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The variational mode: three cases about documents, artworks and animation

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Endplay²⁷⁸

A recapitulation

Are artworks and documents the same thing, according to you? Or, if they are not, can you elaborate on the relationship between them?

Both artworks and documents may be studied as situational and relational modes of existence of objects, insofar as both are based on the use a community makes of them. Both in artworks and in documents, the object is suspended from its everyday use in order to be contemplated, involved in an *other* use. If the status of the artwork and that of the document really share such a mode of existence, research in and through art is able to address the two concepts through an approach that encompasses both.

An artwork, or a document, is not a thing substantial or pre-established, but corresponds completely with the use that one makes of it. Both documents and artworks may be regarded as ‘intensities’, as *modes* of existence of objects – rather than objects ‘in themselves’. Their definition is not therefore ontological, but performative: they need to be *used, animated* in a specific way in order to exist as such.

In my practice, the concepts of ‘use’ and ‘animation’ proved effective not only to study ‘documents’ and ‘artworks’ separately, but also to put forward a *variational mode*, which encompasses both. Through the concept of a *variational mode* I have referred to narrative artifacts capable of acting *both* as artworks and as documents – puppet shows, songs, illustrations, tales, etc.

In my cycle on Simone Pianetti, for instance, the idea of an interchangeability of positions can be applied to documents and artworks. The story of the murderer from Camerata Cornello was not transmitted through official, authenticated documents but, rather, through artistic forms such as flyers or performances by *burattinai* or *cantastorie*. In this specific case, the concepts of ‘document’ and ‘artwork’ are two modes of existence of the very same objects, according to the use one makes of them. I have tried to demonstrate how such *variational* artifacts would be better described – through a bipolar model – as *both* documents and artworks since, in them, the two modes co-exist. Rather than through the categories of history, anthropology or legal studies, ‘research in and through art’ constitutes a powerful way to address this ‘knot’ of documents and artworks, by developing a theoretical and practical approach, able to encompass the concepts of ‘artwork’ and ‘document’, and *use* them, *practice* them at the same time.

²⁷⁸ In order to conclude this dissertation, I would like to answer some questions I have been asked by my supervisors towards the end of the writing process. I will do so by recapitulating some of the points I have addressed throughout the text.

About the notion of narrative: this notion presupposes the perspective of one particular narrator. However, you argue for plural perspectives. Can you explain that?

My practice, as that of a *metteur en scene*,²⁷⁹ includes staging multiple narrations (variations) of a specific fact, for example Pianetti's massacre, for which there is no single, official version. I do not think that the notion of narrative necessarily presupposes a single narrator; rather, I believe that, by studying stories and their modalities of transmission over time, one has to account for multiple variations, multiple ways of telling the same story by different narrators, in different formats, to different audiences.

For example, Pianetti's trial was conducted *in absentia*, since the authorities never caught him. So, they did not provide a single, certified version about his escape. On the other hand, his story was transmitted through unofficial narrative formats, such as *burattini*, *cantastorie* and *fogli volanti*. Those artifacts were able to tell Pianetti's story through intrinsically multiple perspectives, without affirming any official and validated truth, but only *variations*. In my cycle of works on Pianetti, I aimed at presenting his story without hiding the manifold, contradictory narrations through which it had been transmitted over time. As an artist, I aimed to *mettre en scene* – to stage, re-enact, (re)perform – those different narrations, without choosing a single perspective. And I believe that 'research in and through art', compared to other disciplines, has a wider spectrum of potentialities to explore this multiplicity, this openness.

Are you implying that art works narrate something (something else than themselves)?

If we refer to formats as films, puppet shows or radio-documentaries, this may seem evident. But even exhibitions may be conceived, in their entirety, as narrative artifacts, which is what I have tried to do in my solo show *The Variational Status*. However, I am not stating that every artwork is a narrative artifact: clearly, not all art can be described as narrative. The artworks I included in this dissertation, however, were presented and studied in relation to their narrative potential.

²⁷⁹ For a study on the concept of *mise-en-scène*, I remind again to Mieke Bal's study in chapter 3 of *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

I have tried to address this connection between artworks and narrative potential through the notion of a *variational mode*. In cases such as Onofrio's puppet play *Il Vendicatore*, the narrative borne by the artwork (Pianetti's story) and the artwork itself (the puppet play) are inseparable, and therefore are to be studied as a single organism – what I called a *variational document*. A *variational mode* emerges, then, when a document refers to an inaccessible truth and, yet, still documents of its relational, narrative function, without excluding other possible variations, without proposing itself as the sole, official bearer of a single truth.

I believe that the concept of a *variational mode* of documents is important to reflect upon today also from a political perspective, since it sheds light on the use-based character of documents, always open to the potentiality of being revoked, debarred, misused, abused or disused.

An aesthetic reflection on your artistic practice: why, and how are your artworks used in an exhibition?

My exhibition *The Variational Status* was conceived:

- as a 'cutaway view' of a puppet show, with its basic elements exposed and 'exploded' in space (puppet, background, script, props, advertising posters);
- as an overall narrative artifact, where each of the objects was *animated* as part of a single storytelling, distributed in space.

Every element in the exhibition could be regarded as a self-standing artwork in itself, but it acquired its full potential when it was experienced as part of a bigger artwork: a narrative *mise-en scène*, constituted by the exhibition as a whole.

So, to answer the question, my artworks are used to tell stories, and to investigate on the conditions of existence and transmission of stories. In my practice the collection of information, the production and presentation of artworks, the delineation of new concepts are all intertwined. The narrative formats I study (puppets, *cantastorie*, flyers, etc.) are also the very same formats I use in my artworks. That is why I like to think of my artworks as aimed towards what Jan Verwoert calls "a *performative critique*, that is, [...] a practice which criticizes the logic of a medium in the process of using it"²⁸⁰.

²⁸⁰ Verwoert, Jan. "Research and Display. Transformations of the Documentary Practice in Recent Art", in *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art*, ed. Hito Steyerl and Maria Lind (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2018), 204.

What makes you excited in your artistic practice?

I believe that re-enacting, rather than reading or interpreting documents, is a powerful method to identify and study their 'performative' dimension. In and through an artistic practice, I seek to 'revive' documents, rather than simply using them as sources of information. By animating them, blowing new life into them, one has the chance to see these narrative artifacts again *at work*, instead of studying them as dead, inert objects.

