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Julien Mercier is a graphic and type designer, engaged in research within his field. His endeavors often qualify as a post-studio artistic practice, collaborating with remote facilities across the globe.



OXFORD  
ARTISTIC AND PRACTICE BASED  
RESEARCH PLATFORM

## Issue Zero, Oct. 2016 *Response*

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Abstracts for submissions (approx. 300 words) should be sent to [editors@oarplatform.com](mailto:editors@oarplatform.com) and may propose either a response to this issue or a contribution for future issues. A more detailed call for responses and submissions can be found on the final page of this issue.

This PDF document contains audio files and is optimised for Acrobat Reader.

# Contents

	Cover – <i>Impossible Knowledge</i>	Julien Mercier
4	Introduction – <i>On Having the First Line Written</i>	The Editors
7	<i>A Transcription of Adrian Rifkin’s ‘On Writing the Last Line First (One of Three Possible Titles)’</i>	Adrian Rifkin
7	Transcribed by Yuval Etgar (00.00 – 08.00)	
9	Transcribed by Naomi Vogt (08.00 – 18.00)	
13	Transcribed by Anita Paz (17.00 – 27.00)	
15	Transcribed by Nina Wakeford (26.00 – 34.00)	
18	Transcribed by Jessyca Hutchens (34.00 – 45.00)	
20	Transcribed by Nina Wakeford on behalf of Joseph Noonan-Ganley (44.00 – 56.53)	
24	<i>Seeing First and Then Still: Art Historians and Objects</i>	Naomi Vogt
30	<i>Setting Out</i>	Anita Paz
36	<i>Rifkin’s Dossier for Lost Documents</i>	Jessyca Hutchens
41	<i>Hearing the Sound of One’s Voice</i>	Nina Wakeford
43	<i>A Certain Logic of Expectations</i>	Arturo Soto
50	<i>Enunciating Film – A Response to ‘On Writing the Last Line First’ in the Form of a Film Program</i>	Dimitri de Preux & Anna Tarassachvili
54	<i>This is the point for practice based research; If one is possessed by clarity, one is doomed</i>	Adrian Rifkin
55	<i>Call for Responses</i>	

This pdf contains hyperlinks. You can click on titles to go directly to the contribution’s page. You can go back to this content page at any time, by clicking on the bottom link navigation.



# Introduction – On Having The First Line Written

Jessyca Hutchens, Anita Paz, Naomi Vogt & Nina Wakeford

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In 2014, a group of us at the Ruskin School of Art (the Ruskin) – the Fine Art Department of the University of Oxford – began a set of conversations which have resulted in O A R: the Oxford Artistic and Practice Based Research Platform. Drawing on our experiences of academic research in contemporary art and its institutional manifestations, O A R is a collaborative project which brings together our different alignments in art history, theory, philosophy, and the making of art works.

O A R began as a way to find productive focus for the ways in which 'artistic research' and 'practice based research' have been mobilized in many educational institutions to offer designated forms of research greater voice or status. At the core of O A R is our hope that researchers from a wide range of backgrounds might be given space to pay more attention to the specificities of the knowledge and experiences generated through such methodologies, from whatever discipline they approach them.

Although the discussion and promotion of artistic research seems to have reached fever pitch in the academic art field, we nevertheless felt a place for broader critical interrogation was lacking. Despite optimism over the interdisciplinary potential of artistic research, it has remained largely only a buzzword in disciplines outside of fine arts, not yet accepted as a unique epistemological category or rigorous mode of research. Perhaps these are not inevitable or desirable destinies, but where were such questions being played out, and answers accumulating? As researchers with interests in other disciplines (philosophy, visual anthropology, cultural studies and so on) and yet being committed to contemporary art research, we were particularly interested in how these other disciplines conceived of practice in their research and were understanding or coming to adopt artistic methods.

We also wanted to take advantage of the infrastructure of Oxford University, at which the collegiate system encourages extensive connection to academic researchers outside of immediate schools and faculties, to produce an arena that would convene artistic practices occurring across different disciplines and research areas. Thus came the idea to create a journal of artistic and practice based research with its initial base at Oxford, both as a way to link together a diverse community of researchers already interested in artistic research at the University, and to encourage others to delve into these frameworks, approaches and methods.

It's also worth noting here that, while artistic research is increasingly recognised as an innovative and dynamic category of research in universities that follow largely Western pedagogical traditions, more holistic approaches to research that utilize artistic practices have long been a part of different educational systems the world over. In the experience of one of our editors, for example, courses taken in Aboriginal History at the University of Western Australia incorporated visual arts, storytelling, visits to important sites, performances, and research papers, as equally valid and important means of investigating Indigenous knowledge and histories. There is nothing new about artistic and practice based research, only its acceptance within particular disciplines and institutional settings. Moreover, we should remain sceptical of artistic research as a neatly distinguishable category from non-artistic forms of research.

When art historian Adrian Rifkin was announced as an upcoming speaker at the Ruskin, the perfect opportunity presented itself to initiate our journal project – which was to be concerned with both the theoretical and practice based aspects of artistic research. Rifkin's presentation at the Ruskin, 'On Writing the Last Line First', might best (or most easily) be described as a performance lecture – a format that has been much explored by contemporary artists – yet Rifkin asserted emphatically during his talk that he was 'not an artist', and used the term 'practice based research' with some scepticism. His assertion meant that we were to take his 'enunciation' not as art but as firmly rooted in the discipline to which he belongs, art history, albeit a form of art history that few of us had ever experienced. In her contribution to this issue, Naomi Vogt likens Rifkin's art history to following a score, transforming the lecture as a whole into an interpretation of objects more similar to a musician's interpretation of sheet music. Considering the role of ekphrasis in art history – together with the role of looking away – she examines ways in which seeing objects, making them visible to others, and making meaning out of them can become fully intertwined.

In the same vein, Rifkin's intervention never becomes a 'careful unfolding of archival research', which he promises not to provide at the outset of his lecture. Jessyca Hutchens uses this promise as a prism to address the expectations of 'revelation' held around research. The seductions, as well as the asymmetries and pitfalls of the archive are woven together in her essay, from the gaps in colonial archives to heroic discoveries of documents, increasingly romanticised with the help of TV and cinema. In his lecture, by intertwining art history, autobiography and fiction, images, performative gestures and spoken words, Rifkin's research was unfolded in non-linear and sometimes obfuscating ways – ways that might sit closer to how research in fact takes pace: its stops and starts, contradictions and revelations, and even its affective potential.

This enunciation served as a starting point, the beginning of an on-going conversation between us, a collaborative process (we each transcribed a section of the recorded performance), and the provocation for a series of individual responses. The concept of 'response' thus forms both the topic and format for this issue. For instance, using a quotation by Rifkin as a starting point, Anita Paz's essay opens a philosophical exploration around the nature of response. Conceptualising the response, exploring its possible modes, means,

and courses, her text develops a larger question around the activation of moments of thinking: how are we to think new thoughts?

Nina Wakeford's contribution to this issue reworks a section of *The Dialogues of the Carmelites* (Poulenc, 1956) to interpret and reanimate the words of Adrian Rifkin. The result is a manipulated image of the score, and a soundwork sung by the artist Hannah C. Jones. Further, in a photography series produced for O A R, Arturo Soto responds to Rifkin in the form of a personal, urban rippling. He selected lines from the lecture, not to illustrate them but as an attempt to find their resonance in the aftermath and broader environment of their presentation: decontextualized, the lines resurface with the experience of Oxford's urban landscape.

In another twofold project, Dimitri de Preux and Anna Tarassachvili respond to Rifkin's film narrations, intended to replace archival and academic rhetoric. Their essay discusses the politics and authority of an enunciation that 'places knowledge into the present'. A film program follows, with a film selection that envisages 'film' as one of the languages spoken by humans. Moreover, the very cover page of the journal responds to the contents in the form of a comic strip conceived by Julien Mercier, the designer of O A R. The work seeks to restore the author's impressions of the lecture, decoding and recoding it in accordance with textual and visual comics tropes. Finally, Adrian Rifkin offers his own thoughts on the issue and some of its underlying themes, such as the iconography of the gasp. This final contribution is published as the sound file of a recorded conversation.

As editors, we thus chose 'response', not only as a means of producing content from the generative ground which Rifkin's performance provided on the topic of artistic research, but because we wished for response to be a central part of all the journal's issues going forward. Rapid responses to journal articles have long been included in the social sciences, but despite enthusiasm for response and collaboration in the humanities, such formats are rarely formally integrated in research publications. The individual researcher, that frequently lone, individualised dweller in the archives, tends to reign supreme as a romantic ideal. Encouraging collaborations and building response into our journal format, we hope not only to form a more integrated research community, but also to extend our journal temporally – to be conscious of not letting individual submissions quickly slip away into the ether of the internet, but to allow our articles and themed issues to continue to accrete and accumulate new knowledge long after their first public release.

Instead of beginning with Issue 1, we launch a prelude, Issue Zero, as an attempt by the current editors of this journal to gesture towards the journal we wish to produce. It is the initial provocation to give the project momentum. We hope each issue will be a prompt or provocation for further content, commentary, response, and debate.

# A Transcription of Adrian Rifkin's 'On Writing the Last Line First (One of Three Possible Titles)'

Adrian Rifkin

To cite this contribution:

Rifkin, Adrian. 'A Transcription of Adrian Rifkin's "On Writing the Last Line First (One of Three Possible Titles)".' Transcribed by Yuval Etgar, Jessyca Hutchens, Anita Paz, Naomi Vogt, and Nina Wakeford. *OAR: The Oxford Artistic and Practice Based Research Journal* Issue 0 (2016): 7-23, <http://www.oarplatform.com/issue/issue-zero/>.

This talk was delivered by Adrian Rifkin on 26 February 2015 at the Ruskin School of Art, The Green Shed, University of Oxford. It has been transcribed by five different audience members (and four editors of this journal) using a video recording of the lecture. All images used are stills from the video recording.

Transcribed by Yuval Etgar (minutes 0.00–8.00)



Justin Coombes: Thank you for coming everybody. A lot of you already know Adrian Rifkin and his ground-breaking work. We're honoured to have him here this afternoon for a short presentation, performance, titled... Adrian?

Adrian Rifkin: What did I say? Yes, 'On Writing the Last Line First'

JC: Yes, you gave me three alternative titles, but I think that was the first.

AR: Let's get to it.

JC: Ok.

AR: Thank you, thank you. Thank you for inviting me, thank you for coming. I should give you a certain amount of explanati.. E-x-p-l-a-n-a-t-i-o-n in this... no let's not. I want you to listen to this song. It's a song by... written after the Second World War actually by a very famous French poet, Pierre Mac Orlan, and sung by a very famous French Chan-teuse, Germaine Montero, and it's called *La Fille de Londres* which means 'the prostitute of London'. I'll explain something to you, I'll explain something to... You deserve some explanations. [pause]. Until... yeah I guess the 1940s, the mythic Chinatown of Europe was in Limehouse. If you read *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that's where the mythic Chinatown

of Europe was, and that's where the worst things happened and the greatest cultural fantasies unfolded, and this is a song written after the war, sung by Germaine Montero, and I suppose I've known it for years and years and years and years, and then you listen to it one day and as you know, you all know, you know this very well, you hear one line rather than another. And the longer you listen to it and the longer it goes on, the more times you listen to it, the more one line replaces another. It's a bit like a kind of virtuality even if it's from long before the invention of the virtual. So I want you to listen to Germaine Montero singing *La Fille de Londres*. It's about a prostitute; she has a Policeman in her room and then he goes and she has a Chinaman in her room. And it's like all those things from that time: it's a bit racist, it's a bit sexist... but... it is, it's a piece of material. In different times and different ways we live differently and we tell ourselves different stories. And I want to tell you, this is not the beginning to my lecture, this is not the beginning, this is just to begin to explain to you how I came to... near to the beginning, and how I came near to the beginning after deciding the last line first. But I have to say that deciding the last line first came very late in the day, so it's a very compressed, very strange relationship between the first line - which was never really uttered - and the last line, which really was, even tha... Should I tell you the last line now? It won't spoil it. I decided... No... Let me explain you the situation, you don't even know the situation yet, the situation is this, the situation is this, before we listen to the song... that I was asked to be a visiting professor at Central Saint Martins school of art and I said yes, that would give me something to do. It's great. Because after I left Goldsmiths I've been doing too much. I said great, this sounds like a good nothing to do, and they said it is a good nothing to do, so I accepted. And I had to give an inaugural lecture, and an inaugural lecture to be a visitor, so I decided to do a lecture on visitation as such. Now visitation is something very very complicated as a subject, so I went away, I like to do research, I still like to. So I did some scholarship, I did some research on the virgin Mary and her aunt, Saint Elizabeth, because when the virgin Mary became pregnant she went to see her aunt to tell her about it, and that's called the Visitation. And her aunt also was pregnant, one was very young and one was very old and they were both pregnant and they met and they touched each other's bodies and it gave rise to a huge religious movement to get out and hand out and hand out and hand thousands of paintings of Elisabeth and Mary in the Visitation, ... a whole religious order called The Sisters of the Visitation which was founded in 1610 by Saint François Xavier [Saint François de Sales] but the Sisters of the Visitation not only got painted in their turn but invented a lot of good cakes called 'Visitandine' which they distributed throughout the world and which they baked. I remember a painting of them baking and photographs of them baking them, and distributing... so the minute you start with this word 'visitation' it's out of hand. I thought of all kinds of visitations; some of which were queer visitations, some which were [xxx] visitations, and I began to realize that for anyone to invite me to be a visitor, it is a terrible risk. It's a risk for the visitor and it's a risk for the visited because between these two words, 'visitor' and 'visitation', there's a very tense relationship about what happens to whom, where. And... I wanted it to be a really beautiful set up with a quotation. On the left hand side of the set up I had a table with a big book on it. And that has... It's a book that I still read bits of now, from time to time I read paper books. I am not very much a virtual person but I read paper... This is a big dictionary, which I couldn't bring today. If you were to see... it's an etymological dictionary in French, it has the word 'Visite', so I thought if I

get stuck I got this big book here on the table and I can go read bits of ‘Visite’ and translate it to the audience when I get lost, when I get stuck. So that was something I thought I would do right from the beginning, that’s before I had the last line. So, but that was a quotation too, that was a good quotation, it was a quotation from the picture I sent round here: *Saint Augustine* by Carpaccio. So it’s a proper talk; it has quotations, even if no one ever sees that quotation I am satisfied, it’s there, there isn’t a footnote but I quoted, and now I am acknowledging to you, if not the last [xxx]. This is a quotation from Carpaccio. And then when I came in I had a whole pile of archives and I threw them all on the floor as if I was in a rage and then I got down on my knees, I’ll do it in a minute, I’ll show you how I did it, I’ll show... I dropped down on my knees and went through these archives and found things to talk about, I didn’t know quite what I could talk about but it turned out that there are all kinds of interesting things in my archives. I visited my archive and it visited me. Visit and Visitation all in one terrible gesture, scrambling ‘round on the floor looking to find... It was quite frightening anyway. And I had a bell, this is the bell [ding ding!]. But I didn’t ring it. I rang it now so this is different from the previous lecture.

