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Introduction

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One of the recent turns in the humanities and arts research is the switch from a focus on art as a static, representational thing to art as an active actor within a larger network of agential objects. What unites these approaches is that they all suggest that art is something that does things. Such a perspective explodes the notion of art, opening it up to a broad range of practices, where art participates in society instead of merely reflecting society. Art is thus not only a cultural field a la Pierre Bourdieu (1993) but also a range of practices intent on engaging our senses and sensibilities. Where earlier aesthetic and cultural research focused on matters of meaning, signi-

fication, and hermeneutics, this special issue asks questions of aesthesis, materiality, agency, performativity, sensation, and feeling. Not as a matter of rejecting earlier findings but simply as an attempt to explore the "other side" of the experience of art.

We must account for the intensity of art, otherwise we can only explain part of our aesthetic experience. This argument is found in critics as diverse as Brian Massumi (2002), Charles Altieri (2003), and Sianne Ngai (2007). They draw on philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, and Gilles Deleuze, who have argued that much of our perception is not cognitive but intuitive; we connect to the world through our senses. Cognition and feeling are not distinct but articulated together; their relation changes depending on the specific artwork. Similarly, our bodies are porous to the world around us. Through sensory perception the world reaches into our bodies, just as our bodies extend through the environment.

By exploring the sensory experience of art, we can also understand the intersection of art, culture, and politics in ways that go beyond issues of representation. Art becomes a doorway to new experiences, new sensations, and new modes of thought: consider, for instance, the uncanny spatial feelings we get from Robert Lazzarini's *Skulls* or the difficult music of Karlheinz Stockhausen. This process-oriented approach clarifies the need for art by showing art's transformative potential. Art is one of the most vital aspects to the becoming of life; the way that we understand life and our lives are organized by works of art. Works of art filter our perception, whether by obscuring areas of life or by claiming new territories.

This focus extends through current approaches such as affect studies, performativity studies, and speculative aesthetics, revealing that thought, act, and creativity cannot be separated. Such a perspective is also evident in (new) materialist or actor-network approaches to art, exemplified in critics such as Rita Felski (2008), Timothy Morton (2009), Eileen A. Joy (2013), and others. Art is never isolated from other actors and art's materials have their own forms of agency. Once again, simply by extending agency to actants other than humans, nothing is taken away from human beings. The fact remains that there are far more components to the networks of art and that objects, not only subjects, have agency. By investigating the agential impact of artworks, we gain a fuller understanding of how art works.

The essays in this issue speak to these concerns in various ways. In 'Computation as Medium', Elizabeth Jochum and Lance Putnam investigate how new technologies are transforming the relations between art work and audience. In a similar vein, Steen Ledet Christiansen points out that technologies of musical reproduction shape what we hear and how we hear it in 'Sounds of Futures Past'. And yet, as he shows, older technologies may continue to manifest themselves in the form of "ghost effects". Matter thus seems to be distinct and yet very hard to separate from mediation.

Related issues crop up in the medium of literature. Beate Schirrmacher's analyses works by Günther Grass and Elfriede Jelinek in 'Disturbing the Metaphor', pointing out that both authors not only draw on metaphors in their works, but also materialize metaphors in distinct ways. The performative aspects of language are also picked up by Jens Kirk in 'Changing Your Vision for Good' in his discussion of Robert MacFarlane's *Landmarks* as a striking example of the "post-pastoral" genre. Why are you attuned to one piece of art and not to another that might seem to be quite similar? This issue is picked up by Kim Møller in his discussion of experiences of looking at paintings in 'Experiencing a Painting', combining phenomenology with neuroscience.

There is a related interest in combining humanistic and scientific frameworks in Anders Bonde and Birger Larsen's essay 'Studying the Aesthetics of Images and Advertising Films', which combines semiotic analysis with physiological measurement of audience response. In her analysis of Christian Lollike's play *Living Dead* of a contemporary Danish in 'Dissolving Europe?', Birgit Eriksson draws explicit connections between aesthetic feelings and obstructed agency. Liani Lochner also tackles the relations between affect and language in 'What Literature Can Do', where she draws on Derek Attridge's ideas about the singularity of literature to reflect on her response to Zoe Wicomb's *October*, while Jodie Childers deals with the creativity of four individuals incarcerated in mental asylums during the early part of the twentieth century in 'Making Art as Resistance'. Katalin Halasz's essay 'On Affecting White Women' blends an account of a video performance with some broader reflections on the relations between art and sociology, a topic broached slightly differently by Frederik Tygrstrup, who outlines the democratic potentials of art in his "The Work of

Art." Finally, Rita Felski provides a response to the issue's articles in the postscript 'How is an Art Work an Agent?'

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Computation as Medium

Agency and Motion in Interactive Art

Dr. Elizabeth Jochum *(BA Wellesley College; MA, PhD University of Colorado) is an assistant professor at Aalborg University. Her research focuses on the intersection of robotics, art, and performance. She is the co-founder of Robot Culture and Aesthetics (ROCA) research group and a member of AAU Robotics, and RELATE Research Laboratory for Art and Technology. She serves on the editorial board of Global Performance Studies.*

Dr. Lance Putnam *(B.S. in Electrical and Computer Engineering University of Wisconsin; M.A. in Electronic Music and Sound Design, Ph.D. in Media Arts and Technology University of California, Santa Barbara) is a composer and researcher in generative art, audiovisual synthesis, and media signal processing. His research concerns the relationships between sound and graphics and motion as a spatiotemporal concept. He is a research associate at the Digital Creativity Labs at Goldsmiths.*

Abstract

Artists increasingly utilize computational tools to generate art works. Computational approaches to art making open up new ways of thinking about agency in interactive art because they invite participation and allow for unpredictable outcomes. Computational art is closely linked to the participatory turn in visual art, wherein spectators physically participate in visual art works. Unlike purely physical methods of interaction, computer assisted interactivity affords artists and spectators more nuanced control of artistic outcomes. Interactive art brings together human bodies, computer code, and nonliving objects to create emergent art works. Computation is more than just a tool for artists, it is a medium for investigating new aesthetic possibilities for choreography and com-

position. We illustrate this potential through two artistic projects: an improvisational dance performance between a human dancer and a mobile robot, and a virtual reality art work based on procedurally-generated content. Through our practice, we find that computation fosters an interrogative approach to artmaking that raises questions about agency and intentionality, such as how artists work with immaterial processes to generate novel and unexpected aesthetic experiences.

Keywords Art, agency, computation, motion, robotic art, procedural art, virtual reality, choreography

Introduction

Just as the computer transformed human labor practices, so too has it altered artistic practices and media art. The computer has long been a tool for art-making and introduced levels of interactivity that expand the notion of agency in art. For interactive art, the artist is increasingly regarded not as the sole creator of the art work, but rather as a director that devises situations or environments where spectators give life to an art work or event. Interactive art works can be viewed as "scenarios or scores that project the interactive behavior of the receivers" and emphasize "the dynamic of the changeability of an art-work event" (Kluszczynski 2). For interactive art works that utilize computational processes, the question of art's agency is not limited to a discussion of its performative function (Hantelmann) or social function (Gell), but extends to the concept of agency in computer simulations and emergent systems. Interactive art promotes a shared agency where the agency – or intentionality – of an art work is shared between the artist, spectator / participant, and code. Although computational art relies on formal mathematical processes that are deterministic and procedural, computation does not limit the dynamic possibilities for unexpected outcomes but rather expands them by creating art works that are ephemeral and unique. Interactivity and agency are thus linked: the spectator experiences her own agency in the art work as a generator of events.

The article is organized as follows: we briefly outline the concept of agency as it relates to art works and computer agents in interactive art. We then introduce motion algorithms as a method for

interaction that allow the spectator to directly shape the art work. By effecting motion and choreography, the spectator animates the art work – sometimes producing outcomes beyond what the artist had originally intended. The spectator experiences her agency through the perception and experience of motion.

We then describe two art works that we developed in collaboration with research institutions: *The Dynamic Still* (Figure 1) is an improvisational dance performance between a human dancer and a mobile robot, and *Mutator VR: Vortex* (Figure 2) is an interactive, immersive, virtual reality art work based on procedurally-generated content. Both works use motion algorithms to generate organic, natural motion. While on the surface the works appear to be vastly different – an improvisational robot dance performance and a virtual world experienced through a head-mounted display – the strategies of interactivity are remarkably similar. We analyze these works according to the types of agency they afford and articulate how computational approaches to motion can contribute to new artistic experiences.

Figure 1. Sandro Masai performs with a mobile robot in *The Dynamic Still*, an improvisational dance performance at *International Impro Festival* in Aalborg, Denmark. Photo: Barnabás Várszegi.

Figure 2. Participants immersed in the virtual reality art work *Mutator VR* at the *Hybris: Monsters and Hybrids in Contemporary Art* exhibition in Venice, Italy. Photo: William Latham.

Agency

Concepts of agency vary across disciplines and even within disciplines. In art theory, agency can refer to the social agency of art objects (Gell), the performative function of art (Hantelmann), art as a social system (Luhmann), or the conceptual lens of affect and political agency (Massumi). In computer science, the notion of agency is more descriptive as it seeks to designate degrees of autonomy of a given software system and classify agents according to function. Definitions are not exhaustive, but rather meant as a tool for analyzing and evaluating software systems. Franklin and Graesser define an autonomous agent as "a system situated within and a part of an environment that senses that environment and acts on it, over time, in pursuit of its own agenda and so as to effect what it senses in the future" (Franklin and Graesser 1996). There is no unifying taxonomy or classification scheme for software agents, but a variety of approaches. For example, reactive agents respond in real-time to changes in the environment, whereas learning/adaptive agents change their behavior over time based on previous experience.

Such definitions give rise to philosophical considerations: do adaptive agents have more agency than reactive agents? How do agents perceive and understand the role in their environment? These questions are not unlike questions about social agency in art and the humanities. For example, anthropologist Alfred Gell defines social agency as

> a culturally prescribed framework for thinking about causation, when what happens is (in some vague sense) supposed to be intended in advance by some person-agent or thing-agent. Whenever an event is believed to happen because of an 'intention' lodged in the person or thing which initiates the causal sequences, that is an instance of 'agency' (Gell 17).

Gell famously extended the role of social agency from human beings to art objects, positing that nonliving objects can exhibit social agency, for example by causing uncertain or unexpected events to transpire. Unlike Franklin and Greasser, Gell is not interested in classifying agent behavior but rather in theorizing about art's agency

in relational and context-dependent scenarios. He is also careful to distinguish agent-motivated events from chains of physical/material causes, where occurrences or 'happenings' can be explained by physical laws [16]. While the subject of his argument is the static art object, Gell's observations on the link between intentionality and causation – what an agent wants and how it effects change in a given environment – indicate some possible points of connection between agency in art and computer science. For Gell, "an agent is defined as one who has the capacity to initiate causal events in his/her vicinity which cannot be ascribed to the current state of the physical cosmos, but only to a special category of mental states; that is, intentions" (19). While the human psyche is essential to understanding human agency, it does not necessarily prohibit nonliving objects from possessing agency:

> We can accept that the causal chains which are initiated by intentional agents come into being as states of mind, and that they are oriented towards the states of mind of social 'others' […] – but unless there is some kind of physical mediation, which always does exploit the manifold causal properties of the ambient physical world (the environment, the human body, etc.) agent and patient will not interact. Therefore, 'things' with their thingly causal properties are as essential to the exercise of agency as states of mind. In fact, it is only because the *causal milieu* in the vicinity of an agent assumes a certain configuration, from which an intention may be abducted, that we recognize the presence of another agent. We recognize agency, *ex post facto*, in the anomalous configuration of the causal milieu – but we cannot detect it in advance, that is, we cannot tell that someone is an agent before they *act as an agent*, before they disturb the causal milieu in such a way as can only be attributed to their agency (Gell 19).

Gell's focus on intentionality and environment correlates with Franklin's autonomous agent that acts "in pursuit of its own agenda" and senses and acts on its environment over time (causal milieu). While computer science and philosophical concepts of agency are far from synonymous, they are both concerned with

human or nonliving agents that interact meaningfully with and relate to their environment. Thus, agency might be understood as "a glob- al characteristic of the world of people and things in which we live, rather than as an attribute of the human psyche" (Gell 20). For inter- active art, where the spectator is invited to interact with art works that use reactive software agents or autonomous robots, agency can be experienced through movement and embodiment.

One aspect of computational art is the ability to generate organic-like motion from a combination of inorganic materials and immaterial processes. Motion algorithms that are encoded in software are fundamental to how interactive art works are generated, and therefore it is a useful starting point for examining agency for interactive art. Our primary interest is how abstract conceptualizations and reasoning about motion are made explicit through computation, and how movement and choreography influence the spectator's experience of agency in an art work.

Motion

We can conceive of two types of motion for interactive art – physical motion generated by the spectator and computer motion generated by algorithms. For interaction to take place, the spectator must be able to use their body to effect some meaningful or observable change in the computer motion. An interface such as a mouse, a handheld controller, or a tracking device captures the spectator's physical gestures that can then be used to influence – but not dictate – the motion of a virtual agent or robot. Independent of the interface, the spectator experiences a sense of shared agency as she observes the effect that her behavior (input) has on an autonomous agent and the effect on the resulting art work (output). The experience of this active feedback loop between spectator and computer program, observable through motion, is a simple illustration of how interactivity affects the experience of agency.

Interactive art utilizes immaterial processes – coding, sensing, and computation – that invite the spectator into an interaction with the art object/environment. The invitation to act was a key factor in the participatory turn in visual art, evidenced by Fluxus artists and others such as Robert Morris, Trisha Brown, Simone Forti and Yvonne Rainer, who transformed the role of museum goers by giving spectators the chance to participate in art works with their

whole body. In these works, the environment was a key factor for cultivating the experience and awareness of agency. The defining feature of participatory works is their unrepeatability predicated on chance, individual experience, and direct participation. While the computer may not radically alter this expanded notion of agency, it does afford unique possibilities that give artists and spectators more opportunities for nuanced interaction. For example, artists can define specific rules that guide the spectator towards specific gestures or exchanges that enable them to produce singular experiences. Leveraging the power of computation, artists can place certain constraints on interactions (for example, limiting the types of affordances available to the spectator) that result in novel experiences. Spectators "exploit the manifold causal properties of the ambient physical world" designed by the artist, and experience a nuanced sense of agency. When a spectator interacts with an art work using motion algorithms, the experience of agency is tied to the transformation of bodies in motion – the human body triggering, controlling, or eliciting some perceived motion or transformation in the art work.

Computation provides artists with a formal language for describing and representing motion, but the embodied experience of motion and agency is shaped by the interface and the structure of the art work. As artistic researchers, we are deeply interested in leveraging the potential of computation to create new aesthetic experiences that promote interactivity and augment the spectator's experience of agency. Working with different materials (embodied robots and virtual reality), we share similar approaches to designing motion and interaction.

The Dynamic Still

The Dynamic Still[1] is an ongoing research experiment into improvisation and choreography for humans and robots. The goal is twofold: to develop improvisation sketches for performance between a robot and human dancer based on real-time interactions, and to design motion algorithms that support human-robot interaction. The mobile robot is a four-wheeled cart that moves in response to input from the dancer. None of the choreography is preprogrammed, and we deliberately refrain from teleoperating any movements during the performance. We experimented in an open

studio setting, exploring mapping different motion algorithms to the robot based on movement patterns of the human dancer. We established an improvisation sketch where dancers from three distinct dance traditions (physical theatre, modern dance and break dancing) generated a 7-10 minute-long performance together with the robot. There is no set time signature, so each improvisation evolves according to the individual dancer's pace.

We were inspired by interactive art works that merge dance and sculpture – particularly Robert Morris' "task-oriented" performances that investigate the aesthetic potential of ordinary movement and William Forsythe's "choreographic objects"– sculptural installations which prompt spectators to interact with material objects designed to materialize choreographic thinking. We were also inspired by Louis-Philippe Demers' *The Tiller Girls* (Demers 2016), a live dance performance comprised of thirty-two small, autonomous robots that experiment with synchronized motion and various walking gaits for low-degree of freedom robots. A public performance featuring dancers and live musicians was staged at the *International Impro Festival* at Aalborg Theatre in Denmark in March 2017.[2]

The Dynamic Still began as an investigation of improvisation: what does it mean for robots to improvise? Improvisation is an important aspect of human performance, and essential to the experience of liveness in performance. When robots appear onstage, their performances often appear mechanical and perfunctory (Jochum et al. 2014). While this is obviously a function of robot design, we suspected it might also relate to the algorithms that determine robot motion. We wondered whether improvisation might be a useful method for designing robot motion, and questioned how interaction with a robot might inform new ways of moving for dancers. While the work culminated in a public performance, we view the project as an experiment in adapting process-oriented approaches to choreography. We used a "bottom-up" approach, and began by exploring the most basic patterns of movement and mimetic behaviors to generate simple motion commands based on input from the participant.

The decision to work with a mobile robot presented certain advantages and limitations. The non-anthropomorphic platform avoided that the robot might be interpreted as a metaphorical

human. The non-human form also prompted the dancers to interact with the robot according to spatial awareness and orientation, rather than representational gestures. However, the range of movement available to the robot is limited: the robot can only move horizontally (although in several directions), tracing a path along the floor and varying its speed. Limited to proxemic movement and lacking the capability for expressive, gestural movement, the robot had only a small number of behaviors: following, mirroring, repeating, and circling the dancer. Despite these limitations, a wide range of interesting spatial arrangements and coordinated action between the dancer and the robot emerged. Stillness also because an important action: alternating moments of stillness created poetic moments where even the dancer was momentarily uncertain about who was following and leading. We are analyzing the video documentation of each improvisation to understand how motion algorithms can be adapted to develop more creative and unexpected choreographies. Eventually we will develop learning algorithms that enable the robot to learn from the dancer's input and become a more capable improvisation partner. Our initial findings suggest that dynamic and aesthetically interesting choreographies can emerge even with limited motion. Although the motion algorithms were identical, the individual dancers elicited unique behaviors and unexpected motions using the same interaction paradigm.

Mutator VR

Mutator VR takes the abstract organic forms of *Mutator* (Todd and Latham 1992) into a new type of sensing space through virtual reality. Virtual reality offers a rich kind of immersion and trackingbased interactivity that can provide an enhanced sense of presence by creating an intimate bond between spectator and virtual object. The work consists of two unique experiences, *Mutation Space* and *Vortex*, that explore different uses of virtual reality to enhance the viewer's participation and interaction with the artwork. In *Mutation Space*, the viewer manipulates a complex, procedurally-generated form through various inputs from a pair of handheld controllers. The participant can make gestures to change the shape of the form or modify various aspects of the environment, such as lighting. The biological form emits sound that reflects changes in its shape and position. *Vortex* immerses the spectator into parallel

fantastical worlds inhabited by alien lifeforms and evokes an experience not unlike scuba diving. Using handheld controllers, the participant can attract and repel creatures with force fields to choreograph their motions into complex flocking and swirling patterns. Each creature sounds with a unique "voice" that is spatialized to create an emergent, unique spatial soundscape. The participant can smoothly morph between worlds with a controller press to experience a new environment with a unique set of creatures, interactions, dynamics, and sounds.

Figure 3. In-VR screenshots of *Mutator VR: Vortex*. The coil shapes near the bottom of the screen represent the controllers held by the participants, which are used to create force fields to interact with the autonomous agents.

One interesting aspect of *Mutator VR: Vortex* is how convincing both the autonomy and social interactions of the creatures appear, given that their dynamics derive only from a basic particle system

driven by vector flow fields and Newtonian laws of motion (Reynolds, 1999). In exhibition surveys, many participants reported positive feedback with regards to the level of immersion, interactions with creatures, and perhaps most importantly, the feeling that they were in another world (Putnam, Latham, and Todd). To give participants a strong sense of presence or "being there" in the world, we paid careful attention to providing "environmental presence" through a sufficient level of agent autonomy and obvious cause-and-effect user interactions (Slater et al., 1994) (Heeter, 1992). These interactive elements contribute to the spectator's experience of agency: without them the participant would have a diminished sense of presence in the generated worlds, as there are no perceivable consequences to their actions. The spectators perceive their impact on the environment, or as Gell calls it, their *casual milieu*. By supplying both virtual creatures and humans with some degree of agency to act on the virtual world and interact with each other, the participants gain a more coherent (Slater et al., 1994) and complete sense of participation with the art work.

Interaction-Driven Agency

The artistic research projects presented here only begin to touch on the myriad possibilities for exploring motion using computational tools. Both *Mutator VR* and *The Dynamic Still* use motion algorithms to generate unique art works that utilize computational motion and rely on interactivity to complete them. While there is much that divides these two works – different genres of dance and audiovisual art, real-world environments versus virtual reality – both works are predicated on strategies for nuanced interaction built around a grammar of motion. Through interaction with an interface, the spectator is transformed into a co-creator of the art work. Whether the spectator is a trained dancer or a member of the general public, the principles of interaction model a similar type of agency, where input is translated by the computer code into a meaningful output that generates the motions of a nonliving object. Operating on Gell's two propositions that 1) agency cannot be detected in advance but only becomes evident when the agent acts as an agent, and 2) agency relates to the configuration of the causal milieu and agent's effects on the environment, we realize how computational strategies might augment the experience of agency for in a work of art.

Computer code offers artists a formal method for describing the entire spectrum of motions and the means to generate motion, from deterministic to chaotic or chance-based rules. Whereas early computational art was dominated by questions about what the computer could do, artists now think more systematically about the opportunities afforded by computation. The experience of agency in interactive art need not be limited to the artist or spectator alone, but can be conceived as a dynamic field of relations.

Computation involves the transformation of material and also transforms how art works are conceived, generated, and experienced. Generative approaches to movement open up new avenues for improvisation and exploration for artist and spectator, presenting opportunities for interaction-driven motion and agency. These interactive art works bring together human bodies, computer code, and non-living objects where the dynamics of interaction create an emergent art work. Computation is more than just a tool, it is a medium for exploring new aesthetic approaches for choreography and composition.

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Notes

1 The title is inspired by Mary Bryden's article "Beckett and the Dynamic Still" (Bryden 2004). Bryden's insight inspired us to consider the relationships between motion, stillness and character with aspects of visual and performing arts.

2 Video recording of the performances are available at https://vimeo.com/211666686

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Sounds of Futures Past

Materiality, Hauntology, Affect

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Abstract

This article examines the ghost effects in *Dark Night of the Soul* produced by the residual media of old sonic technologies. Alfred North Whitehead's notion of perception in the mode of causal efficacy is used to explain how materiality has agency over the listener.

Keywords ghost effects, hauntology, materiality, uncanny sonics

New sonic technologies are constantly added to music production, allowing for new affordances, both technological and aesthetic. Materiality plays a significant role in our sonic experience. We are used to thinking about music innovations as in part dependent on technological innovations. The 8-track improved the mixing capabilities, ProTools afforded new ways of manipulating sound, and so forth. But what happens when obsolete sound technologies make a reappearance, and when the materiality of older technologies are used as aesthetic devices? Here, I will argue for the production of sonic ghost effects through the incorporation of older forms of sonic materialities.

One of the best examples of sonic materialities that produce ghost effects is Danger Mouse and Sparklehorse's controversial album *The Dark Night of the Soul*. The controversy surrounding the album

comes not from this album itself, but from another album that haunts this one, if only in a legal context. Originally, the album was a concept album collaboration between Danger Mouse, a musician and producer possibly known best from Gnarls Barkley, Sparklehorse, an indie rock multi-instrumentalist, and David Lynch, who would provide photographs. Danger Mouse and Sparklehorse performed and produced the music, inviting many famous vocalists to contribute. The album was ready to be released by EMI in 2009, when EMI abruptly decided to drop the album. The reason: Danger Mouse's 2004 *The Grey Album*, a mashup of The Beatles' self-titled album commonly referred to as *The White Album* and Jay-Z's *The Black Album*. Danger Mouse released this album online without asking for permission or rights and so EMI (owner of The Beatles' copyright) demanded distribution ceased.

In what can only be considered an act of petty revenge, just as the *Dark Night of the Soul* album was ready to be released, EMI dropped it, making it impossible for Danger Mouse and Sparklehorse to release the album without incurring legal action. What they did was to release the book of photographs with an empty CD. Simultaneously, the music showed up on various illegal download sites. A year later, the album was released by conventional means through Parlophone and Capitol Records, containing far fewer of Lynch's visuals.

The music itself, however, did not change. Filled with ghost effects and uncanny sonics, the album has an unusual ambience for a pop music production. The album employs an impressive array of sonic effects. The ambience teems with uncanny sonics through the foregrounded materiality of residual media, such as vinyl records, Speak & Spells and other outdated devices. Simultaneously, these older musical technologies are reframed by newer, digital processes that resurrect aesthetic textures from earlier music technologies. Digital dust, doppelgänger and machine voices blur the separation between human and nonhuman performance, showcasing that materiality exhibits agency.

I use the term "residual media" in the way that Charles Acland uses it in his introduction to the anthology *Residual Media* to suggest how "the material entwinement of the old and the new is a particular experience and understanding of the passing of time and historical change." (xvii) New technologies often work by reproducing earlier effects and experiences, so that we may speak of such things

as "digital dust" which is the addition of the sound of dust in the grooves of a vinyl record to a fully digital production. Similarly, new digital technologies afford easier voice modulation, manipulation, and doubling, which then produce uncanny versions of recognizable voices. With these affordances, we see how digital technologies exert their own forms of agency, in producing new ways of doing and making music.

A quick word on materiality here is also necessary. I use materiality in a broadly inclusive way, to not just suggest the objects and devices that are part of any music production (instruments, microphones, distortion pedals, mixing boards) but also the materialism of sound itself: the way an environment is made to vibrate with the sounds of music, the vibration of our ear drums, even our entire bodies. Sound is a material process, not just made by material objects.

Agency, Materiality, and Perception

The uncanny experience we have listening to *Dark Night of the Soul* comes from its unusual materiality. In evoking music's materialism, I draw on the work on sonic materialism developed by Christoph Cox and Will Schrimshaw, who focus on sound's material dimension. Schrimshaw is most explicit in connecting such sonic materialism to sonic affects, although he emphasizes that such affects are not contingent on individual affirmation, i.e. the process of articulating affect as an embodied emotion (Schrimshaw 2013). In individually affirming sonic affects as embodied emotions, there is a transfer from a material dimension to an aesthetic-experiential dimension which is not fully material but is induced by material effects. This process is what is at stake for me.

Cox makes a larger argument in his attempt at reconfiguring sound studies as inherently materialist, by arguing that sounds are events – they are not objects in the same way that drums, tables, and mountains are objects. In insisting on a materialist approach Cox, possibly unwittingly, follows Whitehead in naming all objects *events*. It is just that some events change "at relatively slow speeds." (Cox 157, see Whitehead 1967, 175-185; 2004, chapter VII). Cox follows Casey O'Callaghan's argument that sounds are waves that "*occur*, *take place*, and *last*." (O'Callaghan 57, emphasis in original).

In other words, sound is a material event that therefore has its own form of agency.

Media archaeology has become a strong field for understanding the complicated genealogy of media technologies and the ensuing "technics of the body" (Parikka 2012, 31). In this way, media archaeology engages with materiality's agency, the ways in which "media includes a new agency of the machine." (Parikka 2012, 70) Matthew Fuller argues much the same in his *Media Ecologies*, when he discusses "materialist energies" as patterns and interactions between matter and energy (Fuller 2005, 4). Media archeology has little to say about the experience of said media technologies, instead preferring to remain well below human phenomenology, i.e. the not immediately perceivable.

However, just because something is below human phenomenology is not to say that it does not register in our experience. Alfred North Whitehead in his *Process and Reality* distinguishes between two modes of perception. The first is "perception in the mode of presentational immediacy," which is essentially ordinary sense perception. The second is "perception in the mode of causal efficacy" (Whitehead 1974, 135, 134), sometimes termed nonsensuous perception, although that sounds misleading (no pun intended). Causal efficacy is defined by Whitehead as a vector feeling that allows later experience to coalesce. In other words, perception in the mode of causal experience is *prior* to our conscious experience and filters our experience, which makes it parallel to Schrimshaw's argument that affects are imperceptible "agents of qualitative, sensory appearances that remain irreducible to them." (Schrimshaw 32). For this reason, memory is perception in the mode of causal efficacy, since we are who we are because of our memories: they are our settled forms. Perceptions in the mode of causal efficacy are fedforward to consciousness, as Mark BN Hansen terms it (Hansen 2014). In a slightly different register, we can say that the causal efficacy haunts our experience — we never have access to it, yet it impinges on us. Materiality thus exhibits agency over us, because perception in the mode of causal efficacy registers material effects and feedsforward to our perception. We do not control this process, since I cannot deny the headache a supersonic sound produces, and so am affected by it.

But media technologies also have memories, in the form of obsolete technologies. Charles R. Acland calls such residual media "the material entwinement of the old and the new" which inevitably leads to "reconfigured, renewed, recycled, neglected, abandoned, and trashed media technologies and practices." (Acland 2007, xvii, xx) Older media never go away, which is why they are residual. They remain to always come back, whether as recycled material forms or renewed practices. *Dark Night of the Soul* does both by reconfiguring old sound technologies and recycling abandoned sounds, such as the record player's needle crackling with dust in the vinyl album's groove.

We would do well to consider David Toop's notion of "sinister resonance" to understand this album: "a haunting, a ghost, a presence whose location in space is ambiguous and whose existence in time is transitory." (Toop 2011, loc 188) Although this description fits all sound for Toop, it is evident that *Dark Night of the Soul* deliberately plays with the haunting atmosphere of residual media. Such sinister resonance emerges from the condition that R. Murray Schafer identified as *schizophonia*: "the split between an original sound and its electroacoustical transmission or reproduction" (Schafer loc 1910). But in fact Schafer does not go far enough, because some sounds are not simply reproduced electroacoustically but are *produced* electroacoustically and could never exist "naturally" or separate from an electroacoustic ecology. The dissolution of sounds as natural or artificial suggests that materiality acts and produces sensations.

We can call such materialist agencies "ghost effects," taking a cue from Brian Rotman's concept of "invisible, technologically induced agencies that emerge … as autonomous self-enunciating entities" (Rotman 2008, 113). Rotman's ghost effects also register a shift between objects as material and technologically induced agencies as material, although the latter are less obviously material: they fall within Whitehead's causal efficacy; not consciously perceived yet still registered. Ghost effects confront us with the fact that we are often the results of materialist agencies, essentially what Schrimshaw refers to as affects. That is to say, aesthetic encounters and events hinge on the transduction of materialist agencies to bodily affects. This is why the experience of listening to *Dark Night of the Soul* is so uncanny; we feel materiality impinging on us, the reacti-

vated ghosts of old technologies, that we cannot fully place because these sounds are ambiguous and transitory.

Ghost Effects

As a way of understanding what such ghost effects are and what they entail, let us take the last track on the album "Dark Night of the Soul" sung by David Lynch. The entire song has a distressing echo to it, not unlike the industrial soundscapes we know from Lynch's early films and Lynch is also credited with sound effects and synthesizer in the liner notes. This mechanical acoustic space lends an ominous mood to the song. The use of sound effects, such as crackling, distortion, and echoes is an example Toop's sinister resonance.

These resonance effects may then be considered according to Cox's notion of sounds as force-complex – the forces and intensities of several sounds as they interact in a new becoming (Cox 157). The track consists of instruments but also the sound effects and their interaction with the instruments' sounds. Individually, they each have their own powers and forces that end up *mattering together*. The instruments matter, the sound effects matter, and each produce their own material agency that work together with the other material agencies in what Schrimshaw calls "*additive* producer[s]." (Schrimshaw 38) "Dark Night of the Soul" thus displays its agency of the material in the way it pushes these ghost effects to the foreground.