So, what makes me excited in my artistic practice? To tell stories, especially if they regard facts for which there is no official version, no certified truth. And to study documents, especially exploring their (often unexpressed) narrative and political potential.

The Theatre of Sleepwalkers

Andrea Cavalletti²⁸¹ in conversation with Riccardo Giacconi

RG: On the morning of 30 October 1911, while in the courtyard of the Cialdini barracks in Bologna, waiting to leave for the war in Libya, the soldier Augusto Masetti shot his rifle at Lieutenant Colonel Stroppa, wounding him in the shoulder. On being interrogated, Masetti would say he had no recollection of the incident, and that for this reason he could not repent. I would like to start off by talking about your book, *Suggestione* (Bollati Boringhieri, Turin 2011), and in particular about this episode, linked to the themes of the book, yet which you actually decided to omit.

AC: Actually, this was the age of amnesia, depersonalisations and suggestion. Around the turn of the 20th century, the cases of double personalities escalated, as well as women or men disappearing or, with no memories of themselves, starting a new life elsewhere. The episode of the anarchist Masetti is part of the panorama, and thus it has roots that go far back. Just as the word ‘suggestion’ itself at the time stood for that which at the end of the 18th century was called ‘mesmerism’ or ‘animal magnetism’, likewise in the loss and doubling of the personality, the old story of possession re-emerged. That said, rather than insisting on the issue of responsibility, I believe it to be more important to highlight the political component of suggestive possession, and its unforeseeableness.

RG: It would appear that in Colombia, a case similar to that of Masetti may have given rise to a marionette figure, known as *el espiritado*. During a series of interviews that I carried out, many of the puppeteers of Bogotá told me that in order to be a good puppeteer, you have to let yourself go to the object that you’re bringing to life. This is a kind of two-way possession: it’s also the object that is animating you. It seems to be a similar idea to a passage found in your book when you write: “The voice of the character is undetermined in that of the magnetiser. Yet at the same time, even the influence of the magnetiser is lost in the genius of the magnetised. A perfect co-existence is created, an unsurpassable duplicity and a total indeterminacy.” I would like you to talk about this idea of a power which, while it acts, must also in some way let itself go. You define it as the paradigm of the uncertainty of power.

²⁸¹ Andrea Cavalletti is Professor of Aesthetics and Contemporary Literature at the IUAV University of Venice. He has published essays on literature, philosophy, political philosophy and urbanism.

AC: Yes, I also draw on the Hegelian theory of the ‘double genius’, according to which activity and passivity are indeterminate. But let us go one step at a time: the great psychiatrist Hippolyte Bernheim stated that everything is suggestion. Then Freud raised his objections: if suggestion is the explanation for everything, what is it that explains suggestion? This wry rhetorical question introduces the need for a new theory: that of psychoanalysis of course. Instead, my book attempts to take Bernheim’s motto seriously: everything really is suggestion, and it is so in the biopolitical/securitarian context that still governs us. The biopolitical model is in fact historically and logically evocative, and this is because ultimately it is not based on anything: or rather, it is based on an uncertainty or a constitutive indeterminacy.

Now, the interpretation of ‘animal magnetism’ that Hegel offers in a few dense pages of the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* (which Jean-Luc Nancy had already dealt with from a different point of view) highlights this aspect. What’s more, these pages are bound together by very close relationships (and by a perfect terminological correspondence) to those renowned ones on the dialectics between the servant and the master. Hence, Hegel illustrates the relationship between the magnetiser and the magnetised starting from the immediate, ‘magic’ link that would seem to bond the foetus, a purely passive being, to the mother, or rather to the maternal genius, capable of influencing the foetus by determining several of its dispositions – in terms of character, for example or also physical, somatic ones. Instead, in the case of the ‘malaise of the soul’ known as ‘animal magnetism’, this relationship with the tangible sphere is exercised by an external individual or genius: thus it is no longer an internal, immediate, magical relationship, but a genuine relationship of the subjection or ‘power’ (*Macht*).

Nevertheless, it is exercised on the same sphere of sensitivity on which the first maternal influx made its impression, the sphere which now lies under the genius or character of the subject, i.e. all that which sediments after birth: habits, inclinations etc. In other words, with regard to the sensitivity of the magnetised, two influences, two geniuses remain: the magnetiser and the character. The influx is thus two-sided: external (that of the magnetiser) and not just external (that of the character), and it is by virtue of this very duplicity that it is impossible to determine whether an action has been induced, favoured, or ordered by one or the other. It’s impossible to establish whether a given behaviour is rooted in character or in external conditioning. The same goes for the magnetiser: despite everything, he will never know whether the sleepwalker obeys him or his own character, and he can never really know whether the subject is carrying out an order or seconding an inclination of his own genius.

There is an insuperable uncertainty or indeterminacy in suggestive power relationships. And it’s for this reason that, in the book, where I do not speak directly about Masetti but about Mario, the figure in the story by Thomas Mann *Mario and the Magician* who kills Cipolla, the hypnotist and magician (the alter ego of Mussolini), I proposed substituting the paradigm of the resistant animated by self-awareness and

free will. To counter the classical reading by Hans Mayer, based on the concepts of free will and resistance, I set out to present an interpretation based on indeterminacy and the ambiguity of the suggestion game. In actual fact, the opposition between will/suggestion is not to be taken for granted. While will cannot generate suggestion, as one of Bernheim's epigones said, suggestion generates will. Which also goes for resistance: this is aroused, provoked by the suggester, who must first of all understand what orders the subject will not carry out and to which, on the other hand, he will be sensitive: while not everyone will do everything, everyone will do something. And so, in order to explain Mario's (or Masetti's) gesture, I tried to illuminate that which is completely outside the magician's control. By animating desires, provoking resistances, he believes he can control the subjects, dominate them and manage an orderly, vertical, hierarchical relationship. In order to be strong, the magician has to believe in his strength and thus he does not recognise the duplicity of genius, nor does he contemplate the possibility that those who appear to carry out his orders are in actual fact following another voice, that nothing is so clean-cut, and that everything in the end is indeterminate and unforeseeable.

That which remains obscure to the suggesting magician instead appears perfectly clear to the puppeteers you mentioned: for them it's a matter of letting themselves go, along with the voice of their own genius and that of the genius-puppeteer – or rather the character – to reach the state of indeterminacy in which puppet and puppeteer are one and the same thing.

