installation by AMBruno* at The Lab, New York City 2011. The display consisted of new screen-works by 42 artists, the films to be silent and of 101 seconds (1' 41") duration, this formal temporal constraint acted as theme for the project. There was an initial showing of the first 23 films at the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds in 2010.

movement that, in the present, is seen in the stillness of this moment from the past is also from that time, the trace as a blur of one young boy's turning head.

Such loops of *then now then*, of a conjunction and layering of moments of the past in the present and of that present in turn assimilated in those evocations, can only be intimated in the synchronicity of a single image. It may be reasoned that essentially each instance depicted is a pause in a spatio-temporal continuum and so implies preceding and subsequent events. There may also be more concrete manifestations, as in the case of *Fermata* and *Tremolo*, where inadvertent indexical traces of time are apparent in the form of colour distortion and loss of focus.

Might it be in writing that such interweaving and accumulation of temporal zones is most effectively realised? For although narrative discourse tends to be linear and progressive on the page and in the reading of those printed words, the construction of the text and form of its narration might be that of complex anachrony. This is a dislocation between the time of the chronological order of events of a story and that of the arrangement of their telling, disruptions also encountered in cinema narrative construction. The (presumed) present time is interrupted by anachronies that "can go back to the past (*retrospection, analepsis, flashbacks*) or forward to the future (*anticipation, prolepsis, flashforward*). They have a certain *extent* and *amplitude*"[4] This is recounted by the voice of the narrating subject(s), which may be an interdiegetic first person 'involved' narrator or an omniscient third-person heterodiegetic one, and these shifts in time may be signalled or be intentionally obfuscated. Mieke Bal points out that sometimes "although we may see clearly that we are dealing with a deviation [in chronology], either the information cannot be sorted out, or there is too little of it to define the deviation further." (Bal 2009: 96) So that for instance, a prolepsis may be a displaced moment of retrospection, then further moves of perspective are made from that position. Whether the subject is a character in the story or not, an analepsis may be considered to be associated with the activity of memory and recollection but also of invention and conjecture. The narrator/writer speaks from his/her own present time, and the reader is in the present moment of reading, one that encompasses their reflection on and anticipation of the read and the to be read.

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[4] Gerald Prince *Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), p. 5.

In all of Patrick Modiano's novels there is a search to understand or reconstruct a history, a personal history and that of the wartime of occupation of France and its repercussions through the following decades.[5] Starting from a faint scrap of (often unreliable) memory, and also from a physical fragment of paper (a note, a page of an address book, a photograph) the narrator/protagonist revisits and attempts to comprehend his, and/or an erstwhile acquaintance's past. Tracing back through palimpsests of years and generations along the streets of towns and cities, though Paris is the principal location in nearly all the books, in the rooms of hotels and at the tables of cafés. Palimpsests, for these are not a flow of fluctuating memory but scenes that clearly cut from one time to another, transitions on the pivot of place or documentary remnant. Although an abundance of precise geographic and point of time detail is given (such as addresses and dates), physical descriptions are brief and vague and the overall effect is one of nebulous unreality. Akane Kawakami suggests "the reader finds herself in an unreal, vacillating world governed by the particular vision of the narrator."[6] For although these markers might appear to reinforce a sense of authenticity or of actuality; their discrete occurrences in the drift of the narrating subject's consciousness do not support the possibility of any such determinacy. For Modiano's typical narrator is experiencing a state of ontological uncertainty, one mirrored by the novel as it progresses, as the narrative's focalisation loses perspective, and the protagonist's attempt at recovery of a/the past or of securing an identity is never achieved, feelings of dislocation are left without resolution.

The novels encompass layers of several time periods, incidences recalled by the narrator and events recounted to him, and the movement between these. Modiano has said that he always has the impression of writing the same book, so do all his books (re)tell the same basic story?[7] From one book to another there are changes in

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[5] Novels such as *La Ronde de nuit* (1969), *Chien de printemps* (1993) and *Pour que tu ne te perdes pas dans le quartier* (2014).

[6] Akane Kawakami *A Self-Conscious Art Patrick Modiano's Postmodern Fictions* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 57.