This ghost effect is also evident in the use of the Speak & Spell for this last track. The Speak & Spell is an old toy produced by Texas Instruments, although it has long been discontinued. The Speak & Spell was the first mass-produced synthetic voice chip and it was used mainly to teach children how to spell. The Speak & Spell would say a word that the child was then supposed to spell, hearing whether or not he or she got it right. The voice synthesizer was quite simplistic and by today's standards the timbre comes off as artificial, as there is very little human warmth to the voice synthesizer. However, it is not its capabilities as a voice synthesizer that is the main point here. Instead, the presence of the Speak & Spell in "Dark Night of the Soul" comes in at the bridge of the song, where the digital dust gives way to clear sound production. Then, we hear a string of peculiar crackles and pops in the back of the mix, clearly electronic.

These strange sounds come from a circuit-bending practice known as key ghosting, where three keys are pressed down at the

same time ion the Speak and Spell keyboard. Upon pressing a fourth key, the device will produce erratic pitches and timbres, depending on which key is pressed. Depending on the device and its electrical circuits, some key combinations will not produce the ghosting effect, but for those that will, it is in fact possible to play the device as a kind of synthesizer, playing errors and glitches in the hardware, rather than an actual instrument.

Such fascination with residual media is one example of what Simon Reynolds has termed "retromania" — the contemporary obsession pop culture has with its own past As Reynolds points out, retromania "tends neither to idealise nor sentimentalise the past, but seeks to be amused and charmed by it." (Reynolds 2011: xxx). Residual media, alongside the album's digital resurrection of analog instruments and recording practices, are indeed retromanic obsessions.

But more than that, these residual media practices and objects are also evidence of what Mark Fisher calls "materialized memory." This materialized memory arises on the "use of crackle, the surface noise made by vinyl. Crackle makes us aware that we are listening to a time that is out of joint; it won't allow us to fall into the illusion of presence." (loc 387). Crackle only makes sense as an aesthetic addition in a digital world where we have become accustomed to the absence of crackle. Crackle marks what Fisher calls the "agency of the virtual," what Blake and Van Elferen refer to as the "secret" of materiality (Blake and Van Elferen 65), which is essentially parallel to Whitehead's causal efficacy – the album's residual media impact our musical experience.

In using key ghosting the musicians tap into the materialized memory of the Speak & Spell, employing the potencies of residual media in new ways. We begin to see how Parikka's "technics of the body" is relevant but with a slight difference: we find in *Dark Night of the Soul* a technics of the media body. The specific techniques for using the Speak & Spell are essentially subverted and used against it, producing new vibrating sound affects. We hear the past unaware, feel the presence of materialist agencies.

These sounds, then, are ghost effects: autonomous and self-enunciating because the sound is erratic and unpredictable, since it is a glitch. They are, in a word, potencies: powers and potentialities of the material, technological device. Any sound producer is an as-

semblage of material potencies, but key ghosting makes this fact evident in a new way, because key ghosting produces sounds counter to the Speak & Spell's design. New sonic experiences emerge as the result of key ghosting and if they register as sinister, it is because they are autonomous – we cannot exactly predict the output, even as key ghosting is a deliberate process. Always already contingent on materiality, art may be considered any object that impinges on us and will not rest, despite the fact that it is not directly accessible to us, since the ghost effects are autonomous and self-enunciating.

Ghost effects are affects in that they are present absences, things that escape conscious, cognitive processes, and yet these ghosts linger. As Jacques Derrida has argued "what surpasses the senses still passes before us in the silhouette of the sensuous body … that remains inaccessible to us" (Derrida 2006, 189). For Derrida, this is why any ontology must begin with a hauntology (the word works as a homonymous pun in French). I would rephrase that to say that we must begin with materiality's agency, what Fisher called the agency of the virtual. Every affect, every encounter, every event begins in the productive encounter of at least two bodies, or entities. These entities need not be human, even both can be the nonhuman bodies of Optigans, Speak & Spells, synthesizers and more. These nonhuman bodies are also affected and how the power to affect, though in no way do they carry embodied emotions.

Significantly, what is at stake here is the fact that materiality grounds experience, as Matthew Fuller argues, while at the same time there is no hierarchical organization in art's processual encounter; it is rather collective processes occurring inside and outside fluctuating and agitated bodies (Fuller 2005, 63). The Speak & Spell's circuits are part of this collective and participate with a specific technics of body that interacts with the potencies and capacities of other human and nonhuman bodies and their technics.

The media technologies used to produce the album are every bit as expressive as the musicians involved; at times even more so. While Lynch ostensibly "features" on "Dark Night of the Soul" and "Star Eyes (I Can't Catch It)," we cannot truly say to have heard Lynch singing. So extreme is the use of vocoder that it is impossible for us to tell where his voice begins and the vocoder stops. It is not that the vocoder simply modulates a pre-existing human voice, but rather that the two vibrating events enter into an assemblage that

includes other actors such as microphone, amplifier, and speaker, not to mention the instruments and the lyrics. Materialities are agents in this assemblage, as is Lynch's voice.

Another example of *Dark Night of the Soul's* disruption of boundaries is in the album's fetishistic use of outdated instruments. Consider the song "Grim Augury" where Vic Chesnutt's vocals are pushed to the very front of the mix, thick with shadows and extra resonance, while we hear the scratches, fizzes and pops of a gramophone needle and a wriggling melody produced by synthesizers but this time also with an Optigan. The synthesizers push and pull the melody and disturbs the temporal dimension, making time actually perceptible as we can actually hear the notes being dragged out, the timbre shifting in a dream image of a song.

This form of dyschronia is not unusual in recording techniques but the blatant presence here is unusual, again because it disrupts any kind of pretense to a pro-phonographic event before the microphones. Technology here is not like air, but rather like mud or wet clay — something we have to wade through with difficulty and it inevitably slows us down. Yet the warble of synthesizers is not the most disruptive element of the melody. That honor goes to the Optigan. The Optigan is a peculiar keyboard instrument, first released in 1971 but dead already in 1976 due to its poor sound quality and peculiar sound production. Unlike a piano that works by vibrating strings, the Optigan, like other synths, produces sound through the use of pre-recorded optical soundtracks stored on plastic discs loaded into the side of the keyboard. The Optigan, then, does not produce sound but plays back already recorded sound. The various discs available were sound samples recorded by studio musicians. Part of the soundtrack disc would be sustained notes from a particular instrument, while the other part would be a soloist playing chords in different keys. In other words, the Optigan does not play music but instead conjures the performances of earlier musicians – the Optigan plays with ghosts; all synths play with ghosts.

Because of the unusual design of synths in general, notes do not have a limited duration but can play a constant timbre indefinitely. At the same time, the Optigan has a built-in tempo switcher, that can manipulate not just the speed of the notes or chords but also the pitch, since sound is caused by air vibrations. These melodic changes are clearly evident on "Grim Augury," as most of its musical ex-

pression – as opposed to the vocal performance – derives from the elongated and meandering notes. All in all, the Optigan stands not so much as a musical instrument but rather as a temporal instrument, playing time itself. This is the case because even though the Optigan is electronic, its sound reproduction is analog, so it does not separate speed from pitch.

While not exactly unusual techniques in sound production, as Mike Berk points out, "time-stretching, time-compression, and pitch-shifting were never meant to be foregrounded as audible effects, or even to be aesthetically pleasing. They were engineered to be as inaudible as possible in operation," once again pointing to the desire for transparency of mediation (Berk 2000: 197). *Dark Night of the Soul's* aesthetic pushes mediation to the forefront and allows it to take on aesthetic significance; most listeners will be unaware of the presence of the Optigan, since it is such an unusual and rare instrument, yet to enjoy the song one needs to accept the aesthetic effect of the Optigan and its dyschronic displacements. This is another instance of Whitehead's perception in the mode of causal efficacy, where we are unaware of what we perceive, yet it impacts us.

So the Optigan plays slices of time from elsewhere and elsewhen – sound events of the past inserted into the present, where they do not belong. This very fact pushes against the entire conception of event and sounds as events, for as O'Callaghan is at pains to point out, events are unique, singular, and can occur only once. Other events may of course occur, but each event is unique and can never repeat (110-111). Is the slice of time played by the Optigan then a new event or the repetition of a former event?

For Whitehead, the recurrence of D-flat, for instance, is not a problem since D-flat is what he calls an "eternal object," an inexhaustible resource that never changes and can never be novel (1978, 22-23). We all hear the same D-flat (sound's material agency) but we might not all experience it the same way (embodied emotion), nor can anyone exhaust the D-flat. But the Optigan does not play D-flat or any other pitch; it plays the past event of a D-flat being played. The Optigan is an example of a technics of the media body impinging on other bodies in the mode of causal efficacy. For the Optigan plays the material nonhuman memory of an event, which is Whitehead's very basic definition of perception in the mode of causal efficacy: "[t]he present moment is constituted by the influx of *the*

other into that self-identity which is the continued life of the immediate past within the immediacy of the present." (1967, 181, emphasis in original.)

The Optigan, in a sense, play nothing but samples, even if these samples are not recognizable as belonging to any specific song (which they don't). However, unlike typical recordings that also attempt to control and limit the future, the Optigan's past-present-future division is far more complicated since the temporal slices of the past were always meant to generate new and different futures. The future, that is to say the new, is generated by temporally altering the past in the present, thus collapsing time into a vertical pillar, making musical time fluid, which is exploited in this song. The material manipulation of sound through the Optigan is an unusual technique that turns the performance of playing the Optigan into a kind of necromantic augury – collapsing past and future into the present. These slices of time are ghost effects and affects as self-enunciating entities, produced through a technics of the nonhuman body of residual media.

Uncanny Sonic Experience

Sonic experience must be said to be a highly complex assemblage with no clear demarcations or boundaries. One boundary that can be traversed to interesting effect is the temporal boundary. That is to say, old media anticipated a future that never happened, and so still carry immanent potentials that are now fedforward into a different, tangential future. In other words, the locus of past, present and future stops being a linear unfolding and is instead a rupture of old, past potentialities that suddenly gain new actualities. Yet the sonic ghost effects of residual media technologies erupt as sinister resonances because they are out of time. As they drag dead futures into the present, time is out of joint, which sounds uncanny.

Listening to dead media is not simply an archival activity but a haunting experience of hearing what never happened. Listening to *Dark Night of the Soul*, we hear the dead futures of the Optigan. That is to say, we listen to an instrument's unrealized potentials, the futures that were never actualized. Yet at the same time this is a haunting experience, because we do in fact hear these dead futures. While I have only focused on a few examples here, it should be evident why we can only understand the album through hauntology,

because "a ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back" (Derrida, 2006, 123). The ghost that returns, kicks back, is materiality, the very potencies that are inherent in every object, every assemblage of matter. Matter is not inert, materiality is not distinct from other entities but imbricated in a reciprocal process.

Dark Night of the Soul thus produces ghost effects; effects that are best regarded as intensities that shift and warp affects and agencies inside the soundscape. To listen to the album is to allow dead futures to constitute me for the duration of the encounter, to feel and sense their agencies as integral to me. As affect arises from contact with other material entities, I recognize that my experience is not entirely mine but traversed and haunted by the autonomous agencies of materialities.

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Notes

1 There is a larger discussion here between matter and energy that I do not have space to engage with. The relationship between matter and energy is far from straightforward in common parlance, because we tend to think of materiality as something having mass. In physics, matter has both mass and energy, although either mass or energy may be zero. Fuller's argument can be rephrased to suggest the instances when matter acts.

2 I put naturally in scare quotes because of course any sound produced by any means is part o nature; what else could it be? However, we tend to distinguish between sounds that are produced by analog processes and electronic processes, considering electronic processes less natural, due to their short cultural history.

3 A quick note on Fisher's use of the term "virtual" here. He does not use it to suggest something which is immaterial but rather something which has not happened but could have happened. I prefer to stick with the term potential to not muddy the waters of material effects.

4 For more on this relation between singer, microphone, amplifier, speaker and listener, see Blake, Charlie and Van Elferen, Isabella (2015) Sonic media and spectral loops. In: Edwards, Justin D., (ed.) *Technolo-*

gies of the Gothic in Literature and Culture: Technogothics. Abingdon: Routledge. pp. 60-70.

5 These unrealized potentials are part of every historical instrument that is no longer in wide use, and their reintegration into music production would constitute their own forms of ghost effects.

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Disturbing the Metaphor

Performance and Medial Presence in the Fiction of Elfriede Jelinek and Günter Grass

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Abstract

In this article, I want to discuss the way metaphors take form as diegetic actions in Elfriede Jelinek's *The Piano Teacher* (1983) and Günter Grass's *Too Far Afield* (1995). In these texts, the reader must literally picture what metaphorical language usually only conceptually refers to. Both authors confront their readers with disturbing actions that are felt to be significant in some way; they resist straightforward interpretation and rather provoke affective reactions. This deliberate disturbance of metaphorical language can be understood as medial presence effects. They foreground the mediality and materiality of language and literature. The way literature performs and functions as a medium is made visible and perceptible.

Keywords Intermediality, performativity, metaphor, presence effects, Elfriede Jelinek, Günter Grass

Introduction

In the fiction of both Elfriede Jelinek and Günter Grass, some objects appear to be let loose, and some actions are perceived as more disturbing than meaningful. Both authors confront the readers with

actions and objects that are felt to be significant in some way, although it is hard to say exactly what they mean apart form 'actually' taking place on stage, or being 'really' present in fiction. Grass's fiction appears as visual, concrete, and occupied with sensual detail (see Standfuss 2008, 35–66). Even abstract processes are felt to be part of the plot, to be "real objects" (Just 1972, 118).[1] What, however, is meant by this idea; that some objects – a tin drum, potatoes, a protagonist's teeth – are more 'real' than other objects in the diegesis? Although their significance may become obvious to the reader, it is more difficult to come to any conclusions regarding exactly *what* and *how* they signify.

In Jelinek's plays and novels, the structural violence in social structures and language use is 'actually' carried out in forms of direct, physical violence (Janz 1995). Even here, researchers explicitly point out an unusual degree of materialisation. Thus, Mireille Tabah not only explores how Jelinek's female protagonists defy traditional female gender roles, she also stresses how female protagonists "*actually* appear as vampires" and that "mothers *actually* are child devouring monsters"; language becomes visible on stage as "signifiers . . . flown on the stage as gruesome objects, things or bodies" (Tabah 2008, 219, my italics).[2] Processes of materialisation appear to replace or disturb signification.

In this article, I want to explore this peculiar stressing of 'actual' events and 'real' objects. Why are some objects perceived to be more 'real' than others are, although they are still only represented by language? Why are some events or actions on stage perceived as more 'actual', although they still clearly are make-believe?

In the following, I intend to explore how this 'actual'-ness foregrounds the presence of literature as a medium. As both authors are familiar with other media than literature, they thus also are aware of the mediality of language and literature. Jelinek is a trained musician and composer, Grass was educated in visual arts and always continued to switch between writing and drawing. Performing music depends on material bodily presence. In painting material qualities have to be considered. In language, however, material preconditions are easily ignored. In the following examples from Jelinek's *The Piano Teacher* (*Die Klavierspielerin*, 1983) and Grass's *Too Far Afield* (*Ein weites Feld*, 1995) the immediate short cut to a level of ideas is disturbed. Metaphors, which usually describe *how* to imag-

ine a diegetic object or event, 'actually' appear within the diegetic world. The reader is thus confronted with diegetic actions that are felt to signify but do not make immediate sense, as they are not perceived as meaningful. I want to explain these actions as primarily performative. The way in which language and literature perform as media is set into action within the plot.

Performativity, mediality, metaphors

Disturbing metaphorical understanding involves that linguistic performativity, theatrical staging and medial performance interact in a way that has to be explained more in detail.

The "wandering concept" (see Bal 2002, 174–212) of performativity is applied to a confusing range of different phenomena. However, even if performativity and performance often appear as only loosely connected, they still share some common characteristics (Bal 2002; Wirth 2002; Krämer 2004). No matter, how we understand performativity, it always involves that the production of meaning cannot be separated from bodily or material presence. A performative perspective always implies that otherwise convenient binaries collapse or start to oscillate (Krämer 2004, 21; Fischer-Lichte 2008, 17); word and action in Austin's performatives; repetition and change in Derrida's concept of iterative performativity; linguistic iteration and the social identity that they help to establish in Judith Butler's performative acts; actor and work in Fischer-Lichte's performative approach to performance. In medial perspective on communication the material presence of the medium and conveyed meaning cannot be separated. A focus on mediality in communication is thus always performative (Krämer 2004, 20), and implies an oscillation between meaning and a certain kind of "presence effects" (Gumbrecht, 2004). Instead of unmediated presence, these effects discussed here rather draw attention to the presence of the medium and could be considered as "medial presence effects".

Intermedial relations highlight the connection between performativity and mediality (Krämer 2004). Nevertheless, even intermedial interpretation easily focuses on how material medial presence contributes to meaning and interpretation. In the texts discussed below however, intermedial relations and the convergence of literary performativity and performance prevents immediate interpretation and creates disturbance.

In literary language, the performative convergence of action and words mostly appears to take place in the act of writing, narrating or reading a story. Literary studies have mostly focused on the performativity of narrative discourse – its self-reflexive ability to both create and comment upon what it described (Wirth 2002, 25). To a performative perspective, narrated acts and words appear to be of lesser interest as they do not affect the real, social world. However, a heightened self-reflexive performativity of narrative discourse also influences the way we understand narrated acts. Svend Erik Larsen points out, how narrated performance that is not clearly framed by a stage or by the narrator, blurs the border between every day and performatively meaningful acts (Larsen 2010, 79). As a result the border between what the texts means, or represents, and what it does, or presents is destabilised (ibid., 68). This can be seen in the performative use of metaphorical language.

Metaphors connect two apparently unrelated objects through imbuing a primary subject with the characteristics of subsidiary subject (Donogue 2014; Cohen 2008). All language-based thought relies on conceptual metaphors that describe the abstract with the more concrete (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2010), whereas explicit metaphorical expressions creatively establish new connections of similarity. Max Black describes the metaphor as a "filter" (Black 1954/55, 291) that highlights certain traits of *both* primary and subsidiary subject while downplaying others. In order to understand explicit metaphors we apply a metaphorical shift from literal to transferred meaning – whenever literal meaning appears as absurd, self-contradictory, or false (cf. Cohen 1997, 224). Both metaphorical filter and metaphorical shift are performatively challenged in the examples below.

The Piano Teacher : Performing Metaphors

Elfriede Jelinek's texts foreground the ambiguity of language with all its polyphonic resonances (Kecht 2007). All semantic meaning is iteratively destabilized in literary discourse; and language self-consciously reflects the way it participates in shaping social reality (Janz 1995, Piccolruaz 2007). In Jelinek's early novel *The Piano Teacher*, there still is the notion of a coherent plot and psychologically motivated characters. However, already here, a plot that is perceived coherent is challenged by the novel's self-reflexive narrative dis-

course. The novel's protagonist, Erika Kohut, is a failed pianist and turned severe piano teacher. Her sexual life revolves around voyeurism and self-harm. When Walter Klemmer, one of her students, tries to make her his sexual conquest, she can only conceive of a sexual relationship in terms of Bondage & Dominance.

It has been noted before, that Erika's profession as a pianist contributes to her inhibited sexuality (Powell and Bethman 2008). Her most disturbing behaviour, in terms of both sadistic aggression and self-harm, often remains the subject of psychological interpretation (ibid., 176). However, several of her disturbing actions appear to be in performative relation with violent metaphors that are used to describe music. In the novel, performance of music is presented as gender performance by means of a performative narrative discourse. This merging of different performative levels destabilizes the borders between what is perceived as diegetic actions and metaphorical language.

In *The Piano Teacher*, music is not primarily the source of auditory pleasure. From the perspective of the performer, music appears as the result of hard work and discipline. Violent and mechanical metaphors highlight the amount of physical strain and subjection to discipline (see Schirrmacher 2016). Mechanical metaphors compare Erika to a piece of ticking clockwork (Jelinek 1988, 40, 114), or other mechanical instruments (36); an unmotivated music student is compared to a reluctant car engine (28). The gendered notion of performing (and thus reproducing) music as an approach to music deemed suitable for women (Powell and Bethman 2008) is conveyed in domestic metaphors. Thus, a recital's audience listens to "the intricate crocheted patterns of contrapuntal texture" (Jelinek 1983, 63f.), and Erika, in her role as piano teacher, "corrects the Bach, mends and patches" (105) when a student fails to perform adequately.[3] Performing music, when described through the filter of female household chores, is gendered female (Solibakke 2007, 259). Mechanical metaphors compare the performer to a tool, an object. These metaphors foreground, how conceptions of music have been used to define the female gender (Powell and Bethman 2008, 173), and they point out the rigours of discipline in the tradition of Western art music which the performer has to subject her body to (Cook 2001). However, in the diegesis, only the primary subject, performing music, is present, the subsidiary subjects, as

needlework, clocks or engines are only conceptually evoked in narrative discourse to describe the way *how* Erika performs.

Subjecting the body to discipline in performing music also is conveyed by metaphors of direct violence. The "crocheted patterns" above are in fact "*the whiplashes* of the intricate crocheted patterns of contrapuntal tissue" (my italics), while the recital's audience should, according to Erika, be "gagged and subjected", as they apparently yearn for "thrashings" (68). The five black lines of the staves of a piece of sheet music are said to be a "grid system, that has hamstrung [Erika] in an untearable net of directions . . . like a rosy ham on a butcher's hook" (190).[4] The similarity between the net of the ham and the grid system of the staves literally 'fleshes out' how the demands of discipline may mistreat the body. However, unlike the domestic and mechanical metaphors, the subsidiary subjects of the violent metaphors also appear in non-metaphorical contexts: the whips, the gags, the instruments that hurt the body play a vital role in Erika's sexuality and self-harm. In her BDSM fantasies she becomes as immobilised as the smoked ham in the net, asking her would-be lover Walter to tie "her up with the ropes . . . and also the leather straps and even the chains! Hogtie her; bind her up as thoroughly as he can" (215); "Use a rubber hose . . . to stuff the gag so tightly into my mouth that I can't stick out my tongue: . . . Please use a blouse to increase my pleasure: tie up my face so skilfully and thoroughly that I can't get it off." (218)[5]

Thus, the aggression towards the body that is demanded of the (female) performer is not only brought out in metaphors, but also literally carried out by Erika's actions. When Erika cuts her hands, "she presses the blade into the back of her hand several times . . . . The metal slices her hand like butter" (44). In her need for self-harm she is "spreading her legs she makes a cut" and mutilates her genitals (86).[6] Actions of violence and self-harm are not only metaphorically evoked, but they also literally take place in the diegesis. The razor is an object in the diegesis, and Erika uses it to slash her vulva or maim her hands, at the same time, the razor, as the whips, the gags are imbued with significance as subsidiary subjects of violent metaphors. As the reader must imagine what language otherwise only refers to, this is experienced as being transgressive, twisted, distorted.

In artistic performance, the very materiality of the acts carried out prevents a merely symbolical interpretation, and so both material and symbolic interpretation begin to oscillate (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 16-18). Reading the passages that relate to Erika's self-harm almost certainly results in feelings of unease and rejection. The bodily violence overrules any merely symbolic interpretation; the actual violence in the diegesis is kept present. The virtual world of the diegesis, which is traditionally believed to lack performative force, is thus able to provoke emotional affect a notion of 'actual'-ness. Art performance usually takes place at a performance site rather than a clearly framed stage; it toys with the uncertain relation, of material and symbolic acts (ibid.). Similarly, certain of Erika's actions turn the diegesis into a performance site.

Too Far Afield – Visualising Metaphors

Just as in the work of Jelinek, disturbing metaphorical language deforms and distorts the narrative in the fiction of Günter Grass. The controversial novel *Too Far Afield* (*Ein weites Feld*, 1995), for example, appears rooted in the visual and material qualities of Grass's graphic work. Published in 1995, approximately all literary critics literally ripped the novel to pieces (Reich-Ranicki 1995; see also Negt 1996). On its front page, the news magazine *Der Spiegel* showed Germany's then most influential literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki to 'actually' tear apart the novel (*Der Spiegel* 34/1995).

Set in 1990 in Berlin, the novel reflects German re-unification, and deals with the problems and hopes of former GDR citizens who are adapting to the new order. Still, the plot appears somewhat contrived. The novel's protagonist, Theo Wuttke, nicknamed Fonty, is mentally stuck in the nineteenth century, re-enacting the life of his idol, the novelist Theodor Fontane. Hoftaller, a former member of the Stasi, constantly follows – or rather shadows – Fonty. Even Hoftaller is a kind of literary double of the protagonist spy in Hans-Joachim Schädlich's novel *Tallhover* (1986). As Fonty always draws on history in order to explain the present, and as Germany's unification in 1871 preceded two world wars, Fonty expects re-unification to lead to renewed German aggression. This critical perspective on re-unification was widely attacked. Additionally, the critics found the novel's plot overly complex, its style intolerably cumbersome and the protagonists as being lifeless. Fonty's actions appear

to be too often dictated by Fontane's biography and predilections, and lacking in individuality and psychological depth. Moreover, as Fonty is very fond of quoting his idol Fontane, and both he and Hoftaller frequently repeat their favourite phrases, they thus appear to be poor imitations of their originals.

Scholarship has considerably revised this picture of a failed novel. Alexandra Pontzen, for example, point out to the relevant parallels between Fonty and Cervantes's Don Quixote (Pontzen 2008). However, the protagonist's unsatisfactory lack of depth and complexity can also be explained by how Grass visually explored metaphors. His working process involved drawing motifs that were related to the text. In this process of "checking on verbal metaphors by the means of drawing them", he perceived the drawn metaphor as being more exact, as "not prone to the alluring sound of words. . . . First when translated into graphic representation, the metaphor can prove itself to be consistent." (Grass 2007, 506)[7] In drawing, Grass explored how primary and subsidiary objects of the metaphor might exert concrete influence on one another. He then re-translated these relations into the text. Verbal metaphors appear as artistic material, formed and deformed through a graphic process. This process can be exemplified with the series of images created during the writing of *Too Far Afield*.

In "Bilderbogen – sitzend, stehend und gehend" ('Epinal print – seated, standing moving'; Figure 1) we find the two protagonists standing side by side or back to back, sitting vis-à-vis, or parting company at a corner. Here, Fonty and Hoftaller appear loosely sketched, two-dimensional, flat, in contrast to Grass's usually more detailed graphic style. These figures, however, look like silhouettes, shadows. Thus, their loose, vaguely sketched nature can be seen as a way to put on test the metaphor 'to shadow' by means of drawing. Fonty and, arguably, Hoftaller are literary doubles – *doppelgängers* – in various ways. They explicitly lead their narrated lives in the shadows, or as the shadows, of their predecessors, being introduced as "silhouettes" (Grass 2000, 6, 13) or "shadowly outlines" (45).[8] Hoftaller is referred to as Fonty's "day-and-night-shadow" (36 et passim), clinging as he does to the object of observation – Fonty – that he is tasked with 'shadowing'. Nevertheless, as Grass moves from literary to visual means of expression, he refers not to the commonplace associations of shadows in literature – which of-

Figure 1: Günter Grass, "Bilderbogen – sitzend, stehend und gehend," Kugelschreiber 1993. In Günter Grass: *Catalogue Raisonné*, Volume 2: Die Lithographien (Göttingen: Steidl 2007), 254. © Steidl Verlag.

ten is the familiar turned *unheimlich* unfamiliar (see Freud, 1919). In drawing, Grass highlights the visual qualities – the flatness of the silhouette, the fleeting nature and dependency inherent in a relationship centred on ever-following – aspects that are deliberately downplayed in the literary metaphor of the shadow as an uncanny, haunting double.

Flatness and two-dimensionality are present in the graphic presentation as well. The series' title refers to épinal prints, and the drawings are produced as lithographs – 'flat', planographic printing techniques that duplicate the original on a two-dimensional surface. Furthermore, the épinal print was used to disseminate popular songs and stories in the nineteenth century and was, in terms of both visual detail and narrative quality, relatively simplistic and lacking in depth. The visual and material exploration of the metaphorical material appears to be re-integrated into the narrative; Fonty is not only a *doppelgänger* but literally unable to act independently, encumbered as he is by the visual restraints of his assumed role, and thus his behaviour is (irritatingly, perhaps, to contemporary critics) lacking in depth.

The visual metaphor with its more unconventional characteristics of the shadow bereaves the literary *doppelgänger* and the shadowing spy of their threatening potential. The visual treatment of the two protagonists is a deliberate demystification of the threat of history repeating itself. Upon closer inspection, the novel does not share its protagonist's fatalist perspective – of German history repeating itself – but offers emancipation from the past (Platen 1999; Preece 2008, Schirrmacher 2012, 163–208).

However, the disturbance of metaphorical language obstructs immediate understanding: The metaphor of the shadows not only illustrates Fonty's behaviour. Instead, the material characteristics of the shadow develop an agency of their own – they do not explain but govern Fonty's behaviour and distort his diegetic actions. When asked the reader does not automatically recognise the familiar metaphor of the shadow as a double rather, many readers and critics only perceive an odd 'badly written' protagonist and a contrived plot. As aspects of the plot appear oddly distorted, critics are easily tempted to blame the author of failure. The obstruction of conventional understanding however is intended.

Conclusion – Performing Medial Presence

Both Jelinek and Grass deliberately disturb the effectiveness of metaphorical language as they insist on the presence of the metaphorical subjects involved. The subsidiary subjects of metaphors deform events in the diegesis. In Jelinek's *The Piano Teacher*, the subsidiary subjects of violent metaphors are present and able to 'actually' hurt and even maim in diegetic actions. Not only in *Too Far Afield*, Günter Grass questions established metaphorical meaning. Subsidiary subjects become 'actually' present both in diegesis of the text and in the material production of his visual art. Conceptual relations, usually only evoked, turn into diegetic actions, which accounts for the notion of things 'really' being present, of events 'actually' taking place.

The insistence on conceptual relations 'actually' taking place prevents a metaphorical shift, which would enable the reader to separate diegetic actions and their meaning. The texts discussed here do not simply give access to an imagined world, as the language participates in forming diegetic actions. The texts thus performatively demonstrate how the diegesis does not exist without narrative discourse; they keep the medium of language present.

The awareness of medial performance, of medial presence effects could be used to reconsider Grass's insistance on the concrete, on *Gegenständlichkeit*, which resists symbolical meaning and instead might be understood as mediating a notion of objects being present. One might also ask, how performance of metaphors is also in effect in Jelinek's later prose, which often is perceived as self-reflexive iterative language game. It might help to better approach the irritation caused by texts that engage with reality but at the same time resist referential reading as has noted concerning Coetzee's *Disgrace* (Horsman 2009, 147). Of course, these texts still convey meaning, but interpretation includes affective reaction to what is presented. The irritation not being able to settle for a meaning beyond what is presented, draws attention to the language at work. In these "medial presence effects" we thus perceive literary language in action, they make language as a medium disturbingly perceptible.

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Notes

1 "Darstellung psychischer oder anderer unanschaulicher Vorgänge [die] als reale Gegenstände der epischen Handlung angehören."

2 "Frauen treten *tatsächlich* als Vampirinnen, Mütter *tatsächlich* als Kinder ermordende und fressende Monster auf . . . . Der Signifikant wird dabei ins Groteske übersteigert und als zugleich komisches und grausiges Objekt – als Ding oder Körper – auf die Bühne 'geworfen.'"

3 "in regelmäßigem Zweiglatt/Zweiverkehrt" (Jelinek 1983, 151); "des verschlungenen zu Mustern gehäkelten Kontrapunktgewebes" (63f., my translation as this passage is missing in the English translation). "Erika K. bessert den Bach aus, sie flickt an ihm herum." (105)

4 "Peitschenschläge[ ] des verschlungenen zu Mustern gehäkelten Kontrapunktgewebes" (Jelinek 1983, 63f.); "Man muss sie schon tyrannisieren, man muß sie knebeln und knechten, damit sie überhaupt durch Wirkung berührt werden. . . . Sie wollen Prügel und einen Haufen Leidenschaften." (69); "In dieses Notensystem ist Erika seit frühester Kindheit eingespannt. Dieses Rastersystem hat sie . . . in ein unzerreißbares Netz . . . geschnürt wie einen rosigen Rollschinken am Haken eines Fleischhauers." (191)

5 "dass er sie mit Genuß so derart fest, stramm, gründlich, ausgiebig, kunstgerecht, grausam, qualvoll, raffiniert mit den Stricken, die ich gesammelt habe, und auch den Lederriemen und sogar Ketten!, die ich ebenfalls habe, fesselt, ver- und zusammenschnürt und zusammenschnallt wie er nur kann." (216)

6 "Dann drückt sie die Klinge mehrere Male tief in den Handrücken hinein . . . . Das Metall fräst sich hinein wie in Butter." (45); "Sie setzt sich mit gespreizten Beinen vor die Vergrößerungsseite des Rasierspiegels und vollzieht einen Schnitt" (88).