Oh... What was I up to. Yes, Visit and Visitation, that is a quotation. And my kneeling on the floor, that was also a quotation. It’s a quotation from a film by the American video artist Vanalyne Green from a film she made called *The House that Ruth Built* where she talks about... made in nineteen eighty one or two. Where she sits on her own, surrounded by baseball memories and papers and photographs and video extracts, and she talks about the relation between the radical feminist article and baseball. And she kneels on the floor amid these archives and talks. And I always admired that video, I admired Vanalyne’s works, so I thought I’d quote this too.

Transcribed by Naomi Vogt (minutes 8.00–18.00)



I thought: ‘I’ll quote that too, I too will get down on my knees and announce the archive and I’ll talk...’ So that’s one of them... Now I can’t remember, I remember I have to tell you something about this now. [*He turns towards the table he is sitting at and lowers his voice. He turns back to face us. Then he cups his face in his hands and raises his voice.*] So I’d done all this research, I’d been doing weeks and weeks of

research, all of which vanishes without technology, all of which has no footnotes, maybe would have appeared as a line, half a line, a quarter of a line [*He brings his hands to his face again, this time as a gesture of worry*] And then I said: ‘Well I know [*He coughs and drinks from a mug*] you may think I’m wrong or I’m crazy but I came up with the last line, and the last line is going to be: “Play it again, Tinker Bell.”’ You may ask: ‘Why “Play it again Tinker

Bell”?” and I’ll try to tell you, but that’s what I decided to do; I want my last line in this piece – even if the piece doesn’t end there, and it didn’t end there, it went on well after the last line, but without me – I want the last line to be that, which as you know is partly a quote, ‘Play it again, Sam’, but now it was Tinker Bell. You all know who Tinker Bell is, or was?

So I wanted it to be a fairy story, so once I decided that my last line would be ‘Play it again, Tinker Bell’, I also wanted it to be a fairy story. But at the same time, a fairy story with two fairies, because there would be Tinker Bell, if I could find her, and there would be me, if I could find me; we would both be fairies. [*He turns towards the table.*] Let me play you that song, I have to play you that song, I need to play you the song – here it is, I get to play it for you. [*He jumps back when the accordion starts playing loudly.*]

Germaine Montero sings:

*Un rat est venu dans ma chambre  
Il a rongé la souricière  
Il a arrêté la pendule  
Et renversé le pot à bière  
Je l’ai pris entre mes bras blancs  
Il était chaud comme un enfant  
Je l’ai bercé bien tendrement  
Et je lui chantais doucement :  
Dors mon rat, mon flic, dors mon vieux Bobby  
Ne siffle pas sur les quais endormis  
Quand je tiendrai la main de mon chéri*

*Un Chinois est sorti de l’ombre  
Un Chinois a regardé Londres  
Sa casquette était de marine  
Ornée d’une ancre coralline  
Devant la porte de Charly  
A Penny Fields, j’ai souri,  
Dans le silence de la nuit  
En chuchotant je lui ai dit :  
Je voudrais je voudrais je n’sais trop quoi  
Je voudrais ne plus entendre ma voix  
J’ai peur j’ai peur de toi j’ai peur de moi (...)*

[*He lowers the sound until the song can no longer be heard.*] Did you hear what she sang? [*He screams*]: DID YOU HEAR IT? She said: ‘I want something, I don’t know what, I want not to hear my voice anymore.’ And then she says some other things too. And that’s what I heard when I heard it a year ago, two years ago. [*He almost whispers and it sounds like an echo*]: that’s what I heard. [*He screams*]: I DON’T WANT TO HEAR MY VOICE ANYMORE! ANY-MORE. DO YOU HEAR ME? And I shouted it to myself, I said: ‘I don’t want to hear my voice anymore, I’ll stop, I’ll stop, I’ll stop speaking.’ I’ve been standing in universities

for 43 years talking, and I'm [*he shouts*]: SICK TO DEATH OF IT! I DON'T like listening to anyone else speak and I don't like listening to myself either.

So I gave up. I gave up and I wrote some very long PowerPoints with lots of images and lots of [*he moves his hands to mimic something that is floating down*] movies and lots of little texts, and exclamations, and this horrible ugly print you get on PowerPoint and I sat with my back to the audience and I played them. And they watched, and all I did was that [*he imitates pressing on a button with his index.*] I didn't want to talk anymore, [*his voice brightens*] I was very happy not to hear my own voice. But it's HARD [*he says this word almost onomatopoeically*], because it's HARD to be tired of your own voice... and at the same time, sometimes it doesn't work, it simply doesn't work. I did one of these PowerPoints and I was being very very silent, very quiet, and very good, and it was a long narrow gallery in Istanbul and I realized no one could read the screen, or that hardly anybody could read the screen. So I started reading the screen, and then when I realized no one could hear me read the screen I started shouting the screen, AND THEN SCREAMING THE SCREEN [*by now he is screaming*]. AND THEN THE SCREEN TOOK OVER because I didn't like what I'd written. So I started shouting at the screen, because it disagreed with me. And then I realized: I didn't have to stop speaking; I had to carry on. I had to carry on, because the point at which what one is constructing – what one wants to say – comes together is very seldom, it doesn't always work like that, you don't always see what you want to see, or write what you want to have written, or read out what you wish you had written, or now would have said – even if it's only half an hour after you've written it.

These things are complicated, and... I thought: 'What would someone else do in these circumstances?' I'm not an artist, I can't do anything I want, I'm just an academic but I'll try, I'll try to take that gesture of what has ludicrously come to be called 'practice based research'. I say now: 'LUDICROUSLY come to be called practice based research'. I'll try and take that gesture from when I learned what it was, from people with whom I first worked; I'll try to train that gesture and put it alongside what it is to be an academic, and that will silence my voice. You won't hear the voice of the lonely researcher; you won't hear the voice of the careful unfolding of the archival research. Now let's hear the end of the [*he turns towards the table, picks up a pile of folders and throws them to the floor, using the sound of them falling to fill the gap in his sentence – THUMP*]... finish. That's the archive, it's a bit of the archive, we can do what we want with it, we can throw it away, we can pick it up, [*he throws a few other folders to the floor: THUD, BAM*]. We can get down on our knees and scabble amongst it, but we may never find a proper footnote. It will be a gesture that brings together the impossibilities of finding, and enunciating, and saying something. So, the last line is going to be: 'Play it again, Tinker Bell'. [*He repeats it in a softer, inquisitive tone*]: 'Play it again, Tinker Bell'. Why would I want to say: 'Play it again, Tinker Bell'?

It has... Well let me tell you a story about myself. It's a story completely about me. I do think I remember – there's no evidence for this by the way, I can't find any evidence. I've been on the Internet, on programmes, I've done research: there is no evidence and what I'm about to say is unverifiable. Even my sister doesn't remember. And she ought to because we were together. Can you imagine... did you know that, talking about ports and East End, that Salford Lancashire was once the Barcelona of Northern Europe? It had a huge inland port, seething with sailors and dirt and sulphur and coal and products from all over the world. [*His tone is now a storytelling tone. He brings his hands to his face in a gesture that seems to say 'Oh my!', but he then leaves his hands near his cheeks in a calm, frozen posture.*] And part of that dockland is now a smart dockland with people living there; and they have these little chains and they turned it into petit bourgeois housing because it sounded indecent – which it was.

And when I was quite a little boy, I probably wasn't fourteen yet, my father was a doctor – he looked after people on these docks. He called me through once, from the front of a boat to the back of the boat and said: 'Would I phone the Manchester Royal Infirmary V.D. Clinic and tell them he had fourteen syphilitic Turkish sailors, and that they needed to be seen straight away!' So, you know, I was a good child, I phoned the Manchester V.D. Clinic, and I said: 'I'm Dr. Rifkin's son', and they said: 'Ah yes, what is it?' and I said: 'He's got fourteen syphilitic Turkish sailors and they're on their way!' And the woman said: 'No no! It's ladies' day!' I said: 'It's too late! They're in taxis now!' And then, very inventive – no, I mustn't flatter myself... Well, they said: 'What should we do?' and I said: 'Put up a screen!' Now that's interesting, because for whom was this screen? Was the screen meant to save the ladies on ladies' day? Was it to save me from my own fantasmatic structures? I mean [*and he brings his hands back to his cheeks*]: f o u r t e e n s a i l o r s ! Syphilitic or not syphilitic, a few years later I would have invested in it quite differently... So you can see something there about living in this density, living in this framework, which is producing a kind of fairy story – in which I'm already this innocent little fairy, who's fluttering around himself, maybe fluttering towards leading the bad fairy, Tinker Bell, to help him in his life.

Now, imagine this in the middle of this seething dockland, this Northern Barcelona. There, there is the Salford Hippodrome. The Salford Hippodrome. And the Salford Hippodrome is a big old fashioned, cavernous, booming, working class music hall, of the kind which we've left. And me and my sister had been taken to see *Peter Pan*, as a Christmas treat. [*At this point, the automatic screen saver is activated and the projector begins to show, on the wall behind Adrian Rifkin, a picture of penguins in a group on a beach.*] *Peter Pan* is played by Margaret Lockwood, a British film star now down on her heels, out of fashion; and she's playing *Peter Pan* in provincial hippodromes. Which for us was a great excitement, but for her I think a great defeat. But nevermind.

At some point, they all think Tinker Bell is lost. [*He rings the little bell twice. The screen saver is now projecting a pink and purple sunset behind a Marula tree.*] And Margaret Lockwood says: 'Tinker Bell! Tinker Bell! Is that you Tinker Bell? Tinker Bell, is that YOU?'



So... imagine in the midst of this seething dockland, this Northern Barcelona, there is the Salford hippodrome... the Salford hippodrome... and a... the Salford hippodrome is a big, old-fashioned, cavernous, booming, working-class music hall of the kind which we've left. And me and my sister are taken to see *Peter Pan*, as a Christmas treat. And Peter Pan is played

by Margaret Lockwood – a British film star now down on her heels, out of fashion, and she's playing Peter Pan in provincial hippodromes, which for us was a big excitement, but for her I think it was a great defeat, but never mind.

At some point, they think Tinker Bell is lost [bell ringing] and Margaret Lockwood says – 'Tinker Bell! Tinker Bell! Is that you, Tinker Bell? Tinker Bell! is that you?'

[Bell ringing]

– 'Oh, Tinker Bell! Tinker Bell!'

And the audience all start shouting 'Tinker Bell. Tinker Bell! Tinker Bell, Tinker Bell!' [Bell ringing] and the bell gets louder and louder, and Tinker Bell comes back. She comes back, and she sorts everything out... As I remember, but my memory is very feeble. And however much I search, I can find one reference to Margaret Lockwood visiting Manchester hippodrome in 1941, but there wasn't a Manchester hippodrome, there was only a Salford hippodrome, so some... this is a lost document.

So I decided... Not then, but now I'm going to alter a filter, and this is to do with magical tricks and it's to do with how you get to the last line, and this is the dossier for lost... lost documents [points to an empty green dossier]: you can see – completely empty, and what we have to do with that dossier, is to learn how to fill it up. [Throws the dossier on the floor] we'll see at the end if it's still empty.