RG: In fact, in my conversations with puppeteers, the notion of 'empty space' often came up, of that space to be left free in order for the animation process to take place. I was reminded of the book of the same name by Peter Brook, published in 1968, which opens thus: *"I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged."*

AC: Ultimately, it's an empty space of consciousness, of will: it's the moment in which the sphere of passivity, of the openness to influence and of indeterminacy emerges. Just as the puppeteer may himself be brought to life, it is for the same reason that Cipolla the magician fails: because we don't know who is animating whom, nor do we expect to know it. The political magician – i.e. the dictator as the 'great actor', to cite the definition of Mussolini offered by Camillo Berneri – aims to establish a relationship of subordination and subjection and exercise a form of control about which the puppeteer is rightly unconcerned, instead keeping to the indeterminacy of the suggestive relationship and the duplicity of possession. We might say that the political magician really is, in every sense, a wicked puppeteer.

In Brook's terms, as you rightly understand them, we might say instead that he who stands as a leader or 'great actor' vainly attempts to use his commands to fill what remains an 'empty space' for the real puppeteer. Of course, here we're talking about a theory of inspiration (or indeed of genius), which however reveals – like all our aesthetic concepts – a decidedly political edge. The void in question is an absence of *arché*. Thus the possession of the masses by the leader is countered by the anarchic inspiration of your puppeteers, or of the two-sided, indeterminable geniuses. That's it, we need to become puppeteers, artists, to reach and nourish the duplicity or ambiguity of the genius, the perfect inseparability of subjectivation and subjection, in order not to subject and not simply be subjected ourselves.

RG: How did the idea come about of writing a book on suggestion? It seems to me that, in the political analysis, you're hinting at a lack of reflection on the concept of will, which is not something given but which is constructed.

AC: I might pick up on the idea of will as construction – and as a product of suggestion – from the great French psychologists of the 19th Century: I cite it to contest the theory of Mayer (and implicitly all the theories on will as the first, underivable element on which there was and still is the belief of being able to construct a form of ethics and politics).

Now, the character of Cipolla the magician in *Mario and the Magician*, clearly inspired by Mussolini, is also modelled on the famous Cesare Gabrielli, the hypnotist who performed in Italian theatres in that period, and who is also portrayed in *The Children are Watching Us* by De Sica (the film came out in 1943, and Gabrielli is shown here as a tired figure, in decline, just like the Fascist dictatorship). By the end of the 19th century, however, hypnotisers had put together a canon to be deployed not only in their shows but also in the scientific study of the phenomena of sleepwalking, animal magnetism and hysteria. Charcot, for example, in his theatre-cum-lecture hall at the Salpêtrière, as Joseph Delboeuf noted, put together outright spectacles in which imitation played a key role, and – as his critics would point out – did nothing but copy the model of sideshow hypnotists, with a few variations here and there. And so Mann, in his story, thumbs through the vast catalogue of suggestive techniques offered by figures such as the famous Donato (the genuine founder, of whom Gabrielli was a worthy descendent) and by others, who instead practised their arts in the most prestigious of clinics. In particular, Cipolla uses the alternation of the persuasive invitation and the imperious command, which was a technique developed by Bernheim himself. And as a matter of fact, Mann must have known his theories: if not directly, at least through the essays by Freud (who had in fact been a translator of Bernheim's works), first and foremost through *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921).

The importance of Bernheim, at any rate, is fundamental in all respects. One of the most interesting and contemporary aspects of his theory is the idea that suggestion is not carried out in a precisely vertical manner, but as it were, circular, with a return effect or conditioning, meaning that the suggester issues orders while undergoing the effects of those orders himself. In other words, I command, I can command if I react suitably to the responses of the suggestee. That is, the real order is triggered by the reaction to the order; it's a suggestion which, depending on how it is perceived and on the effect of the return, triggers a certain power game, a game which the suggester may dominate in the measure to which he shows himself to be happily sensitive to the answers. In other words, the commander is the one who is convinced he is commanding. Thus there is no vertical position of power given once and for all; rather, there is a complex relationship, one in which the position of command must be built time after time (just as the will is constructed). The suggester must therefore remain in a state of grace, and it is charismatic power itself that always requires feedback.

We might say that political power works on the basis of this circularity, in which the enchanter is happily the victim of his own charm, in which every suggestion is an autosuggestion, and we might thus explain the role of opinion polls, methods of checking which may help but may also betray, for they are at any rate cumbersome and cannot substitute pure sensitivity and the unconditioned response. This game, which as I said before always remains indeterminable and uncertain, is shown by Mann "under a magnifying glass and in slow motion" (Lukács), rendering it in its micrological dimension.

RG: In that case, it is also a matter of how power acts on an individual level, how the magician Cipolla acts on a specific person.

AC: Exactly. This is the great issue of the relationship between the individual and the collectivity. The young Fromm, for example, pointed out that in Freud (i.e. in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*) this relationship is a pure and simple analogy, i.e. it remains unresolved. In 1884, to give another example, Gabriel Tarde, the master of sociology, the first real theorist of imitation and fashion, defined life in society as a state of sleepwalking ("To have only received ideas while believing them to be spontaneous: this is the illusion to which both sleepwalkers and social man are prey"), stating that in order to explain the phenomena of general imitation, the sociologist must make way for the psychologist, i.e. examine the specific case of the relationship between the therapist and the patient. Tarde was thus able to cite the contemporary theorists of suggestion ("Bernheim et al.") because in his system, the passage from psychology to sociology, from the individual to the collectivity, is only possible on the basis of 'universal sociomorphism', i.e. the idea that everything is immediately social, that every being and every phenomenon is an association (an

imitative one, according to Tarde) of beings and phenomena. But let us consider the Hegelian theory of the 'two-fold genius' from this point of view: not only does the indeterminacy of the influences confuse two geniuses, understood as two individuals, but every order and every response over the long series of collective influences. The command of the magnetiser is confused with other inclinations which come from the 'second nature', from education, from a personal history which is not exclusively personal. Hence there is no two-sided relationship which, be it by multiplying or by analogical transposition, becomes a mass relationship. In actual fact, the suggester is nothing but the spokesman of a much longer-standing power, of a suggestive game which coincides with its own tradition. Bernheim always spoke in terms of previous conditioning.

RG: You write that the totalitarian state is “not only the most lethal, but also the most hypnotic and suggestive,” and that “authoritarian suggestion is the necessary outcome and the never-fading ghost of every state.”