7 "die sprachliche Metapher zeichnerisch zu überprüfen"
"Die Grafik . . . ist genauer. Sie lässt sich nicht durch Wortklang verführen . . . . Erst ins graphische Bild übersetzt beweist die Wortmetapher ob sie Bestand hat."

8 "Schattenrisse" (Grass 1995, 13, 21, 45); "Tagundnachtschatten" (48 et passim).

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Changing Your Vision for Good

The Work of Words and Books in Robert Macfarlane's *Landmarks*

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Abstract

Taking its point of departure in recent considerations of the notion of post-pastoral literature as capable of inducing awe in readers, this article discusses the work of words and books analysed and performed by Robert Macfarlane's *Landmarks* (2015) in terms of vastness and accommodation.

Keywords post-pastoral, awe, (re)enchantment, vastness, accommodation, Robert Macfarlane, language, landscape.

In his book *Pastoral*, Terry Gifford shows that certain literary texts are capable of more than representing our environment, they also change our relationship with our environment by inducing or encouraging a particular stance in us. While these particular texts take as their points of departure both pastoral's tendency to rank and celebrate the country over the city (1999: 2) and anti-pastoral's derogation and dismissal of what it regards as attempts at idealising the real nature of country life, these texts, nevertheless, go "beyond the closed circuit of pastoral and anti-pastoral to achieve a vision of an integrated natural world that includes the human." (148) Gifford coins the term post-pastoral for the kind of literary text that is con-

cerned with shaping these new kinds of images and visions of the relationship between man and his environment.

In part, Gifford presents his notion of post-pastoral as a response to Lawrence Buell's call to eco-criticism for "'a mature environmental aesthetics'" (Buell 1995: 32 quoted in Gifford 1999: 146, 147, 149). He agrees with Buell that pastoralism remains key to eco-criticism since it forms "'a species of cultural equipment that western thought has for more than two millennia been unable to do without'" (Buell 1995: 32 quoted in Gifford 1999: 4). The notion of post-pastoral is used by Gifford to refer to texts that are aware of the contradictions inherent in pastoralism, but, nevertheless, forge "a language to outflank those dangers with a vision of accommodated humans, at home in the very world they thought themselves alienated from by their possession of language. (149)

Gifford identifies six features which to varying degrees characterise post-pastoral literature (146-74). They all emphasise the vision changing actions performed by the texts. Thus, post-pastoral texts are said to produce "recognition" (153-56, 156-61), "awareness" (161-63), "conscience" (163-64), and "realisation" (164-74) in the reader. The most ambitious aspect – and the one I find most interesting in the context of art's agency – is the aspect which he finds fundamentally responsible for producing a new vision or image in readers, i.e. "an awe in attention to the natural world." (151-52) Awe signifies "the feeling of solemn and reverential wonder, tinged with latent fear, inspired by what is terribly sublime and majestic in nature, e.g. thunder, a storm at sea" (Oxford 2016, sense 3). According to Gifford, it springs from several sources. It "derives not just from a naturalist's intimate knowledge or a modern ecologist's observation of the dynamics of relationships, but from a deep sense of the immanence in all natural things." (152) While Gifford doesn't disqualify the careful and systematic observation of empirical reality undertaken by amateur and professional students of nature as productive of awe, his emphasis is clearly on the spiritual awareness that earthly things manifest a divine principle. This principle cannot be grasped empirically by any of the five senses, but is only available to a sense that is deeper or more profound – a sense found in post-pastoral texts and prompted in readers.

Gifford's notion of post-pastoral and, more particularly, his ideas that certain literary texts are capable of inducing forms of awe, rev-

erence, wonder, and humility in readers partake of the turn away from looking at art as a representational thing towards appreciating it as an actor, which the present volume of *Akademisk Kvarter* addresses. In this paper, I analyse and discuss the matter of arts's agency with reference to the production of awe in English writer Robert Macfarlane's most recent book *Landmarks* (2015). Macfarlane is often associated with what a 2008 special issue of the literary magazine *Granta* christened *The New Nature Writing*. In contrast to the old nature writing identified as "the lyrical pastoral tradition of the romantic wanderer," the new nature writers are said to deal with their subject "in heterodox and experimental ways" (Cowley 2008: 10). In this essay, I address Macfarlane since he has published widely on the agency of books and, particularly, on how they have helped shape his sense of landscape. His first book, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination* (2003) outlines e.g. how "the great stories of mountaineering" (1) fashioned him as a boy. Similarly, *The Wild Places* (2008), among other things, concerns how his love of the wild originated in reading the word *wild* as a child (7). Also, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (2012) is a testimony to the enduring influence of "the life and work of Edward Thomas" (1878-1917) on Macfarlane (23). Lastly, in *Holloway* (2012) one of the guides – together with a map of the area – Macfarlane and his friends bring in order to explore the landscapes of sunken paths in south England is a novel (9). *Landmarks* continues – and is perhaps the culmination of – Macfarlane's examination of the agency of texts in relation to their readers. Here he explores the power of words and makes a series of ambitious claims about the transformative power of a dozen writers or so, who have produced "writing so fierce in its focus that it can change the vision of its readers for good, in both senses." (1)[1]

But before I turn to Macfarlane, though, I begin by developing aspects of Gifford's notion of awe in order to analyse how it manifests itself in texts. First, I situate it in the historical context of modernity in terms of disenchantment and (re)enchantment. Secondly, I narrow down its constitutive aspects in terms of vastness and accommodation.

The Law of Awe

Gifford's definition of awe with its scientific and a spiritual components sums up Richard Jenkins's reformulation of one of sociolo-

gy's founding ideas, i.e., Max Weber's notion that modernity constitutes an irreversible process leading inevitably to the progressive disenchantment and demystification of the world and to the dominance of rationalism and capitalism over traditional world views (Jenkins 2000, 12). According to Richard Jenkins' paraphrase of Weber's ideas, disenchantment equals "the historical process by which the natural world and all areas of human experience become experienced and understood as less mysterious: defined, at least in principle, as knowable, predictable and manipulable by humans" (Jenkins 2000, 12). However, Jenkins problematizes the linearity and teleology involved in Weber's grand narrative of modernity as the defeat of magic and success of rationalism. He argues that, "the imperialism of formal-relational logics and processes has been, and necessarily still is, subverted and undermined by a diverse array of oppositional (re)enchantments".[2] As outlined by Gifford, awe exemplifies this double logic. It is disenchanted by the work of the naturalist and the ecologist *and* (re)enchanted as originating from a deep sense of immanence in earthly things.

Contemporary scientific studies of awe alow us to grasp its constitutive features as an emotion or what Gifford would call a deep sense. For instance, social psychologists Dacher Keltner and Jonathan Haidt's study entitled "Approaching Awe, a Moral, Spiritual, and Aesthetic Emotion" (2003) arrive at what they call a "prototype" of awe after reviewing earlier treatments of the subject in the fields of religion, sociology, philosophy, and psychology. They identify "two features [at] the heart of prototypical cases of awe: *vastness*, and *accommodation* (303). The category of vastness they split into literal and metaphorical components. It involves physical size in the form of, for instance, "loud sounds or shaking ground", on the one hand, and, on the other, social or symbolic size (their examples are fame, authority, and prestige). By the notion of accommodation they refer to the process of "adjusting mental structures that cannot assimilate a new experience" (304). Prototypical awe, then, "involves a challenge to or negation of mental structures when they fail to make sense of an experience of something vast" (304). The features of vastness and accommodation are implied in Gifford's definition, too, I think. Awe cannot just be assimilated or explained empirically by the scientifically minded. The experience of immanence, which is Gifford's particular example of prototypical vast-

ness, involves the negation of the five senses and instead giving room for what he called a deep sense. Like Gifford, Dacher and Keltner underline the transformative powers of awe, effectively (re) enchanting it.[3] They point out that "awe can transform people and reorient their lives, goals, and values" (312) and they advise that "awe-inducing events may be one of the fastest and most powerful methods of personal change and growth".

Awe and the Work of Words and Glossaries

Like Gifford and Keltner and Haidt, Robert Macfarlane's *Landmarks* (2015) is also concerned with awe, reverence, and wonder and the opposing tendencies of disenchanted (re)enchantment. The book deals with language as the basis of enchantment and the source of awe. It deals with "the power of language – strong style, single words – to shape our sense of place" (Macfarlane 2015: 1) and with "how reading can change minds, revise behaviour and shape perception" (12). The structure of the book mirrors its basic concern with words and style. Ten chapters are devoted to an analysis and discussion of a selection of 19th, 20th, and 21st century British and North American writers whose work is capable of permanently changing the mind-set of its readers for the better. Between those chapters, nine individual glossaries list "thousands of words from dozens of languages and dialects for specific aspects of landscape, nature and weather". In the following, I begin by outlining Macfarlane's idea that individual words and glossaries have the power to inculcate a particular kind of awe by signifying vastness, a kind of intimated immensity that resists assimilation and forces us to accommodate and rearrange our mind-set. Then I take a look at Macfarlane's reading of a particular book, J.A. Baker's *The Peregrine*, a book that dramatizes vastness and accommodation on the levels of the action and reading and has been responsible for changing Macfarlane's outlook.

The individual words have been collected into glossaries because they form part of a "vast vanished, or vanishing, language for landscape" (2). He believes that the loss of a "basic literacy of landscape" (3-4) is accompanied by the loss of "a kind of word magic, the power that certain terms possess to enchant our relations with nature and place" (4). For instance, he speaks about words that enlarge our experience in naming "something conceivable, if not instantly locat-

able", i.e. words that produce the possibility of naming a specific and precise sensation which has resisted signification or gone unnoticed. Along these lines of enlarging our experience, he also mentions "untranslatable" words from languages generated by people engaged in particular kinds of work (5). Those terms are magical in allowing "us glimpses through other eyes, permit[ting] brief access to distant habits of perception."

Next to words that work their magic by extending the referential possibilities of our vocabulary and the range of our experience, making both more inclusive of other cultural practises and historical contexts, the words gathered by Macfarlane also enchant poetically (2). Thus, euphony (4) and onomatopoeia (5) are highlighted. Similarly, he mentions, for instance, how forgotten synonyms are capable of revitalising the already known by bringing "new energies to familiar phenomena". His most ambitious claim concerning the poetic magic worked by some of the words, however, is that they form "topograms – tiny poems that conjure scenes" (6). He gives the following example:

> *Blinter* is a northern Scots word meaning 'a cold dazzle', connoting especially 'the radiance of winter stars on a clear night', or 'ice-splinters catching low light'. Instantly the word opens prospects: walking sunwards through snow late on a midwinter day, with the wind shifting spindrift into the air such that the ice-dust acts as a prismatic mist, refracting sunshine into its pale and separate colours; or out on a crisp November night in a city garden, with the lit windows of houses and the orange glow of street light around, while the stars *blinter* above in the cold high air. (6)

Here Macfarlane draws upon principles of signification that elude the standard accounts upon which traditional dictionaries are composed. While, *blinter* works as a sign, he posits a different kind signification. Next to denotation and connotation, he identifies a level of signified that appears to rest on personal associations rather than the conventional and culturally specific system of meanings shared by language users. Taken together the referential, poetic, and topogrammatical functions help to reinstate a sense of awe in relation to

language. Not only is language a vast store of signs that spans experiences that we have forgotten or that we are unfamiliar with, it also works in ways that we tend to overlook. His view of language is certainly difficult to integrate into our quotidian or academic practises of talking and writing about the world. It requires something akin to accommodation to take seriously features such as euphony and the topogram. Macfarlane asks us to rethink the relationship between world, experience and language.

The individual terms are organised into glossaries according to the specific kind of landscape they belong to. Each glossary is headed by a unique and landscape-specific title. Some are found in ordinary usage, e.g. "Uplands" (81) and" Coastlands" (163). Some are intertextual references, e.g. "Flatlands" (37) and "Waterlands" (117). Others again are neologisms, e.g. "Underlands" (195)[4] and "Earthlands" (279). In general, the headings appear to depart from established ways of signifying landscape in terms of moors, woods, mountains, and marshes, for instance. This principle is continued within each glossary, which contains a number of further subdivisions devised by Macfarlane. For instance, in the first glossary of the book, "Flatlands" (37-53), the terms are grouped according to specific aspects of such landscapes: "Flowing Water" (39), "Mists, Fogs, Shadows" (40), and "Pasture, Transhumance and Grazing" (41-42) to give just three examples. The originality of the glossaries suggests that they are intended as a new kind of writing. Macfarlane himself regards some glossaries as prose-poems (18), and I understand the glossaries in *Landmarks* along the same lines. But apart from this very broad generic label, they do not conform easily to traditional standards of writing. Perhaps they constitute the discourse of a lover of lost landscapes, and perhaps they can be assimilated along the lines of Roland Barthes' *Lover's Discourse* (1978). Consider, for instance, the following entry in Gaelic from the Isle of Lewis: "éit: practice of placing quartz stones in moorland streams so that they would sparkle in moonlight and thereby attract salmon to them in the late summer and autumn" (Macfarlane 2015, 39). Certainly, this entry is reminiscent of Barthes' concept of *figures*, his "outbursts of language" or "fragments of discourse" (Barthes 1978, 3) that form a "code" or "reservoir" or "thesaurus"(6) of linguistic gestures familiar to lovers. But unlike Barthes' lovers, we cannot recognise Macfarlane's figures because they never have been, or

they are no longer, or not yet, part of our discourse and cultural practices. So the glossaries involve a certain amount of accommodation, too, and we must adjust our set of mind to appreciate them. The book includes a space for the newly accommodated reader. The last glossary of the book consists of a number of blank pages left for readers to fill in with future words and words of their own (329-32).

The blend between accommodation and assimilation also surfaces in Macfarlane's account of their purpose. He doesn't believe that they "will magically summon us into a pure realm of harmony and communion with nature" (Macfarlane 2015, 9) Instead, he hopes that his collections of words are capable of "enriching" life, "stimulating" the imagination, and "irrigate[ing]" contemporary sterile conventions of talking about and using landscape. In the following chapter of his book, Macfarlane develops his views further. A return to "animism" (25) or "systematic superstition" is not the idea behind his glossaries, nor is it a valid replacement of the disenchantment diagnosed by Weber (24). Instead, he regards language as "fundamental to the possibility of re-wonderment" and takes seriously its performative powers, and the fact that certain kinds of language can restore a measure of wonder to our relations with nature" (26). Rather than consecrating landscape anew, rather than making it holy once and for all by casting a spell of magical words, Macfarlane's oppositional glossaries of (re)enchantment involves what he calls *counter-desecration* (15-35).[5] Counter-desecration is a form of re-enchantment, then, that works by relativizing existing representations of landscape and wildlife – representations that parade as absolute and without any alternatives. The agency of the glossaries is twofold, then. They demand accommodation as a new form of writing, but allow for integration into oppositional strategies, too.

The Work of Books

Chapter Five of *Landmarks* is entitled "Hunting Life" and concerns J. A. Baker's *The Peregrine*. Originally published to great acclaim in 1967, Baker's book is now a classic and, according to Mark Cocker, regarded as "the gold standard" in the history of British nature writing (Cocker 2010: 4). The chapter falls into nine sections and with one exception they are narrated chronologically around the events of a single day. Framed by accounts of the sighting of per-

egrines, the majority of the chapter outlines Macfarlane's visit to the J. A. Baker Archive at the University of Essex. Here his explorations of Baker's field notes, proof copies, maps, and binoculars inform his discussion of Baker's life, *The Peregrine*, and the power and influence it holds over him.

The chapter opens with three attempts at narrating a single event, i.e. the sighting of a peregrine. The three accounts differ massively in style. The first is short, elliptical, and sparse (139). The second is longer, consisting of full sentences. The third adds more detail and contextualises the sighting (139-40). Macfarlane neither explains his use of multiple frequency nor his stylistic choices, but launches into an account of Baker's life, instead. His account centres on how Baker became a bird watcher, and why he became interested in peregrines in particular. To Baker, partly because of his myopia and his suffering from a particularly debilitating form of arthritis (141, 144), falcons came to signify something analogous to the notion of vastness outlined by Keltner and Haidt (2003). Macfarlane claims that "[f]rom the start, the predatory nature of the falcons, their decisive speed, their awesome vision and their subtle killings all thrilled him. Baker was enraptored" (149). Macfarlane's neologistic pun sums up Baker's complete enchantment by the peregrine well. The biographical sections also narrate Baker's ways of accommodating the experience of awe elicited by peregrines. For instance, Baker resigned from work (151) in order to follow the falcons on a daily basis across the Essex landscape and partake in their "'hunting life'" (155). He studied WWII aerial photos of Essex in order to begin to see like the peregrine (154). He taught himself ways of tracking the elusive birds of prey (155-56). And he began mimicking their "behaviour and habits" (156) to the extent that they became "first his prosthesis and then his totem" (157), i.e. the falcons became a remedy for his short-sightedness and a species he came to associate himself with.

However, for Baker accommodation also involved a literary aspect, and he found it impossible to assimilate his experiences of the peregrine into existing conventions of nature writing and representation. According to Macfarlane, he devised a new style to fit the falcon "as sudden and swift as the bird" (151). Although he is aware that Baker's unique style, its "shocking energies," and its "hyperkinetic prose" (152), are simply the consequence of a set of linguistic

choices, he is surprised, nevertheless, when he opens a proof copy of the book and discovers the extent to which Baker subjected his writing to rigorous and systematic analysis. The pages of the proof copy are heavily annotated, and

> On every page, he [Baker] had also tallied and totalled the number of verbs, adjectives, metaphors and similes. Above each metaphor was a tiny inked 'M', above each simile an 'S', above each adjective an 'A' and above each verb a 'V'. Written neatly in the bottom margin of each page was a running total for each category of word-type, and at the end of each chapter were final totals of usage. 'Beginnings', the first chapter of *The Peregrine*, though only six pages long, contained 136 metaphors and 23 similes, while the one-and-a-half page entry for the month of March used 97 verbs and 56 adjectives. (153)

Thus, Macfarlane's account shows how disenchanted enchantment is at the very heart of Baker's book. In the last instance, the vastness manifested by *The Peregrine* – evoked by Macfarlane in terms of shocking energy and restless movement – and the enchantment produced by Baker are the premeditated results of his carefully monitored distribution of word classes and rhetorical devices. This realisation does not change Macfarlane's attitude to the book, however. The scientific analysis does not allow him to assimilate Baker's prose. Accommodation is an irreversible process and the book has changed the ways he sees landscape for good. It has made him literally follow in Baker's footsteps across Essex (161). One of his books has Baker's "style stooped into its prose". When he sees peregrines and tries to recall the experience, he always does so "at least partly in Baker's language". Thus, we are led to understand that the sighting of the peregrine which opened the chapter depended upon a frame of mind *already* accommodated to Baker. Without Baker's *Peregrine*, that morning's peregrine would have eluded him. Moreover, without Baker's *Peregrine*, his own style would have remained unable to recount the experience satisfactorily.

Macfarlane's chapter on Baker concludes with an outline of an incident that occurred months after his visit to the archive when a pair of falcons made their nest on a window ledge of the library

tower in Cambridge. He outlines how one of his friends gave him the exact directions to the nest, "South Front Floor 6, Case Number 42 (2015, 161)". The positioning system used here dramatizes the awe inspiring relationship between books and the natural world. For Macfarlane, books literally form the privileged place from which we look at wildlife with awe. Books are awe elicitors. They have the power to resist assimilation by the reader and force us to accommodate.

Conclusion

This essay began by exploring one of Terry Gifford's contributions to environmental aesthetics, i.e. the idea that post-pastoral texts are texts that act by inducing particular stances and attitudes in readers. More particularly, I singled out what he regards as the fundamental agential aspect of post-pastoral texts, i.e. their capacity for encouraging awe, respect, and humility in attention to our environment. Because of the progressive demystification of the world that constitutes modernity according to classical sociologists, this inculcation of a deep sense of awe performed by post-pastoral texts is necessarily – in Jenkins' terms – an act of (re)enchantment. (Re) enchantment involves notions of vastness and accommodation, which according to social psychologists are constitutive of prototypical awe. Using the notions of vastness and accommodation, the second part of my essay outlined a way of analysing and discussing the work done by what is arguably a post-pastoral text. Macfarlane's *Landmarks* works by engaging its readers in two ways. First, it is a collection of words carefully organized into glossaries designed to produce awe. His glossaries succeed in exemplifying that signification is quantitatively and qualitatively much more complex than we usually consider. Vastness according to Macfarlane involves both the idea that the sheer number of signifiers is limitless, and the fact that the nature of signification is other than and much more than the referential one we usually appreciate. This leads to accommodation in readers. We have to change our basic ideas about how our language works. We have to admit that language is central and acknowledge the existence of other linguistic traditions, other principles of signification, and other figures. The book even includes a glossary for the newly accommodated reader to fill in with terms from specific areas of experience to counter des-

ecration. Secondly, his book also analyses and discusses other books as examples of disenchanted enchantment produced by and productive of awe in terms of its prototypical features. Books like Baker's *The Peregrine* originate from a deep sense of awe and are stylistically fashioned in terms of vastness to produce (re)enchantment and accommodation in its readers, changing their vision for good. In Gifford's sense, post-pastoral texts form a significant body of texts for the study of art's agency. In a reading of an example of a post-pastoral text, this essay has outlined how the notions of vastness and accommodation are useful in analysing how texts actually work and succeed in (re)enchanting and inducing awe in readers.

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Notes

1 Macfarlane is also a highly esteemed academic working in the field of English Literature. His *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (2007) deals with the subject of nineteenth century British fiction. Moreover, he is a prolific writer of paratexts, e.g. introductions to and reviews of other books on landscape or wildlife. Lastly, he is also a prolific presenter for radio and television where his thoughts are transformed into speech, sounds, and images.

2 Jenkins' re-reading of Weber is echoed by many scholars. Joshua Landy and Michael Saler show how the disenchantment of the world is accompanied by the rise of a "thoroughly secular strategy for re-enchantment" (Landy and Saler 2009, 1). Cristopher Partridge's two volumes on *The Re-Enchantment of the West* (Partridge 2004, 2006) deal particularly with (re)enchantment in the context of what he calls he calls "the alternative spiritual milieu in the contemporary Western world" (Partridge 2004, 1)

3 Specific examples of the disenchanted study of the transformative and accommodation demanding powers of awe, instances where disenchantment is followed by re-enchantment from within, are not difficult to find. To name just two: Harlan Ullman and James Wade outline how "Shock and Awe" tactics can be used by the U.S. Military as "actions that create fears, dangers, and destruction that are incomprehensible to the people at large, specific elements/sectors of the threat society, or the leadership" (Ullman and Wade 1996:110). On the level of the individual, awe has been (re)enchanted as effective way for businesses to enhance the well-being of their time-starved customers (Rudd et al. 2012).

4 I credit Macfarlane with the term. But it is also found in Ted Nield's *Underlands: A Journey Through Britain's Lost Landscape* (2014)
5 Macfarlane credits Finlay MacLeod with the term (31)

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Experiencing a painting

An interdisciplinary discussion regarding epistemology and experiencing

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Abstract

This article discusses how the relationship between the perceiving and the perceived can be outlined in terms of a current philosophical and neuroscientific understanding. The ambition is to highlight the potential relations between the processes of consciousness and interpretation, particularly regarding the experience of art as *invoking an immediate feeling*. The article takes a philosophical standpoint that is inspired by Edmund Husserl's epistemological discussions regarding intentionality and tries to combine it with a discussion of art as having the potential to invoke a feeling. In other words, the article tries to answer how, if we maintain the philosophical understanding of ourselves as the perceiving entity, art can *invoke an immediate feeling within us*.

Keywords Interpretation, epistemology, neuroscience, art, experience

Introductory remarks

Before we start, it is necessary to account for an assumption made in this article. This article has a phenomenological foundation, yet it also includes scientific results from the field of cognitive neuroscience. Initially, this might appear controversial due to considerable

ontological and epistemological differences between the two scientific fields. In their research, however, it is not uncommon for neuroscientists to apply the phenomenological method (Damasio 2003, Varela et. al. 1999). For the purposes of this article, the ontological and epistemological gap can be considered irrelevant on two accounts. First, cognitive neuroscientific research results are treated as the result of at least two interpretational processes, just as any inclusion of empirical data would be. This means that the neuroscientific research is considered a construction of knowledge, just as it would if it consisted of quotations from a phenomenologically inspired interview. Second, the purpose of this article is an inspirational one. The ambition is not to propose a new and completely finished construction of the process of perception, but instead to progress as far as possible within the framework afforded by the article in showing how perception can be considered. When that process meets the limits set by the framework of the article, the aim is to indicate sites with research potential along the intersection between cognitive neuroscience and phenomenology. The inclusion of cognitive neuroscience primarily rests upon the first argument: in this article, cognitive neuroscience is treated as a set of empirical statements, and is analyzed as such. Furthermore, the inspirational purpose of this article will hopefully allow some experimentation involving the inclusion of other materials. This specific use (and reduction) of neuroscience should not be treated as a generalization about neuroscience, nor as a comment on its validity. It is only a result of the limited scope of this article and the unsolved complexity of the mind-body problem, which will be introduced later in the article.

Perception as a process

In a discussion of the perception and inherent conscious interpretation of a painting, perception might initially be defined as a process. Perception thus becomes something that occurs in time, with a beginning and an end. One of the initial problems of this view is that the beginning of the process can be defined as the moment we first become consciously aware of seeing the painting. There are two problems with such a perspective. First, it disregards the historical development of our memories and our experience which has formed our interpretational position prior to seeing the painting. Second, the requirement to be consciously aware of seeing the painting

neglects the preconscious processes and their influence on the response of the consciousness. In other words, we must somehow experience a painting before we can become consciously aware of it - otherwise it would require that our consciousness can be directed towards external things that our senses could not. In terms of perception as a process, this can be described as the bio-chemical process of light hitting the painting, ricocheting into the eyes of the perceiver and then being transmitted to various neuronal elements of the brain, including the elements required for us to experience consciousness. This account of the process involves a number of assumptions, of which we can briefly discuss two. Firstly, it assumes that the experience of consciousness is located within networks of neurons in the human body, and that such networks are somehow able to constitute what we experience as consciousness. The transformation from neuronal networks to our experience of consciousness involves what is commonly referred to as the mind-body problem, since no explanation has been scientifically accepted yet (Overgaard 2015). Because this problem is still unsolved, it remains a challenge to the potential unification of the two different ontological stances adopted by neuroscience and phenomenology. Secondly, just as in the previous definition of a process, the biochemical process takes place over time. In that case, we can entertain the idea of preconscious processes forming the framework of our conscious experience of the perceived painting if we accept that the preconscious processes have the possibility to form a framework or at least an initial position for our conscious perception. We therefore need to look into what this preconscious process consists of. So far, we have established that the non-conscious process can interpret what is perceived prior to conscious experience.

In every moment of our lives, there are things of which we are not consciously aware. This statement is derived from two observations: first, insofar as it is defined as the direction of attention, consciousness is always directed towards *something*, and that *something* is always experienced as *one thing*, or as *one* experience of something. Second, at any point in time, more than *one thing* is available for consciousness to direct itself at, which means that those things must in some regard be present in the non-conscious part of the perceiver. For example; even if I am staring at something as monotonous as a white wall, I *choose* to look at a certain part of the wall, thus deselect-

ing other parts of the wall. This leads to the conclusion that the non-conscious process has at least two possibilities in interpreting what is perceived. The first interpretation is that the perceived is relevant for the consciousness in some way, and the second is that the perceived is not relevant for the consciousness (as it is the case with the remaining white wall at which I am not looking). If we can accept the assumption that we as humans do not always interpret things as having the same relevance for consciousness, there must be something in the interpretation of the perceiver prior to the perception which constitutes the difference in the interpretation of relevance. In other words, when a group of people see the same painting, the difference in individual interpretations of the painting has to originate from something which is not in the painting itself, but rather within the people who perceive the painting. This leads us to the concept of intentionality and the concepts of noema and noesis (Husserl 1995). Intentionality can be understood as a description of how the individual enters into a dialectical process in the perception of *something*. Intentionality involves the relations between the perceived as it is perceived (noema) and the experience and explication of the internal processes of the perceiver (noesis).

> "For every noema there is a noesis; for every noesis there is a noema. On the noematic side is the uncovering and explication, the unfolding and becoming distinct, the clearing of what is actually presented in consciousness. On the noetic side is an explication of the intentional processes themselves. What is meant noematically is continually changing in perception, the something meant is more, more than what is originally meant explicitly. The something meant achieves a synthesis through a continual perceiving of the whole throughout its angular visions and perceptions." (Husserl in Moustakas 1994, 30)

In Husserl's view, the dialectical relationship between the perceived and the perceiver is not only a relationship between what is noematically experienced nor what is explicated within noesis; it is a continuing development of synthesis between what is meant explicitly and what *more* is meant. In this article, this understanding of the relationship between the perceived as uniquely tied to the per-

ceiver and the perceiver as conscious and non-conscious is the starting point for further discussions regarding perception.

To understand the potential for interpretation located in the conscious processing of a painting, it is relevant to further elaborate on the preconscious processes, since they form the framework of the conscious interpretation and whether it will take place at all. This brings us to the noematic interpretation of relevance. Here, cognitive neuroscience can provide a potentially relevant elaboration on the interpretation of relevance.

> "For example, when the occipital lobe is activated by incoming visual data, there is no perceptual consciousness of the object until the parietal and frontal lobes are active, as shown by Martha Farah (1989), and Posner (1990). Yet Carl Aurell (1989), Sverker Runesen (1985), and McHugh and Bahill (1985) show that the activation of the parietal and frontal lobes is not caused by the activity of the occipital lobe. Instead, what happens is that, prior to occipital processing of the visual stimulus, the very act of paying attention in order to see what is there has already been activated by the midbrain and limbic system, which subserve emotional-motivational activity. Panksepp's (1998) and Damasio's (1999) neuropsychological studies strongly suggest that this activity is self-generated and self-energizing, and can be triggered by the stimulus only if the stimulus is already felt as possibly emotionally important for the organism's purpose" (Ellis 2006, 40)

The occipital lobe is the area of the brain generally associated with the processing of visual data. The parietal and frontal lobes are generally associated with consciousness. Ellis' initial statement has two consequences. First, visual data is processed prior to a conscious response. This point was also made above in the discussion of perception. Here, the two scientific fields reach the same conclusion. The second point Ellis makes is that the areas associated with consciousness are not activated by the visual data unless the midbrain and limbic system, which are associated with "emotional-motivational activity", are activated prior to the occipital lobe. Philosophically, this can fairly accurately be interpreted as saying that we are

not conscious of visual stimuli unless they are deemed emotionally relevant for us. All of this assumes that the different ways of scanning the brain for electrical activity resemble the way in which the brain processes information and therefore also what constitutes consciousness (here we are back to the mind-body problem). However, the first point Ellis makes does appear to fit the philosophical discussion. The second point, regarding emotions enabling and directing consciousness constitutes a new detail in regards to how past experiences enable the perception of the present. Both the philosophical and the neuroscientific approach agree that some preconscious process decides whether the object is relevant for the conscious or not. The important difference is that cognitive neuroscience regards emotions as the foundation for that interpretational process. Further research regarding the relationship between consciousness and the emotions would be very interesting for ontological discussion in general, but also with regard to assumptions regarding the characteristics of logic as a transcendental system.