[7] "J'ai toujours l'impression d'écrire le même livre." interview with Maryline Heck, *Magazine littéraire* n°490, October 2009.

setting, intrigue and characters and in the deployment of these, but fundamental and constant is the theme of loss in and of the past and an ensuing *a-driftness* in the present moment(s) of recollection. The whole series reflexively reiterates the palimpsest of temporal strata found in each book, in that all the novels together might be seen as forming a single work, one of reprise and variation.

Such understated confounding of the present and an envisioned yet elusive past is evoked in the book, made in 2006, by art student Leanne Bell. This consists of a photographic sequence of an occurrence of refracted light. A slightly paler band runs diagonally across double pages (including the inner sides of the cover) of mid-grey paper, there are highlights of brightness with hints of colour spectrum; the pictures change very subtly from one spread to the next. The title, *Grandma's Sideboard, the shadow of a 1960's ashtray*, is printed in a small, light typeface along the lower left-hand edge of the front cover, a date and time/duration, 8.31am - 8.32am, is also given. These two pieces of contextual information, one discursive, the other specific and precise establish an analepsis in their interrelationship with the images, allusively evoking and contrasting differing time spans, going from generation to generation, from a current point and event to a past when Bell's grandmother would have been about her age at present.

A palimpsest is the palaeographic term for a document on which the original manuscript text has been erased and the papyrus or vellum re-used for new writing. This was done for reasons of economy due to the relative scarcity of support material, and was practiced from ancient times until the end of the 15th century, when printing had replaced handwritten copying and paper become more generally obtainable. Books were taken apart, and the sheets trimmed and collected to form stocks of new pages, without regard to the originating works. Over time the same sheet might be re-processed and re-inscribed, with layer of writing superseding layer, disparate texts with no more connection to each other than had the various sheets on which they were written. The processes of washing and scraping never entirely eliminated the original texts and vestiges of the previous writing were still faintly visible, or became so over time as traces of ink oxidised; researchers have also been able to reveal earlier script by chemical and electronic means. And so as Sarah Dillon points out "rather than erasing ancient texts, the practice of medieval palimpsesting in fact paradoxically preserved them for posterity." (Dillon 2007: 12)

She gives as example the Archimedes Palimpsest on which (in the late 12th or early 13th century) a liturgical text supplanted a 10th century transcription of mathematical theorems from a thousand years earlier.

Dillon in her book *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* utilises the concept of the palimpsest, in its underlying interdisciplinarity, as a means to enquire into "how do we read *texts*", she states that "this study thus consistently investigates the nature of writing and textuality, accepts the insecurity of reading" (Dillon 2007: 3), a condition that she refers to as *risky* reading, and so interrogates the relationship between theoretical and critical writing. A figure that she proposes is an involuted one, in which diverse texts are intertwined and intercut; she uses the neologism 'palimpsestuous' in that it "describes the type of relationality reified in the palimpsest." (Dillon 2007: 4) This coming together and materialisation in a form that is, to an extent, serendipitous and in that encounter revelatory is an apposite model for Dillon's project. The palimpsest is also, in physical form and notional possibility, solely comprised the past (inscriptions) and potential future additions. In its present-ness it is inherently temporal, a compositional process of one *then* another, an accumulation of layers on the page and of page on page.

To make *A Room of One's Own/One Thousand Libraries* Kajsa Dahlberg transcribed in pencil and then overlaid all the marginal notes and underlining left by readers from every page and every copy of Virginia Woolf's essay which she was able to access in Swedish public libraries.[8] As only one edition of the essay was published in Sweden (originally in 1958), the position of the markings all matched on the template pages of the printed text upon which they were superimposed. These have been printed and bound into a new work, presenting the accumulated material traces of the ephemeral and personal acts of reading, of reading and commentating this specific work, and also the manifestation of a collective and yet multifarious reflection over nearly fifty years by the text's numerous unknown readers. Every one

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[8] "What interests me the most is the description of a subjective position in relation to a larger system. For me this works in several layers: in Woolf attacking a patriarchal system; in the reader's reactions on her text; and in their relation towards the library as an institution." - Kajsa Dahlberg in a conversation with Niklas Östholm, *Index* - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, November 2007 - http://www.kajsadahlberg.com/files/pdf_AconversationwithKajsaDahlberg.pdf [accessed 9 May 2017]

of the pages of Dahlberg's assembly has multiple annotations and underscores, with some sections and pages rendered black with repeated attention.