AC: The explanation of Bernheim's words, according to which “everything is suggestion” comes from the history of biopolitics: biopower is suggestive. According to Foucault's thesis, biopower takes care of and is responsible for the living conditions of the population, if it is the power to manage and look after people's lives and do as it wishes with them, rejecting them through death, and totalitarianism is simply its paroxysmal development: it is the most protective power, the one which most takes care of individuals' lives, which most aims to protect them and fortify them; on the other hand, it is also the most lethal power, exposing the population to the risk of death (for death may purify and strengthen the race). What I'm trying to add, as I mentioned before, is that the biopolitical/securitarian system is originally (historically and logically) a suggestive framework, and that totalitarianism (both logically and historically) therefore represents an extreme development of the same devices and techniques of suggestion: it is both the most intensely bio-thanatopolitical and suggestive system.

I cited the book by the philosopher and militant anarchist Camillo Berneri, *Mussolini grande attore* (1934), the first analysis of the 'actorial' performance of the leader. The leading figures of the political scene of the early 20th century in fact used radio shows, cinema and newsreels. After all, their scripts drew heavily on the mass psychologists of the late 19th Century: *The Crowd: a Study of the Popular Mind* by Gustave Bon had become a paradoxically inspiring text, and the underlying concept of these analyses was that of 'prestige'. According to Tarde, the leader is prestigious, and this is enough to make him a leader. It is no coincidence that Cipolla the magician is also an actor, a hypnotiser and a conjurer.

RG: Within this biopolitical horizon, what paradigm did the figure of Masetti represent? I have often examined his vicissitude through the notions of confession, *alethurgia* and *parrhesia*, analysed by Foucault in his last lecture cycles at the Collège de France. If the state deploys a system according to which a subject must ultimately be bound to his own actions, might we then look at Masetti's presumed amnesia as an attempt to question the state-approved device of confession? In his case, a subject is declared separate from his actions by virtue of his being amnesic, ecstatic, out of mind. If at the same time the powers that be wish to reach a truth which links the subject to his own actions, the counterexample of Masetti offers an individual divorced from such actions.

AC: In his last course at the Collège de France, in 1984, Foucault identified a number of examples of modern cynicism in the artist and in the political militant. The issue of the relationship between the nihilist that Foucault refers to and the figure of Masetti needs to be thoroughly investigated. On the other hand, suggestion is a definition of subjects. Just as Foucault said that there are no subjects but processes of subjectivation, we might say – *pace* Bernheim – that there are no subjects but just games of suggestion. These tend to determine, to establish the resistances and thus the weaknesses, the variables of character. The construction of the subject-patient is a sort of dressage, of training, of education. But its very nature is ungraspable and the whole construction may – like in Masetti's case – give way suddenly. Military discipline, which as Jarry said is the final brutalisation in the hypnotic state, may thus give voice to the unforeseeable genius.

Let us go back to Bernheim and to his clinic in Nancy. Is everything really suggestion? Is there really nothing but suggestion? Yes and no. Delboeuf, whom I have already mentioned, shared Bernheim's motto. Like Freud, he made a visit to Nancy and witnessed the remarkable success of suggestive therapy. But he had also recognised that just where everything is suggestion, that is where a non-suggestable subject may actually appear. Bernheim himself. Any way you try to place him under suggestion, says Delboeuf, he shows himself to be resistant: indeed, if the suggester attempted to make him concentrate on something (even then, certain hypnotists used a luminous dot or diadem), he would remain focused exclusively on the technique that the other person was trying to use. I would say that beyond the power dynamics (and death) that bind Cipolla and Mario, Stroppa and Masetti, a different level emerges, one we might define as being of pure technique. A non-suggestive, non-violent level, which Walter Benjamin called that of 'pure means'. To contrast those spectacles propped up by forms of totalitarianism, Benjamin and Brecht actually called on the use of technique. The epic Brechtian theatre draws on a technique capable of destroying the effects of rapture, of fascination on which classical theatre is based. According to Brecht, like to Benjamin, cinema or classical theatre audiences are a

mass in a state of hypnosis, following the leader or the actor in awe. Old theatre – said Brecht – is one of suggestion, while epic theatre is made using arguments.

RG: At the end of the book, you also speak of the idea of tradition in Benjamin, i.e. of a life in which “there are no real masters or leaders, for everything is always education.” Is this just another paradigm to counter suggestive power?

AC: Yes, ultimately it’s the same thing I was talking about before. Benjamin wanted to remove the suggestive figure of the master from education, or rather the hierarchy that separates the teacher from the student, proposing a form of teaching which is at the same time a form of learning (or a form of learning which is also teaching). Like in the book, I’m quoting a letter written in his youth to Gershom Scholem, but the coherence between the Benjamin of a more anarchic inspiration of the 1910s and ‘20s and the heterodox Marxist of the later years is very close. In his major 1921 essay, *A Critique of Violence*, the technique is classed in the sphere of the nonviolent ‘pure means’ (which of course does not mean neutral. While by virtue of its presumed neutrality, the technique irremediably ends up in the hands of the strongest, instead for Benjamin it is a matter of isolating the technique from the *Gewalt*, from power, from violence, from the force of authority). The theme of technique is then taken up again and elaborated from the middle of the ‘30s in the famous essay dedicated to *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* and in those, of course, on Brecht’s theatre. In a very important note to the essay on reproducibility, Benjamin deals with the theme of the suggested mass, of Le Bon, of crowd psychology and of the revolutionary class. The crowd, the raw material of forms of fascism, which is always compressed in a state of both tension and panic, scared and dangerous, with a taste for the thrill of war and willing to partake in racist follies, is countered by an absolutely original notion of class. Indeed, class is not conceived in terms of a mass labour base (factory workers or farmers), but by a destructive moment, one of the dissolution or loosening of the crowd, of the tensions running through it, i.e. as the loosening and distension (*Auflockerung*) of the hypnotised mass.