Before the epistemological discussions so far can be related to the experience of art invoking a feeling, the latter has to be defined. The traditions and literature addressing the interpretation of art and its relations to emotions is extremely rich. It is far beyond the scope of this article to show its placement within the theoretical field of art. As a result thereof and of the style of this article so far, the aim of this discussion of art as having the potential to invoke a feeling finds it origin in the everyday, lived experience of such an event. The initial definition of art invoking a feeling sounds something like this: It is the becoming aware of an emotion which the individual did not feel was present in the current situation and the process of that feeling being made central to the understanding of the specific situation in which the painting exists. This entails that it is a conscious experience of some feeling invoked by the painting, initially unconsciously. A line of argument could rightfully be that all feelings are immanent and only available to consciousness once they have been formed. In the case of the painting, this must derive from a contextually and culturally developed understanding of the expectations of perceiving colors on a canvas and the sometimes rather significant role and experience of the feeling(s) invoked by the colors and the canvas. Therefore, the understanding of art invoking a feeling does not seem to be principally or theoretically

different from the emotional potential inherent in any situation. However, it is the individual's contextual interpretation of similarities to other situations along with the reference to a clear, relatable experience that allows this discussion of perceiving paintings to be used as an illuminating case for theoretical comments regarding perception. Here, a painting serves as an example of all forms of art, since the level of abstraction in this article precludes highlighting the differences between different forms of art - and such a distinction is beyond the scope and purpose of the present study. The painting has been chosen as an example because it is a common and relatable form of art in which the potential to invoke an emotional relevance is quite clear.

The terms 'context' and 'culture' refer to individual interpretations regarding the concrete and historical context wherein the individual and the painting is situated. Context and culture therefore become part of the interpretation of the painting. Such a contextual and cultural approach has many consequences for perception, and numerous works have been written on that topic. Two obvious references are Immanuel Kant's categories of understanding and Piaget's schemata (Kant 1929, Piaget 1926). Although such a discussion is beyond the scope of this article, a comment is in order. Similarly to the mind-body problem; any discussion about whether schemata and categories stems from a biological or cultural origin has not yet been decisively and unanimously resolved. In this article, however, the elements are considered purely from a cultural standpoint. However, it could be speculated that the answer to the problem might be to abandon the analytical distinction between the cultural and the biological.

In regard to cultural and contextual influences on the perception of art and the idea of art invoking a feeling within us, a painting seems to be an excellent case to illuminate the preconscious interpretation of the perceived as the starting point of perception. The judgement of the relevance and therefore also of the characteristics of *something* (or of art) is the initial framing process for our future possible conscious experience of the initial object. When relevance is founded on emotion, it becomes clear that relevance is a judgement that can only be made if an initial interpretation of the unifying characteristics of that *something* has already been made. In other words, we cannot judge whether something is relevant or not with-

out experiencing some sense of what it is. This process is considered a non-conscious process, and, as such, it is a part of the noematic aspect of intentionality, since the result of the process is the perceived, as it is perceived. This also entails that the idea of art invoking a feeling within us and we have no conscious experience of that feeling being invoked, the preconscious process must have the potential to invoke a feeling. The specific experience of art invoking a feeling within us seems to be a verifying element for the discussions so far, but it also exemplifies the way in which consciousness can presuppose emotions. However, this does not mean that the emotion a painting invokes is the same in every perceiver, since both preconscious and conscious processes remain a construction formed and limited by the experiences which preceded the encounter with the painting.

The notion of noesis can help elaborate the conceptualization of perception. Husserl defined noesis as "*an explication of the intentional processes themselves*". This indicates that the part of the intentional perception which is based on consciousness only includes the *explication* of the internal processes and therefore not the processes themselves. In other words, we as humans can only experience our thoughts along with all other potential intentional processes after they have occurred. This limitation arises from the fact that perception as a process has to be directed at *something* and that *something* has to be available for our interpretation of relevance (Møller 2015). However, due to the nature of the preconscious process discussed above, we can now state that thoughts or conscious interpretations can only be formed within the framework of the preconscious emotional judgement of the relevance and character of what is perceived. This discussion leads to an understanding of thought and intentional processes as similar to the concept of emotions in regards to how they become available to consciousness as the result of processes and not as processes in themselves. If this understanding is combined with the notion of preconscious processes, it becomes clear that thoughts as well as emotions only occur within the *framework* created by the preconscious processes. In light of the discussion so far, it still seems reasonable to see the individual as the perceiver and interpreting entity. However, it is not reasonable to assume that the interpretational process is guided primarily by consciousness, because the vast majority of intentional processes are

preconscious, and it is these preconscious processes that enable and shape possible conscious interpretations.

Framework as a concept has not been completely defined yet, and from the perspective of this article, it cannot be defined in a way that satisfies a contextual, scientific understanding. Framework as a concept is not derived from what it must be, but from what produces it and from the logical necessity that preconscious processes must have an end, a result, however temporary it might be. As long as framework is considered the result of preconscious processes, however, it must therefore also possess the principal characteristics of the processes which created it. The discussions presented in this article indicate that the concept of framework can be described as *unifying* (since it must interpret elements of the perceived as *something*, and therefore as a coherent element), that it is *contextually and culturally developed* (due to the nature of all experience being created that way), and that it must contain an interpretation of *emotional relevance.* Due to the characteristics of the preconscious process, any analysis of such characteristics shows just as much about how our perception functions as it can show us about how we are limited in our understanding of the world. For example, the necessity of emotional relevance logically indicates that we can never consciously perceive something which is without emotional relevance for us. This can both enlighten our conscious limitations and show how broad a concept *emotional relevance* has to be.

Finally, the concept of framework can be considered a result of the temporary position which the perceiver preconsciously takes to enter into a dialectical conscious process with a painting. Framework can be metaphorically described as the boat we did not get to choose but still have to use when we try to navigate the rough sea of interpretational possibilities afforded by a painting.

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Studying the Aesthetics of Images and Advertising Films

Combining Systemic-Functional Grammar and Audience Physiology

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Abstract

The notion, that aesthetic objects are not only things but also *does* something to those who engage with them, is consistent among various researchers in the arts and humanities; and also that this is not primarily a matter of interpretative symbolic meaning in the fields of semiotics and hermeneutics, but may rather be associated with sense perception, such as arousal, vigilance, fascination and appraisal (Marković 2012). In this position paper, we sketch out a conceptual approach for the study of art by combining, on the one hand, the systemic-functional and social-semiotic approach to textual analysis of grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, van Leeuwen 1999), and on the other hand, attentional and affective-computing techniques for measuring audience response.

Keywords aesthetics, sense perception, systemic-functional grammar, eye tracking, electrodermal activity.

Introduction

It is often stated that an aesthetic experience of art will always be a personal matter; that is, something that cannot be measured or defined by general rules. In the same vein, the aesthetic experience of art has often been subjected to hermeneutics, phenomenology and cultural studies, giving preference to qualitative non-directive interviewing and observation methods. Concurrently, empirical and quantitative approaches have been heavily criticized as reductionist and insufficient for understanding the nature of an aesthetic experience, relying on a number of misconceptions about art (see, e.g., Wheelwell 2000). It seems, though, that the problem lies in the vague or even absent definition of the concept of 'aesthetic experience', at least in the field of experimental aesthetics where some clarifications seem appropriate. For instance, there are at least three overall characteristics or aspects to consider in that matter; that is, the *attentional* aspect, being a state of high arousal and vigilance in which the spectator or listener is focused on and fascinated with an aesthetic object; the *cognitive* aspect, being a state of high appraisal of the semantic, symbolic and imaginative referents of an aesthetic object; and the *affective* aspect, being a strong feeling of unity with the object of aesthetic fascination and appraisal (Marković 2012, 3).

In this paper, we will concentrate on the attentional and affective aspects in relation to aesthetic content. More specifically, we sketch out a conceptual approach for investigating correspondences between, on the one hand, social-semiotic and systemic-functional grammar analysis of visual and audio-visual aesthetic objects (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, van Leeuwen 1999), and on the other hand, eye-tracking (ET) and electrodermal-activity (EDA) studies of subjects exposed to the objects, the latter being examples of popular, simple and relatively inexpensive tools. Introduced in detail below, the aesthetic objects include a pair of food photographs and a Japanese snow-tyre TV commercial.

The reason for combining text analysis and experimental audience-testing research seems evident: One thing is to complement attentional and affective computing with cognitive data (e.g., introspective or retrospective think-aloud protocols), thus obtaining missing insights into people's minds while or after looking at an aesthetic object; another thing (being the core matter in the present paper) is to understand potential connections between the atten-

tional and affective responses and the content of the aesthetic objects that elicit them. The latter, straightforward as it might seem, happens to be, by and large, a rarity in empirical-experimental research in which aesthetic objects (used as stimuli) are seldom analysed systematically for structure, function and meaning. Of course, we cannot redress such insufficiencies in a short paper like the present one. Instead, our aim is to state a position by providing analytical examples of what might be achieved through a limited but significant choice of aesthetico-semiotic and physiological methods used in combination.

Grammar analysis and experimental aesthetics

Why do we find social-semiotics and the systemic-functional approach useful? For one thing, bringing aesthetics under semiotic theories is a familiar and well-proven strategy in terms of analysing art or artistic endeavour (cf. Rudner 1951; Morris 1939), and there have been previous attempts to do so in the field of social semiotics (cf. O'Toole 1990; Kress 2010). Moreover, the approach, which is originally based on theories of Halliday (1978, 1985), offers a high level of detailing, formalization and abstraction that appear fit for method-parallelization processes (Junk 2011) with quantitative data from ET and EDA monitoring. Finally, the strong emphasis on the significance of *context* for determining how "images relate the people, places and things they portray to each other, so as to form coherent representations", and "[w]hat kind of 'interpersonal resources' do the images use to create a relation between the image and the viewer" (Van Leeuwen 1999, 190), seems advisable when analysing sense or meaning making.

In order to provide an analytic-descriptive system for characterizing any visual image on the basis of context-dependent semiotic properties, Kress and van Leeuwen have defined nine 'modality markers' (2006, 160–162, 264); that is, mutually independent parameters, each being characterized as continua with an infinite number of articulatory levels between two opposite extremes, from *maximum simplicity* (i.e., a high level of abstraction) to *maximum complexity* (i.e., a high level of detail), and within amplification or reduction might take place (cf. Figure 1)[1]. Analogously, van Leeuwen (1999) has identified eight markers in the domain of sound (cf. Figure 2). The basic idea in both cases is that modality, as defined as the

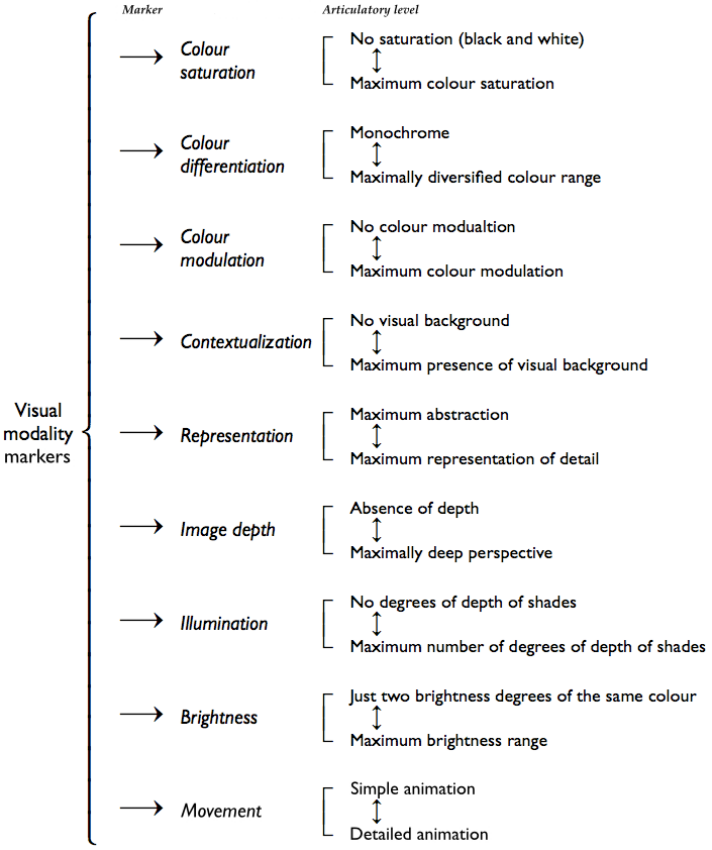

Figure 1. Visual modality markers (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

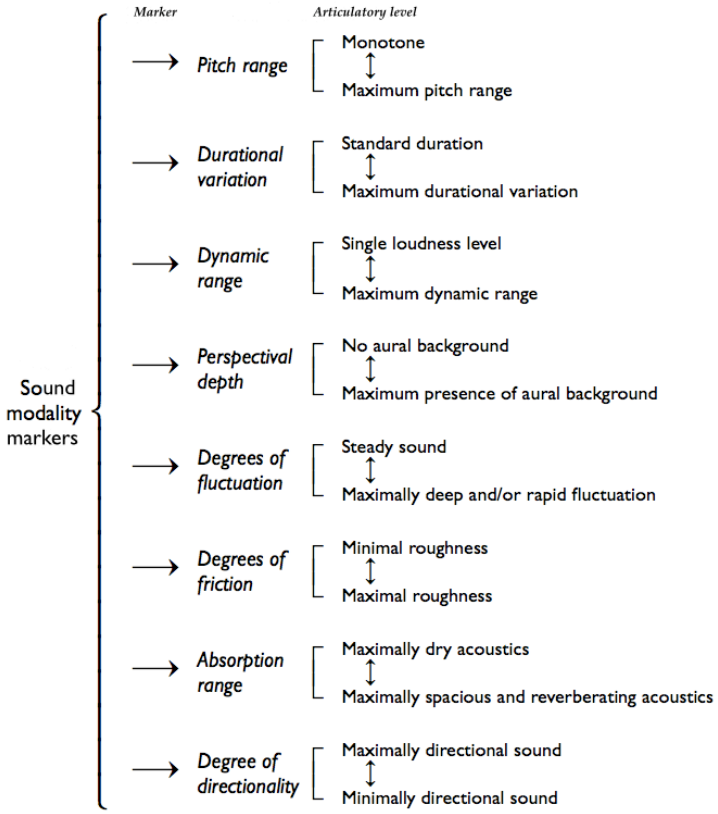

Figure 2. Sound modality markers (van Leeuwen 1999).

amount of reliability or credibility assigned to any given image or sound, "is realized by a complex interplay" of settings according to a number of individual markers (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, 163); and by the systemic-functional or structural approach, the authors offer an all-inclusive, transparent and logical framework for mapping out socially constructed resources for the communication of meaning through images. Moreover, and what is not explicated directly, the generic attributes of the modality markers may be considered as carriers of *aesthetic* meaning having influence on attentional information processing and affective arousal; and this is why the markers are particularly useful in inter-paradigmatic research combining arts (or humanities) and science as suggested in the present paper. The markers simply form a set of explanatory (inde-

pendent) content variables, which can easily be aligned with (quantitative) data from experimental audience research.

As for the *contextual matter*, which is crucial in the field of social semiotics, Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) distinguish between technological, sensory, abstract and naturalistic kinds of 'coding orientation', the latter being a concept that is originally developed by Bernstein (1971, 1981) with regard to socio-cultural and situational context, that is, "sets of abstract principles which inform the way in which texts are coded by specific social groups, or within specific institutional contexts" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, 165). That means that the modality of an image (or a sound) may differ from one context of perception to another, either across socio-cultural boundaries, or within the same socio-culture but being conditioned on the actual situation. For instance, the modality of a densely-coloured painting in an art museum will most likely be estimated higher than the modality of an equally densely-coloured an architect drawing (even by the same perceiver).[2]

To enable the combination of analytical findings with ET and EDA data, we use distinct scale values rather than continua. Besides, due to the position-stating aim of the present paper, we have, for the sake of simplicity, chosen five-point scales, though a finer-grained scaling would probably be preferable in a more exhaustive analysis. Likewise, for simplicity reasons, while recognizing the plurality of visuals in moving images, we have in the analysis of the commercial applied the visual modality markers in relation to the total sequence of images. This makes sense to the extent that the configuration of modality settings is reasonably invariable during the motion. Similarly, as for the auditory domain, we have applied the sound-modality markers in relation to the sound part in its totality rather than, as implied and exemplified by van Leeuwen (1999, 184–185), in relation to distinct sounds. Accordingly, in the following analytical sketch, the configuration of settings within modality markers nos. 1–8 (cf. Figure 1) will be pivotal points when subsequently aligning the findings with ET data. After that, we exemplify briefly how a similar text-analytical approach might be extended to the analysis of moving images (incorporating all nine modality markers in Figure 1) and sound (incorporating the eight modality markers in Figure 2), and how the results might be aligned with EDA data.

Analysis of the food images

The photographic pair was selected on the basis of a search for images with a creative commons license on the popular photo-sharing site Flickr. The idea behind the photo selection originates from an experimental ET study, which was designed and undertaken by a group of students on an elective course in *Applied Aesthetics* as part of the Master's degree in Communication at Aalborg University. The students tested a number of photo pairs displaying a vegetarian and non-vegetarian version of the same type of food. The aim of the study was to identify whether viewers tend to focus on the one or the other kind and, additionally, if there were any attention differences between male and female viewers. In the present paper we have, in similar fashion, picked out two photos of a grilled burger and a vegetarian (or 'veggie') burger, respectively (cf. Figures 3 and 4); and as a supplementary set of descriptors, we include content information in form of the eight modality markers (cf. Figure 1).

Figure 3. Grilled (meat) burger.
Photo courtesy of Alpha (https://flic.kr/p/4gRyYm)

Figure 4. Veggie burger.
Photo courtesy of lara604 (https://flic.kr/p/67dPFp)

When studying the two burger photos, one might come across a number of compositional similarities. To begin with, each photo reveals a kind of gourmet-type burger characterized by a home-baked bun, green salad, cheese and slices of tomatoes and red onions, as well as a grilled beef or, in the case of the veggie burger, a

black-bean paste, all held together with a strong toothpick. Secondly, the burgers are both delicately arranged on shiny white plates and shown in an extreme close-up shot on a blurred background. There are, however, also some differences to notice. Aside from the alternative choice of 'protein component' (black-bean paste instead of grilled beef), the veggie burger has been split in two halves with the right piece placed slantwise on the left piece, while the grilled burger remains in one piece. Furthermore, the veggie burger contains a layer of light-green sprouts between the salad and the upper part of the bun, and the colour of the (cheddar) cheese is dark yellow and not white as in the grilled burger. Lastly, while both being seen in central perspective (cf. *image depth*), the photographic angle of the grilled-burger photo is somewhat higher than the angle of the veggie-burger photo, where the front of the burger appears at eye level. This inevitably leads to a slightly higher level of *contextualization* in the grilled-burger photo, testified by the fact that one is able to identify a person's arm and the contours of (possibly) a class-

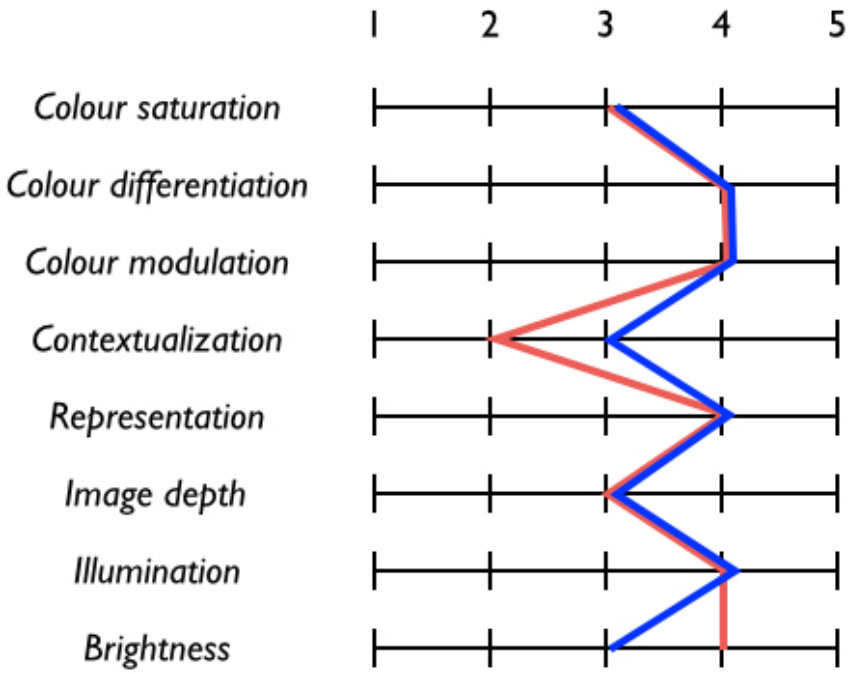

Figure 5. Modality configurations of the grilled burger photo (blue) and the veggie burger photo (red).

room floor on which furniture is set. As regards other modality markers and their respective settings, it might be worth concentrating on *brightness*, seeing that the difference between the lightest and darkest areas seem to be more profound in the veggie-burger photo, with a greater amount of deep blacks in the background and bright white flickers in the colours of the vegetables in the slanted piece to the right. In sum, according to the eight modality markers, the scale settings of the two photos might be illustrated as displayed in Figure 5, through which the (minor) modality differences can be observed and interpreted. For instance, the veggie-burger photo might be characterized as a little more 'artistic' and less 'natural' than the grilled-burger photo; compared to the grilled burger, the veggie burger tends to appear (but not entirely), what Kress and van Leeuwen describe as "more than real" or "hyper-real" (2006, 163–164).

The ET study

The use of eye tracking goes back to before 1900 (see, e.g., Huey 1898) and is an increasingly popular method of studying the attention of subjects on different stimuli, ranging from print and on-screen text, works of art, web sites, and recently also spatial analysis in 3D settings as, for instance, in museums (see Bergstrom & Schall 2014 and Bojko 2013 for an overview and Magnussen et al. 2016 for an example of a museum study). The use of eye tracking relies on the notion that human physiological capability to obtain visual evidence from the surroundings is limited by the structure of the human eye: high-acuity visual data can only be perceived from a very narrow visual angle at any given point (Land 2014). In addition, perceptual processing capacity is also limited, and thus there is a high correlation between the direction of a person's gaze and the focus of attention. Therefore, continuously tracing where a person is looking can offer rich information about what data is being sampled and used in visually guiding the activities people are involved in (Lauwereyns 2012). In the present study we used an low-cost eye tracker developed by The Eye Tribe[3], in the form of a bar placed below and in front of a 22 inch computer flat panel screen, which is a quite unobtrusive setting not too different from normal use of a desktop computer. The tracker samples both eyes of a subject at 60Hz. The open source Ogama software[4] was used to present stimuli and record and analyse gaze data. We created a single stimuli

slide containing the photos in Figures 3 and 4, and without instructions exposed this slide to subjects for 15 seconds while eye-tracking them. This short exposure was chosen to capture the immediate points of focus of the subjects.

In the following, we report on the results from two subjects, a male and a female, participating in this ET experiment. The purpose is to illustrate the type of data that can be collected, as well as to exemplify the kind of results and interpretations that can be based on this. Eye movements consist of so-called *fixations*, which are short periods of time where the eye rests on a single point of attention and can perceive visual data (typically more than 200–300 ms), and so-called *saccades*, which are quick jumps between fixations where visual input is reduced. In the 15 second exposure the subjects had 6–7 fixations. The eye-tracking software records both the duration and location of the fixations and these usually form the basis of the analysis and interpretation. Several different types of analysis can be performed.

Figure 6 shows the stimuli slide with an overlay of the *scan path* of the two subjects (the female in yellow and the male in green/dashed). The numbered scan path shows the order of the subjects' fixations, with lines drawn between them to indicate saccades, and the circle sizes represent fixation duration. We see that the female subject (yellow) has fairly many but short fixations. She first gazes at the veggie burger, then at the meat burger and then some longer at the veggie burger. At the meat burger, the prominent lower part the burger itself as well as the plate and person in the background was noticed. On the veggie burger, the background and in particular the bean paste was noticed. The male subject (green/dashed) has fewer, but much longer fixations (see also Table 1 below). He first focuses on the meat-burger filling and for a long time on the piece of bacon, and then moves on to the veggie burger focussing on the centre of the filling of both pieces of the burger. It is also interesting to note that the split veggie burger seems to attract attention to both halves in both subjects.

While scan-path visualisations are good for detailed studies of gaze behaviour, including flow and ordering and individual focus points of individual subjects, they become impractical with long exposures to stimuli or with many subjects. Here heat maps, such as the one illustrated in Figure 7, are more useful. Figure 7 shows a

Figure 6. Scan path visualisation (female = yellow, male = green/dashed).

Figure 7. Heat map aggregation of male subject fixations.

heat map where the fixation information is aggregated using a colour scale, where red and yellow indicate frequent/longer fixations and blue and purple colours indicate the least fixation activity. In the present example only one subject is included (the male), but the technique can be used on large numbers of subjects as a way of summarising a large amount of gaze data. Again we see the clear focus on the meat burger and in particular the bacon, as well as the dual focus on both halves of the veggie burger's filling. Taken altogether, the result might, for one thing, suggest a hypothesis that contextualization differences between the two burger photos (cf. Figure 5) lead to attentional differences among females; and, secondly, that a male audience might be expected to focus on meat rather than vegetables. Besides, the more decorative presentation of the veggie burger has attentional implications for both sexes.

Finally, we present an *area-of-impact* analysis, in which certain areas of particular interest are defined and various fixation statistics are calculated for these specific areas. In the present study we simply split the stimulus vertically screen in two, with a burger in each. Various areas can be defined including polygons and even overlapping ones. For a more thorough study, the selection of these areas could be informed by the analysis of the food photos above. Table 1 shows that the male subject has his first fixation on the meat burger and looked longer at it than the veggie burger both in total and in average per fixation. The female subject has 4 out of 7 fixations on the veggie burger, including the first one. She also looks longer on average and in total on the veggie burger. The absolute numbers are

Measure	Female	Male
First fixation (total number of fixations)	veggie (7)	meat (6)
Number of fixations (meat/veggie)	3 / 4	3 / 3
Average fixation duration (meat/veggie)	189 ms / 224 ms	933 ms / 522 ms
Total fixation duration (meat/veggie)	566ms (39%) / 897ms (61%)	2799 ms (64%) / 1565 ms (36%)

Table 1. Area of interest analysis.

of little interest (e.g., that the male has longer fixations overall) - it is the relative statistics that are of greater interest (e.g., that the female and males looked approximately ⅔ of the time on the veggie and meat burger respectively).

With only one subject in each gender group and a very short exposure to the stimuli, the presented eye-tracking results are only for illustration. However, they do demonstrate the potential for an interesting study of a larger group of subjects – as discussed below.

Analysis of the TV commercial

Released in December 2013, a Japanese TV commercial, promoting car tyres from the manufacturer Autoway (ostensibly suitable for snowy weather),[5] generated considerable media attention as 'the scariest ad ever' (see, e.g., Edwards 2013; Green 2013; Withnall 2013). Indeed, as warned by red text colour in the beginning of the commercial, and subsequently demonstrated by several unexpected scary moments by way of a sudden close-up shot of a ghoulish figure (complemented by dramatic sound effects), it is not for the faint-hearted. For that reason, due to its arousal-invoking content and hence its capabilities of (potentially) causing sweat-glands variations in the skin that are measurable, the tyre commercial was included as stimulus in an EDA experiment with the participation of 79 students from the Bachelor degree in Communication and Digital Media at Aalborg University. The experiment was conducted for didactic purposes and figured as a part of the curriculum in a prescribed fourth-semester course in *Aesthetics and Effect*. In the following, we will describe the content and story of the 'ad thriller', and after that we give an account of the design and results of the EDA study.

The story unfolds through the eyes of a driver and a passenger (both men) who are driving along a dark and snowy road at night in the middle of nowhere while having a low-voiced conversation. The viewing conditions are rather bad due to numerous snowflakes that are drifting by the windshield. At a certain point, the men catch the sight of a ghoulish-like figure (perhaps a young woman) in the middle of the road, wearing (it seems) only a thin nightdress. As the driver stops the car, keeping in proper distance from the figure (and probably waiting for her to step aside the road), she suddenly hits the windshield with a loud bang and appears with her eyes wide

open in front of the driver, and one immediately notices the ghoulishness and scariness of the woman due to her black-edged eyes and scarred left cheek. The windshield collision affects a ghoulish shout, and the shocked motorists start yelling and screaming while hazardously reversing away, probably without noticing that the woman is holding an open laptop with a texted message (in Japanese) saying: 'Have you put your winter tyres on?' However, the instinctive action of the driver clearly demonstrates the performance of the tyres; and as a final zoom-in clip of the laptop, the advertising message is revealed for a longer period of time to the sound of driving. The commercial ends with the Autoway logo and the company's web address, initiated by another bang sound.

Given that the spectator experiences the scary incident as if (s)he is the driver or is sitting in the car, thus perceiving the course of action from a central perspective (cf. *image depth*), the narrative possesses realistic and immersive qualities.[6] The shaky footage due to the hand-held ('subjective') camera, so typical for the aesthetics of horror films (see, e.g., *The Blair Witch Project*, 1999), contributes significantly to this accomplishment. Despite the artificially amplified "tension in the play between concealment and revelation" (Monnet 2015, 146), the filmic representation of *movement* appears quite realistic. Also, except for the ghoulish woman on the road, the 'naturalness' or 'realism' of the spooky night scenery with the absence of *colour saturation* and *colour differentiation* seems quite convincing. When driving in a car at night looking out the windshield (and not being outside in the dark), one is hardly able to distinguish any colours; only different shades of grey (cf. *colour modulation*) are visible, but even then the articulatory diversity is limited, as in regard of *illumination* and *brightness*, which is due to the contrast between the visible spot on the road that is illuminated by the car lights and the pitch-black surroundings. All such matters suggest a high modality in the domain of naturalistic coding orientation (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, 165). However, otherwise unnatural appears the reduced level of *representation*. The image of the ghoulish woman abstracts from 'photographic naturalism' (2006, 161), since the figure on the road is never exposed in detail, nor in the zoom-in clip at the end.

Considering the auditory dimension, the sense of realism is supported according to a number of markers such as, for instance, *de-*

grees of friction, *degree of directionality* and *perspectival depth*. As for the former one, the grinding noisiness of the car's engine and the friction of the tyres on the road are fairly detailed, consistent with real-world experiences, while as for the latter two, the realism is established by a comparably low level of complexity. More specifically, the sounds are easily localized (cf. *degree of directionality*), that is, "pinpointed to a specific source" (van Leeuwen 1999, 177), and the 'flat' internal soundscape of the car's cabin is characterized by a low differentiation between foreground and background (cf. *perspectival depth*) due to a naturally occurring interference between to two men's conversation on the one hand and the exterior car sounds on the other. At the collision point, *pitch range*, *dynamic range* and, to a lesser extent, *durational variation*, are widened because of the bang on the windshield, followed by the men's emotional outbursts and the car reverse sounds (both the engine and interior beeps), though without affecting significantly the degree of friction and perspectival depth. All in all, similarly to the modality configurations of the burger photos (cf. Figure 5), the scale settings of the visual and auditory dimensions of the commercial might be illustrated as displayed in Figure 8.