Another layered record of the anonymous passage over time of many people is *La Disparition* by Paola Di Bello. In the form of a folded map the work reproduces actual size a central area of the Paris Métro map as found in the system's stations. Di Bello had visited every one of the network's stations and photographed the small part of each plan that depicted that same station. She then collaged all of these together to construct a new single map. The métro maps are (or were at the time, in 1997) pasted up, one on top of another like posters on a billboard, and as passengers pointed and touched the spot on these of the station they were at and/or travelling to, over time holes are worn through the layers of paper. The artist's reconstitution shows stations rarely, if at all, effected, whilst others (such as Louvre and Étoile) have large contoured pits exposing the backing metal sheets.

Peter Handke's first novel, *Die Hornissen* (the hornets), is a complex reading experience, for it sets out the unreliable and fragmentary articulation of the movement of thought, of memory and imagination, from a consciousness turning in on itself at every moment.[9] The story that the narrator endeavours to tell is that of the telling of the telling. The two principal strands of this are in a past that is the imperfect reconstruction by the narrator of his experiences and/or of a book read, and in a present recalling that past, though these are not easily differentiated from one another. David Darby, who takes the palimpsest as the structural model for his study of the novel writes, "While the latter text is superimposed on and supersedes the earlier one, traces of the redundant narrative remain incompletely eclipsed by the new text."[10] The interlacing of event and amendment, combined with a multiplicity of sources and points of reference, and the shifting to and from first to second and third person narration leads to a cumulative loss of coherence. This destabilising effect for the reader may also be that of the narrating subject, as the

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[9] *Die Hornissen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1966) has not been translated into English - I have read the French edition *Les Frelons* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1983).

[10] David Darby, 'The Narrative Text as Palimpsest: Levels of Discourse in Peter Handke's Die Hornissen', *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*, 23.3 (September 1987), p. 253.

one voice relates the many levels of embedded mediated discourse in a complexity and confusion of layers of iterations.

The accumulation of one and many voices, here in a montage of disparate genres, languages and themes is also occurs in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*.[11] The book presents fragments of text of differing style and a variety of documentary and cited material, to form a rendition of the past and of the Cha's and her family's experience in the context of her Korean heritage. Throughout the book there is a sustained foregrounding of the interaction of language(s) and of a struggle to articulate these in speech with associative attempts to secure memories and identity. The book's title is the French for dictation (here, maybe one without origin) and a first section of the work is headed 'Diseuse', she who tells - this begins "She mimicks the speaking. That might resemble speech. (Anything at all.) Bared noise, groan, bits torn from words." (Cha 2001: 3) The telling is in a polyphony of voices, distributed under nine sections named after the Greek muses, daughters of Mnemosyne. The characters and persons embodied in these acts of speech include St.Thérèse of Lisieux, Demeter and Persephone, the author herself and her mother and the young Korean freedom fighter Yu Guan Soon. In none of these is the first person singular used (except at one point in the mediated form of a letter written to her mother), to follow Julia Kristeva's formulation, Cha positions herself away from being perceived, even initially, as the *subject of utterance* to establish the texts and their linguistic interrelations as *subject of enunciation*, texts that whilst reflecting on history and recollection also self-reflexively consider themselves.[12]

In addition to the diversity of written forms and languages, *Dictée* comprises of photographs, reproduced handwritten texts, diagrams and single Chinese characters enlarged to full pages, and with other pages left partially or completely

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[11] *Dictée* was first published in 1982 by Tanam Press, reprinted (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001).