Now, epic theatre is also a technique of distension, of *Auflockerung*. Just when the audience would tend to follow the story, spellbound, Brecht interrupts it sharply, only to make way for an analysis of the facts. Thus various possibilities are studied: why something happened, what didn’t happen, how and why everything could have gone otherwise... In other words, the story shows the spectrum of possibilities; it is *loosened*, just as the ballet instructor – says Benjamin – loosens the joints of the ballerina to make her carry out unexpected steps. And so together with the story, the audience also relaxes, *loosens up*, i.e. becomes a collaborator, no longer following the show in a state of passivity or almost hypnotic tension: it observes events with detachment and analyses them critically. The ‘fourth wall’ is thus also done away

with, the immaterial wall which physically separates the spectators from the stage, doing away with all boundaries between the dramaturge, the actor and the audience. The revolutionary, as Benjamin in fact said, does not rise up above the masses like a star, but instead is capable of letting himself be continually reabsorbed by them. His is an anti-suggestive performance, based on technique, and the fitting political orientation for him lies in the right technical orientation. In other words, where the fourth wall falls, it is also easy for us to recognise a different declination of the themes of that letter to Scholem on education.

RG: Many puppeteers in Colombia told me that they are interested in Masetti's amnesia: on one hand because it is in some way a paradigm of the practices of the puppeteer; on the other because it may be seen as a 'perfect act of anarchy'. Amnesia attempts to dismantle responsibility, i.e. those mechanisms that the state deploys to bind an individual to his actions. In a short 1964 film in which he is interviewed by Sergio Zavoli, Masetti continues to claim that he can only draw a blank over a period of thirty-six hours, and asks: "How can one repent something he has no memory of?"

AC: Masetti has lost the *compos sui*, the mastery of himself. On the other hand, he finds himself in an army barrack, being subjected to military discipline. An action of *his own*, in that context, would be unlikely: thus in his place there may be nothing but a gap. Masetti's statement is a very fitting and intelligent one, which turns the tables of possession against the very military power which takes control of the lives of others. Furthermore, it also turns around the issue of responsibility or irresponsibility of those subjected to that power, transforming and undermining the sentence "I'm not responsible, I'm just following orders" (making us think here of Eichmann of course with his "it's not me who is not obeying"). In short: seeing as you once wanted to subject me, don't come asking for explanations now. The issue of responsibility and action leaves room for the theme of the unforeseeableness or duplicity which makes them both unassignable.

RG: Masetti was then interned and declared mad by the state which, so as not to turn him into a hero, could not execute him. The judiciary mechanism thus gives way before the psychiatric one; his gesture is transformed from a political act to a 'degenerate' one, or – to use a term typical of Foucault, 'abnormal'. You write that the biopolitical government, as a machine of mass suggestion, "captures the population by drawing a line between the healthy and the unhealthy, the normal and the abnormal."

AC: Yes, and it does so in the name of the categories of consciousness, will and self-control. Instead it would be only fitting to show that consciousness, will and self-control are in actual fact nothing but products of a game of suggestion.

Glossary

An inter-disciplinary, fragmentary, heterogeneous and at times contradictory list of concepts included in the dissertation, conceived both as an imaginary gathering of authors and as a toolbox for the reader.

*“While groping to define, provisionally and partly, what a concept may mean”, Mieke Bal once pointed out, “we gain insight into what it can do”.*²⁸²

*Before her, Theodor Adorno half-jokingly wrote, “the longing for strict definitions has long offered, through fixating manipulations of the meanings of concepts, to eliminate the irritating and dangerous elements of things that live within concepts.”*²⁸³ *It is in this spirit that this list of terms was drawn up, since concepts live “not because they mean the same thing for everyone, but because they don’t.”*²⁸⁴

– anarchism

“(from the Gr. *ἀν*, and *ἀρχή*, contrary to authority), the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government – harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being.” (Pëtr Kropotkin²⁸⁵)



²⁸² Bal, Mieke. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 11.

²⁸³ Adorno, Theodor W. “The Essay as Form”, translation by Bob Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, in *New German Critique*, No. 32 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 160. My emphasis.

²⁸⁴ Bal, Mieke. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 11.

²⁸⁵ Kropotkin, Pëtr. “Anarchism”, in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (London: 1910).

– *animation*

(1) “Odradek. At first glance it looks like a flat star-shaped spool for thread, and indeed it does seem to have thread wound upon it; to be sure, they are only old, broken-off bits of thread, knotted and tangled together, of the most varied sorts and colors. But it is not only a spool, for a small wooden crossbar sticks out of the middle of the star, and another small rod is joined to that at a right angle. By means of this latter rod on one side and one of the points of the star on the other, the whole thing can stand upright as if on two legs. [...] the whole thing looks senseless enough, but in its own way perfectly finished. In any case, closer scrutiny is impossible, since Odradek is extraordinarily nimble and can never be laid hold of.” (Franz Kafka²⁸⁶)

(2) “What if the soul is not a substance, not a “thing,” but a function (not unlike the “zero” in mathematics)? What if “soul” (*anima* in Latin) is another name for the very medium that makes reciprocal exchange possible, for what happens in the very in-between, the event of communication? [...] the *fact of animation* and the *event of communication* are one and the same. There is no being-in-communication that is not also a form of *animation*, even if this is a *negative animation*, the absence of a certain sovereignty and agency, as in the case of “objectification” or “reification.” Animism then becomes the point of departure, the most common thing in the world – a world in which there is nothing outside of the relations that constitute it. Where there is communication, there is *animation*. *Animation* is always a form of entanglement with an environment and with *otherness*. This otherness is incommensurable and can never be fully objectified; it always escapes positivist knowledge to some degree, implicating such knowledge instead within situated practice. This point of departure hence also suggests that there aren’t – there cannot possibly be – non-animist societies. Animism is a different name for the primacy of relationality, for social immanence. [...] Museums make objects to be looked at by subjects – and this is already a “relational diagram” in which one side talks *about* the other.” (Anselm Franke²⁸⁷)

(3) “Marx [...] derives his concept of commodity fetishism as a critique of capitalist culture: the *animate* appearance of commodities provides testimony to the thing-like appearance of persons, appearances that dissolve once it is pointed out that the definitions of man and of society are market inspired. [...] the market system of modern capitalism engenders a marketing mentality in which people tend to be seen as commodities and commodities tend to be seen as *animated* entities that can dominate persons. [...] we attribute to commodities a reality so substantial that they acquire the appearance of natural beings, so natural in fact that they appear to take on a life-force of their own. [...] Man becomes the passive offspring of a power that he himself creates, a

²⁸⁶ Kafka, Franz. “The Cares of a Family Man”, in *The Complete Stories*, translation by Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).