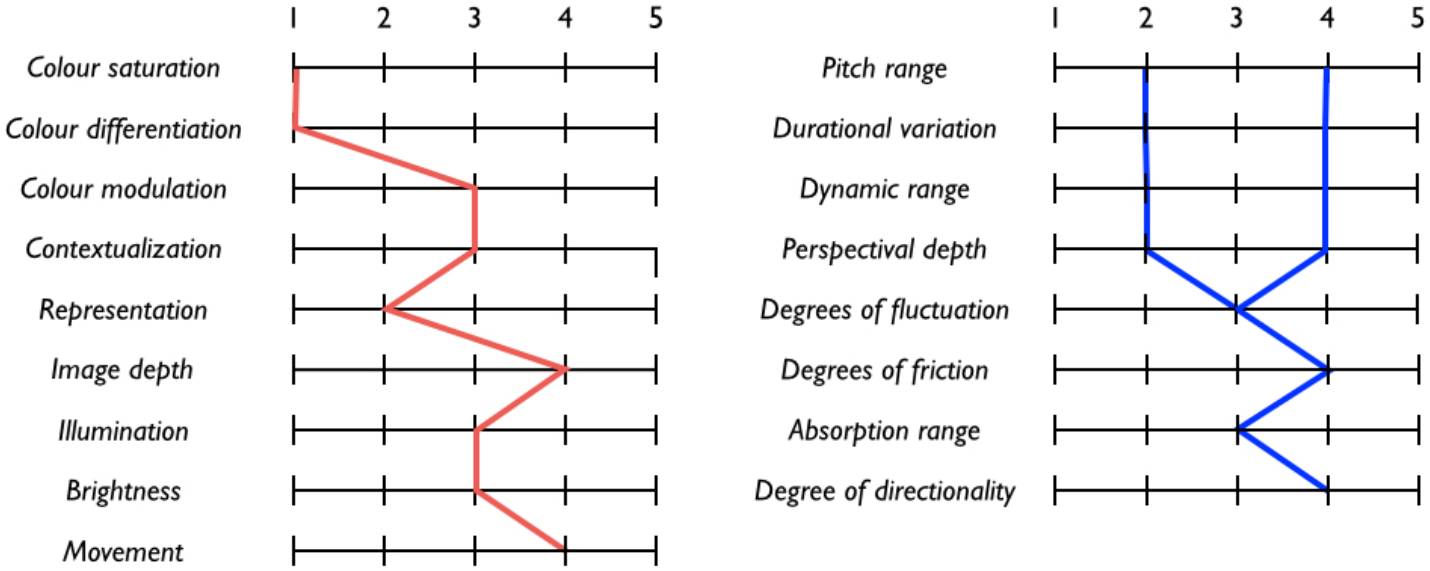

Figure 8. Visual and sound modality configurations of the commercial (red and blue, respectively).

The EDA study

There seems to be broad agreement among scholars in the fields of marketing psychology and consumer behaviour that affective-computing technologies for monitoring physiological signals, such as EDA, are highly relevant for studying audiences' experience of TV and web advertising. By providing an exact quantitative description of the electrical conductivity of the skin's moisture level (i.e., the state of sweat glands activated by the sympathetic nervous system), they may offer insight into emotionally induced reactions that are not immediately accessible to the researcher and perhaps neither "available to viewers' conscious awareness" (Ravaja 2004, 195). Additionally, the tools of EDA monitoring have become relatively simple and inexpensive to manage (Boucsein 2012, 1). However, being an indicator of the intensity of an emotional experience (or the state of physiological and psychological 'awareness'), EDA measures provide results only for one of two dimensions of affective experience (cf. Russell 1980), that is *arousal*, while revealing no information about *valence*, that is, the quality of the experience. Moreover, EDA measures are hardly of any use without being processed in combination with additional and explanatory information, as for instance (subjective) participation feedback or, in this case, stimulus annotations in the form of textual (visual and auditory) grammar configurations.

In the following, we report from the procedures and the results from an EDA experiment in which the Japanese tyre commercial was used as stimulus. 79 students watched the commercial while they were monitored by a wireless Sense Wear armband from Body Media attached by a Velcro strap on the backside of the upper left arm. The experiment took place in a dark media lab at Aalborg University, where the students were scheduled to participate in groups of three. The tyre commercial was incorporated in a 10-minute compilation including seven advertising or campaign films, which were specifically chosen for the experiment, given their emotional content and (presumed) capability of invoking affective response. In the following we shall, however, concentrate exclusively on the data derived from watching the tyre commercial. In this connection it should be noted that we chose for the experiment a modified and extended version, in which the zoom-in clip of the laptop and the subsequent bang sound is cross-faded with

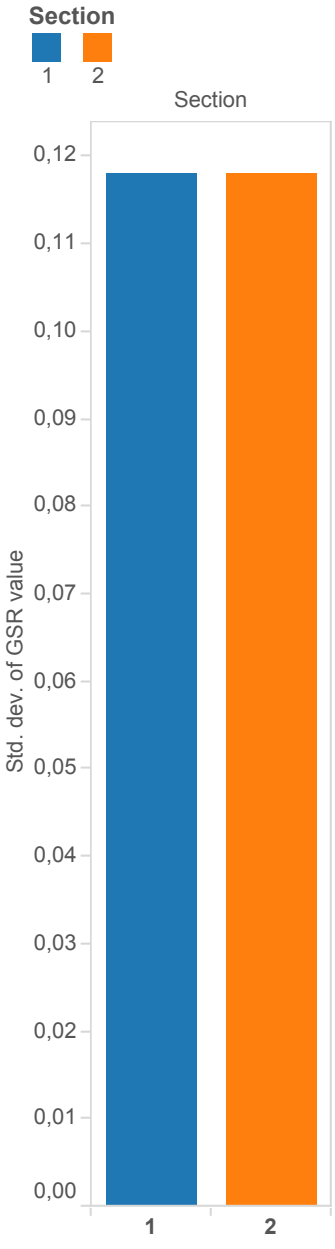

Figure 9: Between-subject variability in Sections 1 and 2.

a repetition of the scary sequence (car stopping followed by the collision and the reversing), which is once again cross-faded with a slow-motion replay of the same sequence (except for the reversing) before the final logo and bang sound. The choice was motivated by a wish to retain the intensity a bit longer so as to improve the ability to measure the differences of affective reactivity before and after the first shock effect. Accordingly, in the following paragraph we will account for the resulting data belonging to the two sections on each side of the (first) collision, that is Section 1 (0:00–0:18) and Section 2 (0:19–0:54).

When we compare EDA variability in Section 1 with EDA variability in Section 2, there are virtually no differences at all (cf. Figure 9). That simply means, though, that the general between-subject differences are rather constant regardless of the perceived media content and the evoked impressions. Thus, the two columns in Figure 9 describe the average EDA variability across all 79 students. When we, however, conduct an equivalent examination of the two sections on a within-subject level, it becomes very clear that Section 2 exceeds considerably Section 1 in far most cases, with only five exceptions, that is, in case of participant no. 8, 68, 84, 89 and 93 (cf. Figure 10). This result – which is further illustrated in a box-and-whisker plot, showing both the typical and atypical values of variability (cf. Figure 11) – might be interpreted as a clear indication that the level of affective arousal among the participants is markedly greater after the collision episode; and it confirms what one would expect in the light of the scary close-up confrontation and shout of the ghoulish figure followed by the high-intensity exposure of the emotional reactions of the motorists. Indeed, the significance of the shock effect should not be underestimated. Yet, it seems also reasonable to assume that the altered configuration of sound-modality markers (cf. Figure 8), which is due to the intensified soundscape, plays a major role in the elicitation of arousal increase.

That said, one should bear in mind that Section 2, with its repetitive content, hides the affective impact of the first shock effect and its influence on the replayed shock effects.[7] Thus, it raises the question whether the increased EDA variability in Section 2 may be attributable to within differences before the extension (0:19–0:36) or within the extension (0:37–0:54), or to differences between these two subsections. The latter is illustrated as '2a' and '2b' in Figure 12,

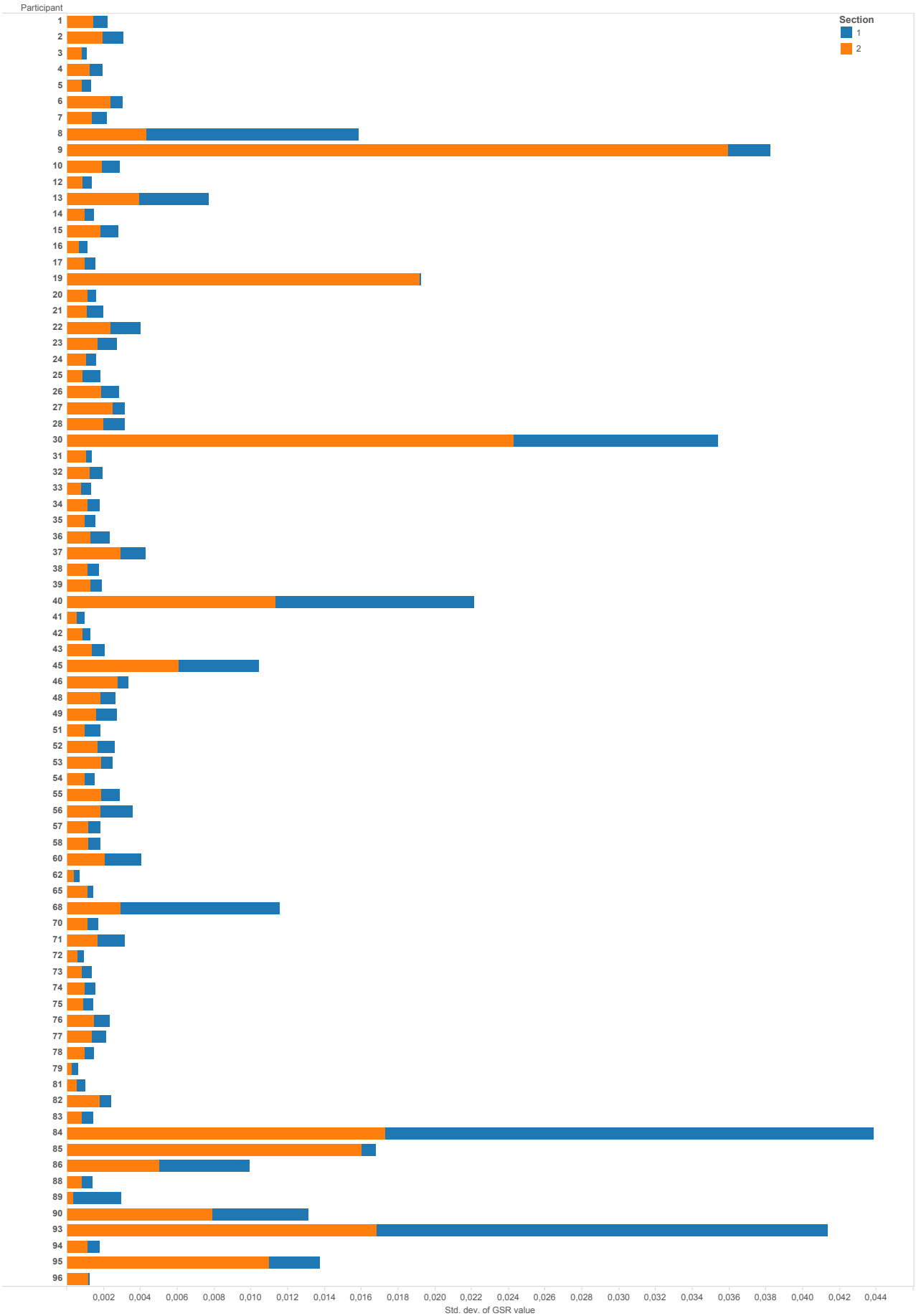

Figure 10: Within-subject variability in Sections 1 and 2.

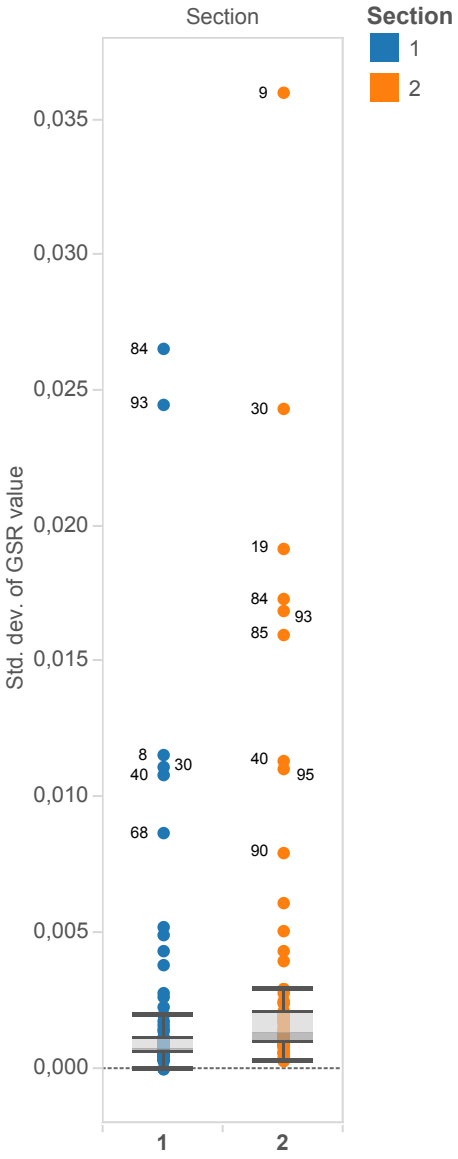

Figure 11: Inter-quartile range and outliers in Sections 1 and 2, with details shown for participant.

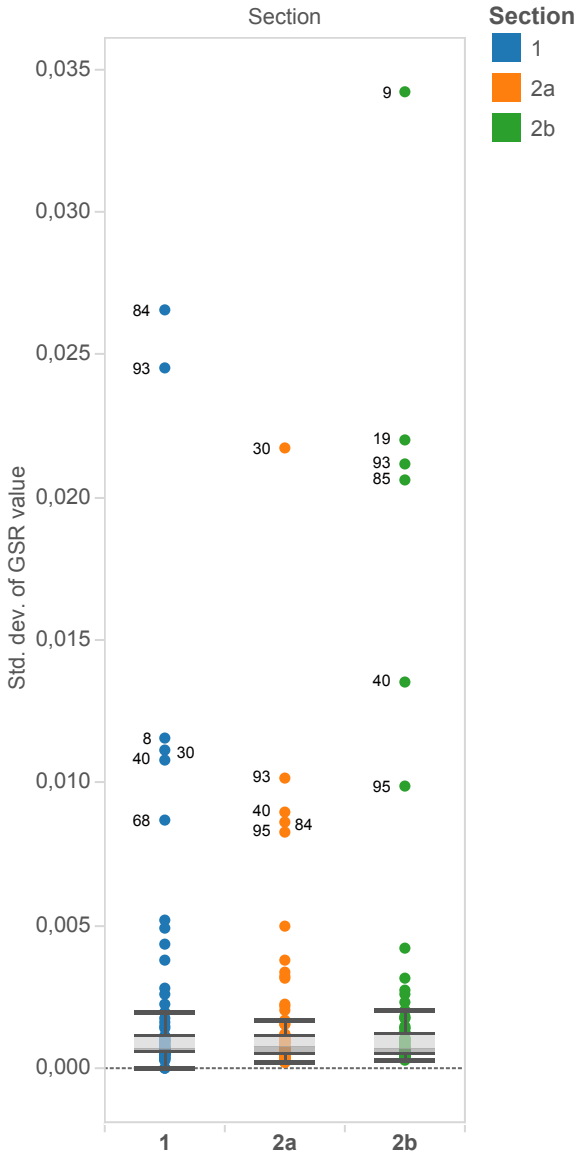

Figure 12: Inter-quartile range and outliers in Section 1 and Subsections 2a and 2b, with details shown for participant.

and when compared with Figure 11 it is evident that the increased affective arousal in Section 2 is the consequence of subsectional differences, however small they may seem.

Discussion

In this paper we have chosen to use ET and EDA measures as examples of popular, simple and relatively inexpensive tools of data col-

lection for experimental audience-testing research, which can be combined with textual grammar analysis of visuals and sound as suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and van Leeuwen (1999). In this way, we wish to highlight the fruitful synergies that can be potentially realised by the inter-paradigmatic approach. We believe that the modality markers make up a powerful toolbox for describing systematically the parametric details in the construction of aesthetic objects, which can be related subsequently into the attentional and affective aspects of aesthetic experience. On the one hand, results of textual grammar analysis – being valuable in their own right – can support the generation of hypotheses to be tested empirically, against which the analysis results can be further discussed and put into perspective. Both confirmation and refutation of predictions made by the textual grammar analysis will be interesting and can inform future strategic use of aesthetic elements. On the other hand, grammar-analysis results could support experimental testing, by providing a more informed basis for selecting stimuli in relation to a specific study purpose. For instance, an analysis might lead to the result that two or more photos are not sufficiently comparable, given that the parametric differences are too many to draw revealing conclusions; and that for a real study it might be necessary to collaborate with a cook and a photographer to create a set of images that are sufficiently alike to isolate the effect of the independent variable (veggie vs. non-veggie). The same applies to moving images, such as TV commercials. However, in the case of the tyre commercial chosen for the present paper in which we made internal comparisons between narrative-based sections (and subsections), a text-oriented close reading, as the one outlined above, seems, under any circumstances, to be a necessary prerequisite for understanding differences in affective response.

Now, by focusing on ET and EDA, concerning respectively the attentional and affective aspects of an aesthetic experience, thus leaving out the *cognitive* aspect (cf. Marković 2012), the present paper by no means pretends or claims to be exhaustive. Considering viewers' self-reported verbal responses to aesthetic objects, making sense of such responses, and the use of findings for strategic-communication purposes, may indeed represent a significant complementary component of the audience-testing part. For the same reason, we emphasize once again the positioning-stating intent of the

paper. In our view, the synergies are not limited to the specific tools and methods used in this paper. Indeed, other systemic-functional and social-semiotic approaches to grammar analysis and the wide range of different computing techniques for measuring audiences' attentional, cognitive and affective response all have interesting synergies that can be fruitfully explored to obtain new and interesting results in the study of aesthetic experience of art.

Acknowledgments

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Note

1 The ninth marker, movement, constitutes an addendum to the former eight markers when it comes to moving images. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, "movement can be represented with different degrees of realism or abstraction and hence play a role in modality judgements", just "[l]ike visual detail, background, depth, light and shade, colour etc." (2006, 264).
2 As for the domain of sound, van Leeuwen distinguishes between naturalistic, sensory and abstract-sensory coding orientation (1999. 177–180).
3 http://theeyetribe.com/.
4 http://www.ogama.net/. Ogama version 5.0 was used.
5 The TV commercial can be accessed online via YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54U6BgYuJMY.
6 See Sobchack (2004) for a cognitive-phenomenological study on the immersive qualities of "subjectively perceived and embodied presence" in first person point-of-view cinematic images (2004, 136).
7 For the impact of stimulus repetition, see, e.g., Uno & Grings (1965) and Kraut & Smothergill (1978).

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Dissolving Europe?

Fear of refugees and ourselves in Christian Lollike's *Living Dead*

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Abstract

When the performance *Living Dead* premiered in Denmark in 2016, its reception was characterized by an equal amount of praise and unease. Written and directed by Christian Lollike, *Living Dead* dealt with the increasing number of refugees coming to Europe from Africa and the Middle East. Controversially, it was a "horror performance" focusing on the fear, anxiety, and potential dissolution of Europe. The article examines the agency of the performance. How does it engage our senses and sensibilities? How does the affective and intensive elements of horror relate to the representation of the refugees? And how may the horror on stage affect our feelings and stance towards refugees outside the theatre – and relate to contemporary humanitarianism? In order to clarify these questions, I will use the analytics of mediation suggested by Lilie Chouliaraki (2006), Sianne Ngai's theory of "ugly feelings" (2007), and Judith Butler's reflections on the sensual dimensions of war (2009).

Keywords performance, refugees, affect, Lollike, agency

In September 2016, the performance *Living Dead* premiered at Aarhus Theatre in Denmark. It was a co-production between Aarhus Theatre and the theatre Sort/Hvid, written and directed by

Christian Lollike, artistic director of Sort/Hvid. Working across art forms and genres, Lollike is well known for his often controversial performances about current political and social issues. Engaged in troubling themes like group rape, right wing extremism, and the Danish warfare in Afghanistan, his performances draw attention in- and outside the world of theatre, as they explore what art can do in a contemporary world in need of new forms of understanding and agency. This is most explicitly manifest in "The Puppet Party", an artistic political party trying to restart democracy by exhibiting the emptiness of Danish political culture and engaging the citizens in political dialogue (Lollike 2015). However, art's social and political agency is a key question in all of Lollike's works also when articulated less explicitly than in "The Puppet Party".

In this article, I will focus on the agency of *Living Dead*, a performance dealing with Europe's confrontation with refugees from Africa and the Middle East. At first glance *Living Dead* is not as controversial as the performances in which Lollike gave voice to and tried to understand for instance the group rapists in *Dom over skrig* (Judgment over scream, 2004) or Anders Breivik in *Manifesto 2083* (2012). The response to these performances was highly conflictual, with politicians and others accusing the theatres of sympathizing with the rapists or terrorist. The debate, mainly fueled by people who had not seen the performances, was so heated that the manager and director of the theatre, Katapult, which staged *Dom over skrig*, even felt the need to declare in public that "Katapult does not defend group rape" (Jyllandsposten 2004).

Compared to debates like this, the reception of *Living Dead* has been surprisingly unanimous and positive. Apart from resulting in numerous praising reviews and sympathetic interviews, it made the association of theatre journalists award Lollike "Teaterpokalen" for his remarkable will to face contemporary conflicts and dilemmas without offering easy solutions (Teater1 2016). In spite of this consensual reception, I will argue that *Living Dead* engages in the question of art's agency in a way that is as controversial as the performances mentioned above. The fact that Aarhus Theatre has *not* felt the need to go public with a declaration saying, "Aarhus Theatre does not blame the refugees for the dissolution of Europe", does not mean that the performance cannot be understood as a claim to exactly this. According to the website of Sort/Hvid, it is a "horror

performance" about "our time's greatest refugee crisis", and the introductory words are "Now they are here, the refugees have reached your town. A stream of zombies who have taken the concern to Europe and that no one can control. Humanism will fall – do we need to fight or flee?" (Sort/Hvid 2016).

But what does this "horror performance" do – to us as spectators and to our understanding of the refugee crisis? How does it engage our senses and sensibilities? How does the affective and intensive elements of horror relate to the representation at play? And how may the horror on stage affect our feelings and stance towards refugees outside the theatre? In order to clarify these questions, I will use the analytics of mediation suggested by Lilie Chouliaraki (2006), Sianne Ngai's theory of "ugly feelings mgl." (2007), and Judith Butler's reflections on the sensual dimensions of war (2009).

Short feelings and unknown threats

"What does the EU-chairman-president-commissioner think?"[1] This question is repeated several times by the three nameless, slow moving and slow speaking characters in *Living Dead*. They – enacted by Maria Rich, Özlem Saglanmak and Morten Burian – appear like mechanical, maybe post-human, Barbie and Ken-like robots or zombies, with blond artificial wigs, dark contact lenses and long, bare, bronzed limbs. They do not themselves know what to think about the refugees coming to Europe or drowning on the way, but try to stay calm. One is "over-sensitive" (maybe meaning "a little self-centered") and lacks an emotional filter towards the many catastrophes; another is over-producing, over-communicating, stressed and exhausted, unable to concentrate on one thing; and a third feels "threatened all the time. That I have to be ready. On duty. Even when I eat, I know that something can happen".

Staged in a depressing orange-green or "vomit-colored" (Dithmer 2016) kitchen scenography by Marie Rosendahl Chemnitz, the three mechanical figures articulate their ambivalent feelings about the refugees with monotone voices. Empathy is overshadowed by fatigue, distractions, sedation, or even relief when the refugees drown on the way. The European zombies do not know what or how to feel. The world makes them suffocate; they "cannot handle more tv-catastrophes, terror-net-news, and now another boat..."

The conversation is fragmented and fluttering, momentarily bordering on the comical and grotesque. It alternates between reflections on the refugees, diagnoses of their own suffering from cold hands, restless bodies, and "empathic disorders", including hyper-immunity, confusion, forgetfulness, and inability to stay concentrated and have "long feelings" in a time that "has become shorter and more aimless".

The European zombies conceive the refugees as an indeterminate and nightmarish threat that can be realized at any time: "a black and islamistic mass of zombies" expanding and invading the European souls just as war, terror, and trauma have invaded theirs. They wonder why the "this-is-a-human-like-me-mechanism" does not work. Is it because the refugees are so black or so many? Empathy has become an instrument of survival: taking the position of the other enables one to predict his next step, catch him off-guard if necessary. The danger is articulated as crime and terror but mainly as an undefined disease: a contagious infection originating in the minds of the traumatized, a virus spreading from the refugee camps to the Europeans' nerve paths, or a mutation derived from fish feeding on the corpses of drowned refugees in the huge Mediterranean mass grave.

The fear of refugees, however, is not only articulated verbally, but also performed and generated physically. The only action in the first part of the performance, apart from moving and talking in slow motion, is when the zombies first fry and then eat a fish. As an audience, sitting close to the stage in a small theatre, we smell the frying fish. We cannot escape it but keep inhaling the microscopic particles of the fish, while the zombies eat and talk about how fish feed on drowned refugees and transmit unknown forms of contagion.

Distant and close suffering

Living Dead is a performance about the fear of refugees and the dissolution of European humanism. This is how the websites of Sort/Hvid and Aarhus Theatre present it and how the reviewers understand it. Unavoidably, however, it is also about the object of the fear: the refugees. In order to clarify what the performance's representation of them does, I will use the analytics of mediation suggested by Lilie Chouliaraki (2006).

Chouliaraki's analytical focus is not on art, but on mediated representations of the suffering, faraway other. Based on an ethical point of view she asks if and how television can cultivate a disposition of care and engagement and create "a global public with a sense of social responsibility towards distant sufferers" (Chouliaraki 2006, 153). Understanding particular cases of television news as unique enactments of an ethical discourse, she suggests analysing mediated representations based on their relationship between text and image, their particular space-times, and their forms of agency.

Visually, street cameras in major disasters have the aesthetic quality of eyewitness and proximity to suffering, implying actuality and activity. They "place the event in the temporality of emergency" and "organize the spectacle of suffering around action that may alleviate the sufferer's misfortune" (Chouliaraki 2006, 158). By contrast, long shots of skylines entail aesthetic contemplation of the sublimity of the catastrophe, inviting reflection over causes, consequences, and historicity.

Verbally, the narrative of the news "performs fundamental classificatory activities: it includes and excludes, foregrounds and backgrounds, justifies and legitimizes. It separates 'us' from 'them'" (Chouliaraki 2006, 162). The verbal narrative organizes the spaces and temporalities of the visual content in a way that makes distinct claims to the reality of suffering: to the facticity of suffering, to the emotion of suffering, or to justice around the cause of suffering (Chouliaraki 2006, 163). In addition, it invokes distinct reactions, addressing the spectator's affective potential anger, tender-heartedness, or reflexive contemplation of the conditions of human misery.[2]

The regimes of pity of the media representations are contingent, and so are the ways in which they performatively shape agency:

> agency refers to how active the sufferer appears on screen and (...) how other actors present in the scene appear to engage with the sufferer. These two dimensions of agency come to shape how the spectator herself is invited to relate to the suffering, that is whether she is supposed simply to watch, to feel or to act practically in relation to the 'others" misfortune. (Chouliaraki 2006, 167)

Seen through the analytical lenses of Chouliaraki, *Living Dead* has a paradoxical ambivalence. On the one hand, we are very distant from the sufferers, the refugees. With two exceptions they are seen from a distance, not as particular refugees but as a general refugee *crisis*. The two exceptions, in which we get some kind of proximity to the sufferers are, first, an anecdote about an Eritrean refugee, who has melted plastic and his fingertips into each other in order to erase his fingerprints and flee to another country. Second, a monologue alternates between first hand memories from drowning in the Mediterranean ("There weren't life jackets for everyone (...) I clung to the dead") and the traditional English language course ("Excuse me Madame but where will I find Tate Modern"). The only scenes with proximity and "action that may alleviate the sufferer's misfortune" thus grotesquely reinforce them by a very concrete erasure of the fingerprints/individuality of the sufferer and a more general highlighting of the unequal life conditions of observer and sufferer.

On the other hand, we get uncomfortably close to the refugees, however not as actual sufferers but as unknown and potentially threatening strangers. Apart from the monologue above, we do not hear their own voices but only hear *about* them. In addition, the verbal presentation of their sufferings makes them objects of fear rather than pity. This seems reinforced by many of the other sensual elements of the performance. The three scenes in which we actually *see* 'the other' are scenes of either nightmare or horror: In one, entitled the "Burqa wheel nightmare" in the manuscript (Lollike 2016), figures wearing black burqas move in slow motion on a dark scene, accompanied by disharmonic sound. In another, the three zombies – now with their faces painted black and the blond wigs replaced by afros – approach the spectators directly as beggars, coming close enough to embody a physical and tactile threat, leading to a sudden and shocking scream of horror. And in the third scene, the horror becomes grotesque and nauseous when one of the zombies, who has revealed her black hair and maybe turned out to be one of the refugees or foreigners herself, pulls out octopus from within her shorts before getting killed by the others.

The proximity to the refugees is, however, more frightening when we do *not* see them. The sudden and 'Aristotelian' fear caused by the scream is an exception in the affective aesthetics of *Living Dead*.

Rather than the potentially cathartic fear and scream, the threats of the refugees are of a more constant, invisible, and inaudible kind. The fear is not caused by individual, strong subjects with agency, but by anonymous crowds embodying and carrying contagion. It spreads affectively, without any subjectivity or intentionality. The contagion is not decided by anyone, it is just happening, and the origin and character is uncertain. It is therefore difficult to confront, by the zombies on stage as well as by the audience.

Contagion and ugly feelings

Bodily contagion is thematized on stage. But it seems also to be transferred from stage to audience, resulting in strong embodied affect. When reading the reviews of the performance, the uncomfortable feelings and bodily unease is a dominant trait. This is remarkable also in the fragments of reviews on the website of Aarhus Theatre. According to them, *Living Dead*

> "crawls up and into our faces, it wants to go beneath our skin and occupy our bodies" (Kristeligt Dagblad);
>
> "is so present that you want to look away" (Aarhus Studenterradio);
>
> "not only the stench of oil-fried fish but also the Westener as a corpse in decay is difficult to shake off" (Aarhus Stiftstidende);
>
> "the audience moves anxiously in their seats. The performance settles physically in the spectators" (Den fjerde væg). (Aarhus Theatre 2016)

The reviews articulate the intense bodily and affective impact that the performance has on the audience. One can understand these affects as a performative enactment and generation of "ugly feelings". According to Sianne Ngai (2007), "ugly feelings" is a repertoire of amoral and non-cathartic affects[3] that do not entail virtue or any other grand qualities. The "bestiary" of weak and petty affects includes (among others) envy, irritation, anxiety, paranoia, and disgust (Ngai 2007, 7). These ugly feelings arise when agency is ob-

structed or suspended. They are the feelings of not being focused or gathered, of indecision, weak intentionality, and conspicuous inactivity. They arise in moments when obstructed or suspended agency produces "the inherently ambiguous affect of affective disorientation in general – what we might think of as a state of feeling vaguely 'unsettled' or 'confused', or, more precisely, a meta-feeling in which one feels confused about *what* one is feeling" (Ngai 2007, 14).

The European robot zombies in *Living Dead* perform the ugly feelings. They embody them in their slow motion, their unfocused conversations, their weak intentionality, and their articulated affective confusion about their own feelings:

> "It is not because one doesn't want to, but one doesn't know"
> "I don't know what to feel, okay?"
> "One should not confuse things, one should not, but one just doesn't know who is who"
> "Then one sticks to human rights, but...they are also on social media, and one has to be able to put one's telephone aside, so I stopped taking it with me to the bathroom"

Their words articulate exactly what Ngai describes as an affective disorientation, a feeling "of being lost on one's own map of available affects" (Ngai 2007, 14). They are unable to navigate between the available feelings, and their agency is reduced to *avoiding* decisions – including responding to social media's call for humanitarian aid. Lost in ambivalent feelings about the refugees, what they *cannot* do is much more certain than what they can do.

The ugly feelings seem unproductive, but Ngai argues that they are fundamentally social and material, bearing with them a kind of truth and a political significance, however ambiguous. Building upon Raymond Williams, feelings are not personal and idiosyncratic phenomena, and their weak intentionality and ambivalent agency can amplify "their power to diagnose situations, and situations marked by blocked or thwarted action in particular" (Ngai 2007, 27).

This diagnostic power was noticeable as widespread uncomfortable feelings and bodily unease in the audience of *Living Dead*. And the blocked or thwarted action felt alarmingly true when one of the

zombies, staring at the spectators, said, "You cannot tell your children that the war will not come. You cannot say that".