So where was I up to? Yes, I was getting to finish the lecture. Yes, so, Tinker Bell – so, she visited me every few years of my life, this [sound of bell ringing] would visit me... would visit me. Here's a longer story about me writing – I just want to tell you how I came to write a scholarly learned performed piece for a group of people I don't know. Let's see, where to begin? When I was a small child, we had rationing. Do you know what rationing was? It meant you had little tickets to get sweets, food – we were quite lucky because we'd gotten all off these ships, with obviously sailors, sailors, whatever, you know, we got lots of food and things we shouldn't have had, it was illegitimate that we had it. And... I used to get every year, every time this American ship was cycled, I got a box of M&Ms, and in those days M&Ms came in a brown cardboard box, with 24 small packages. And this was the most important thing for me. The most important thing. Because it was mine, because... I have to tell you, my father stole my sweet rations. So I used to eat one package

of M&Ms and then throw the whole box onto my parent's wardrobe, so that I wouldn't gobble them all at once. And then I would get a table, and another table, and a chair, and I would climb up on them, to get one down again, and then throw it back up – so, it was what you might say was an erotic gesture in childhood: the desire to protect these sweets from my father who would have been there, from my own desire to gorge on them, running to this fantastic structure where everyday I put my life at risk, several times, by building these fragile, collapsible structures – repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat... If anyone had known, I would have been in child therapy. But I wasn't, and I was left throughout my life with the insatiable desire for M&Ms. So even when walking in the Pyrenees in the 1980s, I'd be dragging my partner from one station sweet shop to another, to see if we could find them in the Pyrenees, and this was... no one could understand, and friend – academic friends who went overseas: 'Do you want us to bring some books? Do you want us to bring...?' I said, 'No, just bring me a mega pack of M&Ms!'. And then one day I was sitting at a dinner party – a very very polite dinner party, of course, with Victorian chandeliers with the candles, and the things and the flowers – and we were in the middle of dinner, and it went [sound of bell ringing], and I lost track of the dinner conversation, I went into a kind of trance, and Tinker Bell came, and at the end of that dinner I never had an M&M in my life. Since then, I was cured.

So, in a sense, once I worked on this line 'Play it again, Tinker Bell', I began to realise what it means, and here I'm being serious – you understand? Very serious. But I mean very serious! To take very seriously the notion that the personal is political. Because, when in the 1970s and 80s the feminist movement, and then the gay movement, and before this all the personal is political, we felt 'tear your clothes off!', tear away your false identities, outface the world, be out, out-front yourself – then the personal is political. But I didn't think we ever stopped to ask what is the personal and what is the political. What is the thinnest possible interface of these two words, and what kinds of theories we need, or what kinds of knowledges we need, or what kind of therapeutic notions we need, or what kind of political conflicts we need – we decided which is which, and which one slots over at a certain moment, so that you can see the personal is political. This is 'the personal is political' – it's this, it's that, it's this huge battle, it's this kind of detail, it's this emergence of sex and annunciations, which move now in one direction, now in another. And that we never know what we're going to come up with, if we plunge into the instance of 'the personal is political', we may end up somewhere completely different where we don't even know either of these, or we're in a new situation, because that plunging process has changed everything, because something we found out, which is, in a sense, you might say, not a result of what we've looked for. And that's kind of exciting.

So I decided, at a certain point when I decided to stop speaking (you may say this is contradictory), to think much more about this weird relationship between the personal and the political – what's the thinnest possible thing? So, you can see that in some ways it's a vague process, but it's a process I think I've learned from artists – I need to say that... (or picked up from them, like a kind of contagion...) That it's a risk, or maybe not a risk, but if I talk about Pete... Tinker Bell, and I talk about the M&Ms, it's because I don't know where this borderline is between the personal and the political, and because I have to take it where-

*follow* it wherever it can go, into any memory, into any frivolity, if necessary. So that it will emerge as something, which is paradigmatically now – in the present, personally and politically – as some kind of fragile healing of the relation between those gestures, which I would say, I can often find in art, and I can less often find in life, to use these silly old categories of art and life.

So, you can take a film like Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be*, which begins with this wonderful comic classic screwball sequence, where... the heroi-... where there's a play within a play about Hitler, it's set – it's made in 1942 – it's set in... in Krakow... in Warsaw in 1939, and it's made in America in 1942, and it makes jokes about the Holocaust, which hasn't happened yet. Which is the most dangerous thing! You couldn't... first of all to make a joke about the Holocaust, and second, to make one before it's happened. They're doubly dangerous processes. And there's a scene where the heroine walks out to where the director is arguing with his minor actors, in a beautiful beautiful shimmering evening gown, and says to the director within the film, where they play – 'do you like my evening gown?' – 'Yes, of course I like it'. 'Isn't it pretty?' she says, and he says 'you're not going to wear that in the concentration camp scene, are you?', and she says 'But of course I am! Of course I'm going to wear it in the concentration camp'. She says 'I thought: people will hear me screaming, and suffering, and being whipped, and then lights will come on, and I'll be wearing this beautiful dress'. And another actor, who's a Jewish actor, comes up and says 'It's good for a laugh!'.

And that's I think what I mean. So, when I stopped speaking, I decided that I would let things speak for me. I started accumulating more and more of these instances from movies: little connections between them – maybe some of them 'Haa!', or a group of things where people go 'Haa!'. Because 'Haa! Haa!' reminds me, for example, of my earliest education in art history, which was at this university in 1965, where there was an old professor now famous and mythical – Edgar Wind. And at the end of all his lectures you went 'Haa!' because you didn't believe you could get to a conclusion like that.

Transcribed by Nina Wakeford (minutes 26.00–34.00)



They are doubly dangerous processes. And there is a scene where the heroine walks up to where the director is arguing with these minor actors, in a beautiful, beautiful shimmering evening gown and says to the director within the film, that she plays within the film 'Do you like my evening gown' 'Yes of course I like it!' 'Isn't it pretty' she says. And he says 'You're not going to wear that in the concentration camp scene, are you?' And she says 'But

of course I am' 'Of course I'm going to wear it in the in the concentration camp.' She says 'After all people will hear me screaming and suffering and being whipped, and then the lights will come on and I will be wearing this beautiful dress.' And another actor, who is the Jewish character in the film, comes up and says 'It's good for a laugh' And that's I think what I mean. So when I stopped speaking, I decided that I would let things speak for me. I started accumulating more and more of these instances from movies. Little connections between them. Maybe someone going 'Ahh!' [Gasp/Intake of breath]. Or a group of things where people go 'Ahh!'. Because 'Ahh!' [turns] 'Ahh!' reminds me, for example, of my earliest experience of art history which was at this university in 1965. There was an old professor now famous and mythical called Edgar Wind who at the end of all his lectures went 'Ahh!'. Because you didn't believe you could get to a conclusion like that.

I went to little classes, but people came from all over England to listen to him. You know, he filled the Oxford Playhouse. And at the end of the... all his lectures he went 'Ahh!'. It was more than Tinker Bell, and I'm sure that's because he wrote the last line first. I'm sure it's because he did that. But it took me 50 years to work that out. 50 years of remembering the 'Ahh!'.

So things begin like that. Accumulations. Shots of films where people go 'Ahh!' Shots in films where people say 'It's good for a laugh' but it has to have that screwball [claps] crack crack crack, turn around visually and verbally perfect. So everything turns around. So the minute it is gone, you can't remember it. Because its too swift, and it is too perfect. And I started projecting these instances, these moments instead of speaking because each one of those was something that I would have wished to say had that been my form of enunciation. There were a lot from Fassbinder too. There's one where a man turns round and round in a courtyard shouting 'frische Birnen! frische Birnen!' 'Fresh pears! Fresh pears!' And when he has done it several times the girl goes [raises right shoulder, turns head and smiles]. And I thought yes, that's... that shot is who I wish to be. It's that shot. It's that sequence and that shot that I would wish to be. That, that could become my 'I' for a certain moment of enunciation.

So that became a sort of dictionary, a Bilder-Atlas, just like Warburg's, but one already in ruins. It's not a construction. It's a series of ruins, like these ruins lying on the floor now. So you can see now that I am getting near to telling you, why I wanted to have my last line 'Play it again Tinker Bell, Play it again Tinker Bell, Play it again Tinker Bell'. See, the logic to a last line to allow something called a visitation. But if you have written your last line, you are so determined on your last line, where on earth do you begin? How can you begin? How can you begin to get to a last line? How can you be sure that when you say the last line everyone will go 'Ahh!' with a sense of an overwhelming logic that the last line really was written first, which I suppose in a way it was now I come to think of it. Or as if they were convinced that the last line was absolutely ineluctable in terms of this, or maybe a completely different set of precedent enunciations. And I think that again brings one to this question of how it is to bring, if you like, knowledge into a present, into an enunciation which is a characteristic of certain forms of art, and rarely the characteristic of certain forms of academic discourse. And here I'm being quite serious. I'm saying

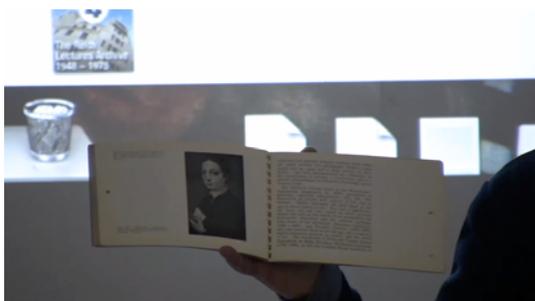
maybe what we become sick of is not hearing the sound of one's voice, but hearing the capture of the sound of one's voice by a certain logic of expectation, a certain logic of normalization which becomes that of academe. My political critique of that in our own time, the endless research assessment exercises, the endless pronunciation of opinion about work based on anything other than its, if you like, enunciative powers. Its capacities to sustain a certain kind of relationship in the present or in the presents.

So that is where I ended. But once I had the first line. Once I had the first line, I had to have another line. The last line had to have a first line. I thought about this as a first line. It seemed to me to be important... [helped with computer – shows picture] This is a fairy. Here's a fairy. It is called John Vassall. And he was one of a group of British spies, who were all gay, like Anthony Blunt and so on. And this is a picture of him. He is pretty. Cute, actually. I always thought he was cute. And in 1962 he was arrested. And there was a huge fuss, a huge, dramatic [?] fuss, fuss, fuss. This homosexual spy. And this cartoon appeared, I think in *Punch*. I think it must have been in *Punch*. It must have been in *Punch* as my father had *Punch* in the surgery and I used to go and sit in the waiting room and read *Punch*. And I found out about all kinds of things in *Punch*. I actually found out about the French New Wave in *Punch*. Went to see *Les Quatre Cents Coups* at a night-time porn cinema/daytime arts cinema in Manchester after reading *Punch*. It meant you had to play truant, because um [?] the only way to see the film. There it is. There was this cartoon about civil servants, 'Now surely Sir Percival, if you had visited Sir Vassall's flat, you would have noticed his, well, unnatural tendencies' 'No dear, he seemed perfectly normal to me'.

Now something very strange happens to this cartoon. Which was lodged in my memory. Which I just finally found 6 months ago on the Internet. It had really vanished. Because I wouldn't do the research on *Punch*. Too much too much too much. Then [?] the internet. Something strange happens to it in the course of our life, and the course of my life. And it is called 'theory'. Now I'm not going to criticize theory. I'm not going to detach myself from theory. I'm not going to deny the importance of theory. Not one little bit. But I am going to say that after the emergence of the theory of performative, in people like Judith Butler or Kosofsky Sedgwick, a cartoon like this suddenly became a bad memory. I always wanted to cling on to it like Tinker Bell was a bad fairy as a good memory, because it used the word normal when I didn't know what I felt about myself, or who I was. I was a very naïve 17 year old. The word normal was like being saved. Was being visited by a form of salvation. 'Normal? Yes, maybe that's what I am. I am normal'. Later on of course I wanted to be abnormal. But at that time, to want normal – it was a safety. Now it is interesting to note, to note, to note, to note, to note. There's an academic phrase for you. It is not even interesting, but it is worth remarking on the fact after the theorising of Butler on the performative and on the excitable speech and after the work of queer theorists in France such as Didier Eribon what you were supposed to remember, you felt, was the insult, not the redemption... [?]. But the insult. And in a sense one of those relations between the personal and the political, is this relationship between me and the memory, and me and the theory of the insult. Is such that my own memory is falsified, or made wrong, or wronged by the theory that tries to save me from the insult which this has come to represent afterwards. So it is there, if you like, a tracing of this thing that the person

puts into all kinds of archives of one's formation, of one's being in the world now, one's capacity to enunciate in the world now. Which... somehow you have to overcome theory, if you like, or overcome the predications of theory, the predicates of theory. Not to rediscover some Eden-like primary feelings valid forever, but to discover this layering in the person which can't be invented, that has to be in a state of constant, if you like, cognitive, or epistemological unfolding, in circumstances.