[12] That this is a differentiation of status of the subject evident in time, from the moment of verbalisation and the direct association of word to speaker/thinker to its subsequent transmission when that subject has become one of enunciation (*énonciation*) and the relationship is one of reading subject and text, of signified and signifier. Julia Kristeva *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art,* trans. by Thomas Cora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez, ed by Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press 1980), pp. 74-76, pp. 127-128.

blank. The layout of these elements throughout the book mirrors the broken syntax in some of the writing and the abrupt transitions from one piece of text to the next. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha was also a filmmaker, and these strategies of disjunction may be seen as equivalent to those of structuralist film, drawing attention to process and construction. This correspondence is made explicit in the *Erato* section, where a scene is described succinctly and subjectively "She is entering now. Between the two white columns. White and stone. Abrasive to the touch." (Cha 2001: 94-96) and then reprised as if a film observed "Extreme Close Up shot of her face. Medium Long shot of two out of the five white columns from the street." In this same part of the book different pieces of writing are interleaved on alternate pages, breaking off mid sentence to continue two pages further.

Coda

I have proposed that the reading of an artist's book is one that may entail an engagement that is distinctive to the medium, that the reader's expectations of what a book is and does, and of its place and function as cultural signifier in the world are initial contingents, and that those expectations are ones that might be surprised or disrupted. This in concert with an awareness of the physicality of the book held in the hands, and of its interactivity and deployment in time, a time of the reader in a combination of tactile and cognitive negotiation with the intrinsic temporal mechanisms of the book's structure, sequence and content, make for a particularity of experience. That this activation of a space between hand and mind, between book and reader is an indefinite and ephemeral event that brings about, in a myriad of ways, a self-reflexive foregrounding of the material presence of the book together with a concomitant mutability of possible readings.

As a dialogical relationship, coming from a personal and infinitely variable experience of the book by its reader, this is one that is inherently elusive and complex to analyse. Studies and surveys of artists' books inevitably do reference diverse aspects and instances of this crucial relationship of work and audience, but none have focussed specifically on the nature of the temporality of this reflexive dynamic as an underlying characteristic of the medium. This has been my intention in this research, in this text and through my practice and the production of a series of book works, and to approach the question by means of the allusion to the occurrences and strategic use of self-conscious metafictional play in literature, not as a directly comparative study nor to prescribe and classify, but by appraising the effect in terms of relational, and at times implicit association.

This principle of correlation of literary texts (ones in which there is a loss of transparency of written language, and in which breaks occur in the illusion of mimetic projections, thus questioning the ontological status of the work's linguistic representations) with artists' books and their explicit (or subtle) recalls to an apprehension of form, both material and operational, has progressed to become a germane and constructive one. In forming a model consisting of a materially stable (printed) text that is also inconsistent and volatile, it presents a working paradigm for the study of the, mutable, experience of artists' books. For notwithstanding the

bibliographic conjunction of book and book, the subject of this investigation is not one that is distinct and specifiable but is the movement of reading, a movement of reading in and of time that is a conceptual event. This occurs in loops of shifting attention - from the concrete actuality of texts, whether they are words on the page (and their semiotic process of signification and syntactic construction) or the material components and structure of the book held, to that of the intangible and ephemeral associative reflections of evolving, or digressing, thoughts.

The development of this proposition and the setting out of the enquiry has been undertaken through the production, example and methodology of my practice, which takes such auto-reflectivity as manifest subject. And in turn the composition of this writing has also engaged procedures of specular self-reference, so that it not only investigates the topic through ekphrasis, contextual reference and analysis but also forms in itself an exemplification and implementation of the formal strategies outlined. I submit that this incorporation of method is an innovative, and apposite, approach to the exposition of the experience of artists' book works. Though this aspect (the time of reflexive awareness) is tacit and particular, it is in the coincidence of description of exemplars and the application and reflection of their various effects and mechanisms, that such an indeterminate phenomenon may be apprehended.

In each of the preceding sections of writing one of a series of themes has been addressed, and in these a number of works have been described, the descriptions are detailed and function not only as illustration, but are one (inevitably selective) reading of the work with the amount of, especially physical, description mitigating any overly subjective interpretation. There has also been the wish to place these works (my books, other artists' books and works of literary fiction) in the movement of the writing, to have them actively there, their pages turned. Each of the sections is self-contained, to the extent that their order is interchangeable, in a reflection of the anachrony of intertextuality, and of the serendipity of books on shelves. A reading of this text may not only be sequential and progressive (line by line, page by page) but that of a transverse axis, one notionally passing through the depth of pages as diverse aspects are reprised throughout in a constellation of associations and implicit connection and transition. Though presented in separate portions the subjects are not distinct but combine, overlap, loop and fold into each other in the

same self-reflexive manoeuvres as they themselves set out. Thus mirroring in temporal layers the recursive and fragmentary relations of *mise en abyme* and of the palimpsest, the unreliability and disruption of metalepsis and the materiality and stasis of texts.