Framing the refugees

In *Frames of War. When Is Life Grievable,* Judith Butler reflects on the sensual dimensions of war. In a normative line of thinking, close to Chouliaraki's, Butler asks a question almost opposite to hers. Instead of exploring how representations of suffering can foster care and responsibility, she examines the ways in which representations of other populations frame them as war targets in an initial action of destruction. Visual and other representations frame and initiate the war by producing and enforcing what will count as reality: "In some sense, every war is a war upon the senses (…) There is no thinking and judgment without the senses" (Butler 2009, xvi).

The framing influences "why and when we feel politically consequential affective dispositions such as horror, guilt, righteous sadism, loss, and indifference" (Butler 2009, 24). Our feelings are in part conditioned by our interpretations of the world around us and by interpretive schemes beyond our control: "We are already social beings, working within elaborate social interpretations both when we feel horror and when we fail to feel it at all. Our affect is never merely our own: affect is, from the start, communicated from elsewhere. It disposes us to perceive the world in a certain way" (Butler 2009, 50).

According to Butler, the differential distribution of grievability across populations is decisive for these affective dispositions. Lives are neither lived, nor injured or lost, in the full sense if they are not first apprehended as living. They become un-grievable when they are represented as already lost, and especially when they are represented as shadow lives or threats to life: "populations are lose-able, or can be forfeited, precisely because they are framed as being already lost or forfeited; they are cast as threats to human life as we know it rather than as living populations in need of protection" (Butler 2009, 31).

Returning now to *Living Dead*, Butler's reflections shed new light on the title as well as on the representation of the refugees. Seen from the point of view of the three European zombies, the refugees are un-grievable. They are not apprehended as living in the full sense. They are the living dead that constitute an infinite threat and

must be drowned or kept out in other ways. They are framed as the targets of war, which becomes very tangible towards the end of the performance when one of the zombies repeatedly intones "war is coming, war is coming...".

But what about the performance itself – how does *Living Dead* frame 'the other'? In a way, its representation of refugees seems similar to the one expressed in the zombies' ugly feelings. The performance does not offer an alternative to the framing of refugees as contagious, lost, and un-grievable. It does not give voice to refugees or present them in ways that could appeal to or even enable compassion instead of fear. As spectators, we do *feel* the unease and horror.

From a humanitarian point of view – like Chouliaraki's or Butler's – *Living Dead* might seem problematic. It is possible to interprete it as a reinforcement of the xenophobic media representations of Denmark and other European countries as being flooded with infinite, unknown, and desperate crowds of refugees. In a way, it seems to contribute to the widespread impression that Europe is sinking under the weight of countless refugees from the South and Middle East.

The migration to Europe can, however, be represented in other ways, Quantitative data gives a less alarming picture. While countries like Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, and Ethiopia host most refugees, the numbers in Europe are relatively modest. In 2015, the year of the so-called European "refugee crisis", there were 370 asylum applicants per 100,000 inhabitants in Denmark. In the EU, the equivalent number was 260, and 1.53 per 1000 inhabitants were granted asylum in 2015 (Refugees.dk 2016).

Numbers like these frame the question of refugees in a way quite different from the one of *Living Dead*, which – from one point of view – can be criticized for contributing to a framing that exaggerates the "crisis" in Europe. Performatively it generates the feeling of unease, passivity, and fear of a dissolving Europe without questioning whether this fear is reasonable. Following this interpretation, one could even argue, that Lollike's performance frames the refugees as targets of war. If suffering is presented as a case of action, this action is not help but rather defense and violence.

So why, in spite of this deeply troubling trait of *Living Dead*, is the agency of the performance different from the ugly feelings and suspended agency of its three European characters?

(In)equal precariousness

Living Dead is a nightmarish horror performance, establishing two alarming approximations or equalizations. One, which has been discussed above, is the performative and affective approximation of the ugly feelings of the European zombie characters and one self as a spectator. One can hardly attend the performance without feeling infected by the fear or at least anxiety regarding the refugees' impact on the future of Europe.

The other equally alarming equalization is that the Europeans are framed as just as un-grievable and frightening as the refugees are. As mechanical zombies who have lost their ability to focus, to feel, to reflect, and to act, they also do not live in the full sense. They are not human any more, and the title's living dead may just as easily refer to them as to the refugees. The already lost populations are not only the refugee others but also the Europeans, i.e. ourselves.

This double equalization between xenophobic Europeans and spectators on the one hand, and between already lost refugees and already lost Europeans on the other, is what makes *Living Dead* a "horror performance". It is also what enables the performance to explore our stance towards refugees in a way that challenges well-known xenophobic or humanitarian arguments and feelings. As Devika Sharma has argued (2013), contemporary humanitarianism can be criticized for being a self-gratulating feeling for the privileged, who practice it for their own well-being, cherish human rights on social media, and thus save their self-image. They, or rather we, who profit on global inequality, can pretend to be in solidarity with the world without the inconvenience of political struggle. With the victims as passive receivers, we can take the roles as powerful benefactors, thereby affectively contributing to the global inequality that we claim to fight with our media-generated momentary feeling of compassion.

Seen in the light of Sharma's critique (based on Alain Badiou, T.J. Demos, Didier Fassin and others), it is obvious that *Living Dead* wants to and succeeds in doing something radically different from a self-gratulating humanitarianism. Instead of making us the

powerful subjects of humanitarian action and the refugees the objects, it performs and generates ugly feelings and obstructed agency. Instead of depoliticizing and sentimentalizing the structural inequalities of the world by appealing to compassion with individual refugees, it equalizes us and them by making us all objects of contagious affect.

This contagion, of course, does not entail that our life conditions are equal. There is a world of difference between being a refugee and fearing one. But in *Living Dead*, we all lack agency. There are no strong subjects here. Rather there seems to be what Butler calls a "generalized condition of precariousness" which is not a feature of a single life, but a fundamental social condition (Butler 2009).

Living Dead's equalization of unlivable lives can be seen as a performative enactment of such a general precariousness. As made tangible in the affective contagion, we are exposed to others, vulnerable by definition. In the performance, this exposure and vulnerability includes the refugee others, the European zombies, and us as spectators. When it ends by exposing us to an elegiac madrigal by Monteverdi, beautifully performed by five singers of the Mogens Dahl Chamber Choir, it seems to suggest the deeply human character of this vulnerability. We may understand the elegiac song as a nostalgic remembrance of a proper European humanism, as a deep grief over all the "living dead" in our current world, or as a sensual and emotional insistence on the immense beauty that the exposure to other people *also* can entail. After all the ugly sensations and feelings, the almost otherworldly beauty seemed more ethereal than the nightmarish horror. But simultaneously, the beauty was present, it was where *Living Dead* ended, indicating the potential of other affective intensities than the ones of fear and horror.

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Notes

1 I have seen the performance at Stiklingen, Aarhus Theater, live as well as video-recorded. In the following, quotes without reference are all from the unpublished manuscript *Living Dead* (Lollike 2016).

2 Chouliaraki refers to Luc Boltanski's description of these three topics of suffering – political "pamphleteering", caring "philanthropy", and distancing "sublimation" – in *Distant Suffering. Politics, morality, and the media* (1999).

3 Differently from Lawrence Grossberg, Brian Massumi and others, Ngai uses the terms feeling and affect more or less interchangeably, and I follow her in taking the difference as modal rather than formal: a difference of intensity or degree rather than quality or kind. She assumes that "affects are *less* formed and structured than emotions, but not lacking forms of structure altogether; *less* 'sociolinguistically fixed', but by no means code-free or meaningless; less 'organized in response to our interpretation of situations', but by no means entirely devoid of organization or diagnostic powers" (Ngai 2007, 27). This modal understanding enables her to analyse the transition between affect and emotion: "the passages whereby affects acquire the semantic density and narrative complexity of emotions, and emotions conversely denature into affects" (Ngai 2007, 27).

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What Literature Can Do

Performing Affect in Zoë Wicomb's *October*

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Abstract

Our affective response to works of literature, Derek Attridge argues in "Once more with feeling: art, affect and performance" (2011), is not "some mental simulacrum of affect, but a real feeling" (330) that replicates remembered experiences in the extra-literary domain. While reading, we feel these emotions "always *as performances of language's powers*" (334) as we perform the literary work, bringing to life as events the "individual's mental processes" – "the emotions, the mental and physical events, the apprehendings of the external world it depicts" (58). The affective response Zoë Wicomb's *October* (2014) elicits in the reader, I argue in this essay, is also staged in the novel: like Mercia, who returns again and again to Marilynne Robinson's *Home*, a novel she finds "Strangely familiar" (12), to reflect on ideas of home, her own conflicted relationship with her past in South Africa, and her present deracinated existence in Scotland, the reader of *October* feels the performative power of language in a novel that affectively unsettles complacent understandings of memory and belonging.

Keywords affect, performativity, Derek Attridge, Zoë Wicomb, literary reading as event

Zoë Wicomb's *October* (2014) undoes me as a reader. Each reading of this narrative of Mercia Murray – a coloured academic who visits her native South Africa after being left by her Scottish boyfriend only to be confronted with a family secret – takes an inordinate amount of time, as I intermittently find myself staring off into space, lost in memory. The act of reading becomes one of remembering, which also means that my affective response to events within the novel are conflated with the feelings evoked by this nostalgia. But what exactly am I remembering? After all, I am reading across a considerable cultural distance and while both Mercia and I are academics, South African, and immigrants, I am not from her hometown, Kliprand, these are not my family members, and this is not their story. Of course, this is not anyone's story, as these characters, in this incarnation, exist only on the page, variously brought to life by different readers and readings, and Mercia's tortured negotiation of notions of home and belonging are performed emotions. My affective response, however, as Derek Attridge argues in "Once more with feeling: art, affect and performance" (2011, 330) is not just "some mental simulacrum of affect, but a real feeling" that replicates experiences in the extra-literary domain. While this suggests that my response to this work is singular, influenced by my unique idioculture, it is not purely subjective. As Attridge (2015, 33) points out, "I belong to a group whose members share a great many of my own mental and emotional habits and norms" that, to a certain extent, determine my reading practices. Significantly, however, reading *October*, I am feeling these emotions "always *as performances of language's powers*" (Attridge 2011, 334), demonstrating literature's capacity to engage with the complex, intertwined nature of memory and affect. The emotional remembering the reader experiences, accessing her own memories while being performed *by* the text, is also staged (that is, performed) *in* the novel: on a bus ride from Glasgow to Edinburgh, Mercia overhears a mother consoling her son after he throws up; the mother's soothing "Sweetheart, my sweetheart" does nothing to appease the boy's conviction that "he had ruined everything." Mercia's own stomach heaves as "she lurche[s] into the past, once more a child groping for her mother's skirt, sobbing her sorrys and her incomprehension" (Wicomb 2014, 109). In this remembered event, however, she receives no maternal comfort, but only punishment for accidentally dropping a cup onto

a cement floor where it smashes into pieces. This echo reverberates later in the novel when, taking her alcoholic brother, Jake, to a rehabilitation centre, she soothes him with the words, "Sweetheart, my poor sweetheart" and is "alarmed to hear in her own voice that of the woman on the bus ride to Edinburgh" (Wicomb 2014, 184).

This article, then, examines the affective reading experienced in this encounter with *October* through the lens of Derek Attridge's influentional notion of literary reading as an event, elucidated in a series of publications: *The Singularity of Literature* (2004); "Once more with feeling: art, affect and performance" (2011); and *The Work of Literature* (2015). For Attridge, the meaning of the work of literature should be seen as "a verb rather than as a noun: not something carried away when we have finished reading it, but something that happens as we read or recall it. And that happening occurs only because the language is shaped and organized, an active shaping and organizing that we re-live as we experience the literariness of the work" (Attridge 2005a, 9). The text's linguistic performance of the reader constitutes the *work* of literature. Thus, for reading to be experienced as an *event*, which in Attridge's use of the term also means an encounter with alterity, form and content should be considered together; put differently, the form also has content. In *The Singularity of Literature* (2004) he writes, "The new form that emerges, the new arrangement of cultural materials, is, by the same token, a new content – an open set of fresh possibilities of meaning, feeling, perceiving, responding, behaving," with all the words in this list "understood as verbs, not as nouns" (108). The affective reading *October* elicits, as registered above, is the event that unsettles the reader's complacent understanding of the relationship between memory and place as a site of belonging.

In Mercia Murray's engagement with Marilynne Robinson's novel, *Home* – from which *October* takes one of its epigraphs – Wicomb's novel also renders visible the nature of literary reading. When the reader performs the literary work, Attridge claims, she brings to life as events the "individual's mental processes" – "the emotions, the mental and physical events, the apprehendings of the external world" (Attridge 2015, 58) – staged by the novelist. Mercia returns again and again to a novel she finds "Strangely familiar" (Wicomb 2014, 12) to reflect on ideas of home and her conflicted relationship with the past she thought she left behind in South Af-

rica. Called to Kliprand by her brother's letter asking her without explanation to take care of his son, tired of waiting for him to emerge from his room and his alcoholic stupor, and trying fruitlessly to work on her memoir, Mercia longs for the inspiration of this novel, which she had read before her return. "These days her memory is not what it was," the narrator tells us. "[A]lready she could do with re-reading the story she remembers as a version of theirs, echoed in another continent. Give or take a few transpositions, the different worlds are not so different, in spite of the genteel northern setting." "[H]aving then settled into identification with the story, the characters – a child with a dressing-up box – [Mercia] wonders what it would be like reading the novel now, at home, where she grapples with being back" (Wicomb 2014, 143).

Her use of the paradoxical phrase, "strangely familiar," and the metaphor, "a child with a dressing-up box," suggests a potentially *hospitable* reading, a literary experience through which otherness can enter into her existing idiocultural framing of notions of belonging. Of course, this alterity is "not just anything … hitherto unencountered; it's that which is *unencounterable*, given the present state of the encountering mind or culture, what [Emmanuel] Levinas calls the 'same'" (Attridge 2015, 55). It is significant, then, that *October* finds Mercia seemingly in the midst of an existential crisis brought on by two major events: the first is announced in the opening lines of the novel as an affirmation of identity in the declarative sentence that forms the entire first paragraph: "Mercia Murray is a woman of fifty-two years who has been left" (Wicomb 2014, 1). After many years together, her former boyfriend Craig is expecting a child with another woman. The second is the revelation of her father's paedophilic relationship with Sylvie, the woman who now is her sister-in-law (revealed only towards the end of the novel). Up till this point, these men have acted as fulcrums for Mercia's ostensibly rooted understanding of belonging: she describes her continued residency in Scotland as the result of being "enthralled" (Wicomb 2014, 144) – held in place – by Craig; in South Africa, being raised to not belong to the coloured community by her father, Nicholas Theophilus Murray, who teaches his children to speak English, her sense of belonging is nevertheless anchored in the idea that she is the daughter of a good man. In fact, this phrase, "a good man" (Wicomb 2014, 9) to describe him is repeated so often in the

narrative as to foreshadow its emptying out of meaning once the family secret is exposed; in light of its revelation, Mercia vows that she "will not be destroyed" by her father (Wicomb 2014, 198), as she will not "destroy herself" (Wicomb 2014, 201) by probing the reasons for Craig's desertion too deeply.

It is in the resulting state of existential vertigo that Mercia is forced into a re-evaluation of her understanding of home as related to place. Again we are reminded of *October*'s epigraphs taken from novels entitled *Home* – Robinson's, as mentioned, and that of Toni Morrison. Wicomb has revealed in an interview that her publishers thwarted her desire to give the same title to this work (*Sunday Times* 2015). As such, she is returning to familiar concerns; as various scholars such as Attridge (2005b), Minesh Dass (2011), and Antoinette Pretorius (2015) have noted, her work is characterized by a sense of displacement, and characters who, like Wicomb herself, straddle different cultures are often depicted as having the sense of being simultaneously at home and un-homed. Perhaps because Mercia, in *October*, is a literary critic, an academic working on post-colonial memory who prides herself on her rigour in close reading, or due to her abhorrence of the memoir form rendering the private public, she seems unable confront this topic directly, rather mediating her investigation through the reading of Robinson's portrayal of family relations and homecoming. However, a different way of looking at this, one more pertinent to the argument here, is that Mercia is, in fact, unable to explain herself and make sense of recent events within her current frames of understanding, informed as they are by her knowledge of the "exilic condition" (Wicomb 2014, 67) – Craig teases her about this – and of cultural hybridity. More specifically, she articulates this as having "no language for such an exercise" (Wicomb 2014, 198). Like the "child with a dressing-up box" she invokes, Mercia thus clothes Robinson's story of a wayward brother, dutiful sister, long-suffering parents, and a family secret in her feelings about her own family and, conversely, tries on the characters' affective responses to explain her own. In other words, it is her *literary* reading of Robinson's novel, both familiar and strange, that leads to an apprehension of otherness that provokes her into rethinking her understanding of herself in relation to the places, Glasgow and Kliprand, and the people, her deceased parents and her brother Jake, who ostensibly represent home.

Unsurprisingly, then, "Home" is the file name under which she saves her attempt at memoir on her computer; however, her choice of medium through which to re-examine her family dynamic, a form that "prides itself on fidelity" to the past (Wicomb 2014, 213), raises significant questions about the possibility of representing the singularity of events, as first lived through or experienced, through language, rendered further complex by the vagaries of memory. Trying to summon a memory of her deceased mother, she recalls the baking of birthday cakes for her brother and the accompanying smell of "clove and cinnamon and nutmeg rising from the oven." She immediately doubts the origin of this recollection: "Is it an actual memory? her own? Or is the smell intertwined with that in the novel [Robinson's *Home*] she is reading, where the house is filled by the mother with fragrant food?" Remembering the smell's message in *that* novel – "*this house has a soul that loves us all, no matter what*" – she decides that it is a false memory, concluding that "if she can't distinguish between her own history and someone else's fiction" (Wicomb 2014, 17), she should abandon this project.

Ideas about the limitations of memory and the role of narrative in recounting the past are, of course, familiar and well-rehearsed, but it is worth standing still on Mercia's conundrum and the text's apparent shift of focus onto the role of the author and her narrative's implied, presumed knowledge of characters and events. The demands of the memoir she is attempting to write foreground this problematic relationship between the past and its linguistic representation, historical events and their remembering. *October*'s staging of this relationship between author and character is salient also in Morrison's novel, its other inter-text. That story of a young man's journey to rescue his sister after receiving a letter declaring her life in danger is interspersed with his addresses to his interlocutor who also appears to be the author of the novel. In statements such as "*Since you're set on telling my story, whatever you think and whatever you write down…*" (Morrison 2013, 5), he emphasizes characters' lack of control over their narratives; at the same time, he undermines the novelist's ability to capture others' singular experiences. "*Describe that if you know how,*" he says about the Louisiana heat. "*Trees give up. Turtles cook in their shells*" (Morrison 2013, 41). The uniqueness of the event as experienced by the character can never be the same as that very event either as lived through or as de-

scribed by the author; add the reader (or the listener) to this exchange, and you have yet another incarnation of the event. In Wicomb's novel, character, storyteller, and interlocutor are all present in Mercia's nephew Nicky's anxiety about communicating his newly acquired knowledge about the flower, chincherinchees, to his mother, Sylvie; initially, he is convinced that

> Yes, he could easily remember [there is a long spike with a head carrying lots of little starry flowers … all bunched together, a basket of petals] and he could tell his mamma, explain the chincherinchees to her; she is good at seeing things he talks about, although the smell would be hard; he doesn't suppose she'd get the smell at all. He … would remember it, even once he got home, but carrying it over to her exactly, that he couldn't be sure of, that he would just have to try. (Wicomb 2014, 38-39)

If reading and writing are thus endless acts of translation, then *October*'s staging of these processes as performing only a temporary or even contested totalization suggests an otherness that hovers at the limits of each attempt at ascribing meaning and identity to events and characters. What would Jake make "of being translated into these words"? (Wicomb 2014, 171), Mercia wonders, paralleled in her later musing if the neighbour across the road for whom Craig constructed "an entire life in prize-winning free verse" (Wicomb 2014, 223) would recognize himself in this poetry. Her anguished "what to do, what to do," as the author of memoir, because Jake, "as wayward as he is in real life, won't be pinned down" (Wicomb 2014, 143) suggests that the word I used earlier to describe her existential dilemma – identity – is no longer appropriate. Rather, Mercia's shifting understanding of and dialogue with the characters populating her memoir (and thus life) is more indicative of what Attridge terms, "idioculture," which signals the "continual evolution" of a person's "unique (indeed singular) cluster of attributes, preferences, habits, and knowledges, not all in harmony with one another" (Attridge, 2015, 61).

This point brings me back to the declarative sentences describing Mercia and her father, already cited, that open the novel: she is a woman who has been left; he is a good man. Similarly, we learn that

her brother "Jacques Theophilus Murray is a bad egg" (Wicomb 2014, 3). These assertions of identity are repeated throughout *October* but, in the end, are exposed, as in Marilynne Robinson's work, as well-rehearsed but dubious roles in the Murrays' family dynamic: Mercia reveals her guilt about moving abroad and abandoning her family; Jake is the victim of his father's transgressions; and well, Nicholas Murray is not such a good man after all. But, as staged in *October*, the hospitality towards alterity is more than merely accepting a different, more truthful, account of the other. Mercia's received narrative of Sylvie, tainted by a trained, entrenched snobbery towards this Afrikaans speaking "girl" who in conversation "shouts as if she were in another room" (Wicomb 2014, 32) and by the shame of Nicholas's actions, while undermined, is not simply replaced by a newer, more veracious version. Rather, in a black and white photograph, part of Sylvie's autobiographical project, Mercia comes across a woman whom she "does not know and cannot fathom" (Wicomb 2014, 166). Significantly, Mercia's encounter with the photograph is presented as a kind of reading:

> What is it that the girl knows? There is more than self-reflexivity, something beyond the knowing aesthetics of representing the self. There is knowledge that crosses over from the ghostly world of the photograph, that flicks across eerily into the real, now a flickering shadow across Mercia's heart. A shadow of fear and awe. Who is this apparition who rises out of the darkness, whose bright, ironic grin haunts the viewer? Who is Sylvie? (Wicomb 2014, 166-167)

Mercia is unnerved by the experience, registering an affective response – "fear and awe" – that results in her relinquishing control over the interpretation or knowledge of the character in the photograph.

This mirrors the reader's experience of attempting to interpret Mercia's actions and her development as a protagonist. But perhaps this is the point. While events in Mercia's life prompt a shift in her idioculture, rethinking the notion of home as belonging in or to a particular place, there is for her "no choosing between the contradictions of longing for and longing to be away from home" (Wicomb

2014, 208). Indeed, she seems always to be elsewhere. Recognizing familiar plants while on holiday in Lanzarote, she is reminded of species from home such as "Euphorbias from Transvaal, quaintly labeled in the old geographic names of the trekkerboer, and the very melkbos from Kliprand" (Wicomb 2014, 208). Yet, while in Kliprand, helping Nicky identify the local flora, she does not remember the "homely Afrikaans" name for the kalkoentjie, but it is the Latin name she looked up many years later that returns unsolicited. Her being in "the thrall of placelessness" (Wicomb 2014, 162) is countered with her fear of being irretrievably lost between continents.

These echoes across continents suggest that, for Mercia, belonging cannot be tied to a specific place. Craig's exit left her with a hole into which crept a "sly nostalgia," but the past "cannot be considered without irony" (Wicomb 2014, 171). Unlike the annual salmon run she witnesses at the Pots of Gartness, where she derides the disappointing "circularity of [their] lives," finding the endless repetition of returning to their spawning ground a "repellent" and "horrible notion of roundness and completion" (Wicomb 2014, 128), Mercia's is an impossible return. "So layered are the fragrances of the past, so spliced the memories of places," she realizes, "that nostalgia will have to do without an object" (Wicomb 2014, 171-172). Thus, while the past and place as sites for belonging, like individual identity, are amorphous and continuously shifting, the idea of home remains as a matter of affect, as a structure of feeling, as a desire for belonging. After deciding to sell her apartment and to move abroad – which she actively pursues by attending a job interview on Macau – Mercia is prompted to return to Glasgow after witnessing, in a pond, a young turtle's behaviour towards an indifferent, older one. The extraordinary passion with which she interprets this scene signals the desire and the failure to be recognized, not as an interpellative reading, but in the singularity of the first-person "I": "I am here! Please, oh please. It is I! … Acknowledge me, it is I I I I … I am here. Acknowledge me. It is I" (Wicomb 2014, 234-235).

I started this essay by recording my own emotionally unsettled reading of Wicomb's novel, a literary reading, I have argued, that is also staged in the text. It is not insignificant that, throughout, I have drawn on *October*'s epigraphs from Morrison's and Robison's novels, both entitled *Home*, as intertextual signposts to Wicomb's concerns. Epigraphs represent the novelist also as a *reader* and, while

the intentional fallacy cautions us against making claims about the author's aims in writing a novel, *October*'s epigraphs suggest that it is Wicomb's own experience of literary reading as an event that inspired a reconsideration of the idea of home as a place of belonging. *October*'s last epigraph from Dylan Thomas's "Poem in October," also the source of the novel's title, foreshadows its exploration of the link between memory, narration, and affect: "And the twice told fields of infancy/ That his tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in mine" (qtd. in Wicomb, 2014). In its performance of the reader and as staged in the text, Wicomb's *October* demonstrates the power of language to affectively alter our understanding of that place we call home.

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Making Art as Resistance

The Psychiatric Patient as Subject

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Abstract

Examining 20th century "art brut" by James Edward Deeds, Martín Ramírez, Ovartaci, and Clément Fraisse produced within psychiatric facilities in America and Europe, this paper argues that these artists enacted transgressive creativity, not only aesthetically but through the materiality of their approaches, thereby resisting what sociologist Erving Goffman terms "total institutionalization."

Keywords art brut, outsider art, process based analysis, psychiatry, institutionalization

This article provides a process-based analysis of four artists (James Edward Deeds, Martín Ramírez, Ovartaci, and Clément Fraisse) who were committed to psychiatric institutions in America and Europe in the 1920s and 30s. Despite their distinctive and idiosyncratic visual lexicons, all four artists appropriated materials from their locations to subvert institutional space in acts of transgressive creativity. By recasting their roles in their respective institutions from patients as objects of study to artists as subjects, they actively resisted what sociologist Erving Goffman terms "total institutionalization." Their artistic production thus communicates a tension between bodily confinement and artistic defiance, revealing the

immanent potentiality in the act of art making. Scrutinizing closely not only their artwork but also the materials used during the creative process, this paper recovers a counter-history on the margins of psychiatry, foregrounding "outsider"[1] art's agency to interrogate social institutions and aesthetic hierarchies, while also serving as a source of self-preservation and self-production.

In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault delineates the internment of the irrational through the construction of a social architecture instituted during the Enlightenment that separated and marginalized the "madman" from mainstream society. In his comprehensive history of psychiatry in Western culture, Andrew Scull observes that the push towards segregating "the mad from society" led to a large-scale period of asylum building during the 19th century as "moral treatment" became popular throughout America and Europe (Scull 2015, 190). The 20th century saw another transnational trend in the field of psychiatry as the individual body became the site of biomedical and pharmaceutical forms of control through treatments such as insulin shock treatment, metrazol therapy, electroconvulsive therapy, and, most notoriously, prefrontal leukotomy or lobotomy, the controversial surgery devised by the Portuguese doctor Egas Moniz and popularized in the United States in the 1950's by Dr. Walter Freeman.

During this latter period, the Canadian-American sociologist Erving Goffman spent time in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, DC to research "the social world of the hospital inmate" (Goffman 1961, ix) and his observational fieldwork served as the basis of his book *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. In this book, Goffman outlines the power dynamics and social hierarchies of what he defines as a "total institution". He describes how the very architecture of the total institution "through locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests, or moors" (Goffman 1961, 4) creates a barrier between institutional space and a privileged outside world that is only available to staff. The body of the inmate is reified as labor and viewed as burden by the staff:

> In total institutions, there is a basic split between a large managed group, conveniently called inmates, and a small supervisory staff. Inmates typically live in the institution and have restricted contact with the world outside the

> walls . . . Staff tends to feel superior and righteous; inmates tend, in some ways at least, to feel inferior, weak, blameworthy, and guilty. (Goffman 1961, 7)

A key trait of a total institution is its all-encompassing control over the inmate's time and space. Yet even within total institutions, some still seek and discover ways to assert agency, autonomy, and personhood.

James Edwards Deeds[2] was committed for life in 1936 to State Hospital No. 3 in Nevada, Missouri. Like many asylums, State Hospital No. 3 came out of a transnational movement in mental health care based on moral treatment, which was championed in America by the 18th century doctor Benjamin Rush. Proponents for moral treatment, such as the 19th century reformer Dorothea Dix, viewed the asylum as a humane alternative to the streets, but by the time of Deeds' confinement, many of these Kirkbride institutions were showing signs of deterioration and growing increasingly overcrowded with patients. In 1934, just two years before Deeds was committed, State Hospital No. 3 was investigated after five deaths occurred on the site ("State Hospital Brutality Is Probed" 1934). Deeds was at the institution during a historical moment of transition in the field of mental health care, and his sketches quietly question the movement away from the asylum as a "moral" city and toward biomedical forms of therapy and control.

Using colored pencil, pen, and crayon on scraps of old psychiatric hospital ledger paper used for bookkeeping, Deeds created 283 carefully numbered drawings that invite the viewer into asylum space and time and into his own anachronistic universe. Because these drawings are composed on paper owned by the asylum and bound together into a single volume, it is likely that they were sanctioned by the staff at State Hospital No. 3. Considering this, it is surprising how subversive the content is. The most obvious tension is between the hospital's ownership over the paper and Deeds' artistic reclamation of the space on the page. The name of the hospital and the treasurer are centered on the top each front page which also contains grid lines for calculating expenses, and Deeds often uses the existing lines to guide or frame his portraits or landscapes. He also occasionally even humorously toys with the space on the page

as in drawing No. 123, which includes a small sketch of a tiny finger pointing to the line marked for address.

As this example illustrates, Deeds' sketches are playful in tone while also expressing nostalgic fantasies of a halcyon, idyllic past. While the well-known Swiss artist Adolf Wölfli foregrounds perception and interiority, Deeds' works express a fascination with the external world, both in and outside the asylum walls. He animates human figures, places, animals, vehicles, and objects with dynamism and personality. In his character portraits, Deeds constructs a community of interdependent individuals in provincial town drama: the state attorney, the professor, the judge. Yet alongside the more respectable figures are the deviants and outsiders: the rebel girl, the tiger lady, the deer boy. By placing these portraits within picture frames (oftentimes including hooks for hanging them), he emphasizes art as artifice, and one can almost imagine his work decorating the walls of State Hospital No. 3.

His works also show a preoccupation with wordplay, calling attention to the instability of both visual and verbal communication. For instance, he has a clever affinity for translating verbal homophones into visual puns. A portrait labeled *Deer Boy* offers a literal interpretation of this term of endearment in an illustration of a young man with antlers projecting from his head. In the imagination of Deeds, a tiger can be an animal, a woman (No. 99 *Tiger Girl*), a man (No. 62 *Tiger Jent*), or even a sports team as in No. 205, which includes a team of Tigers in their baseball uniforms. Interestingly, State Hospital No. 3 had a baseball team made up of staff members during the first half of the 20th century (*State Hospital No. 3* 2013, 49), and some of Deeds' sketches seem to look back toward a time when the institution was more integrated into the social life and culture of the town.

His most intriguing wordplay, however, is the word ECTLECTRC in drawing No. 197. In this piece, ECT, an abbreviation for electroconvulsive therapy, is scrambled into the word 'electric,' in a jarring neologism. This dark heading accompanies a seemingly benign drawing of a woman, but based on the verbal wit that can be found throughout his work, and the occurrence of ECT in other drawings, it is unlikely that this misspelling is accidental and in its anachronistic tension, between the buttoned Victorian appearance of the subject with her bouquet of colorful flowers and the

darker connotations of the title, this piece subtly yet powerfully interrogates biomedical therapy.