Transcribed by Jessyca Hutchens (minutes 34.00–45.00)



...and when I didn't know what I felt about myself, or quite who I was, because I was a very naïve seventeen year old, the word normal was like being saved, was being visited by a form of salvation. Normal? Yes, maybe, that's what I am; I'm *normal*. Later on of course I wanted to be abnormal, but at that time, to want, normal, it was a safety. Now, it's interesting to note, to note, to note, to note, there's an

academic phrase for you. It's not even interesting but it's worth remarking on the fact that, after the theorizing of Butler on the performative and on the excitable speech and after the work of queer theorists in France such as Didier Eribon, what you were supposed to remember you felt was the insult. Not the redemption, if you please, no the insult. And in a sense one of those relations between the personal and the political is this relationship between me and the memory, between me and the theory of the insult, is such that my own memory is falsified, or made wrong, or wronged by the theory that tries to save me from the insult which this has come to represent after all. So there's there if you like a tracing of this thing of the person who (inaudible, 35:25) all kinds of archives of one's formation, of one's reading, of one's being in the world now, of one's capacity to enunciate in the world now, in which somehow you have to overcome theory, if you like, or overcome the predications of theory, the predicates of theory. And not to rediscover some Eden like primary field that's valued forever, but to discover this layering of the person which can't be invented, that has to be in a state of constant, if you like, cognitive or epistemological unfolding, in circumstances. And somehow Tinker Bell led me back to this. Once I decided that Tinker Bell was going to be in this lecture, it led me back to this, and to the notion of being visited by fairies, and that indeed, in this advanced time of my career, I was still a fairy visiting Central St Martins. These frames had to be brought together and fed into each other. So, you can see that, whereas I started out with the Virgin Mary and her sister, her cousin Elizabeth, the writing of the last line was now forcing me into a set of visitations in which I was calling up all kinds of knowledges I'd had, obsessional, historical, queer theory, whatever, which had to be configured and re-configured, to enable Tinker Bell to emerge at the end, as the force who, in the eventuality enabled me, enabled me, to achieve this re-configuration in which I was lost. In which I was hopelessly lost. But that said, I

didn't reach a first line until dangerously near the beginning of the lecture, and this is something Nina [Nina Wakeford] will remember, but um, she won't remember the lecture, she will remember the situation. Which is kind of this, that shortly after I met – and I'm not going to go on and on about this man Edgar Wind – I met one of his colleagues at Manchester University, I retreated to Manchester after uni here, and I met his colleague and an old sort of comrade of the pre-Nazi period, Helen Rosenau, who is an art historian, then she took me under her wing and she taught me art history for two terms and that's all the formal education of art history I ever had. We sat down and we talked about architecture books for two hours a day, one day a week, for two terms. But she was kind of a remarkable person. [Reaches over to desk to pick up a folder] In 1943 she wrote a book called *Women in Art*. Which was published in 1944. [Removes book from folder] This is it. Which I must have read then, but... [Shows pages of the book to the audience] It's in a modernist print, published in '44, it was written in a research program with the famous sociologist Karl Mannheim, one of her fellow exiles at the London School of Economics. And I'd forgotten it, no I'd read it but I'd forgotten it, and I kept telling my colleague in Leeds Griselda Pollock that she should read it and she should write on it. And after thirty years she did. It takes us all time to get round to our projects. And a week before my visitation lecture she gave finally a lecture on this book at University College. Now, no-one could remember it but three-hundred people turned out to hear it being talked about. And, someone asked Griselda a question, he said to her, what do you think of this, that and the other about Rosenau's pedagogy, and Griselda gave an answer, which was so complex and said she'd never met her, she never knew about her, she never even knew as she said in the lecture that at the time Rosenau's very last book, on the ideal city, was on the publisher's desk, when she... Griselda's very first book with Rozsika Parker, the, the, the, the, the, ah, *Old Mistresses*, must have been a manuscript on the same desk. That those two manuscripts lay side-by-side without their authors ever recognizing each other at all. An old generation of feminists and the new one, side-by-side but invisible. Again, a *cut* of the personal and the political, that can take decades to unwind, and was unwound on September the, December the 4th, last year. So Griselda gave this remarkable account of what she thought Rosenau's pedagogy must have been, and I said, 'That's it'. It was a moment, if you like, another Tinker Bell moment. I'd realised what I'd got from her. And I thought, oh my god, I got it but I'd missed it. I'd never heard that until now. We're talking about something over forty years later, and I missed it. And I went home and rummaged through my archives and found the notes I'd made of her lectures in 1967. I didn't know I had them, but a week late-, three days later, they turned up. And I read the notes and *boy* did I miss it. You know I'd lived by what I'd missed. That is, one doesn't necessarily recognize the level at which this strikes you, that this moment, to emerge, over forty years later, in someone else's enunciation, has something *now* clear, even if one has been living with it all those years nonetheless. So, I decided at that point that I'd throw all these papers on the floor and say, this is where I'm lost, this is where I'm lost. I am lost with something which is a record, if you like, these are my archives, of my own stupidity, or my own short-sightedness, or my own, like other people's capacity, *always* to miss, but to end up coming somewhere near, with something you might have found afterwards, and how likely a way that is in terms of looking at art, or listening, or coming back to the song and hearing that phrase. I don't want to hear my voice anymore, after all these years.

So, the first line, or one of the first lines. This is the first line, the table is the first line okay? A quotation from, from Carpaccio is really the first line. Then the second line is throwing all that crap on the floor, and then the third line is picking that book up and saying, 'I got it wrong.' Well I didn't get it wrong, I just didn't get it. You can't get it wrong, if you didn't get it that's that. And then there's the question of Tinker Bell, and I thought well, okay - okay, okay, okay - something has to work like this, that Tinker Bell was a fairy. I'm a fairy. I'm always being woken up by bells, very very banal level of thought, let's do some, so I, I, I, I, I got in touch with Hayley Newman, who also, just after Liz [Elizabeth Price] did her PhD in practice at Leeds, and I said, I, I asked Hayley if she'd be, if she'd play Tinker Bell in the lecture I was giving, and she said, 'Fine yes I'll play Tinker Bell. What shall I wear? I've got a...' We went online and found there was a Tinker Bell make-up video on YouTube that shows you how to make-up as Tinker Bell, so we're not alone. There were lots of other people who wanted to do this as well. And I said, 'Hayley, just wear a cocktail dress I think.' And, um, from the Whitechapel bell foundry I bought two little bells like this - still being made the way they were in 1410 or something like that, you know long before Tinker Bell. And Hayley took one and sat right at the back of the lecture theatre and I left this one on my desk, and her sole instruction was to ring it from time to time. She could ring it when I said the word fairy - which was quite often - and she could ring it when she felt it was appropriate, she's a performance artist after all, it's not for me to decide. And that implied the slow transition - seeing she was in the last line - of my performance into hers. Which is a way of saying I'm not an artist. People say, 'oh, you're being like an artist now.' No, I'm not being like an artist. I'm not an artist. I am not an artist. And Hayley would ring her bell and no one knew where it was coming from so I just looked at mine and said, 'I'm sorry folks I don't know how to turn it off.' I didn't touch it I would just say, 'I'm sorry I really do not know how to turn this off yet. But it'll come.' And this became a procedure, in which we had to recognize, if you like, a certain point of exhaustion. And I was going through my images, I had images of the visitation from all over the place, I had this one of Vassall, and this cartoon, I had ones of Jean-Luc Godard, *Je vous salue, Marie, Hail Mary* where there is a wonderful visitation scene in the garage forecourt, a Parisian...

Transcribed by Nina Wakeford on behalf of Joseph Noonan-Ganley  
(minutes 44.00-56.53)



And that implied the slow transition, you see, if she was in the last line, of my performance into hers. Which is a way of saying I'm not an artist. People say 'oh, you are being like an artist now'. No, I am not being like an artist. I am *not* an artist. I am *not* an artist. And Hayley would ring her bell and no-one knew where it was coming from. So I just looked and said

I'm sorry folks I don't know how to turn it off. I'm sorry I really haven't learned how to turn this off yet. But, it will come...

And this became a procedure in which we had to recognise, if you like, a certain point of exhaustion. And I was going through my images. I had images on visitation from all over the place. I had this one of Vassall, and a cartoon. I had one of Jean Luc Godard, *Je vous salue, Marie, Hail Mary*, where there is a wonderful visitation scene in the garage forecourt of Parisian banlieue, if you like, of the 1970s. A film in which in fact I had, uh, when I first saw it in New York actually – from the Virgin Mary by a woman called ‘xx xx’ sent by the Virgin Mary – condemnation of it... to the New York cinema where it was playing. But that is another story. And I had whole scenes to bring back. The queer theme of the story is Sodom and Gomorrah which in the first instance was not a queer story at all. It was a story about hospitality. The angels were sent to destroy Gomorrah, Sodom and Gomorrah because the people were inhospitable and it is the Christian church which turned it into – about sexuality. But there are very very complicated stories of visits and visitations by angels, by angels to the patriarchs in the Old Testament, by angels to Sodom and Gomorrah – a whole theology of visits and visitations which somehow seems to articulate and carry all the other stories of queerness, of fairies, the lot. And they feed into each other.

And these were flashing on the screen and the truth is I did get lost. I really did get lost after 40, 39 minutes, I think. I wanted to hit 45, but after 39 I was in despair. I didn’t know what my next move would be. My images on my screen were a mess. My images on the floor were in a mess. I was in a mess. And at that point the bell from the background became louder and louder and louder. And I said to the audience. It is Tinker Bell. Tinker Bell is here. Now, you might already have noticed that everything in this lecture is actually about the lost document. There is not a single document in it which I could revive. I could find a cartoon about that sort of thing. But that has now been lost again with theory – so it’s a lost document. I couldn’t find Tinker Bell because there is no trace of that performance. Document after document. Rosenau’s book in a sense is a lost document. Because I never really learned from it.

The lost document dossier gets thicker and thicker and thicker. And if you could see it now, were they not lost documents, it would be higher than all the rest put together. That dossier of lost documents would be the biggest one. This is something to begin to learn in creating these enunciations, I think. To enunciate the lost documents. And at that point, that I was lost, I became the lost document. She swept down in her cocktail dress from the back of the lecture theatre, and played a video which I asked her to play. And which is a song I particularly love. I’ll play it to you if you want. It’s from the Talking Head’s film *True Story*. And it’s a song called ‘People like us’, and the chorus is: we don’t want freedom, we don’t want justice, we just want someone to love. That seems something to hold on to. So I decided to leave it. And to ask Tinker Bell to play it.

No, I didn’t. I just said... Tinker Bell came and she played the video and we danced to it, together, with our backs to the audience. And then she turned it off and I said ‘play it again Tinker Bell’. And what follows was out of my hands. She threw me away from the centre of the stage. So I was on my knees at the side of the stage. And she played it again. And danced to it, and talked about it.

So, for me if you like, without fully gripping it or intending it, having written the last line first enabled me, in retrospect, to envisage the lost document as myself. So if you like the lessons of the whole of what we call post-structuralist, Lacanian post-critical theory could be seen to remain somehow seated, within our power, to say something, to be in our enunciation. But that loss and presence in their contiguity are at the heart of that process of 'the personal is the political'. And that, if you like, is something I might have learned from having been immersed in a history of art and in a history from the very first... since I started teaching, and working with artists.

So I... I think that is all I really wanted to say about that. And, um, we can talk about it. But would you like to see the song, or not?

*Audience: Mmm*

Right [inaudible... looking through images on computer] You see I can't... [inaudible] No. It's not that. [video goes black here] That's not it! That's from *Parsifal*. Oh I'll show you a few things. These are Visitandines nuns. Being given their power by... these are Visitandines nuns making cookies with the infant Jesus. Um. This is Elizabeth and Mary having their visit. This is another Elizabeth and Mary having their visit. You can see what I meant by the flourishing. This is the holy trinity, which is based on a visit. Not on Jesus. It is actually based on a visit. This is Kundri in *Parsifal*... visiting the Knights of the Holy Grail, and unleashing the whole hideous story that unfolds. All concentrating somehow, one way or another, on the risk, the danger of the visit. Here is what we had to work with before we were visited by high technology. Here is a slide list from Edgar Wind's lecture which you can find in the, find in the Bodleian library here, which gives you some sense of the 'ohuhh!', the 'ohuhh!' as his 'ohuhh!' is lost except in the present when you might find a new 'ohuhh!' in relation to another situation. So that is both a visitation and a visit. Because I had to visit the Bodleian to drag it out and be visited by some sense of the event, when I read it out. Can anyone see another mp4 here? Ah. Here's... [opera music plays briefly]. Wrong one! Mp4... Mp4... Maybe you are not going to get it. Maybe it is a lost object this time.

*Audience: chuckles*

*Voice from audience [looking at projection of desktop]: Um, Sam? O6/O5 Mp4 on the left?*

Where is that. On the left? Your left or my left?

*Voice from audience: Uh, both, I think it is the same left.*

No! You know what? It's gone.

*Voice from audience: You can sort the folder by type.*

You know what? It's gone. Or, maybe it's this?

*Voice from audience: It's not a .mov?*

Yes, it could be. It could be a .mov. Is it that one? No! Do you know that film? It's *The Mill and The Cross*. Ah. Let's try that one. No! I'm sorry about this folks. Shall I sing it for you? It's gone. It's amazing, isn't it? It's gone! There you are it's gone. I'm sorry. Oh maybe it's this? Ok we are not going to have it. Ah?... No! Actually I'll tell you what. Because of the way Macs work now, I actually have to film all of these with my camera from the screen. Because Macs can't do movie screen back anymore. I mean Elizabeth knows...

*Elizabeth Price: Uh, I do that as well.*

Um. Ok, we are not going to have it. I think I have gone on quite long enough. I've tried to do the impossible for you which is describe something, which is kind of indescribable. I was going to try to give you a blow by blow account. But it's gone. I'm sorry. So, thank you.