²⁸⁷ Franke, Anselm. “Animism: Notes on an Exhibition”, in *e-flux journal* n. 36 - July 2012, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/36/61258/animism-notes-on-an-exhibition/> (accessed 29 March, 2019).

power that is anthropomorphized and animated to the degree that man denies authorship of his own creation.” (Michael Taussig²⁸⁸)

– *cantastorie*

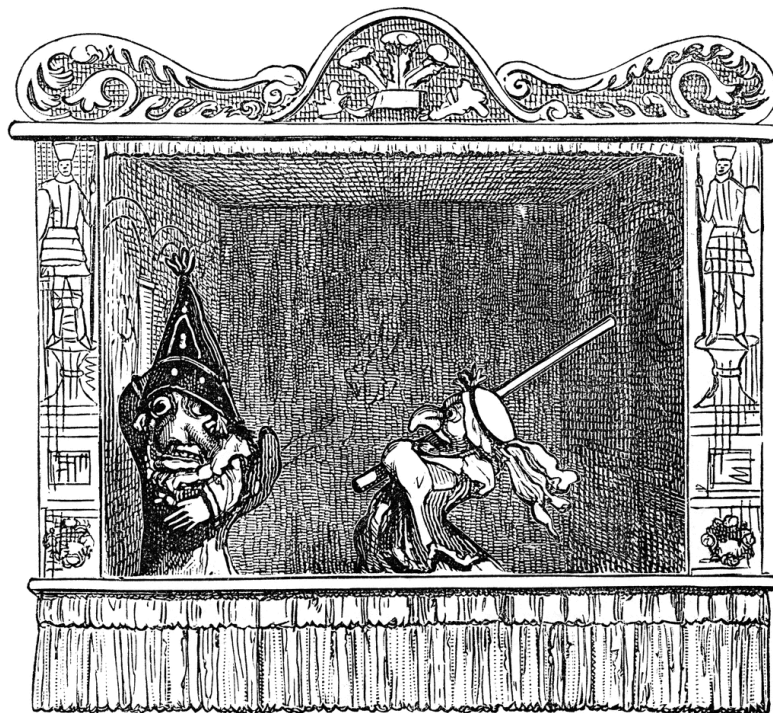
(Italian for “singer-storyteller”): Wandering divulgator, sometimes also composer, of stories in verse, generally with a dramatic or romantic subject. On the occasion of fairs or village festivals, *cantastorie* performed in public squares, often commenting on real events. The *cantastorie* is the heir to the medieval jester, who can be considered the ancestor of the whole family of ‘street artists’, experts in the art of entertaining the audience with music, dance and acting. Due to the advent of modern forms of entertainment (cinema, radio and television) the figure of the *cantastorie* became increasingly rare until it disappeared altogether.²⁸⁹

– *character*

“the combination of traits and qualities distinguishing the individual nature of a person or thing” (Collins English Dictionary²⁹⁰)

* *stock character*

“A stereotyped character easily recognized by readers or audiences from recurrent appearances in literary or folk tradition, usually within a specific genre such as comedy or fairy tale.” (The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms²⁹¹)



²⁸⁸ Taussig, Michael. *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 8, 25-30, 120.

²⁸⁹ See also http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cantastorie_%28Enciclopedia-dei-ragazzi%29/ (accessed 29 March, 2019).

²⁹⁰ *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged*, 12th Edition (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2014).

²⁹¹ <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100533855> (accessed 29 March, 2019).

– **document**

(1) “early 15c., “a doctrine;” late 15c., “teaching, instruction” (senses now obsolete), from Old French *document* (13c.) “lesson, written evidence” and directly from Latin *documentum* “example, proof, lesson,” in Medieval Latin “official written instrument, authoritative paper,” from *docere* “to show, teach, cause to know,” originally “make to appear right,” causative of *decere* “be seemly, fitting,” from PIE root **dek-* “to take, accept.” Meaning “written or printed paper that provides proof or evidence” is from early 18c., hence “anything bearing legible writing or inscription.” (Online Etymology Dictionary²⁹²)

(2) “any concrete or symbolic indexical sign [*indice*], preserved or recorded towards the ends of representing, of reconstituting, or of proving a physical or intellectual phenomenon” (Suzanne Briet²⁹³)

(3) “Any material object that can represent and make known a certain historical fact.” (Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti “Treccani”²⁹⁴)

(4) “How does a text become a document? It has to be certified as a valuable piece of information. Something worth reading and keeping. [...] But what is a text before it becomes a document? Maybe you could call the text in this raw state “material.” [...] our relationship towards documents, as producers or readers, takes on the form of a performance of selection guided by specific interests. Moreover, the certification of a text as a document is based on authority. If you read a document, you know it has been authorized as a document by someone with the authority to do so (usually indicated by a seal or signature).” (Jan Verwoert²⁹⁵)

* **variational document**

Variational documents are narrative artifacts that do not claim an official, validated and certified link to any truth (unlike legal evidence), but which exist as variations on a truth that is inaccessible, and therefore unprovable. Unlike standard documents, a variational document performs its narrative and relational function without excluding other possible variations, without proposing itself as the official bearer of a single truth. Variational documents act outside validation procedures of enforcing institutions of power. *Il Vendicatore*, a puppet adaptation of the story of Simone Pianetti’s 1914 massacre and following events, is an example of a variational document.

²⁹² <https://www.etymonline.com/word/document> (accessed 25 April, 2019).

²⁹³ Briet, Suzanne. *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* (Paris: Éditions documentaires, industrielles et techniques, 1951), 2. My translation.

²⁹⁴ “Qualsiasi oggetto materiale in grado di rappresentare e far conoscere un determinato fatto storico.” See Enciclopedia Treccani, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/documento> (accessed 29 March, 2019). My translation.

²⁹⁵ Verwoert, Jan. “Transformations of the Documentary Practice in Recent Art”, in *The Greenroom. Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art #1*, ed. Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2008), 187-188.