Martín Ramírez was born in Jalisco, Mexico in 1895 and traveled to the United States in 1925 to seek work. While he initially worked on the railroad, it is likely that he struggled to find employment during the Great Depression. In 1931, he was committed to Stockton State Hospital. In his early days at Stockton, Ramírez tried to escape several times before he was eventually moved to DeWitt State Hospital. Unlike Stockton and State Hospital No. 3, which were both Victorian buildings modeled on the Kirkbride plan, Dewitt hospital was a newly constructed army barracks that had been used during World War II. In this facility, where he would reside for the rest of his life, Ramírez made art out of necessity and his process reflects an intense focus and a profound commitment to his craft.

Ramírez´s work resists total institutionalization through his creative and resourceful use of found materials in an environment in which his material possessions were controlled, especially during the period before he received acknowledgement and support for his work by Dr. Tarmo Pasto. The possessions available to a patient in DeWitt State Hospital were limited by precise rules and regulations. According to the Visitors Guide from 1954, Dewitt State Hospital recommended the following list of items for male patients:

> 3 Pair Washable Trousers
> 3 Shirts
> 3 Suits of Underwear
> 6 Pairs of Socks
> 3 Pairs of Pajamas
> 6 Handkerchiefs
> 1 Coat Sweater
> Comb, toothbrush, toilet articles and writing material.
> (Department of Mental Hygiene 1954)

Goffman describes the effects of this type of dispossession on the construction of self within a total institution: "The personal possessions of an individual are an important part of the materials out of which he builds a self, but as an inmate the ease with which he can be managed by staff is likely to increase with the degree to which he is dispossessed" (Goffman 1961, 78). Yet in Dewitt State Hospital,

Ramírez resisted artistic dispossession by assembling found objects and repurposing them for artistic uses. These included a diverse range of ephemera such as "discarded nurses' notes, cigarette rolling papers, magazines, greeting cards, candy-box wrappers, newspapers, book pages, flattened paper cups, and examining-table cover sheets--which he pasted together with homemade glue made from potato starch, bread dough, and his own saliva" (Davis 2010, 21). He used a tongue depressor to draw lines and melted crayon on his radiator to soften the wax to make it more flexible for his work (Davis 2010, 20-21). He hid his works to protect them from being damaged or stolen and worked painstakingly, creating drawings that present a profound narrative of the mind under internal and external constraints. Wayne Thiebaud observed Ramírez in the act of making, noting how the artist used matches and other materials to create a palette of colors: "I remember him coloring the cheeks of one of his Madonnas with such a match, it created a nice kind of pink for the cheeks. Ramírez also used various kinds of food from the kitchen for his colors and newspaper illustrations that he would chew and make into a kind of colored saliva" (Thiebaud 2008, 11). Although spit often connotes destruction and defacement, Ramírez exploits the productive potential in saliva, not only to produce color but to create a paste that he used to expand the scale of his work. For example, his piece *Untitled (Ten Trains)* created between 1960-63 is of an ambitious scale, reaching 50.8 cm x 2.9 m.

Like Deeds' sketches, the works of Ramírez exhibit a fascination with order and recursive patterns. While Deeds' subjects are enclosed within picture frames, Ramírez's horseback riders – and other figures reminiscent of the culture and landscape of his youth – are centered on platforms and in archways. Victor Espinosa, who has done the most substantial work recovering Ramírez's biography, has written extensively about Ramírez's Mexican background and situates Ramírez's oeuvre within three key events that influenced his life and work: the Mexican Revolution, The Cristero War, and the Great Depression in America. Espinosa suggests that for Ramírez, art "became a prime means for preserving his identity, keeping alive his memory and trying to give sense and order to an external and internal world in crisis" (Espinosa 2010, 28).

Many of Ramírez's works obliquely explore memory, yet exist in a liminal space between the past and the present, in a purgatory of

the mind, and the iterative formations create an overwhelming and powerful sense of containment. His tunnels, a common motif in his work, evoke motion and stasis simultaneously, transporting and trapping the viewer into sequences of recursive loops and dark recesses. When looking at a piece like *Untitled (Four Horizontal Rows of Tunnels)*, one can feel the emotional and gravitational pull of dense, dark, crypt-like spaces. Tunnels suggest escape or connection: access to the outside, but Ramírez's tunnels disconnect and isolate, exposing the darkness of the inside. Trains also figure prominently in his work, but transportation appears to exist outside of time in an eternal tension between arrival and departure. While the train seems to imply hope, a means of escape; it also has darker connotations for as Brooke Anderson observes, "The railroad played a key role in connecting the spiritual opulence of his early milieu to the vacant environment of his later life" (Anderson 2010, 25) These problems of connection are foregrounded in Ramírez's works, which portray space as an illusory but real impediment to human encounter. It is only through the act of making that the artist can find respite from the haunting memories of the past and the constraints over the body in the present.

While Deeds and Ramírez appropriated found objects and ephemera to quietly question confinement, the Danish artist Ovartaci reimagined asylum space in both sanctioned and unsanctioned acts of aesthetic transgression. Of the four artists in this study, Ovartaci was arguably the most successful in asserting and gaining both artistic and personal autonomy (though not without struggle) while at the psychiatric facility in Risskov. Hospitalized for fixty-six years (including a brief period at Dalstrup), Overtaci was admitted to the hospital as Louis Marcussen and took on various names, identities, and genders throughout her life.[3] The most well-known is Ovartaci, which according to Eddie Danielsen was a creative spelling of overtosse or "uber loony" (Danielsen 2015, 7).

A sculptor, painter, and poet, Ovartaci constructed and painted papier-mâché female figures, decorated her room with her work, and even painted her own bed, staking an artistic claim on asylum space. Ovartaci's works challenge the binary between private and public space and play with the tension between defacement and decoration. While in Dalstrup, she created one of her most irreverent public works, when she was commissioned to paint the chapel

there. After painting the crucifixion, she later returned in stealth and transformed the piece into a naked female figure. Regarding the work, Ovartaci later observed to the psychiatrist Johannes Nielsen "Jeg blomstrede kapellet i Dalstrup og alt er vist nok skrabet ned."[4]

Another preoccupation in Ovartaci's oeuvre is flight, which is explored through visual tropes such as winged creatures, birds, butterflies, and even helicopters. In her visions recorded by the psychiatrist Johannes Nielsen, Overtaci also refers to herself frequently as a bird or a butterfly. One particularly striking vision dictated to Nielsen involves her transmigratory experience as a butterfly. The butterfly lives in a beautiful palace, but is asked to give up this freedom to descend into a prison and "console the prisoners" (Ovartaci 2005, 38). An unnamed woman explains the butterfly's mission: "Little butterfly, down under there is a prison, the palace has a reverse side and in that is a prison. All the conscientious objectors are imprisoned there, and there are certainly many of them" (Ovartaci 2005, 38). The butterfly agrees to descend into the prison, but it provokes great "unrest" within the facility. The butterfly's commitment to radical beauty within the prison parallels Ovartaci's own life of artistic transgression within Dalstrup and Risskov. According to Eddie Danielsen, Ovartaci desired to completely transform asylum architecture with a "vision" that "unfolded further into the walls of the wards, in ideas of a transformation of the entire hospital, maybe the entire world" (Danielsen 2015, 21)

Despite Ovartaci's many public acts of creative transgression, she also chose to keep some of her creative work private. In the introduction to the book of poetry, *Ovartaci's Secrets: Poems to the Future*, Nielsen tells the story of how he discovered a manuscript of poems in the head of the sculpture Pupparpasta, one of Ovartaci's papier-mâché dolls, while he was in the process of restoring the piece. This act of artistic self-concealment establishes a defiant and defined boundary between Ovartaci's public and private selves, and is especially important within the culture of the asylum, where the self is impinged upon through biomedical treatments and the prescribed codes of the institution. Written in Spanish, the poetry is further encrypted by another one of Ovartaci's personas. Revealing much about Ovartaci's interiority, the poems move between dark and light, delving into themes of war, fear, and suffering and celebrating beauty, love, and art. In one poem, the speaker urges the

audience: "Create or build / All of you, / Hope in pictures / In art / In poetry / In text." (Ovartaci 2006, 13). Like in many of Ovartaci's visions and visual works, hope is found through spiritual surrender to the feminine, which, for her, is the source of art making and aesthetic experience.

While Ovartaci's narrative shows a movement toward artistic self-determination and social recognition, the story of Clément Fraisse is a tragic one of isolation. According to Sarah Lombardi, Fraisse was born in Lozère, France and was committed to the Saint-Alban hospital after an arson attempt on the family farm. Upon expressing violent behaviors within the facility and enacting multiple escape attempts, he was interned within a small wooden cell from 1930-31. During this time, he used several makeshift tools, including a broken spoon handle and the handle of his chamber pot, to carve a narrative of isolation into the walls around him (Lombardi 2012, 52).

As Goffman shows, the codes and rules within the asylum serve to control the daily life of patients through a complex, hierarchical social order established and maintained by staff. Solitary confinement, however, further segregates patients from social contact, silencing or even erasing those who fail to submit to the norms of the institution. Yet Fraisse resisted social annihilation by repurposing the only tools he had available from the institution to carve his presence into the very walls that contained him, reshaping asylum architecture from the inside out in an act of aesthetic defiance and defacement. The wooden wall consists of approximately 150 rectangular carvings. The original planks dictate the width of each individual panel, but the length of each section varies according to Fraisse's design. The most common pattern is the double wheel which fills the space on all 27 blocks of the bottom two rows, and is featured elsewhere throughout the piece. Another important motif is the abstracted human figure, which is more prominent in the upper rows. Shifts between surface scratches and deep cuts into the wood can be discerned, perhaps reflecting changes in emotion, but also indicating shifts in materials as he moved between the tools available to him. The expansiveness of Fraisse's vision, both in terms of its size (1.70 x 3.83 m) and its ambition stands in stark contrast to the enclosure and circumscription of his body within this physical space.

Despite the documentation of harrowing conditions in the 1930's, Saint-Alban hospital became a site for rethinking psychiatry during and after World War II and the birthplace of what would later be termed institutional psychotherapy, a movement in the field linking political and psychological liberation spearheaded by François Tosquelles. According to the scholar Camille Robcis, Tosquelle believed that "psychiatry and politics shared a similar goal: the possibility of bringing about a form of true freedom through the 'disoccupation of the mind'" (Robcis 2016, 212). Although Fraisse left the facility in 1945, the wooden room he carved was preserved by Roger Gentis and another doctor from Saint-Alban, and is currently on display at the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, Switzerland.

While solitary confinement severely circumscribed Fraisse's physical mobility, it opened a space for divergent and unorthodox forms of creativity. This is one of the dark paradoxes in the complicated historical narrative of institutionalization. Institutions that segregated those diagnosed with mental illness from society at large also became sites where some patients discovered their talent as artists and expanded their craft, removed from the capitalist constraints of daily life. This is especially the case for Ramírez and Ovartaci, who were both encouraged by psychiatrists who took interest in their lives and work. According to Goffman: "Every total institution can be seen as a kind of dead sea in which little islands of vivid, encapturing activity appear" (Goffman 1961, 69-70). The art produced in institutions provides one such site of hope and deserves further scrutiny not only for its historical significance but for what it says about the transgressive power of art-making and aesthetic experience.

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Notes

1 While "art brut" has become a broad label for a diverse range of artwork, the term's origins are rooted in the French artist Jean Dubuffet's fascination with the creative processes and practices of those relegated to the margins of society, many of whom were institutionalized in prisons and psychiatric hospitals. In 1972, Roger Cardinal coined the label "outsider art" to identify this body of work, which now includes

artists who in many ways are as different as they are similar, from the spiritualist Madge Gil to the subversive Thornton Dial, from the reclusive, fantastical Henry Darger to the itinerant street evangelist, Sister Gertrude Morgan.

2 The story of how Deeds' work was discovered is quite remarkable. When a bound book of drawings was first found by a teenage boy in 1970 in a trashcan in Springfield, Missouri and shared with a local historian almost forty years later, little was known about the artist behind this intriguing collection of work. The artist and collector Harris Diamant eventually purchased the book and affectionately nicknamed the artist "The Electric Pencil" based on one of the sketches. Diamond searched for more information about the artist but could not figure out the identity, until a niece of the artist recognized one of the drawings featured in a published article.

3 Because Ovartaci attempted self castration and penis amputation and later sought and received a sex change operation, I refer to Ovartaci as "she" in the body of this text, even though this is not an adequate label for Ovartaci's complex gender identity. In *Ovartaci: Pictures, Thoughts, and Visions of an Artist*, Ovartaci speaks of being a woman, a man, a girl, a boy, a puma, a bird, a butterfly, etc taking on multiple and fluid gender identities.

4 Of the artists studied here, Ovartaci provides the most insight into the inner workings of her creative process. Through a profound relationship built with the psychiatrist Johannes Nielsen, Ovartaci's personal reflections on her art were compiled and recorded. In these short pieces, Ovartaci discusses the significance of each painting or sculpture, occasionally addressing the material conditions of the piece's production, but more frequently delving into an intricate and complex visionary universe where she inhabits multiple times, spaces, and various human and nonhuman bodies.

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Performing Sociology at a Music Festival

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Abstract

The white woman has been a central figure in second wave feminism. Conceptualised variously as an embracing character allured by racial difference by Mica Nava (2007) or as a racist oppressor by Hazel Carby (1992) among others, she has emerged in various disguises which all point to her centrality in feminist and anti-racist movements. This article considers *The Chamber of White*, a video performance that reconfigures this historical figure in contemporary relations. It explores how the performance enables an affective experience of white femininities by inviting audience members to engage in different affective states. The question is discussed how to do sociology – a sociological research on whiteness and gender– through the intensive, the performative and affective dimensions of art. It is argued that the performance expands on the concept of "live sociology" (Back and Puwar 2012), whereby through doing an artful sociology the affective and sensory aspects of sociality are not simply reflected but enacted in order to critically examine the affective power of whiteness in a feminist context.

Keywords whiteness, femininity, affect, performance, live sociology

The making of white woman through artful sociology

This article considers the doing of sociology through art by way of discussing *The Chamber of White*, a video performance I performed at Roskilde Music Festival in Denmark in 2014. The artwork was developed as part of a visual sociology research on the making of the white woman – on the affective dimensions and performative codes that reinforce, construct and disrupt meanings of white femininities. The artwork is part of a series of performance events I staged as part of the research, and explores the key themes the research is concerned with, namely embodied subjectivity and the performance of affect. Here I want to focus on one aspect of the piece, on the affective connections triggered between performer and individual audience members through the deployment of several artistic strategies that I argue enable a profoundly intercorporeal and affective experience of white femininities.

Through attending to the intensive, the performative and affective dimensions of art, to the movements and ruptures occurred in the performance event I argue that the artwork enables new modes of doing sociology and expands on the concept of "live sociology" as developed by Les Back and Nirmal Puwar (2012). In their approach "live methods" present an opportunity for a more "artful" and "crafty" sociology, the development of "forms of attentiveness that can admit the fleeting, distributed, multiple, sensory, emotional and kinaesthetic aspects of sociality" (Back 2012, 28). Artfulness in this understanding is not just about form but about "being mindful of the kinds of realities that are enacted and produced" and "*bringing a bit of craftiness into the craft*" (Ibid, 33, 34, emphasis original). They suggest that by embracing multi-media (sound, image and text) the sociological form can be extended and new innovative ways can be thought on the ways in which to attend to the social world: "The component elements of live sociology proposed here seek to expand the sensory dimensions of sociological attentiveness, to design methods that move with the social world and to develop multiple vantage points from which empirical accounts are generated" (Ibid, 28). Although in an artful live sociology "explicit research questions can be critically transformed into aesthetic practices" (Puwar and Sharma 2012, 10) and the fostering of inter- and trans-disciplinary collaborations between social researchers and

creative practitioners are encouraged, there is also a warning about the too hasty blurring of boundaries between social research and art.

Although a growing number of social researchers are using new media technologies, including film, photography, audio (Pink 2001, Blunt et al. 2003, Knowles and Sweetman 2004, Rose 2005 and 2010, Blunt and Dowling 2006, Kuhn and McAllister 2006, Back 2007) and also increasingly art formats like theatre, performance, installation and curatorial practice (Denzin 2003, Latour 2007, Puwar and Sharma 2012, Jungnickel 2013), it remains the case that "the inclusion of audio or visual material in the context of ethnographic social research has been little more than 'eye candy' or 'background listening' to the main event on the page" (Back 2012, 27). While I concur with the caution that needs to be exercised when working with different traditions of knowledge production I would argue for expanding the scale of experimentation in sociological methods through art in order to further the sociological imagination and attentiveness. I would argue that there is scope for using artistic practices beyond only as tools for dissemination of research findings – which is mostly the case with social science research – to affect audiences to enacting and creating the social world as they make sense of it. This is where I expand on the concept of "live sociology" by arguing that working with art in sociology, excavating art's performativity and the affects that are produced by art the research process itself can be transformed. The dialogic encounter augmented between art and sociology as different formations of knowledge production can be further exploited by attending to the intensity of art, which I locate in its performative and affective dimensions.

The uncritical and often over-used application of the notion of performativity is not without its critics. The art theorist Barbara Bolt questions whether any production across creative arts – theatre, paintings, sculptures, films or a performance event – can called be performative only because the practice brings into being what it names (Bolt 2008). Far from being exhausted however I contend the concept as a "possibility of things being otherwise", in Vikki Bell's words (2007, 5), and the expansion of the creative use of a wide range of artistic methods in generating and communicating social research as a compelling invitation to opening up landscapes of enquiry about difficult questions. In my own research practice the concept of performativity allows me to think about its capacity of

inaugurating movement and transformation, and the affective dimensions of creative production within the framework of a sociological inquiry – in a similar vein that Bolt approaches the performative nature of artistic research. She argues that similarly to science, procedures in the creative arts are based around repetition, and that performativity is not first and foremost about meaning, but force and effect. The force and effect of the creative production is then where the truth claims of artistic research can be located: "Here the work of art is not just the artwork/performance or event, but *is also* the effect of the work in the material, affective and discursive domains" (Bolt 2008, emphasis original). In Bolt's interpretation creative arts research is thus directed at mapping the movements and ruptures that are created by its productions and at recognizing the transformations occurred.

It has been argued that academic research itself if performative, that method in social sciences is not a set of procedures intended to report on a given reality, "rather it is performative. It helps to produce realities (Law 2004, 143). John Law makes the point that these realities produced are not free and random, they operate through a 'hinterland of realities', already enacted patterns, resonances and absences that cannot be ignored (Ibid). But method can also be creative: through re-working the hinterland of realities they can be recrafted and thus 'new versions of the world' created (Ibid). Bolt's and Law's accounts are useful in thinking through the transformative potential of an "artful live sociology" that creatively and carefully infuses sociological research with artistic methods and techniques, and creates social realities and situations where the felt and lived experience can be brought within an affective register. It is this space of the affective and aesthetic encounter where I take this debate up through the discussion of the video performance *The Chamber of White*, an artwork that examines the making of the white woman – the formation of white femininities – through creating an affective experience of whiteness. By discussing the artwork I explore the potential of the creative use of artistic methods to create affective engagements that draw people in experiencing and expressing complex facets of affects. I contend that beyond text and talk, a range of objects, interventions and events can be employed not just to disseminate research results but also to activate affective and aesthetic engagement of the audience who is confronted with them and is

completing the artwork. They bring about a kind of engagement and produce a social reality as they make sense of it, where I would argue the force and effect of the performance could be located and the analysis of which made relevant to sociological research.

My focus is on the affective and performative dimensions of the artwork, the movements, ruptures and transformations occurred, and their implications for social research. I approach this by way of discussing first how the different elements of the piece highlighted particular encounters with white femininities. I then trace the affective exchanges between performer and audience members that I argue evoked the affective figure of the white woman before concluding on the expansion of live sociology through artistic methods.

The White Room at Performance Sense Laboratory

The Chamber of White was installed in one of the rooms of the Performance Sense Laboratory at Art Zone, Roskilde Festival in 2014. The curatorial concept for the performance programme focused on how "to activate the sensuous through different, yet related, performance-artistic approaches which all subscribe to an interactive and immersive performance art tradition"[1]. The work was shown during four days of the music festival, which featured a significant art programme.

Each performance group was asked by the curator Gry Wolle Hallberg to explore different ways to "evoke the sensuous and poetic mode of being and being together in the otherworldly space" (Sensuous 2014)[2]. Visitors entered the Performance Sense Laboratory, a giant installation consisting of a big reception area and ten rooms through a gate in the shape of a circle, and were greeted and escorted by "Evokers". Performers prepared the visitors for their journey through the Laboratory and evoked their senses (hence the name "Evoker") through different exercises, like binding the visitors' eyes and letting them touch and taste different objects, a feather, a piece of chocolate, laying them down and whispering poetry in their ears and so on. Before letting visitors move into the rooms, Evokers entered their names in a book and asked them to fill out a form as "Human Research Objects" in order to chart changes in their affective states as they went through the Laboratory. At the exit visitors were asked again to fill out the form, which included simple questions, e.g. What mood are you in? and some possible

answers. Despite its playfulness and fairy-tale like design, where wandering around in different mystic and dreamy worlds the visitor could feel like Alice in Wonderland, the Performance Sense Laboratory had a profound purpose which all artists shared. Surrounded by the buzz of a prestigious music festival with a long tradition[3], Evokers and other performers had to achieve no less than to create the atmosphere of "the otherworldly space" where in each room another immersive experience was waiting for each visitor, who were let in one by one, or in groups of no more than 2 or 3. The ten "intimate parallel-universal" (Sensuous 2014)[4] rooms were designed individually, according to the instructions of the artists performing in the rooms, all with a distinctive fiction and character.

(Photo by Diana Lindhardt)

(Photo by Diana Lindhardt)

(Photo by Diana Lindhardt)

(Photo by Diana Lindhardt)

I designed the video performance as an installation, where each part was constitutive of the others. My room was painted white and I had burning white fluorescent light installed at each wall of the room. Unless the light was switched on, which I used only on two occasions, the room was cosy and intimate in the dark, only lit by the projection. A soundscape connected all rooms, silent music was played from one of the walls. The video was projected in the opposite corner of the entrance. Beans and earth were flowing from the wall where the film was projected down to the floor, where performer and visitor sat facing each other and the projection, thus a continuum was created between the projected images and the performance. I devised *The Chamber of White* for one single individual at a time, in order to create a direct and inescapable interaction, intimate and confrontational. The material properties of the installation space, of the earth and beans, and the physical proximity of performer and audience member were put in use to facilitate and account for the "sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment" (Pink 2009, 25).

At the centre of the artwork is white woman, who has been a key figure in second wave feminism. Conceptualised variously as an embracing character allured by racial difference by Mica Nava

(2007) or as a racist oppressor by Hazel Carby (1992) among others, she has emerged in various disguises which all point to her centrality in feminist and anti-racist movements. *The Chamber of White* reconfigures this historical figure in contemporary relations. I structured the work around its engagement with three primary sources that it pulls out of time and puts into conversation with each other. Blending elements of personal experience with fiction, cultural tropes and archetypal characters, abstraction and real life events, *The Chamber of White* works across three artistic strategies that are its material sources in creating an affective experience of white femininities. The first source is the video with images of white woman and icons of white femininity including cultural figures like Cinderella, the personification of the purity of the white female; the cartoon Betty Boob, with its own history of racism; and Marilyn Monroe, the epitome of the white blonde bombshell[5]. These archetypes of white woman are cross-referenced with my own artworks that interrogate white femininity: the reenactment of Howardeena Pindell's *Free, White and 21*[6]; the binding of breasts from Diane Torr's *Man-For-A-Day* workshops and my subsequent reenactment of Adrian Piper's *The Mythic Being* (*Cruising White Women*); and footages from *The Blush Machine* and *Freeing Up Shame*, two performance works I developed in the framework of this research, along with other cuts to women dancing and resting. White man also appears in the video, in violent scenes of riots from the 1960s and 2011, and as the oppressor of white woman; but also as the intellectual superior who seeks to understand and redress its own actions through words and scholarship, through his own inaccessible white male activity.

The second source is the live performance of Cinderella, who steps out of the video and works on understanding its meaning. She continues selecting and mixing black, white and brown beans, she is deemed to work until she can make sense of the world structured around race and gender, femininity and masculinity, whiteness and its power. She is a labourer of whiteness, the heaps of beans she selected gets stirred together again by her constantly working hands. She invites the visitor to help her, to take part in creating and destroying classification and categorization. The live performance brings close the images projected on the wall. The normative white female body is simultaneously experienced as visual

and haptic, the performance is the site to negotiate the shifting between body image and "body-without-an-image", the viscerally felt body that is not reducible to its image (Featherstone 2006). Cinderella has been given a body that is in progress, opened up to be affected and to affect in the encounter with the visitor.

(Photo by Diana Lindhardt)

(Photo by Diana Lindhardt)

The third source is the narration, quotes from Aimé Césaire, Audre Lorde, and my own words that hold the video and the performance together and offers a connection beyond histories of racism and sexism that we are all entangled in.

The installation responds to these materials and creates an affective zone of engagement with these primary sources. The elements put together are marked by a particular affective circuit I call *white affect*: the understanding of whiteness as an intersubjective and intercorporeal affective performance. A self-reflexively subjective archive of moments of encounter with white femininities are assembled and transformed through the aesthetic strategies of creating connections between past and present; inviting new connections to be made between different historical figures and events; reframing these histories and their legacies and thereby highlighting how they are made relevant today; calling into question knowledges produced about bodies through reading their surfaces; and finally en-

acting complex fields of visuality and affectivity in order to generate feelings of belonging and co-extensivity.

Affecting White Femininities

Creating a visceral relation was an integral part, indeed the desired aim of the performance. A safe space for exploration of the self was created not through subversive artistic means but through an affective engagement of performer and visitor in their intimate proximity. Although it has been stated that performance is distinctive in the unmediated "realness" of living bodies (Phelan 1993), I would agree with Misha Kavka's (2008) contention that it is the *feeling* of intimacy, rather than the unmediated physicality of the performer's body which is the locus of the affective intensities experienced within this performance setting. Because of this, the complex and ambivalent entanglements between truth and fiction, fantasy and history had to be carefully presented, always in response to the actual affective state of the individual audience member. The narrative of the piece had to be relatable and accessible to the audience, allowing for an intersubjective and importantly intercorporeal connection to be made between performer and visitor on a distinctively affective register. The context of the music festival and the audience made up of overwhelmingly white youth in their late teens, early twenties and thirties posed further questions on the intelligibility of the work to this demography, and on its perceived relevance to their lives and their current affective state of being at a festival. When I arrived at site and sat down to face my audience I felt immediately insecure about how the work would fit into this world that did not seem to exist beyond the gates and were made up of music, dance, alcohol, drugs and of letting loose of anything serious or unsettling. The predominantly positive reception of the piece however soon swept away my worries and the few occasions where the visitors left the room without watching the video to the end or engaging with the performer instead opened questions on the boundaries of inter-subjectivity and the limits of affective relation and circulation.

Affect produced in the social encounter is always unpredictable, we can never know its impact upon us in advance. The closed space of the Chamber and the intimate and confrontational design of the one-on-one performance heightened the density of affects in the

room, which at times got thick and heavy. The affective fields of whiteness were created together by the visitor and Cinderella, in continuous reacting to each others bodily, affective and intellectual states. Complex processes of negotiations took place that at many times developed to a joint narration of the situation with both adding their ongoing thoughts about what might count as appropriate response to the other and to the compositions of themselves. These evaluations were bound up with bodily reactions that preceded or followed movements of hands, legs and body signalling the ongoing thoughts and affective states of the visitor and Cinderella in a continuous interaction. The potentiality of the unexpected encounters where affects meshed with evaluative reflection and made the bodies present permeable, open and porous, enabled the renegotiation of power: the power of me as the performer in framing and leading the situation and the power of Cinderella and her white femininity were at once strengthened or dissolved and handed over in a constant movement between the two present in the Chamber. The concepts and ideas of the purity and respectability of white femininities (Dyer 1997; Skeggs 1998) that Cinderella was carrying in her body were made available through the openings of her white female body for the visitor to shape, form, add to or leave it untouched. *White affect* was performed, and white woman created as an affective figure through the joint affective movements of Cinderella and the visitor.

In most cases *The Chamber of White*, I contend, created new models of relationality. The video performance put the bodies of the performer and visitor at the forefront, and invited audience members to engage in different affective states. It offered visitors to map themselves onto a white and heterosexually normative narrative of the world and imagine different embodiments even if only within the confines of the performance and for the time of the encounter. The affective dominance of white normativity was simultaneously asserted and weakened. According to José Esteban Muñoz, the affect of whiteness is underdeveloped and flat (2000). In his view "the affective performance of normative whiteness is minimalist to the point of emotional impoverishment" (2000, 70). *The Chamber of White* proves otherwise. Performer and participant together entered an alternative affective register of whiteness, which was full. Shame, guilt, desire and longing superseded strict confines of iden-

tity politics. The grouping did not form by identity, but instead by the circulation of the powerful affects of whiteness.

Performing Live Sociology: towards an affective and aesthetic experience of social research

By tracing the specific modes of affective and aesthetic engagement presented by the artwork I argued for the creative use of artistic methods to think through sociological questions on the making of racialised and gendered subjectivities through affect, and delivered a way of working that is consistently productive and generative in working with the affective and performative dimensions of art in social research. Through doing artful sociology a central aim was to develop a way of thinking and a line of argument that might flow from the aesthetic and affective experience of art through to social analysis. I showed how affect opened up a space for those that cannot be quantified and measured through conventional methods. The artwork brings to presence the unrepresentable, accessed through an experience that can be aesthetic, and affective. The affective and performative dimension of art, alongside its materials and methods, I contend, can be part of the artistic means of producing and disseminating social research.

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Notes

1 Me and my assistant Louise Jensen performed interchangeably along with performance artists Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen and her staff, Melanie-Jame Wolf and Ana Berkenhoff from Savage Amusement, and Gry Wolle Hallberg, Anna Lawaetz and the performance crew from Sisters Hope. http://sensuous.dk/?p=939
2 See: http://sensuous.dk/?p=939
3 The first Roskilde Festival was organised in 1971. On the night of the opening of The Performance Sense Laboratory The Rolling Stones opened the Festival. See: http://www.roskilde-festival.dk/
4 See: http://sensuous.dk/?p=939
5 See Dyer, R. (1986). Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society. Basingstoke: Macmillan; Handyside, F. (2010). Let's make love: Whiteness, cleanliness and sexuality in the French reception of Marilyn Monroe. In European Journal of Cultural Studies 13 (3) 291-306.
6 http://www.ubu.com/film/pindell_free.html

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The Work of Art
From Fetish to Forum

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Abstract
The modern idea of art has been in place for about two centuries. It has concurred with two other features of modernity: that of developed capitalist economy, and that of the new democratic public sphere. This article explores some of the relationships between art, capitalism and democracy. It argues that the notion of art heralded by modern aesthetic theories mainly hinges on the epistemic form of the commodity, highlighting the interaction between a producer, a product and a consumer. A different theorizing of the work of art could, however, depart not from the market place of commodities, but from the public forum for democratic deliberation. This alternative foundation of aesthetics is delineated on the basis of the anthropological idea of the ritual and its instantiation in contemporary theories of performativity, where the work of art is seen as an affordance for social encounters as well as for individual contemplation.

Keywords aesthetics, performativity, ritual, infrastructure, democracy.

Aesthetics
Studies of works of art are mostly divided, according to the twin meanings of the notion of "work" itself, between studying the arte-

facts produced by the artist, the works-as-things, and studying the ways in which artworks work, how they affect their recipients, or, in other words, the work-as-agency. In the aesthetic disciplines, we have a rich vocabulary about how works of art are made and about the techniques of composition that have gone into their making. And we have a somewhat less developed, but still quite far-reaching understanding of the aesthetics of their reception, how they affect their recipients, how they are encountered, appreciated and used in (historically significant) different ways, how they educate our senses and eventually how they sometimes enable us to look at the world differently by aligning our attention with the mode of experience they convey.