APPLAUSE

The biography and writings of Adrian Rifkin are available at <http://gai-savoir.net/>

# Seeing First and Then Still: Art Historians and Objects

Naomi Vogt

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Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *La brioche*, 1763, oil on canvas, 47 × 56 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Marcel Duchamp opportunely wrote on one of the scattered pieces of paper in his work *La boîte de 1914* that, while one cannot ‘listen to hearing’ (*écouter entendre*), one is able to ‘look at seeing’ (*regarder voir*). Sight allows for the perception of itself in action as it occurs through another being. It is otherwise equally impossible to taste someone tasting or to smell someone smelling. Through touch, one may be able to feel objects and the bodies of others encountering each other, but in order to touch someone touching (that is to feel, through touch, what someone feels and to feel them feeling it), one would need to touch the very point of contact, thus interrupting it.<sup>1</sup>

The empirical practice of looking at others look does not expressly make up a central part of art history and theory as a discipline. Yet attending to the content and disposition of optical perceptions, as a mode of inquiry, is an essential feature of any study in visual culture. This attention to the way objects may look to others and to the researchers themselves tends to constitute a preliminary stage in art historical inquiry, usually followed by investigations regarded as more contextual and theoretical. The communication of the content and disposition of these preliminary visual observations in verbal form is then carried out through ekphrasis. From the Greek word that translates literally as ‘that which is spoken out’, ekphrasis today almost always refers to the description of artworks or images. This practice is paradigmatic of the discipline and contributes to the fact that the ‘representational regime of writing’, as Adrian Rifkin calls it, has held captive even the most radical, socially critical histories of art.<sup>2</sup>

Rineke Dijkstra’s triptych video installation *I See a Woman Crying* (2009) is a device for ‘looking at seeing’, in which the object of the protagonists’ gaze is present only in words. The viewer is confronted with the faces of schoolchildren performing ekphrases. In front of them hangs Pablo Picasso’s 1937 work *La femme qui pleure* (*Weeping Woman*). The painting is never filmed but surfaces through candid descriptions, ranging from concise accounts of color to tentative, compassionate interpretations, such as: ‘Maybe she’s crying because she was at a wedding and she stole the cake’. In Dijkstra’s work, seeing is thus prolonged and fully interspersed with the act of analyzing. The earliest record of purposeful art description, Philostratus’s *Imagines* (second-century BCE), similarly depicts a child, seemingly an exemplar of ingenuous beholding and recounting. In the opening sentences, Scamander asks a boy whether he perhaps failed to notice that the painting facing him is based on Homer, precisely because he was instead ‘lost in wonder as to how in the world the fire could live in the midst of water’.<sup>3</sup> Scamander subsequently urges the boy to turn his eyes away from the image in order to concentrate on its meaning. And it sometimes seems as though art history as a whole could be apprehended as successive acts of perusing and looking away so as to transform visual matter into meaning – ‘meaning’ being usually considered a subsequent and ultimate stage, and one that by definition must materialize verbally.

Ekphrasis presupposes inter-mediality – the transition from a visual and material realm to that of ‘immaterial’ thoughts and words. The process further implies a temporal alteration, given that the senses grasp the appearance and content of most art in a non-sequential way (and time-based works only partially contradict this fact), whereas

spoken and written theory aims to unfold in a prescriptive order. This also means that unadulterated content in intermedia transpositions is impossible. Erwin Panofsky, the art historian who coined ‘pre-iconographical description’, the ideal first stage in visual analysis made of purely formal accounts, was also the one to warn us against its impracticability: because all descriptions automatically renegotiate shapes into symbols.<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to qualify a limb in a picture without, at some early point, naming it, and it is hard to describe its color without gesturing towards the notion of skin. Not to mention that the transition from image to word is accompanied by equally substantial conversions from words into other words. Art historians study books as much as, if not more than, they study visual objects, to such an extent that these objects become almost inseparable from their semantic and theoretical baggage.

Sometimes the ekphrasis is made precisely to exist without the object. It can then act as a series of formula to produce the object as if by magic. ‘By the window, place a full glass of wine, a bottle, a started loaf of bread [...] and you shall see Chardin’s canvas’,<sup>5</sup> wrote Denis Diderot for his remote readership, who would most likely never see the still life with their own eyes. Here the author tries to make the legible visible, whereas the ambition of art history (at least since the widespread use of reproductions, and since the legacy of father figure Johann Joachim Winckelmann) has broadly been to make the visible legible. Unlike the objects of many other disciplines, such as ecosystems, historical events, or psychological triggers, the visual objects studied by art history tend to subsist physically, often integrally alongside the research, in addition to being made widely available through reproductions. This factor could intimate to researchers that their role is essentially to



Rineke Dijkstra, *I See a Woman Crying (Weeping Woman)*, 2009–2010, three-channel HD video (color, sound), 12 min, courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

magnify the already auspicious presence of the object, by allowing the reader to ‘see more than they saw before’.<sup>6</sup> By the same token, this presence can create a complex in the minds of the researchers, who may feel at a constant, almost pleonastic second remove from their subject-matter. Jaś Elsner vexes this complex when he declares that art history ‘is nothing other than ekphrasis’,<sup>7</sup> before offering some relief with an appreciative comparison according to which theorists’ ekphrastic appropriations are after all ‘not much different from Michelangelo’s own appropriation of a block of Carrara marble’.<sup>8</sup>

If art can be carved by theory like marble is sculpted by artists, the practice of art history raises doubt about the primacy of the object, or rather about the primacy of looking at it. In Zadie Smith’s novel *On Beauty*, Howard, a post-modernist art historian bent on deconstructing the myth of genius, has undertaken to write his own masterpiece: *Against Rembrandt*. At the end of the story, standing in front of his class, he is struck mute by a painting, which he begins to project larger and larger onto the wall. “‘Hendrickje Bathing, 1654,’” croaked Howard and said no more’.<sup>9</sup> Here, seeing only took place after a long and relentless ekphrasis, a situation deplored by Elsner and others, whereby the doctrine fueling the descriptions mistakenly serves as the starting point, where the objects should be.

In that case, the communication of any kind of knowledge based on partly visual observations can qualify as ekphrasis, regardless of the discipline framing it. Anthropologist David Zeitlyn recently argued for instance that all accounts in the social sciences are ekphrastic in that they are ‘translations across media’: from the field to a theoretical piece of writing that aims to represent ‘content’ from the field.<sup>10</sup> This recognition is essential to asserting the importance of description and image-making in research across the disciplines. Art history itself makes images, and not only in the sense that it transfigures pre-existing, material ones. But these considerations, which amount to ‘looking at seeing’, and this attendance to the construction of knowledge through description also create a strong binary between fieldwork or visual observations and the making of meaning. As if seeing were the practice that happened first, and meaning that which followed – as with Scamander and the boy, after having looked away. But in research, seeing unfolds together with other forms of witnessing and engaging. The assumption that these practices constitute only a preliminary stage, and one aimed solely at data collection, has a corollary (at least in the humanities): the fact that art and artefacts are treated as products of history much more than they are considered social and material agents in the world.

Thus, the description of these objects regularly concentrates on how they look and why they came to be. Because art itself tends to be held as a descriptive category of objects (whether descriptive of events, feelings, appearances, or ideas), a Droste effect crystallizes when art history becomes a description of descriptive material. It is based on this premise that 17th century Dutch painting, for instance, has been correlated to an ethnography of the society it depicted. But construing art as an index of the context that produced it inhibits other modes of engagement with it. As Tim Ingold suggests, if we want to use the metaphor of art as a document of being into the world, it is better to skip the image of ‘ethnography as description’ in order to favour the image of ‘anthropology as inquiry’.<sup>11</sup> If art, like anthropology, is an inquiry into humans’ experience of being in the world,

then art history can inquire into what art does and did – instead of representing what it represented and testifies to. Surely, several art histories already do precisely that, from Hans Belting and Alexander Nagel’s renderings of images rooted in their effective pre-Renaissance roles, to Marc Ferro’s insistence on the historical agency of moving images. However, the boundary between such kinds of research and ekphrasis is perhaps less bold than it appears – given that, in each case, one must account for the perception of an object.

In Adrian Rifkin’s performance lecture ‘On Writing the Last Line First’, further boundaries are productively blurred. Not only the boundaries between practice and theory or between pedagogy and performance, but also those between seeing and evoking, and between collecting data and making meaning. Rifkin’s intervention is based on a series of cultural and material objects, from M&M’s and the concept of the Archive to a 1953 song by Pierre Mac Orlan, theatre played in provincial hippodromes, the protean figure of Tinker Bell, and films made by Ernst Lubitsch, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Vanalyne Green, and Jean-Luc Godard. Throughout the intervention, Rifkin undertakes to at once describe and simulate these pieces of visual culture, which he has been collecting for years, in order, he says, to let them speak in his place. These objects are the ‘shock’ moments, mainly in films, that make one gasp because they are so swift, so ‘really and verbally perfect’ that once they have happened you can never truly wrap your mind around what they were. ‘Frische Birnen! Frische Birnen!’ (‘Fresh pears! Fresh pears!’) he says, like Hans the fruit monger in the opening scenes of Fassbinder’s *Händler der vier Jahreszeiten* (*The Merchant of Four Seasons*, 1971). Yet Rifkin is not merely imitating the protagonist; he is executing the filmic scene itself. As he slowly twists his upper body to the right, he looks as though he is about



Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Händler der vier Jahreszeiten*, 1971, 88 min, West Germany: Tangofilm Produktion, screen capture.

to lift his skirt, as Hans's wife does when she emerges from a door and a woman catches sight of them from her courtyard window, briefly suspending this 'perfect' 'shock' moment. Rifkin adds that he wishes he could have *been* that filmic scene, had he ever found himself in that moment or position of enunciation – a moment and position which, indeed, he has just produced within his performance.

In Rifkin's intervention, the act of seeing (both for the researcher and his audience) is thus prolonged and integrated with all the conclusions that are potentially, simultaneously being drawn through discourse. The members of the audience become accomplices; they are made complicit with the content and meanings brought about in the talk. A better way to explain this would be to say that the elicited objects and scenes were being interpreted



Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *La brioche*, 1763, oil on canvas, 47 × 56 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

live – interpreted not in the sense of an analysis or a translation, but almost in the sense meant when we say that a musician interprets sheet music. This kind of interpretation actualizes material that is already somehow present – like a musician actualizes the sounds contained in a score. Imaginary characters, moving images, and art objects too can be interpreted in this way, by being at once actualized or made visible, and treated as agents in the world. Seeing and making meaning can then become innately concurrent.

- 1 This point may certainly be complicated to greater extents, notably by attending to the disagreements between Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty regarding forms of perception, and the latter's contention that touching and being touched can never fully coincide.
- 2 Adrian Rifkin, *Inter-disciplinary Encounters: Hidden and Visible Explorations of the Work of Adrian Rifkin* (London : I.B. Tauris & Co, 2015), 9.
- 3 Philostratus, *Imagines* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 7.
- 4 Erwin Panofsky, 'On the Problem of Describing and Interpreting Works of Art,' *Critical Inquiry* 38 (2012): 469.
- 5 Denis Diderot, 'Salon de 1765,' in *Oeuvres de Denis Diderot* (Paris: J.L.G Brière, 1821), 85.
- 6 Jaś Elsner, 'Art History as Ekphrasis,' *Art History* 33 (2010): 26.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 9 Zadie Smith, *On Beauty* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 442.
- 10 David Zeitlyn, 'Antinomies of Representation: Anthropology as an Ekphrastic Process,' *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4:3 (2014): 342.
- 11 Tim Ingold, 'Ethnography is to Anthropology as Art History is to Art Practice: A Provocation', *Frank Davis Memorial Lecture Series: Anthropology and Art History*, The Courtauld Institute of Art, 10 November 2015.

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# Setting Out

Anita Paz

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*I want to capture certain moments of thinking as if they were just points from where I might have set out.* – Adrian Rifkin

A response, according to its commonly accepted definition, is the offering of something in reaction to something else. A response may take the form of a written contemplation, an inter-medial conversion, a spontaneous utterance, an archival exploration, a burst of movement, a change of disposition, a creative reflection, or a metatextual, intratextual or intertextual translation. It may also take no form at all, manifesting itself as loud silence, or still tension. Equally, the something to which the response is reacting may take many and no form, exist in all media and none, and perform different roles or no role at all. In any and all of these cases, the response is a form of thinking (verbal or visual, loud or mute, expanding or static) that comes as a reaction to another moment of thought. The response is an act of generosity that follows a provocation – an act, that in reacting to the thought that provoked it, is setting out from it.

Setting out from a found – or better yet, 'captured' – moment of thinking is a will expressed by Adrian Rifkin in the closing notes of 'Dancing Years, or Writing as a Way Out' (2009). 'I want to capture certain moments of thinking as if they were just points from where I might have set out', he writes. This will to set out is therefore both the moment of thinking from which I wish to set out in my response, and the methodological approach my response will assume, in being a response. Setting out is understood here as a departure, a journey that has its initiation at 'certain moments of thinking' – someone else's thoughts, someone else's words, and its trajectory directed towards what these other thoughts, what these other words, could say.

A response is a setting out. It begins with a statement, one that is taken as a mark, distilled into a starting point, from which departure takes place. Being a departure, a reaction that is a response is not only 'to', but also, and necessarily, 'from'. It responds *to* a moment of thinking, and within that, it departs *from* it. The response is 'to' and 'from', and those are the two potencies inherent in it. It sets out between 'to' and 'from', from the 'to' to the 'from', from the 'from' to the 'to' – two rejecting poles that set it in an alternating motion. Oscillating between the contradictory directions of 'to' and 'from', and existing within the dichotomy of being simultaneously 'towards' and 'out of', the mode of the response assumes and inhabits a schema: that of the helix.

This helical schema of the response is precisely not a Hegelian dialectic helix: its progression is neither through tension nor towards a synthesis-based resolution. Nor is it a full-circle cyclical movement like that of Nietzschean eternal recurrence: the rotundity of its movement does not draw an aura-like nimbus around the moment of thinking, and iteration is not its mark. Instead, the throwback between 'to' and 'from' creates a vortex, within which 'to' and 'from' draw closer together, while continuing to push apart, charging the existing tension.