* *travelling document*

A special case of *variational document*: its specificity lies not only on the possibility of other variations, but also on a socio-geographical translation of context. The dual character of Augusto Masetti/*el espiritado* is an example of a travelling document: a document that can be regarded as such only when considered in its drifting nature – an entity encompassing two states and the transition between the two. Only studying a travelling document in its entire trajectory can one unearth information about the two systems of knowledge that the document links, as well as about the connections and disconnections between them. ‘Research in and through art’ is well suited for this kind of endeavour, since not only it can take into account the information about the two contexts inhabited by the travelling document in its dual nature (as a purely historical research would), but it can also study, account for, and use the very forms (narrative and artistic) through which such information has travelled. Using Mieke Bal’s words, the concept can be articulated “precisely through its movement. After travelling, [...] having arrived at its new destination [it] has received a meaning that overlaps neither with the old one [...] nor with the new one”.²⁹⁶

* *pure document (or bare document)*

A hypothetical ‘degree zero of the document’. How to imagine a document that does not document anything, but that keeps its status nonetheless? In which form could a document exist without any link to any narrative to prove, to any hypothesis to validate, to any truth to confirm? What would remain? One option would be to describe this *document of nothing* with the same words used by Scholem in a well-known letter to Benjamin: “it does not signify, yet still affirms itself by the fact that it is in force”. The expression pure document indicates a hypothetical document unlinked to any act of speech, unlinked to *logos*.²⁹⁷

– *documentality*

(1) “Does truth determine politics or politics truth? It is a question of how the production of truth has always been influenced and standardized by social power relations [...] Michel Foucault called this process the “politics of truth”. He describes it as a set of rules that determine the production of truth, distinguishing true statements from false ones, and fixing procedures of the production of truth. Truth is thus always also politically regulated. I call this interface between governmentality and documentary truth production “documentality”. Documentality describes the permeation of a specific documentary politics of truth with superordinated political, social and epistemological formations. Documentality is the pivotal point, where forms of documentary truth production turn into government – or vice versa. It describes the complicity with dominant forms of a politics of truth, just as it can describe a critical stance with regard to these forms.” (Hito Steyerl²⁹⁸)

²⁹⁶ Bal, Mieke. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 39.

²⁹⁷ See Benjamin, Walter and Scholem, Gershom. *Briefwechsel 1933-40* (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), quoted in Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer* (Torino: Einaudi, 1995).

²⁹⁸ Steyerl, Hito. “Documentarism as Politics of Truth”, translated by Aileen Derieg, in *transversal*, Vienna: Eipcp, May 2003. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1003/steyerl2/en> (accessed 29 March, 2019).

(2) “a theory of social objects develops naturally into a theory of the document, understood as an inquire centered on the definition of what I call “documentality”, namely the properties that constitute, in each case, the necessary and sufficient conditions (starting from two very general conditions: being an inscription and being a document or a “documental” thing) to be a social object. At last, there is no society if there are no documents, and documents are records with a particular social value. On this ground, a theory of documentality can develop along three directions. The ontological dimension, answering the question: what is a document? The technological dimension, concerning the means through which documentality can be spread in a complex society. The pragmatic (and forensic) dimension, which concerns the care of documents in a society characterized by the explosion of writing, and in world dominated by information technology.” (Maurizio Ferraris²⁹⁹)

– **documentary**

(1) “To give documentary back its relevance, to enable it to develop the barren space it represents and signifies in its variety, is to first accept that it is not the vehicle of supposed transparency. It means understanding that, contrary to this, documentary only contains opacity and thickness, and that it is in itself object of study, document among documents, link in a process of interpretation offered to the political freedom of the spectator. [...] What it pursues is to bring a substance out into the light. In other words, rather than being satisfied at collecting a so-called intact raw material, which, moreover, would surely have to be brought in a “pure” state from reality to its representation in images and sound, documentaries produce the whole of this material and also the conditions in which it appears. This is why the opposition between fiction and documentary becomes something inoperative, as the two introduce a manufacture of what is visible and intelligible.” (Jean-Pierre Rehm³⁰⁰)

(2) “the closer to reality we get, the less intelligible it becomes. Let us call this ‘the uncertainty principle of modern documentarism’. [...] The only thing we can say for sure about the documentary mode in our times is that we always already doubt if it is true.” “in certain situations the rupture of the documentary image from the bonds of knowledge and power happens. And this event is even capable of paradoxically and temporarily liberating the documentary image from its ties to power, usefulness, pedagogy and knowledge. This truth is not produced. It cannot be calculated, manufactured or anticipated. It becomes a *factum verum*, a true fact precisely by being unmade, so to speak, by happening, being contingent and uncountable. [...] *Factum verum* not only means that facts are produced. Simultaneously it also means: a fact can be true, precisely because it cannot fully be contained by the power relations of its production. [...] It means that some documentary articulations cannot be wholly controlled by dominant discourses. (Hito Steyerl³⁰¹)

²⁹⁹ Ferraris, Maurizio. “Social Ontology and Documentality”, in *Approaches to Legal Ontologies: Theories, Domains, Methodologies*, ed. Giovanni Sartor, Pompeu Casanovas, Mariangela Biasiotti, Meritxell Fernández-Barrera (New York: Springer, 2011), 92.

³⁰⁰ Rehm, Jean-Pierre. “The Plays of the Witnesses”, in *The Greenroom. Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art*, ed. Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2008), 41-44.

³⁰¹ Steyerl, Hito. “Documentary Uncertainty”, in *A Prior* #15, 2007,

– *ecstasy*

(1) “Ecstasy always involves a trance, whether “symbolic” or pretended or real, and the trance is interpreted as a temporary abandonment of the body by the soul of the shaman. [...] Since the “ecstasy” (trance, “losing one’s soul,” losing consciousness) seems to form an integral part of the human condition, just like anxiety, dream, imagination, etc., we did not deem it necessary to look for its “origin” in a particular culture or in a particular historical moment. As an experience, ecstasy is a non-historical phenomenon; it is a primordial phenomenon in the sense that it is coextensive with human nature. Only the religious interpretation given to ecstasy and the techniques designed to prepare it or facilitate it are historical data. That is to say, they are dependent on various cultural contexts, and they change in the course of history.” (Mircea Eliade³⁰²)

(2) “The madness lies in the hidden movements of the hand, the curious impulse and skill by which a person’s hand can make itself into the animating impulse, the intelligence or soul, of an inanimate object —it is an extension of that more basic wonder by which we can let this one part of our body become a separate, articulate whole, capable of surprising its owner with its movements, the stories it tells. I call it madness, but it is perhaps better called an ecstasy. It lies in the hand’s power and pleasure in giving itself over to the demands of the object, our curious will to make the object into an actor, something capable of gesture and voice. What strikes me here is the need for a made thing to tell a story, to become a vehicle for a voice, an impulse of character — something very old, and very early. The thing acquires a life.” (Kenneth Gross³⁰³)

(3) “Sleepwalking is a different state of consciousness. You are not completely conscious. I feel that puppetry is like getting out of yourself in order to be what the puppet needs you to be.” (Liliana Martin³⁰⁴) – see also *possession*

– *evidence*

(1) “in law, any of the material items or assertions of fact that may be submitted to a competent tribunal as a means of ascertaining the truth of any alleged matter of fact under investigation before it. To the end that court decisions are to be based on truth founded on evidence, a primary duty of courts is to conduct proper proceedings so as to hear and consider evidence. The so-called law of evidence is made up largely of procedural regulations concerning the proof and presentation of facts, whether involving the

<http://re-visiones.net/anteriores/spip.php%3Farticle37.html> (accessed 29 March, 2019); Steyerl, Hito. “Truth Unmade. Productivism and Factography”, in *transversal*, Vienna: Eipep, March 2009, <http://eipep.net/transversal/0910/steyerl/en> (accessed 29 March, 2019).