Likewise, we are well accustomed to consider the relation that exists between these two aspects of the work of art: between how it is made and how it impinges on our senses, between its form and its effects, or, in phenomenological parlance, between its noematic and noetic aspects. We know that an implied mode of reception is already built into the form of the aesthetic object, and inversely that the responsiveness to its formal features depends on the kind of intentionality with which the work is experienced. This loop between the work of art and its reception, between the work and its work, has eventually become a hermeneutic certainty in the contemporary understanding of artworks and of how art works. Arguably, this twofold take on the work of art is one of the particularities of the modern *regime* of art, what Jacques Rancière has baptized the "aesthetic" regime, in distinction to a classical, "poetic" understanding of art. The latter involved a discourse on art mainly targeting the objects of artistic representation and the rules pertaining to the proper confection of such representations – a poetics for proper images of proper objects. Under the aesthetic regime, in contrast, the interest in the represented object is attenuated, and the critical attention shifts from the relation that exists between motif and work to the one between work and beholder. Poetics is about making artful representations of dignified objects, whereas aesthetics is about making art objects that can be appreciated by its beholders. The poetic relation hinges on a mechanism of representation, whereas the aesthetic relation hinges on a mechanism of affect.

The canonical modern aesthetic theories are all invested with the double task of not only acknowledging the rules of art displayed in

artworks, but furthermore also understanding how they concur in the production of a specific aesthetic experience. This interdependence between the work as an object and the ways it works in the experience of individual subjects is a core piece in Kant's notion of the aesthetic reflective judgement, as well as in Schiller's idea of productive imagination and in Hegel's notion of aesthetic cognition. Since the romantic period, artworks have been theorized (and indeed identified) on the basis of their belonging and adherence to the field of art, i.e. not simply by way of the qualities of their confection, but by way of their *function* within the particular social sphere henceforth labelled as the aesthetic. In the modern regime of art, thus, as argued by Morten Kyndrup, art and aesthetics have become inseparably twinned notions where the nascent discourse of aesthetics was occupied by delineating and defining an area specific to art (as a collective singular, generic and medial differences notwithstanding), and where the arts on the other hand would now cater for this new field and provide it with actual instantiations, works of this thing called "art".

Throughout modernity, the work of art, in both senses indicated above, have fulfilled specific functions within the institutional machinery of the aesthetic "regime." Individual artworks and cultures of aesthetic experience have concurred in consolidating a sphere of art, differentiated from other societal spheres and gradually developing into a singular expert culture based on artistic craftsmanship, aesthetic connoisseurship, and a rich discourse on the specific forms of sensibility and cognition that pertain to the aesthetic. This art-system is a peculiar civilizational edifice, comparable to the systems of science, technology, and politics, and as such a token of the power of modernity's differentiation of rationalities, as described by Jürgen Habermas, or the disciplinary partition of the world, as described by Michel Foucault.

Commodities

When we consider art as a societal system, as an institutionally afforded framework for the production, distribution and consumption of works that work on their recipients in a specific way, one thing actually stands out as peculiarly characteristic for the entire set-up, namely that the blueprint of this system, all its whims and beauties included, is modelled on the dominant social form of its

era, that of the commodity. One thing is, of course, that when art became art in its modern sense, it did so by entering the market place of buyers and sellers with the artist in a new role as a producer, rather than being a supplier in the feudal economy of premodern art. The artwork, in its modern guise, is indeed a commodity in a specialized market. But moreover, and perhaps less of a truism, also our aesthetic categories interestingly comply with this logic, understanding the work of art as a peculiar product and the aesthetic relation, the work of this work, as a similarly peculiar mode of consumption; in other words, an encounter of a producer and a consumer facilitated by the market place. Again, it is perhaps not striking that art, in its modern aesthetic form, is modelled on the template of the commodity; the commodity is, after all, as Marx once had it, a "real abstraction" emerging from the way in which production is organised, and corollary how a mode of production organises our social being. Art comes to us packaged as a thing that can circulate in a market (or packaged in a way that attempts to defy this predicament), and we take interest in art as something we consume in delicate ways, including the exquisite mode of non-consuming baptized by Kant as a non-interested interest.

The question is not, then, whether a structural homology exists between the form of the commodity and that which we call "art"; neither is there any doubt that the commodity form has immensely afforded the development of art and the import of art in the modern age: complying with the commodity form has not been a prison house for art; rather, it has given it wings. Being confined to the formal mode of existence of the commodity has moreover been a condition that artworks have reflected in their being, using the very form to reach beyond it – showing this is one of the most important achievements of Theodor Adorno's aesthetics.

One of the instances, however, where we might need to go back and reflect on the commodity form as a mostly unacknowledged template for our understanding of art, is precisely when it comes to our conceptualization of the agency of art. Agency of objects, when considered according to the logic of the commodity, inevitably seems to take the guise of the process that brings a product to the market place where its value is assessed, and from there on to the feast of its consumption, the trading of its exchange value for use value, whether satisfactory or not. According to this model, we are

constrained to consider art's agency as the experience the artwork provides for the recipient, its service to the consumer, as it were. Again, we have every reason to appreciate the rich array of aesthetic theories that originate from this model; it stands at the origin of our knowledge of how the artwork defies our understanding, reforms our outlook, incites our imagination, refreshes our senses, affects our bodies, and much more. But within this framework, understanding art's agency will invariably remain constricted to a small array of pre-determined formats modelled on the commodity form according to which a product impacts on us, touches us, transforms us as we engage in consuming it. The insights that stem from this analytical approach remain valid and indeed relevant, almost per default, as they concur in the mode of being of artworks throughout our modern age. But they should not, on the other hand, a priori obfuscate other qualities pertaining to the agency of artworks and artistic practices.

Rituals

One aesthetic approach that has actually attempted at breaking away from this itinerary of the commodity logic can be found in the recent upsurge in theories of the performative. Originally developed with reference to the theatrical event, theories of the performative aim to shift the focus from aesthetic consumption to aesthetic participation, and from the work of art as an object to the work of art as something that happens between bodies in a singular (and singularly staged) situation. The performative, in this view, doesn't take place as a "reception" of an artwork, but comes about as co-presence and co-creation, and consequently also leaves the traditional hermeneutics behind, not looking for a "meaning" or a "message" encoded in the artwork to be extricated by an effort of interpretive wit, but for the eventual advent of meaningfulness through the collective process of the performative event.

The agency of art, here, does not come about through the consumption of a work, in the encounter of a subject and an object, but through the organisation of social relations and the event of their singular instantiation. This performative approach, however, has quite naturally been restricted mostly to the "live" art forms where there is no clear-cut distinction between the artwork and its taking-place, theatre, music, and the protean genre of the performance that

has ramified explosively throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. But it has also been available, as demonstrated by Erika Fischer-Lichte and Judith Butler, to describe and understand a range of cultural phenomena ranging from the European fascist mass mobilisations to contemporary moments of protest. There is, in other words, an aesthetics of the performative that differs structurally from the mainstream aesthetics developed within the art institution since its inception in the late eighteenth century by adhering less to the form of the commodity than to the form of the *ritual*.

This alternative aesthetics, based on the event and the being-together peculiar to the performative situation, has proved remarkably useful to gauge and understand a culture that has itself become increasingly real-time based in its expressions and interactive in its forms. And it has accompanied, moreover, a similar orientation in the arts, the continuous increase in artistic forms which crystallize into social events and intervene in the fabric of the social. The performative, by this way, has eventually become not just a hallmark for a specific kind of art that unfolds in time at specific places, but a dimension of art retaining interest throughout a broad variety of artistic creation, from gallery shows to poetry readings, from public art installations to interactive video, and so on. Thus, put differently, the performative is being thoroughly deployed and experimented in contemporary art, in what seems to be a common interest in an aesthetics mode that works differently from the inherited aesthetic paradigms and perhaps invites to unearth new, performative dimensions of literature, architecture, painting and other not natively performative art forms.

This new awareness of a different aesthetic dimension, signaled by the ubiquitous claim to a "performative turn," appears also as an invitation to rethink the trajectory of the art-object beyond the commodity form from which it originated. To think of the agency of art no longer in terms of individual consumption (whether in guise of contemplation or arousal, interpretation or affective response) but in terms of how it becomes the medium for a different encounter and enters into the production of social situations. From an aesthetics of reception to an aesthetics of ritual.

We owe to Erika Fischer-Lichte to have demonstrated the fecundity of the anthropological notion of the ritual for purposes of understanding the new performative aesthetics. She particularly high-

lights Emile Durkheim's observations on the role of totemic rituals in his lectures on *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* from 1912. There are three salient features in Durkheim's analysis; first, that religious practices recorded by anthropologists in the nineteenth century seem to have a totem or fetish in common, an object representing a deity or an otherwise magical otherness; second, that a group identity is established on the basis of a shared worship articulated through ritual practices, transforming a multitude of individuals into a community; and thirdly that this process has a transformative power, lifting the participant from one state of being to another (the *passage* peculiar to the ritual). Durkheim's sociological interest in these processes puts less emphasis on the actual content of the totemic objects and ritualistic achievements; instead, he wanted to highlight the basic logic of community building inherent in these processes, acknowledging religious and other ritual and magical procedures as techniques for transforming individuals into socially cohesive groups, according to his *credo* that our understanding of societies should start out, not with individuals, but with a web of social relations through which the particular modes of existence of individuals come about.

The aesthetics of the performative, considered as an alternative to the aesthetic discourse of the modern art institution and the logic of the commodity on which it is moulded, thus points our enquiry in two directions. Firstly, it puts forward another source of aesthetic experience at work in our appreciation of art, which has been occulted in the mainstream discourse on art in modernity, shifting our understanding of the mode of attending to art from one of consumption of an object to one of partaking in a ritual. And secondly (consequently, to be sure), it introduces a different scope for the societal role and function of aesthetic experience, not merely an experience of being individually affected by the encounter with an artwork (or some aesthetic objects), but being collectively interpellated and eventually invoked as a part of a communal social organism by way of the ritualistic nature of gathering around this object of attention.

The seminal import of the aesthetics of the performative, then, is that it relocates the question of art's agency from the market place to the social public, from considering an object that impacts on a beholder to considering an object around which a set of social relations emerge, in turn leveraging the eventual coming into being of

something like a subjective stance. The "performative turn," often enough announced as another paradigm shift in the humanities, surely designates a certain trend towards a shift of expressive strategy in contemporary art, as well as a new research direction in the study of culture; but it also, and perhaps more importantly, provides us with a hint of a new agenda for the understanding of the *function* of art in social life, a different archaeology of what art is for and why art is – namely a site of a community-building around objects and events.

Fora

Art in its modern form is not a totemic object, and the collective art encounter is not a magical or religious ritual. Neither should we expect art to maintain the same tasks that were assured by religious rituals in "primitive" societies described by nineteenth century anthropologists. We are not attempting to portray art as a secular version of religious faith or of magical thinking. But the *formal* characteristics of these practices none the less provide a useful model to describe some features of the societal mode of existence of the work of art.

The two-pronged formal logic of the ritual, according to which a group of individuals first agree on conferring a specific power on an object, and then secondly experience the formation of a social bond as they gather around this object, has recently been re-issued, no longer as a specifically religious phenomenon, but as a blueprint for the democratic assembly. Bruno Latour, in his essay "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik," has suggested to describe the twofold process as the social instituting of what he calls a *matter of concern*. This formula, by way of an elegant swap of grammatical case, can be read in two interrelated ways: we can consider how the (fetishist) matter is being defined by the concern of those assembled, and we can consider how this piece of matter can (ritualistically) unite those assembled in a common concern. To Latour, the social logic of the "matter of concern" reveals a crucial feature of communal life. Living together demands that we identify the matters that concern us, and that we secondly agree to organise our lives according to whatever the respect for these matters of concern allows for. Living together as consensus about the stakes and constraints of our living conditions, and as acceptance to acknowledge the stakes and re-

spect the constraints. This would be something like an updated, contemporary version of the anthropologist's view of the advent of social order through the ritual. If Latour thus seems to take the anthropological model of the ritual to a more general level as a basic operational formula for democracy, I would like in return to exploit this general "post-ritualistic" model of matters of concern to better understand the agency of art beyond the commodity's trajectory from production to consumption.

Art's mode of being is social: it exists where it meets the world. This is a shared condition for any artistic expression – medium, genre and form notwithstanding. There is no art which is not in some way or other an address, a showing of something to somebody. This address has been framed by the commodity logic as an intimate encounter, the communion of lonely souls that have found each other in the market place, "hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère," as Baudelaire had it in his dedication to the reader of *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1857. But in fact, the artwork doesn't have one addressee, it has many – any, really. And as I recognize myself as an addressee, I am similarly a part of a "we", a we consisting of singular individuals who have in common that we have accepted the address of an artwork. It might be customary to look at this "we" as a purely additive set of individuals who each make their unique experience of the work through their individual encounters. But if we refrain, again, from recurring to the default model of the commodity, we could instead claim that as addressees – as beholders, readers, listeners, users – we are from the outset parts of a community, sharing the role as addressees, sharing an attention towards the address. In this sense, a community is already somehow prefigured by the very existence of an artwork which is being exposed to a public. This public consists of a batch of people who have been more or less contingently brought together, and who are implicitly challenged to try and find out, *what* this community actually is about. Interacting with art is to participate in potential or actual communities. Understanding art as an address, then, can invite us to conceive of the addressee not only as the perennial individual consumer, but as a *forum* of individuals who share the response to the address.

A forum is the place of a gathering; historically, it has references both to the market place where people gather to exchange products

of their making, and to the democratic assemblage where common concerns are debated. In both cases, however, the properties of the place itself are of less importance than is what actually takes place there, the event of the gathering and the exchanges that are being made. Moreover, a forum is a place to seek out if you have a specific business to see to, it is a place of passage rather than of dwelling. These two qualities of the forum, its manifestation through the occurrence of an event, and the contingency of its attendance, also characterize the communities that emerge around artworks. The claim, then, as an alternative and a supplement to the description of the aesthetic relation between the artwork and the beholder, is that a forum comes into being each time an artwork articulates an experience to a public and somebody accepts this invitation, thus sharing an effort to take in this experience. We might not eventually accept the offer, and we might not develop that which we have shared in common. But even if we don't, we will nonetheless experience how the work in question inaugurates a forum where I have a concern in common with others in the same situation, whether it is an encounter in real time, like a concert or a theatre representation, an interaction in a specific space, like an exhibition show or a public intervention, or indeed a distributed experience shared between those of us who have read the same book, seen the same movie, contemplated an identical object.

The agency of art here discloses features that do not transpire when we focus only on the customary itinerary from artist to beholder, from producer to consumer. Widening the focus, we will see that the very presentation of a work of art inaugurates a forum composed by those who share the experience of considering themselves as addressees of what is presented, and that the set of their individual relations to the artwork also instantiates a set of relations *between them*. They are related by way of being responsive to the same address, by letting themselves be affected, and by being in a situation where they can potentially engage in a negotiation of the import of this affect. The peculiar nature of the forum of the artwork thus hinges on the fact that the relation between its participants is reinforced by a bi-directional interaction: they are put into a relation to each other by gathering around the work of art (again, figuratively speaking, ranging from attending a live event together to ordering a book on Amazon…), and they are put into relation to

each other by letting themselves be affected by the work, sharing this way of being exposed.

The fora of art distinguish themselves from other gatherings and assemblies of people with common interests precisely by way of this bi-directional mechanism. When gathering in a common cause or with a common interest, the nature of the community is already given in advance by the nature of the concern as something that should be pursued in common. Here, the relation to the concern is uni-directional, that which we share and which in turn binds us together. In the case of the artwork, in contrast, the content of the concern remains in suspense; we might gather due to a shared interest in "art", but we don't know what will result from making ourselves susceptible to the address to which we are exposing us. Or put differently: we contend to being affected, but we don't know how the affect will – precisely – affect us. And this is when the anthropological model of the ritual comes to its full deployment as we give it over to the object of concern around which we gather to define, on its part, the nature of the community thus established.

If the forum of art is different from other communities, it comes back to the indeterminacy of the promise that makes us attend to art in the first place. We gather around art because we expect to be affected – pleased, entertained, shocked, enlightened – because we expect to be moved, in a sentimental as well as in an epistemological sense. What we take from art is produced by way of an experience, that is, we do not only contemplate an object, but also contemplate the repercussion of this object in our own sensorium. It is a major point in modern aesthetics that runs from Kant's *Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck* to Adorno's *begrifflose Erkenntnis* that art produces an experience through which we submit to being subjected to a transformation whose terms we are only partly in control of. The nature of this experience, however, presents itself differently at the two levels of analysis: that of the individual, intimate encounter, and that of an address to a potential forum. On the first level, we have a set of descriptions taking their departure in a phenomenology of consciousness to elucidate the processing of aesthetic experience. On the second level, the question of experience – that is, how to recognize that which is presented to you – becomes a collective one as well. If something happens to you on the individual level of aesthetic experience, the public address to a forum additionally

launches a question of how that which happens to you can become a common concern. Who are we, this assemblage of individuals who are being affected by the work of art? How do we recognize ourselves in that which is presented to us?

A forum of art thus distinguishes itself from gatherings based on common interests in that it is not identitarian, convoking militants of established positions. The forum works the other way around, not assembling people on the basis of who they are, but assembling people around a *question* of who they are. Or put differently, not a set based on some contingent genre, but a contingent set in search of a that common genre that would result from being addressed by a work of art.

Democracy

In the modern *regime* of art, the contours of a specific aesthetic relation between the work of art and its beholder emerge in homology with the commodity form that is becoming the matrix for art when it is no longer produced on request, but for the market. And by the same token, art is no longer deposited to and framed by representative publics such as the church or the royal and mercantile powers that be, bequeathed to adorn their sovereignty. When art enters into the market place, it also enters into a new public sphere where it addresses not only its potential customers, but also the contingent fora that make out its publics. The thrust of art under the auspices of its modern regime has two wings, that of the market place, and that of the public sphere. Out notion of the agency of art, however, comes out very differently depending on which of the two contexts we emphasize. In the first context, which seems to be the one that has most powerfully fueled our modern aesthetic categories, we study the consumption of the fetishized commodity and the drama of individual human consciousness it entails, whereas in the other, we get a glimpse of a peculiar democratic function of art by way of the fora it concatenates in the emerging public sphere. Moreover, and this is perhaps a point that has not been theorized sufficiently, these two tenets interlock in a specific way. It is thus not enough to affirm that artworks are objects to aesthetic experience and that they create new publics of interested citizens, respectively. What is important is that they confer the reflective judgement pertaining to the aesthetic relation on the social fora they convoke.

This mechanism of collective interpellation enacted by the work of art evokes another feature which was highlighted by Durkheim in his sociology of religion, the collective production of self-fashioning ideas: "A society is not constituted simply by the mass of individuals who comprise it, the ground they occupy, the things they use, or the movements they make, but above all the idea it has of itself." (Durkheim, 425) In addition to the function of the ritual that it produces a basic sense of communality where members of a society can "reaffirm in common their sentiments" (429), it importantly does so by presenting society with *images of itself*, providing representations suggesting "[how] individuals imagine the society of which they are members and the obscure yet intimate relations they have with it." (227) This is the (indeed secular) function of the forum of art: that it frames the way artworks affect us in guise of a question of how we can recognize ourselves as a society, once we delve into the self-fashioning prompted by the aesthetic experience.

In parallel to the way in which art works on the level of the individual aesthetic experience, its "aesthetic agency," it also works on the level of the forum of art, submitting the affect of the art encounter to a collective negotiation of a social self-image, thus what we could call its "democratic agency." As magisterially formulated by Rousseau, democracy delicately requires the individual to give itself over to the community which, on the other hand, only exists by way of this transferral of sovereignty; the individual subject needs to abdicate in order only to re-emerge at itself, as a social subject (see Rebentisch, 308-11). Democracy implies this chiastic metabolism between the individual and the community, the individual disappearing into the community which in turn empowers the individual to become what it is. Along the same lines, Jacques Rancière poignantly remarks that "politics cannot be defined on the basis of any pre-existing subject," and that democracy, thus, "is not a relationship between subjects, but one between two contradictory terms through which a subject is defined." (Rancière 2010, 36)

It is indeed questionable whether such an idea of democracy is thriving in the contemporary context of spectacular politics, aggressive identity politics and ramifying "echo-chamber"-communities. Interestingly, though, the fora of art actually retain some qualities of this genuinely democratic structure by offering the means of a collective self-fashioning based on the shared experience of an altered

perception of oneself. "There is no doubt," Durkheim quips, "that society sometimes hesitates over the manner in which it must conceive itself." (425) Aesthetic experience provides this hesitation with an expression, an affect that needs to be accommodated, which is in turn given over to a forum and its potential musings on the qualities of the "we" it entails. The work of art challenges our everyday social self-perception; however much of a truism, this remains a prime feature of art under the aesthetic regime. But in addition, we need to recognize that the forum of art invites a collective self-determination on the basis of being subjected to this challenge. The forum is a social infrastructure in which art is being put to work. And this work is political, not in the sense of advocacy or militating, or not necessarily so, but in the sense of affording an exercise in democratic deliberation and social self-fashioning. To develop this understanding of the agency of art, the work of art as an indispensable infrastructure for maintaining a democratic public sphere, is an urgent matter for a contemporary aesthetics.

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How is an Art Work an Agent?

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Abstract

A brief reflection on recent theories of art works as agents and a response to the essays published in this issue.

Keywords actor-network-theory, art, agency, Bruno Latour, Alfred Gell

Only a few years ago, a journal issue devoted to the agency of art works would have been regarded as utterly retrograde – a lapse into the worst kind of idealism. After all, it had been definitively established that a text is formed in, by, and through its contexts. The task of the critic was to show, via acts of interpretation and critique, how historical and cultural forces bring an art work into being. Traditional formalist methods had focused on the words on the page or the composition of a painting, taking as self-evident the intrinsic value and meaning of a work of art. According to the critical theories that held sway in the humanities over the last four decades, however, there is no unmediated encounter with the work itself; a text *has* no intrinsic value or meaning. Rather-- so the mantra went-- every interpretation of an artwork presupposes a theory.

These claims – confidently parlayed in seminars and conference papers, enshrined in numerous primers and introductions to theo-

ry – have now come to seem far less self-evident. Objections have been mounted from several directions. The much noted "return to beauty," initiated by Dave Hickey and pursued by Elaine Scarry, Alexander Nehamas, and many others, was an early expression of discontent. A one-sided stress on political interpretation and historical context, these critics charged, had lost sight of the sensory and pleasure-oriented aspects of aesthetic experience – the persisting desire for beauty could not be waved away, in Frankfurt School fashion, as nothing more than a retrograde love of kitsch. The rise of "affect studies" dealt another blow to the sovereignty of critical reading. Encounters with art works bring into play a dense swirl of emotions, moods, and sensations that prevailing academic techniques of deciphering or deconstructing are poorly equipped to address. Other frameworks grouped together under the broad rubric of "the new materialism" point to certain qualities of art works – their physical properties, sensory force, presence, and sheer recalcitrance – as exceeding or escaping the explanatory schemas of language and text. In short, we are seeing a growing sense of the limits of cognitive and interpretative approaches to works of art, as well as of standard forms of causal and contextual explanations.

Above all, it is the joint influence of Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency* and actor-network theory that speaks directly to the theme of this special issue. Approaching art as an anthropologist rather than an art historian, Gell is deeply interested in the question of how art of all kinds (Western and non-Western; tribal and avant-garde) has an impact on the world. "I view art as a system of action," he writes, 'intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it" (Gell 1998: 6). How do works of art succeed in captivating, fascinating, and entrapping spectators? What are their links to magic, enchantment, and power? Anthropomorphism, Gell suggests, is an inescapable aspect of thought: we cannot help treating art works as quasi-persons, equipped with intentions and desires, while the distinctions between human agency and the agency of art works are less clear-cut than critical theories have assumed. *Art and Agency* is a pivotal text in its emphasis on the affective force of artworks and the relational dynamics of art – one whose influence is increasingly being felt in fields ranging from art history to visual studies to cultural sociology. (See also the essay by Jochum and Putnam.)

Meanwhile Bruno Latour, riffing off Rem Koolhaas, has famously charged that "context stinks" (Latour 2005: 148); that standard models of historical and social explanation are disastrously reductive. History is not a series of stacked temporal containers (i.e., historical periods) in which objects are held fast, like flies trapped in amber; meanwhile there is no such thing as "society," defined as a monolithic mega-agent imposing its will by imperiously dictating the course of events behind the scenes. Instead of conceiving of an all-embracing yet amorphous "context" that encases and explains the meaning of a "text," we need to trace out the thick web of interactions between various human and non-human actors among whom agency is distributed. What kinds of connections exist between art and other phenomena? How are artistic networks created and how do they extend and increase their influence? As a way of thinking premised on ties and attachments, actor-network-theory rejects any strong idea of artistic autonomy. Even the most defiantly transgressive of art works is entangled with countless other phenomena: exhibition spaces and other institutional or para-institutional structures; advertisements, reviews, and other forms of dissemination; the desires, dislikes, and whims of audiences, whether large or small; coteries of like-minded artists, curators, reviewers. And yet the art work also plays a distinct part; it possesses its own reality, which is irreducible to economic, political, psychological or other forms of explanation. "A work of art *engages* us," Latour writes, "and if it is quite true that it has to be interpreted, at no point do we have the feeling that we are free to do 'whatever we want' with it . . . Someone who says 'I love Bach' . . . receives from Bach,we might almost say 'downloads' from Bach, the wherewithal to appreciate him" (Latour 2013: 241) Thinking of art works as non-human actors allows us to engage both their distinctive forms of agency and their entanglement with many other worldly phenomena.

The essays in this issue speak to these concerns in various ways. Elizabeth Jochum and Lance Putnam ask: how are new technologies transforming the relations between art work and audience? Their concern with what an art work *does* rather than what it *is* connects to a tradition of pragmatist aesthetics stretching from John Dewey to Richard Shusterman. As they show through the analysis of two salient examples, computer-generated and robotic art alter the qualities of aesthetic experience by allowing for new forms of

interactivity; yet their stress on interaction and relation, motion and emotion, has broader relevance for thinking about art works. Materiality is a key word in the essay, as in the issue as a whole. But what does it mean, exactly, to talk about the materiality of an art work? Are we talking about physical presence, as manifest in time and space: its concrete, demonstrable "thereness"? Or is something else at stake? Technologies of musical reproduction, as Steen Ledet Christiansen points out, shape what we hear and how we hear it. And yet, as he shows via an analysis of the album *Dark Knights of the Soul*, older technologies may continue to manifest themselves in the form of "ghost effects" that are registered as untimely and hence uncanny. Matter would thus seem to be distinct and yet also very hard to separate from mediation. Related issues crop up in the medium of literature; Beate Schirrmacher's analysis of works by Gunther Grass and Elfriede Jelinek. Both authors, she observes, do not only draw on metaphors, but also materialize metaphors in distinct ways. As a result, their writings achieve an unusually vivid effect of actuality or "realness." Performance and presence are not opposed but connected; art's force is not attenuated by mediation, but made possible by mediation.

The performative aspects of language are also picked up in Jens Kirk's account of Robert MacFarlane's *Landmarks* as a striking example of the "post-pastoral" genre. Placing his analysis in dialog with recent accounts of awe and enchantment, Kirk draws out MacFarlane's interest in using language as an act of "counter-desecration" to revivify our sense of the natural world. Questions of agency come to the fore insofar as books "have the power to resist assimilation by the reader and force us to accommodate." Enchantment speaks to both the phenomenology and the sociology of art, to individual experiences of being enthralled, captivated, and spellbound as well as larger questions about the extent to which modernity has ushered in a secular and disenchanted world (Felski 2008).

We see a related interest in attunement, atmosphere, and mood in contemporary thinking about art, highlighting the ambiguous relations between affect and agency. In contrast to what we might call container theories of the emotions – a person having an *inner* feeling about an *external* object – such language blurs divisions between subject and object, self and world. Demarcations are fuzzy, causalities uncertain: do I have a mood or am I in a mood? Where

do atmospheres come from? Why I am attuned to one piece of music and not to another that might seem, on first hearing, to be quite similar? Some of these issues are also picked up by Kim Moller in his discussion of experiences of looking at paintings. Combining phenomenology with neuroscience, he shows how preconscious frameworks of feeling shape aesthetic response in ways that we cannot fully register or control. These frameworks, in his apt metaphor, are "the boat we did not get to choose but still have to use when we try to navigate in the rough sea of a painting's interpretational possibilities." There is a related interest in combining humanistic and scientific frameworks in Anders Bonde and Birger Larsen's essay on the impact of advertising images. Combining semiotic analysis with physiological measurement of audience response (such as eye-tracking), they argue that such hybrid methods can enrich our understanding of the attentional and affective dimensions of aesthetic experience.

Meanwhile, in her vivid description of a contemporary Danish play exploring European anxieties about Syrian refugees, Birgit Eriksson draws explicit connections between aesthetic feelings and obstructed agency. Christian Lollike's *Living Dead* purposefully steers clear of empathy and feel-good rhetoric about humanitarian ideals in order to elicit feelings of unease and confusion in its audience. Through these strategies of emotional contagion and affective disorientation, Lollike argues, the demarcations between actors and audience, between refugees and righteous helpers are called into question. Liani Lochner also tackles the relations between affect and language. She draws on Derek Attridge's ideas about the singularity of literature to reflect on her response to Zoe Wicomb's *October,* combining an extended reading of the novel via themes of home and belonging with reference to her emotionally unsettled response. And Jodie Childers describes, in moving detail, the creativity of four individuals incarcerated in mental asylums during the early part of the twentieth century. Appropriating and reworking the found materials of the institution – hospital ledger paper, flattened paper cups, examining table cover sheets, broken spoon handles – hey were able to create extraordinary art works in conditions of severe deprivation and isolation.

Finally, I was especially intrigued by Katalin Halasz's essay, which blends a striking account of a video performance with some

broader reflections on the relations between art and sociology. I am old enough to remember previous attempts to aestheticize sociological thought, such as Ann Game and Andrew Metcalfe's call for a "passionate sociology" and Andrew Abottt's manifesto for a "lyrical sociology." And yet such efforts seem to have made little dent on the mainstream of the discipline, which is becoming, especially in the United States, increasingly quantitative in its methods and ever plodding in its prose. Meanwhile, feminist theory is not immune to this trend toward ever drier styles of argument, larded with a highly technical vocabulary and excess of footnotes. In such a context, Halasz's visual meditation on the connotations of white femininity offers a suggestive alternative: one that may reach audiences uninterested in academic debates about intersectionality and that is less interested in critique that in composing new forms of relationality and affective response.

As these essays indicate, much of the innovative thinking about art is currently being done in the interstices of disciplines. The new inquiries into artistic agency, for example, are not coming, by and large, from aesthetes and litterateurs bent on safeguarding the autonomy of the art work. Rather, we are talking about a fundamentally interdisciplinary enterprise, whether we are thinking of art and anthropology (Gell); new work in cultural sociology (Benzecry, 2011; de la Fuente 2010); or even connections between art and religious studies. What these inquiries share is a conviction that the agency of art works does not separate them from the world, but connects them to the world; art is not just *against*, but also *with*. Agency is co-produced, rather than a solitary achievement. In the last few decades, bonds have often been associated with coercion and control; literature can only be valued, it seems if it can be shown to break bonds and rupture connections. What this new work offers is a more multi-faceted view of connections; not just as constraints, but also as sources of strength, and indeed as indispensable conditions of existence. In short, we are seeing a shift of emphasis from negative aesthetics to relational ontologies.

And here the work of the French cultural sociologist Antoine Hennion would seem especially pertinent to a number of the themes explored in this special issue. Via detailed analyses of the practices of art lovers, music fans, wine tasters, Hennion (2004; 2015; 2016) draws out the patterned yet also unpredictable ways in which

tastes are formed and passions are created. Deeply attentive to both mood and materiality, to what art works do and why we come to care about them, he is a discerning guide to the richness and thickness of our attachments. As both Hennion and Latour insist, agency is not a zero-sum game; a matter of stressing either social determination or the resistive and iconoclastic power of the art work. Rather, it is a matter of tracing out how the force and impact of art works are coproduced. Relations are not just modes of regulation or encroachment, but inescapable conditions of being. In short, attachment and mediation, as this wide-ranging collection of essays amply confirms, are not obstacles to art's agency but essential preconditions of agency.

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