The tension of the departure is central to the ontology of the response. A reaction that is only 'to' is nothing but an opaque reading, understood here as a private act of processing. It may be an examination, a commentary or an impression, but it will always be conditioned by the disposition of the reacting subject projected towards the moment of thinking, so that the latter becomes a mere platform. On the other hand, a reaction that is only 'from' is nothing but an empty affirmation, understood here as a public act of ratification. The reaction 'from' is a derivation. It moves *d'après* – according to the moment of thinking, and necessarily after it, following it, so that it is conditioned by its grounding in the moment of thinking, while the very words of the thought become roots that feed it. A reaction that is only 'to' is often disingenuous, a deceitful usage of the thing itself. A reaction that is only 'from' risks the habit of ontological gerrymandering – the redefining of the boundaries of what is interesting or problematic in or around the thing itself, so that it serves the purpose of the reaction.

At the same time, this does not exclude the possibility of the response being either a reading or an affirmation. If the response is to be understood as reading, then it is to be understood as reading of what was meant instead of what was said (in a Heideggerian, or post-Heideggerian manner), or even as reading what has never been said (like a Benjaminian image of the past that flashes up and becomes what it has never been before). It is not a question of illustration or clarification, but of imagination and invention. If the response is to be considered a reading, then it is not as a weak interpretation, but as a forceful interference. Similarly, understood as affirmation, the response will be a declaration that not only comes out of the moment of thinking, but necessarily states and declares something to it, allowing for the tension of departure to build.

To depart is understood here using two of its etymological meanings, the Old French '*départir*', 'to set oneself apart', and Late Latin '*departire*', 'to divide'. The response as a departure also has this dual mode: in part, it is a movement outwards, in part, it is a split. In being a movement outwards, setting itself apart, the response is a setting out that is also a breaking out – out of the meanings enclosed and delineated within the statement, and out of the field of signification framed by the stated. This is not deconstruction understood as liberation from meaning through an infinite expanding of an unbound context. Breaking out might take down walls, but only to use the debris towards building up annexes. In its movement, the response breaks out from within the moment of thinking, and creates a new – equally enclosed, delineated and framed – moment. The response is a movement that breaks through thought, creating *thought out of thought*, *cogitatio ex cogitato* – a thought out of what was already thought, but also *cogitatio excogitata* – an invented thought.

The movement of the response is a dynamic force introduced into – or, better yet, forced upon – a moment of thinking. A moment of thinking may only be captured and distilled into a starting point, after it has taken its final form: a form that may never be singular. Responding to a written thought, the form of the assumed starting point is, at least, both verbal (in being a sequence of specific words chosen to communicate that thought), and visual (in having those words exist as a mark of ink on the paper). Responding to a performed gesture, that form is, at least, both visual (in being a mark the body left in space), and audial (in having that gesture generate a certain noise in that space). Although this second instance may be deemed as inherently non-static (a movement), I claim that a response reacts and forces itself upon an iteration of that movement, or a plurality of such iterations, that are, in and of themselves, static: from the moment they were performed, they took form – one that is permanent. Appearing in its plurality of forms – verbal, visual, audial and other – the moment of thinking is a static instance: responding to it, creating a movement from the inside out is animating what would have otherwise rested in stasis.

The departure of the response is a movement that projects from the inside out, while it itself is a dynamic force penetrating the moment of thinking from the outside. Being extrinsic to the thought, it nonetheless situates itself on the inside of it, where it initiates a movement from within. The response comes from outside, but has its true beginning in the moment of setting itself apart – moving – from the inside. In that, it collapses the extraneous and foreign into the inner space of the thought, allowing it to dwell and permeate it through, pushing that very inwardness outwards. The response as a movement is a destabilising force.

The second mode of the response as departure is that of the split. In being a split, it is a violent breakage from its point of origin, a forceful division. Thoughts survive in trajectories – they survive *as* trajectories. Projecting down a course not only temporal, but also geographic, they become traditions, solidify as canons or slowly dissolve down the line. The response to a moment of thought opens up a new trajectory – it creates a duality, a bifurcation, a path that is yet to be taken: departure as deviation. The response separates, divides itself from the moment of thinking. More than a coexistence, it gives place to a shared existence, seeing that harmony and accord are rarely maintained.

Working from the moment of thinking outwards, the response is a split in as much as it divides its course from that of the thought. Directed inwards, the response is also a split – a violent crack – from within. Permeating the inner construction of the thought, the response creates divisions within its reasoning. It breaks down the thinking of the thought, opening cavities between its elements, and pulling outwards that which it can consume for its own purpose. The response sets out from the point created out of the moment of thought, a point it fractures in order to extract from it its own building blocks.

Within both of its modes – of the movement and of the split – the response performs the stated – a setting out, a departure – while the moment of thinking itself leans towards a new thought. As a mode, the departure of the response ports within it certain moments from which and to which new thoughts come to be. Instances vary. One thinks of Derrida's

Kantian parergon – fractured from its moment of thinking, the concept is transported from one philosophical context to another, expanding, giving place to a new thought. Philosophy responds to philosophy, but also to visual culture. Think of Foucault’s Magrillian pipe – a departure from painted object and text towards a discussion around representation and deixis in the calligram. From Foucault there is also the famous response to Velazquez’s *Las Meninas*, a painting out of which and to which many responses, many new thoughts have come about, not least Picasso’s Velazquezian maids of honour, a visual response where reiteration guided by willful forgetfulness becomes the site of inventive departure (and *Las Meninas* becomes ‘*mis Meninas*’ – my *Meninas*). Kandinsky’s Schoenbergian concert also comes to mind: through the mode of departure, a musical performance on the Monday of 2 January 1911 becomes *Impression III (Concert)* – colour responds to an asymphonic score. Staying within the realm of music, Philip Glass’s Kafkaesque trial is a recent example – responding to the novel is an opera that ports in it a moment of thought split and set in motion, so that it becomes something else entirely.

At the same time, and on a second register, the departure of the response is not only its mode, but also its means, marked by partition: a separation between the moment of thinking and that of the response. Departing from the moment of thinking, the response gives place to another moment of thinking, marking itself against the first one. Re-photographing the great American West after Timothy H. O’Sullivan is not only departing from within it and moving back to it, it is also marking itself as a separate moment, one that comes out of the moment of thinking, but that is not a part of it. Boris Eifman’s praised choreography of Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* activates the latter, while setting itself apart: proposing a new interpretation of the character’s moral conduct and rupturing the assumptions of the reader (turned viewer), it comes out of the written text, while at the same time leaving it behind, offering a new vision. Similarly, Arthur Pita’s ballet of *Metamorphosis* is not just an adaption of Kafka’s novel, just like Claire Denis’ film *L’intrus* is not an adaptation of Jean-Luc Nancy’s eponymous text, and the latter’s curatorial project ‘The Other Portrait’ is not merely an adaptation or a continuation of his own essay ‘The Ground of the Image’. An adaptation is a derivative reaction ‘from’ that involves inter-medial translation, but these are all responses, departures: moving ‘to’, they do not simply interpret, but also interfere – a ‘to’ that is ‘from’; moving ‘from’, they do not simply derive, but also deviate – a ‘from’ that is ‘to’.

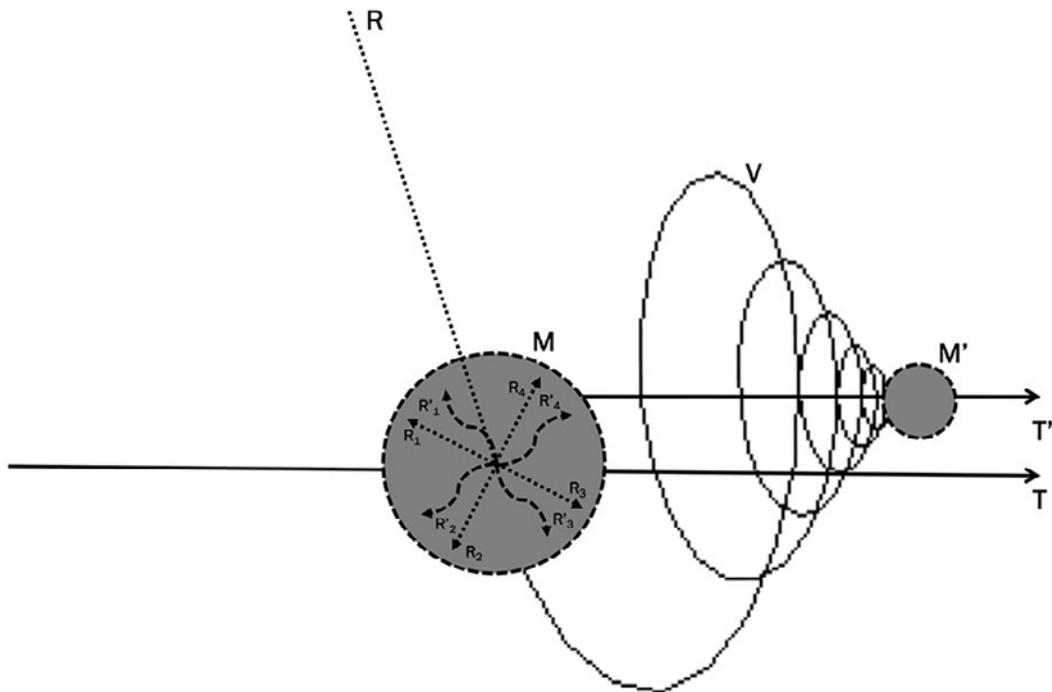


Figure 1. The response (R) is a dynamic force forced upon a moment of thought (M), that exists in the world on a certain trajectory (T). Penetrating the moment of thought from the outside, it moves on its inside (R1-R4), collapsing the extraneous and foreign into the inner space of the thought, allowing it to dwell and permeate it through, pushing that very inwardness outwards. The response is also a violent crack from within (R'1-R'4), one that breaks down the thinking of the thought, opening cavities between its elements, and pulling outwards that which it can consume for its own purpose. The movement the response is that of the vortex (V), so that 'to' and 'from' draw closer together, while continuing to push apart, charging the existing tension. The response to a moment of thought opens up a new trajectory: dividing itself from the moment of thinking (M), the response creates a new, equally enclosed, delineated and framed, moment (M'). That new moment (M') moves along a new trajectory (T').

A response – reaction by means and in the mode of departure – is an *effective* reaction. This is not to say that other types of reactions are ineffective; it is only to say that they are not effective *as reactions*. The already mentioned reading as interpretation, for instance, might be effective as a form of analysis. However, it is ineffective as a reaction, because for a reaction to be effective it must activate – indeed, *reactivate* – the moment of thinking, generating movement and destabilising its static form: it must give place to a new thought.

If responses are effective reactions, it remains to ask what makes an effective response. Or, better yet, what makes an *affective* response, for a response is effective for its disturbance, for the affect it emits. I shall answer this with a digression.

Originally, I meant to respond to Rifkin's text through an entirely different moment of thinking. On the very first page of 'Dancing Years, or Writing as a Way Out', he writes: 'I decided that it was an interesting departure to make things up'. I did not know how to react to it, but I knew I wanted my reaction to be a response, and that within that I wanted to unfold response as such. Both moments – the one on the first page I just mentioned,

and the one on the last I ended up using ('I want to capture certain moments of thinking as if they were just points from where I might have set out') – led to the same movement, to the same split. Both equally allowed me to move to and from them, to destabilise them, to set out from them, and to depart, making things up (a new thought). But I made my choice, and it was the latter quote. I did not choose it because it was more effective for my response – further into (both logically and chronologically) Rifkin's text, thus allowing a greater spanning outwards, and greater tension. In fact, I did not choose it at all – instead, I un-chose the first one. That was because in addition to a response around responses, that first moment of thinking – 'I decided that it was an interesting departure to make things up' – seemed to elicit further responses: it departed towards art history as a discipline, towards questions of invention and lying, and towards speculations around truth and truthfulness. And this further response seemed to me to go much further in relation to Rifkin's moment of thinking – so it had to be un-chosen, reserved for a future moment, when it could receive a better response.

Moments of thinking may be activated in more than one way. That is to say, moments of thinking may lead to more than one effective reaction – to more than one response. But what makes a response to a particular moment of thinking affective is the amount of disturbance it ejects into that moment: the further it pushes the moment of thinking, and the less stable it leaves it, the more affective it is.

Rifkin's words around capturing moments of thought like points from where to set out are what stimulated this response. It was the words, not the context in which they were uttered, or the intention, that gave them place. The words themselves – someone else's thoughts, someone else's words – became my point of setting out, where setting out is responding.