The inclusion in this enquiry of multiple references and numerous exemplifying instances and works has had the object of presenting a series of slightly differing perspectives in the elucidation of the various themes under consideration, in a form of walking round or a turning over of the subject. This has resulted in a relatively wide-ranging survey around a discreet though by nature inconstant object of research. I intend to continue, by means of my practice and reading, this experimental study of the reflexive space of time - though I plan to next focus in some depth on four books by one writer, Claude Simon. This is someone whose work has had an underlying and significant presence throughout this project, but which I have not referenced explicitly in this writing.

In novels composed of visual description and of a fractured chronology reminiscent of cinematic techniques, Simon had explored history and memory and the impossibility of authentic recollection. *La Bataille de Pharsale* was a work of transition, no longer concerned with the past, it is a *bricolage* of pure description moving over a single plane of vision, and so one of duration as surface, picking out fragmented details of multifarious images. The following three novels, *Les Corps conducteurs*, *Triptyque* and *Leçon de choses*, continued the examination of the present moment of writing through the description of the self-same act of writing/thinking. These books respectively employ collage, mutually embedded stories and interwoven temporalities to fabricate worlds of structural synchronicity.

I also have one book in progress, *Bibliotheca universalis*, which will comprise of my photographs of views within a labyrinthine fine-paper store, set out in an analogously convoluted binding structure. A content yet to be inscribed on the surface of the depicted stacks of paper, with the intimation of the possibility of everything in a book and of all books contained in a single book. The construction will be such that there is no determinable beginning or end - a paper-library-book of infinite potential, turning space into time, an indefinite time that is that of all books.

Addendum

A future project is to show ten of the books that I have produced during the period of this research together, and in a context that would enable time to be given to the books, and would invite a reflective reading. With in mind Antonello da Messina's *St.Jerome in his Study*, and George Perec's description of the painting, in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, that "The whole space is organized around *the piece of furniture* (and the whole of the piece of furniture is organized around the book)", the books would be placed on a reading desk, and the desk placed in a library. Considered possible host libraries for this include Chetham's Library in Manchester, the oldest public library in Britain (1653) or The Warburg Institute in London, whose distinctive open classification system encourages the discovery of unanticipated associations.

The desk would be designed and made with reference to the wooden scriptorium in the painting, synthesised with a formal allusion to a pared-down Modernist functionality together with an element of deconstructive self-reference. The essential components (other than a supporting base) would comprise of the basic constituent parts of a flat surface, a shelf and an inclined board. An additional feature would be a shallow arc cut from the side of the top board, as a notional page marker or pause.

Of the ten books, four have not been referred to directly in the preceding text, though they are as equally a part of the practice as the others which have been alluded to in the writing for their particular pertinence to specific aspects of the individual themes examined.

In the flipbook, *A small (or large) machine* the sequence of pages/animation shows a filmic pan along the length of a wooden wedge, from the thick to the thin end (or the reverse). This represented diminishment of volume, mirrored in the reduction of thickness of the book as the pages are flicked through, forms a succinct self-contained device of reflexive motion. The work's title is taken from William Carlos Williams's introduction to his collection of poems *The Wedge*, in which he relates a poem to a machine, one that is "made out of words. As in all machines, its movement is intrinsic, undulant, a physical more than a literary character."

The book *Ellipsis* is concerned with a certain materiality of silence. In Heinrich Böll's story *Murke's Collected Silences* (1955), the protagonist Murke is an editor in radio broadcasting, he has started collecting small discarded pieces of audiotape containing moments of silence that had been excised from recordings. A cut off strip of the first page of this story lies on the right-hand edge of the book's cloth-covered boards, and a similarly abbreviated final part of the story's last page is on the far left. This forms a parenthesis of absence (of words) - these are words that may be thought of as implicitly present in the space outside and around book.

Rubric's title and material form allude to the 13th century *La Queste du Saint Graal*, the content consists of the one and/or two word(s) RE(A)D, the bracketing off of the letter initiates an indeterminacy between signifiers of colour and act of reading, and a vacillation from past to present tenses. In his *Poétique de la prose*, Tzvetan Todorov writes on *Le Graal* and the means by which the text combines narrative and commentary, having both a literal and an allegorical meaning, creating two contiguous conceptions of time, a perpetual present and an eternal return.

Trieste Zürich Paris - a liminal score alludes to visual musical scores and to Gerard Genette's analyses of paratexts in *Seuils*. The three cities are the ones in which James Joyce wrote *Ulysses*, and the graphics consist of the complex of fragments of lines and tones visible on a very narrow band of each page visible on the fore-edge as the books of those city street maps are bent back slightly. Three instances fixed in print of otherwise ephemeral and contingently shifting thresholds, the fragmentation and colliding of their signifying marks hinting to the further indeterminacy to come with *Finnegans Wake*.

Examples of the books are held by, and available to view, at the specialist collections of the following libraries and institutions:

In-octavo

Tate Library and Archive
Bower Ashton Library, University of the West of England
The British Library
Bibliothèque Kandinsky Musée national d'Art Modern, Centre Pompidou, Paris
Kunstbibliothek - Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Ellipsis

Tate Library and Archive
Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore
Brotherton Library Special Collections, University of Leeds
The British Library
John M. Flaxman Library - School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Henry Moore Institute
Kunstbibliothek - Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
New York Public Library

Marque-pages

Brotherton Library Special Collections, University of Leeds
Henry Moore Institute
The British Library

Escapade

Leeds Arts University Library
Chelsea College of Arts Library
The British Library
Tate Library and Archive
The Poetry Library, London
Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore
Brotherton Library Special Collections, University of Leeds
Kunstbibliothek - Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Rubric

Chelsea College of Arts Library
National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum
Tate Library and Archive
Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore

Of time: fermata

Henry Moore Institute
Brotherton Library Special Collections, University of Leeds
The British Library

Trieste Zürich Paris - a liminal score

Tate Library and Archive
The James Joyce Foundation, Zurich
Bibliotheca Librorum apud Artificem, Sydney
The British Library
Kunstbibliothek - Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Bibliothèque Kandinsky Musée national d'Art Modern, Centre Pompidou, Paris
Henry Moore Institute
Bibliothèque nationale de France
Brotherton Library Special Collections, University of Leeds

A small (or large) machine

Henry Moore Institute
The British Library

A list of something in Herman Melville's 'Pierre: or, The Ambiguities'

Chelsea College of Arts Library
Tate Library and Archive
Brotherton Library Special Collections, University of Leeds
Bibliothèque nationale de France
Leeds Arts University Library
Bibliothèque Kandinsky Musée national d'Art Modern, Centre Pompidou, Paris
Kunstbibliothek - Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Teesside University Library

Giornata prima

John Rylands Library, Manchester
The British Library
University of Bristol Library
Kunstbibliothek - Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Leeds Arts University Library
Bibliothèque Kandinsky Musée national d'Art Modern, Centre Pompidou, Paris
Brotherton Library Special Collections, University of Leeds

Three other earlier books are referenced in the *Visual index of art practice 2013 – 2017* as these have been in recent exhibitions and initiatives. Each relates to, and embodies the notion of books that have their inception in libraries, and in turn may be thought of as being in and of themselves a library.

Atramentum

Tate Library and Archive
Leeds Arts University Library
Bower Ashton Library, University of the West of England
Bibliothèque nationale de France
The British Library
Bibliothèque Kandinsky Musée national d'Art Modern, Centre Pompidou, Paris
Kunstbibliothek - Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Bodleian Library
MACBA, Barcelona

Eleven French Publishers

Bath School of Art and Design
Tate Library and Archive

Cover

Kunstbibliothek - Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Bibliothèque nationale de France
Tate Library and Archive
Bibliothèque Kandinsky Musée national d'Art Modern, Centre Pompidou, Paris
The British Library

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