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# Rifkin's Dossier for Lost Documents

Jessyca Hutchens

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*You won't hear this voice of the lonely researcher. You won't hear the voice of the careful unfolding of archival research.*<sup>1</sup>

– Adrian Rifkin, 2015

*Despite increasing awareness of the illusions of historical reconstruction and recovery, the archive at the end of the 20th century assumes an even greater intellectual and social significance.*<sup>2</sup>

– Harriet Bradley, 1999

*Hoccleve would have doubtless been amazed to discover that his shopping list could have been prized by later centuries, just as those who piled more garbage on top of the Gnostic gospels at Naq Hammadi probably had no idea of the cultural significance of the rubbish and would (ironically) by attempting to save it, probably have condemned it to destruction.*<sup>3</sup>

– David Greetham, 1999

*In archives she looked at Gardner's travel albums and the Collection inventories. However, it was the things that got left behind in the process of archiving, documenting, and conserving that Kher felt drawn to. These included saved pieces of string, small labels, pressed flowers and blotting paper.*<sup>4</sup>

– Online description of a residency by Bharti Kher at The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2013

During his presentation, 'On Writing The Last Line First (One of Three Possible Titles)' Adrian Rifkin threw a folder of documents onto the ground, causing most of them to spill out across the floor. This action followed shortly in the wake of the promise quoted above: 'You won't hear the voice of the lonely researcher; you won't hear the voice of the

careful unfolding of the archival research'.<sup>5</sup> The folder, which he described simply as 'the archive', was not at all carefully unfolded in front of us, described and woven into a clear narrative by the art historian who had come to the art school to impart his wisdom, to demonstrate his mastery over the archive which had yielded some of its most precious objects to him. Instead, he offered possibilities for what we could do with these bits of the archive strewn across the stage: 'We can do what we want with it, we can throw it away, we can pick it up, [*he throws a few other folders to the floor: THUD, BAM*]. We can get down on our knees and scabble amongst it, but we may never find a proper footnote'.<sup>6</sup> Following decades of theoretical interrogation of the archive, the possibilities for its use may already be assumed to be split wide open, even for us non-artists ('I'm not an artist, I can't do anything I want').<sup>7</sup> But the invitation to not use the archive, to throw it away, or to do as Rifkin did, to refuse to carefully reveal or explicate its contents (did anyone scabble around in it afterwards to see what was there?), might be a counter point to the dominance of the archive as still the thing we must continuously consult, to emerge heroically from with our bundle of 'new' discoveries, insights or interests.

In 'Dancing Years, or Writing as A Way Out', Rifkin expresses frustration with the process of making and revealing archival discoveries, writing how he 'began to realize that the archive, in the more limited and technical sense of being a series of organized technical records, more often than not, and too easily, gave me what I was looking for'.<sup>8</sup> On his given example of one such find – a box 'on gay sailors in Toulon circa 1929' – Rifkin wrote: 'I needed it to authenticate what I felt it was already obvious to say about homosexuality and class difference, but which I badly needed to "prove"'.<sup>9</sup> The box is thus a 'find' for Rifkin the rigorous researcher, who seeks, finds and provides the evidence demanded by his discipline, but is not much of a 'find' otherwise, it tells him nothing much new about his topic (ironically, a good find in the archive typically confirms the seeker's theory. Should this ever be thought of as revelatory?). He goes on to say:

Yet some of my best discoveries, the ones that most satisfied my desire to underpin certain guesses, once satisfied, I kept to myself and never tried to publish even though this meant leaving some assertion in its speculative state.<sup>10</sup>

Even more than scattering the archive across the stage, refusing to reveal an archival discovery altogether – allowing it to remain unproven – seems an even greater sin, breaking faith with both the notion that researchers should share their finds so that others may use them, and denying the legitimating aura of archival discoveries. On the other hand, the desire to keep the archive secret constitutes a fascination with archival treasures, even a sort of protective regard for them. Left unpublished, the archive remains in an even more precious state, awaiting another diligent researcher to uncover it. Both gestures (concealing and tossing aside) are perhaps a dismissal, not of archival materials, but of their disproportionate use-value to academic research. At another point in his lecture, Rifkin refers to a different folder, his 'dossier for lost documents' – which also ends up thrown onto the floor – but with no contents to spill out, the effect is more melancholic than dramatic.<sup>11</sup> Despite expressing frustration with the norms and expectations of archival research and revelation, Rifkin still yearns for the 'lost document'.

One of the strongest seductions of the archive is the elusive promise of uncovering materials that are wholly unlikely to be there, that, according to the original logic or purpose of the particular archive, should perhaps never have been saved or included in the first place. In his paper, 'Who's In and Who's Out: The Cultural Poetics of Archival Exclusion', textual scholar David Greetham traces the complexities of archival exclusions, from unconscious bias in seemingly small archival decisions, to deliberate destruction, to accidents of transmission and of preservation.<sup>12</sup> In one example, he describes Frank Sinatra's 1959 performance of Cole Porter's 'I Get a Kick Out of You', speculating that by varying the rhythm of one line Sinatra had managed to draw 'attention to the weak content of the previous line', which was 'perfume from Spain'.<sup>13</sup> Greetham speculates that Sinatra's performance might have pointed to a specific exclusion from the textual archive, drawing attention to the weak line because it had replaced the original 1934 lyric containing the word 'cocaine'.<sup>14</sup> The suppression of this lyric has since become a well-established part of the cultural history of the song, suggesting a successful rediscovery and resurrection of a piece of 'excluded' information. At the same time, if Sinatra's performance was indeed a kind of knowing wink to his audience, this might also be evidence of the lyrics' persistence throughout a period of censorship. Greetham argues that while overt acts of cultural exclusion may constitute more permanent loss for the archive, ironically, 'the more overt (and the more successful) the cultural exclusion the more prurient and intrinsic the value of the excluded may become'.<sup>15</sup> Such excluded material (banned books for example), become highly valued, and are therefore likely to be recovered for the next generation's archive. The lyric was never neatly lost or excluded nor suddenly rediscovered. In other words, it is difficult to locate when and whether something becomes lost to or lost in the archive, or when or whether it might return.

Because archives are tasked with predicting what will be of greatest value to future users, Greetham writes that they are 'hopelessly doomed by the force of local prejudice. Hoccleve would have doubtless been amazed to discover that his shopping list could have been prized by later centuries'.<sup>16</sup> And in turn, whoever 'found' Hoccleve's shopping list (or first recognized its value) might have been shocked that it had been saved. This is precisely the place of excitement in the archive, that if by some slip of its own regulatory regime, by error, by accident, it has included something of value to the present-day researcher, who hunts for the elusive lost document, presumed to be discarded, suppressed, or never created. In those discourses that have most critiqued the archive for its failures of inclusion (such as the focus in postcolonial or feminist critiques of the archive on marginalized or repressed histories), recourse is still made to the offending archive to examine its absences, or to find the traces that exist of its exclusions and suppressions. No longer able to offer up unbiased accounts of history, the archive nevertheless offers up a multitude of proof of its own inadequacies. The frustration that Rifkin expresses, that the archive is consulted to prove a point he already considered obvious, suggests that in seeking the unexpected in the archive, or even the evidence of exclusion and oppression, one might both have to search harder and more heroically, for less of a reward: validation from the archive, for what one already knows by other means.

In regard to post-colonial research or art projects, the colonial archive is often consulted for its losses and absences, for its lack of interest in the people who were colonised, or the biases or racial prejudices in their representations. Present-day communities are forced to rely on a complicit and asymmetrical archive, often to recover remnants of culture and history actively suppressed by coloniser and archive. As part of a residency at the Natural History Museum, London, in 2011, Australian Indigenous artist Daniel Boyd responded to the museum's First Fleet collection, which contains documents related to the establishment of the first British colony in Australia. Much of Boyd's project revolves around the idea of the collection's 'missing information.' In a video on the residency, Boyd is shown speaking in the museum's library in front of three images from the collection. As the camera pans over a watercolour painting of a snake, Boyd asks questions that cannot be answered by the image, nor by the rest of the archive which only records the perspectives of the colonisers, and not those of the Aboriginal people with whom the invaders made 'first contact'. He says, 'What I'm interested in is the information that's not in this image, how this snake came to be in this picture, did they trade for this snake? Or did they have a guide? What did they trade for?'.<sup>17</sup> The archive as a signifier of this lost information functions as potent proof of its own failure, consulted precisely because it is a material trace of erasure. But similar to Rifkin's gesture of throwing down his dossier of discoveries, Boyd attempts to put distance between his archival source materials and his audience. For his final works, Boyd used copies of images from the archives, first hand painted, and then obscured under a top layer of semi-transparent dots that partially obscure them, a process Boyd describes as a 'reduction of surface information'.<sup>18</sup> The loss found in the archive is replicated for the viewer. Boyd says: 'In the final image, the loss of information, it empowers me, because the viewer is put in a position where they don't have information'.<sup>19</sup> Still, though, the archive figures strongly as original source material, as a place where the artist finds inspiration. In two videos documenting the residency and embedded on the museum collection's webpage, Boyd's process of consulting the archive, of finding it pertinent, useful and revealing, is itself revealed. Moreover these videos are framed almost as a corrective to the colonial archives' omissions. The webpage for the collection on the Natural History Museum site states: 'The perspective of the people invaded was not recorded at the time but is investigated here'.<sup>20</sup> The project reveals an uneasy relationship between seeking knowledge from the archive on the subject of its own exclusions, while evincing a desire to also obscure its contents, to turn away from a narrative of archival revelation. Boyd's final work is not the missing perspective that the archive wishes to compensate for, he does not speculate on the answers to the questions he asks of the images. Instead, he offers up the experience of being confronted with a sense of loss in the archive. At the same time, his process of consulting the archive is laid bare, the loss which his work creates is perhaps somewhat undermined by the project's own documentation, by the way it is being framed by the institution online. And thus emerges an interesting tension, frequently played out as artistic archival research and thus becoming more exposed and documented in these ways: between a research output (the artwork) that obscures the archive, and modes of representing research which reveal and explicate it, reaffirming, perhaps, the archival stronghold on all kinds of research.

In many ways, the ‘careful unfolding of archival research’, which Rifkin referred to and himself refused to perform, is present not only in the construction of academic arguments that weave together archival evidence, but in the proliferation of representations of archival research itself; narratives that have found their place in both academic papers and contemporary artworks, for example, historian Harriet Bradley’s 1999 paper, ‘The seductions of the archive: voices lost and found’, which offers a highly personal and phenomenological account of doing work in the archive, and which stresses ‘the pleasure, seductions and illusions of archival work’.<sup>21</sup> Or work associated with the ‘archival turn’, Tacita Dean’s *Girl Stowaway* (1994), which traces Dean’s journey researching and connecting with her archival source, a photograph of a girl who stowed away on a ship. They exist too, in the various ways research is now documented, on the research or residency blog, which often feature both written descriptions and images of newly found archival discoveries before they have been included in more formal research output. The video of Boyd in the library, explaining how he drew inspiration from the archive. Susanne Keen has called such representations in literary fiction ‘romances of the archive’ which proliferate across a variety of genres.<sup>22</sup> Such works frequently depict a central protagonist ardently searching the archive, and ‘share a preoccupation with the secrets and hidden truths’ that can be discovered in archival spaces.<sup>23</sup> Keen writes how: ‘In the face of postmodern skepticism, this kind of contemporary fiction claims that its world-making can answer questions about what really happened without surrendering its license to invent’.<sup>24</sup> One need only think of the successful book and film franchise, the *Millennium* series by Stieg Larsson, that begins with *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, where adventure and romance seem to emerge directly from a kind of fervent archival searching. Beyond romance and adventure, I’m thinking too of a number of television crime and legal dramas, such as the series *Suits*, where nearly every major plot point is punctuated by someone throwing down a document folder supposed to contain the answer to the problem at hand – I thought precisely of this when Rifkin performed his own dossier throwdown. It is as though all of these fictions of fact-finding fill a kind of void – if not entirely remedying our disbelief in historical truths, such depictions re-inscribe the archive as an important site of discovery. In many ways, Rifkin’s treatment of the archive and his performance of his own relationship to research is also romantic, but the kind of romance that refuses either to offer up the totality of the story, or to unduly focus on the good times. Unlike so many of the representations of archival research, that seem to engender endless amounts of enthusiasm for what the archive can provide and teach, Rifkin gestures towards moments when we may need to turn our back, pretend to ignore, break away or have time apart. Holding up his ‘dossier of lost documents’ for the audience to see inside, Rifkin said:

you can see – completely empty, and what we have to do with that dossier, is to learn how to fill it up. [*Throws the dossier on the floor*] we’ll see at the end if it’s still empty.

With this project – the website and journal – we are attempting to give our research output a different type of frame (or folder). To create an archive of materials that is not always a careful unfolding of archival research. But there are certain things to be careful of – that in attempting to give visibility to the processes of research and practice that we don’t simply fetishize process – construct heroic narratives of doing research. That, too, if

we choose to romance the archive, that we don't always show ourselves to be faithful, kind and patient lovers, that we are willing to show the frustrations, failures, discontinuities, and antagonisms involved. Finally, that if we are going to learn to fill up our own 'dossier of lost documents' then we may need to get thoroughly lost first.

- 1 Rifkin, Adrian. 'A Transcription of Adrian Rifkin's "On Writing the Last Line First (One of Three Possible Titles)".' Transcribed by Yuval Etgar, Jessyca Hutchens, Anita Paz, Naomi Vogt, and Nina Wakeford. *OAR: The Oxford Artistic and Practice Based Research Journal* Issue 0 (2016): 11, <http://www.oarplatform.com/a-transcription-of-adrian-rifkins-on-writing-the-last-line-first-one-of-three-possible-titles/>.
- 2 Harriet Bradley, 'The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found,' *History of the Human Sciences* 12, no. 2 (1999): 107.
- 3 David Greetham, 'Who's In, Who's Out: The Cultural Poetics of Archival Exclusion,' *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 32, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 19.
- 4 Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 'Bharti Kher,' accessed July 25, 2016, [http://www.gardnermuseum.org/contemporary\\_art/artists/bharti\\_kher](http://www.gardnermuseum.org/contemporary_art/artists/bharti_kher).
- 5 Rifkin, 'A Transcription of Adrian Rifkin's "On Writing the Last Line First",' 11.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., 15.
- 8 Rifkin, 'Dancing Years, or Writing as a Way Out,' *Art History* 32, no. 4 (2009): 806.
- 9 Ibid., 807.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Rifkin, 'A Transcription of Adrian Rifkin's "On Writing the Last Line First",' 15.
- 12 Greetham, 'Who's In, Who's Out.'
- 13 Ibid., 4.
- 14 Ibid., 3-4.
- 15 Ibid., 19.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 'First Fleet: Aboriginal Australian artist Daniel Boyd's new installation, Natural History Museum,' 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8AYHgJAVzo&feature=youtu.be>
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Natural History Museum, 'First fleet collection,' accessed July 25, 2016, <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/art-nature-imaging/collections/first-fleet/>.
- 21 Bradley, 'The Seduction of the Archive,' 109.
- 22 Suzanne Keen, *Romances of the Archive in Contemporary British Fiction*, New Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).
- 23 Ibid., 2.
- 24 Ibid., 5.

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# Hearing the Sound of One's Voice

An Audio Response by Nina Wakeford

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Oh may-be what we become  
sick of is not hearing-the-sound-  
of-one's-voice / but hearing  
capture-of-the-sound-of-one's-  
voice / by a certain logic of

expec-ta-tions / logic of nor-ma-  
li-zation / which become that of  
a-ca-deme. [Not art's] e-nun-ci-  
ative powers its / capacity to sus-  
sustain a re-la-tion in the pre-sent.

(Music: Poulenc, Dialogue  
of the Carmelites:  
Voice: Hannah Catherine Jones)

Nina Wakeford is a Clarendon Scholar at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford. She has studied fine art and sociology, and teaches at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is the coeditor of *Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social* (Routledge, 2012), and a co-founder and editor of OAR.

# A Certain Logic of Expectations

Arturo Soto

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'Very, very banal level of thought'



**'There is no evidence for this, by the way. I can't find any evidence'**



'And the truth is I did get lost, I really did get lost'



'Building these fragile, collapsible structures'



'Who knows if I can remember or not remember... I do think I remember'



'My own short sight'



'Side by side, but invisible'

Arturo Soto holds postgraduate degrees in Photography (SVA) and Art History (UCL). He is the recipient of two FONCA grants, as well as scholarships from Jumex and CONACYT. He currently resides in Oxford, where he is a PhD candidate at the Ruskin School of Art.

# Enunciating Film – A Response to ‘On Writing the Last Line First’ in the Form of a Film Program

Dimitri de Preux. Research and program: Dimitri de Preux & Anna Tarassachvili

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The set design of *Mitleid. Geschichte des Maschinengewehrs* (*Compassion. History of the Machine Gun*), Milo Rau’s theatre play produced by the Berliner Schaubühne in February 2016, appears as such: a large screen is placed above the stage, facing the audience. On stage, amongst a set of chairs and a table, stands a camera on a tripod, which two actresses use to record selected moments of their performances. The camera’s images are screened live on the screen, detailing and framing gestures, expressions, and flows of speech.

*Mitleid. Geschichte des Maschinengewehrs* addresses the conflicts at play in Western humanitarian help in post-genocide Rwanda and Burundi. Actress Ursina Lardi plays a Caucasian NGO volunteer worker; actress Consolate Sipérius a Belgian citizen of Burundi dissent and a genocide survivor. In her final monologue, Sipérius examines the notion of vengeance. At first exploring this notion via her personal history, she moves on to quote a piece of collective memory drawn from largely-distributed fiction cinema – the climax of Quentin Tarantino’s *Inglorious Basterds* (2009). Sipérius is present both on stage and on the screen above her as she narrates the sequence in which the Jewish character Shoshanna Dreyfuss screens a vengeance monologue to Nazi officials locked inside a cinema, before burning it to the ground. The oral recollection of that sequence of film shifts into its very re-enactment, given the spatial and cinematic environment in which it is told. Sipérius never impersonates the character or the actions she describes; she never speaks in the first person singular. Rather, she becomes the sequence itself, as the space she describes in her narrative begins to mirror the spatial and cinematic arrangement on stage, with a screen facing the audience. The enunciation of a film, in this instance, becomes haptic and omnipresent, given that everyone present in the theatre partakes in it, willingly or not.

Film, in Adrian Rifkin’s ‘On Writing the Last Line First’, draws on two sets of antagonistic and shifting conditions of being, two indeterminacies regarding its appearance and usage. Narrated in the past tense, Rifkin first recounts how he used to think of film as a salvation media through which he had hoped to save himself from the archival or academic discourses and their enunciative mores. He had planned to interrupt his flow of speech and let film sequences speak for him. He had identified selected instances of film as providers of a ‘perplexity’ effect, which would purportedly place his enunciation into ‘something which is paradigmatically now’, into a present that he struggled to meet

via the 'careful unfolding of archival research'. The enunciative quality of a specific line in Ernst Lubitsch's film *To Be or Not to Be* (1942), the idiosyncratic force of that line when linked to the manner in which it is pronounced, or the unexpected smile on the character of Irmgard's face when she is being offered fresh pears in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Händler der vier Jahreszeiten* (*The Merchant of Four Seasons*) (1971), were all presented as guidelines for attitudes in speaking and being. Rifkin would screen these attitudes, hoping they would become his 'I' 'for a certain moment in [his] enunciation', rightly joining idiosyncrasy and collectiveness, namely the personal and the political, in order to 'place knowledge into a present'. But then, Rifkin tells us that the chosen sequences lost their capacity to escape the archival once they were screened in front of an audience. Once they are reified on the screen, shown one after another, Rifkin labels them as forming a 'dictionary', as 'ruins'. He compares the filmic instances to the archive he has scattered on the floor earlier during 'On Writing the Last Line First'.

In the introduction of the enlarged edition of his book *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, philosopher Stanley Cavell acknowledges the presence of errors of 'content' and 'sequencing' in descriptions of film sequences that appeared in the first edition of his work.<sup>1</sup> Instead of going back to the original sequences in order to correct his imagined recollections, he states that he will not make this archival gesture and will instead allow this false memory of the film to remain. He further explains that the filmic object he is interested in is his personal recollection of film, his enunciation of film, whether his memory differs from the archive or not. The memory of film becomes superior to film as an archival authority. Hence, to access this memory, the narration of film is vital. What becomes interesting for us, therefore, is this enunciation of film by its spectator. In 'On Writing the Last Line First', we are presented first with the expectations of the effects of film, later by their failure. We thus experience the enunciation of film, bribes of re-enactments of sequences that we create in our imagination – a sort of encounter between our own loose memory of Irmgard's smile in *The Merchant of Four Seasons*, Rifkin's re-enactment of the smile, and the explanations of what he wanted to use it for, which, as in Cavell's case, differs from the filmic sequence as archival document.

The second indeterminacy, or shifting condition regarding the usage of film in 'On Writing the Last Line First', relates not to how film is used by Rifkin, but to what it is about film that he would like to enunciate. At first, one might have the impression that Rifkin wishes to replace his enunciation by human attitudes or fragments of narratives recorded on film, from a particular smile to a line of dialogue. But this attempt is only one aspect of the project. 'It's that shot who I would wish to be' he says, 'it's that sequence in that shot'. Rifkin extends the wish to impersonate gestures and speech recorded on film to the desire of becoming the filmic material itself. The paths 'to place knowledge into the present' cannot only materialize through the events, the reactions, and the attitudes that are represented in film. Rather it seems to be the editing and films' capacity for swiftness that Rifkin wishes to become, or that would trigger the perplexity effect he wishes to become. Rifkin's use of onomatopoeia and gestures to evoke or embody quick editing and shot/reverse shots in *To Be or Not to Be* show how rarely filmic properties can be translated into words. 'Everything turns around, so the minute it's gone, you can't remember, it's too swift and too perfect.'

Thus, Rifkin places film in a limbo state where, on the one hand, its showing has failed – for the reasons explained above – and on the other hand, words and gestures do not seem sufficient to recreate every aspect of the filmic effect. But maybe this is exactly where Rifkin wishes to place lost documents, between their presentation and the narration of their incompleteness when they are narrated. We would like to position the following film program (which we were commissioned to imagine) nearby this limbo state, triggered by the two mentioned indeterminacies or shifting conditions of appearance and usage of film as they appeared in ‘On Writing the Last Line First’. It can seem conflicting to respond with filmic material to an enunciation of film where film ended up being absent, ended up being narrated instead of shown (replaced by its narration). But the films in this program are thought of as guidelines or reflective objects on how to enunciate film in its absence, as a set of tools on how to produce film out of its oral enunciation. We like to think of the series as a set of documents which are somehow witnesses to their own filmic format and which incorporate narrative agents who enunciate film as if film were an alien object to their narrative. The selection aims to reflect on how film can function as a method for enunciative acts instead of illustrative or mirroring acts.

Shohei Imamura, *History of Postwar Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess*

(にっぽん戦後史 マダムおんぼろの生活), 1970, 35mm, 105 minutes, Japan.

Real-life Japanese bar hostess Chieko Akaza has been hired by the filmmaker Shohei Imamura to narrate episodes of her life. The film starts when he shows her archival Japanese newsreels, which are also presented in full screen to the viewers of *History of Postwar Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess*. Imamura then cuts back to Akaza. The images which she and we have seen trigger her personal narrative – which she tells facing the camera, in front of a dark and abstract background. All of a sudden, her own stories – from her love life to anecdotes about her job as a bar hostess – are told in a voice-over while a new series of archival newsreels occupy the screen. This time, instead of triggering her personal narrative, the images seem to illustrate or rather somehow ‘universalize’ her individual story. In *History of Postwar Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess*, oral narration and moving images assist one another, confuse one another, and finally contradict one another.

Nicolás Pereda, *Greatest Hits (Los Mejores Temas)*, 2012, DCP,

103 minutes, Mexico, Canada, Netherlands.

In *Greatest Hits*, Nicolás Pereda worked with actress Teresa Sánchez and actor Gabino Rodríguez. In several of Pereda’s previous films, they had played a mother and a son. In *Greatest Hits*, Sánchez and Rodríguez’s roles borrow from the entire gamut of the past roles they have enacted for Pereda. Their performance is not a remake of their past roles, but rather functions as a sort of condensation or an average of several ways of being, or several ways of saying words and sentences, embedded into a new diegesis and life context.

Jean Eustache, *A Dirty Story (Une sale histoire)*, 1977, 35mm, 50 minutes, France.

*A Dirty Story* is split in two parts, clearly separated by the final credits of the first part. In the first section, actor Michael Lonsdale delivers a monologue in front of a small audience of two women and a man, in a comfortable living room. He talks about how he used to peek into women's bathrooms. He talks about how he used to peek into a women's restroom situated in the basement of a restaurant. In the second part, we witness the non-fiction footage of the same narration, this time told not by an actor but by the actual voyeur whose story the film is based upon. In a simple editing gesture, the sequencing – with the re-enactment preceding the original footage – disrupts the standard order of events and their retelling in documentary film.

Alfred L. Werker, *The Reluctant Dragon*, 1941, 35mm, 74 minutes, USA.

*The Reluctant Dragon*, a Walt Disney production, aims to show in detail how an animated Disney film is fabricated in the early 1940s. Shot mostly in non-animated live action, the film narrates the visit of Robert Benchley, an American humorist playing his own role, to the Disney studios. He wants to meet Walt Disney in person in order to suggest adapting the story of a reluctant dragon. Benchley visits all of the film studios' departments and even gets to see the voicing of Donald Duck and the coloring of Bambi. *The Reluctant Dragon* narrates the techniques of fabrication of a very specific type of film (a Disney work) with the means of the very narrative tropes inherent to a Disney film, namely a hero who explores places and encounters characters while experiencing gags and overcoming obstacles.

Charles de Meaux and Philippe Parreno, *Le Pont du trieur*, 2000, 35mm, 74 minutes, France.

The film addresses the conditions of life in the Pamir Mountains, in the Republic of Tajikistan after the fall of the Soviet regime. But *Le Pont du trieur* opens with a French-speaking actor filmed in a Parisian sound recording studio. He emphasizes the rarity of existing cinematic images of the Pamir region. As viewers, before we are allowed to see images taken in the area, we are introduced to a Tajik botanist who is invited into the sound recording studio. He is placed in front of a white screen and is asked to perform a voice-over for the moving images still to be shot in Tajikistan – images which we begin to see halfway through the film.

<sup>1</sup> Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), ix.

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# This is the point for practice based research; If one is possessed by clarity, one is doomed

Adrian Rifkin

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The biography and writings of Adrian Rifkin are available at <http://gai-savoir.net/>

# Call for Responses

O A R is a journal and website which publishes content around artistic and practice based research. We are now calling for proposals from contributors who wish to engage with this issue. We view all our published issues as merely the starting point for further response, dialogue and debate. We invite submissions in any media addressing the current thematic of 'Response' to be published on our website. We hope to encourage a wide range of views, approaches and formats.

## Submitting a proposal

Proposals for contributions and responses, as well as all inquiries about submissions should be sent to: [editors@oarplatform.com](mailto:editors@oarplatform.com)

If submitting a proposal, please include:

- 1 An abstract or proposal (300 words)
- 2 A short biographical statement (150 words)
- 3 Examples of previous work (optional):
  - 3.1 For text-based proposals we recommend submitting one previous piece of writing, or links to works online.
  - 3.2 For multimedia proposals we recommend submitting two images of previous work, or links to works online.
- 4 Please specify whether your proposed response will address an individual contribution or Issue Zero as a whole.

We will notify you if your proposal has been accepted or rejected.

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