³⁰² Eliade, Mircea. “Recent Works on Shamanism. A Review Article”, in *History of Religions*, Vol. 1, No. 1, The University of Chicago Press, Summer, 1961, 153-154.

³⁰³ Gross, Kenneth. *Puppet: an essay on uncanny life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 9.

³⁰⁴ Interview I recorded in Bogotá, August 2012, with Liliana Martin: puppeteer, founding member of the puppet group “Materile”.

testimony of witnesses, the presentation of documents or physical objects, or the assertion of a foreign law.” (The Encyclopaedia Britannica³⁰⁵)

(2) “Evidence [...] is divided conventionally into three main categories: *oral* evidence (the testimony given in court by witnesses), *documentary* evidence (documents produced for inspection by the court), and “*real* evidence”; the first two are self-explanatory and the third captures things other than documents such as a knife allegedly used in committing a crime.” (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy³⁰⁶) – see also *trial*

* *evidential*

“the group of disciplines which we have called evidential and conjectural (medicine included) are totally unrelated to the scientific criteria that can be claimed for the Galileian paradigm. In fact, they are highly qualitative disciplines, in which the object is the study of individual cases, situations, and documents, precisely because they are individual, and for this reason get results that have an unsuppressible speculative margin: just think of the importance of conjecture (the term itself originates in divination) in medicine or in philology, and in divining. Galileian science, which could have taken as its own the Scholastic motto *Individuum est inefabile* (“We cannot speak about what is individual”), is endowed with totally different characteristics. Mathematics and the empirical method implied, respectively, quantification and the repetition of phenomena, while the individualizing perspective by definition excluded the latter and admitted the former only as mere instrument. All this explains why history never became a Galileian science.” (Carlo Ginzburg³⁰⁷)

– *fact*

(1) “Some philosophers take it to be obvious that if something is true, there must be something that makes it true, a truth-maker. Facts are truth-makers. Like sentences and thoughts, facts are taken to be complex objects. The constituents of (atomic) facts are not words or modes of presentation, but particulars and properties [...] The fact that Socrates is wise exists if, and only if Socrates *is* wise. The sentence “Socrates is wise” is not only said to express the thought that Socrates is wise that is made true by the fact that Socrates is wise, but also to describe the *state of affairs* *Socrates’ being wise*.” (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy³⁰⁸)

(2) “There are people who imagine in good faith that a document can be an expression of reality. [...] As if a document could express something different from *itself*. [...] A document is a fact. The battle is another fact (an infinity of other facts). The two cannot become *one*. [...] The person who acts is *a fact*. The person who tells a story is *another fact*. [...] Every piece of testimony is

³⁰⁵ “Evidence”, in *The Encyclopædia Britannica* (London, 1985).

³⁰⁶ Lai Ho, Hock. “The Legal Concept of Evidence”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2015 Edition: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/evidence-legal/> (accessed 29 March, 2019).

³⁰⁷ Ginzburg, Carlo. “Clues: Roots of a Scientific Paradigm”, in *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 106.

³⁰⁸ Textor, Mark. “States of Affairs”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, first published 27 March 2012: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/states-of-affairs/#FactTrutMakeRegrStop> (accessed 29 March, 2019).

only a testimony of itself; of its immediate moment, of its own origin, of its own purpose, and of nothing more.” (Renato Serra³⁰⁹) – see also *microhistory*

* *alternative facts*

“Two plus two is four. Three plus one is four. Partly cloudy, partly sunny. Glass half full, glass half empty. Those are alternative facts [...] additional facts and alternative information.” (Kellyanne Conway³¹⁰)

– *fiction*

“Against the tendency of postmodern skepticism to blur the borders between fictional and historical narrations, in the name of the constructive element they share, I proposed a view of the relation between the two as a competition for the representation of reality. But rather than trench warfare, I hypothesized a conflict made up of challenges and reciprocal, hybrid borrowings. [...] Fiction, fed by history, becomes material for historical reflection or else for fiction, and so on. This unpredictable intermingling can come together in a knot, or in a name³¹¹ [...] Precisely because it is important to distinguish between reality and fiction, we must learn to recognize when one becomes joined to the other, each transmitting something that we might call *energy*.” (Carlo Ginzburg³¹²)

* *fictocriticism*

“ideas work emotionally and paint a picture of the world on account of the way they are put into language. Today I would say that only literature, meaning fiction and forms of documentary overlapping with fiction – what I have called “fictocriticism” – can do this.” (Michael Taussig³¹³)

* *fake news*

“Wow, so many Fake News stories today. No matter what I do or say, they will not write or speak truth. The Fake News Media is out of control!”

“The Fake News is working overtime. Just reported that, despite the tremendous success we are having with the economy & all things else, 91% of the Network News about me is negative (Fake). Why do we work so hard in working with the media when it is corrupt? Take away credentials?” (Donald Trump³¹⁴)

– *foglio volante*

(Italian for “flyer”): printed flimsy flyer containing the lyrics of the song, usually performed by a *cantastorie*. As well as words, there were often one or more illustrations summing up the main theme of the song: they were either vignettes printed on the top or single pictures placed to the side of the lyrics.³¹⁵

³⁰⁹ Serra, Renato. *Scritti letterari, morali e politici*, ed. Mario Isnenghi (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), 286-287. My translation.

³¹⁰ Nuzzi, Olivia. “Kellyanne Conway Is the Real First Lady of Trump's America”, in *Daily Intelligencer*, March 2017.

³¹¹ Ginzburg, Carlo. *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive*, trans. Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 2-4.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 136.

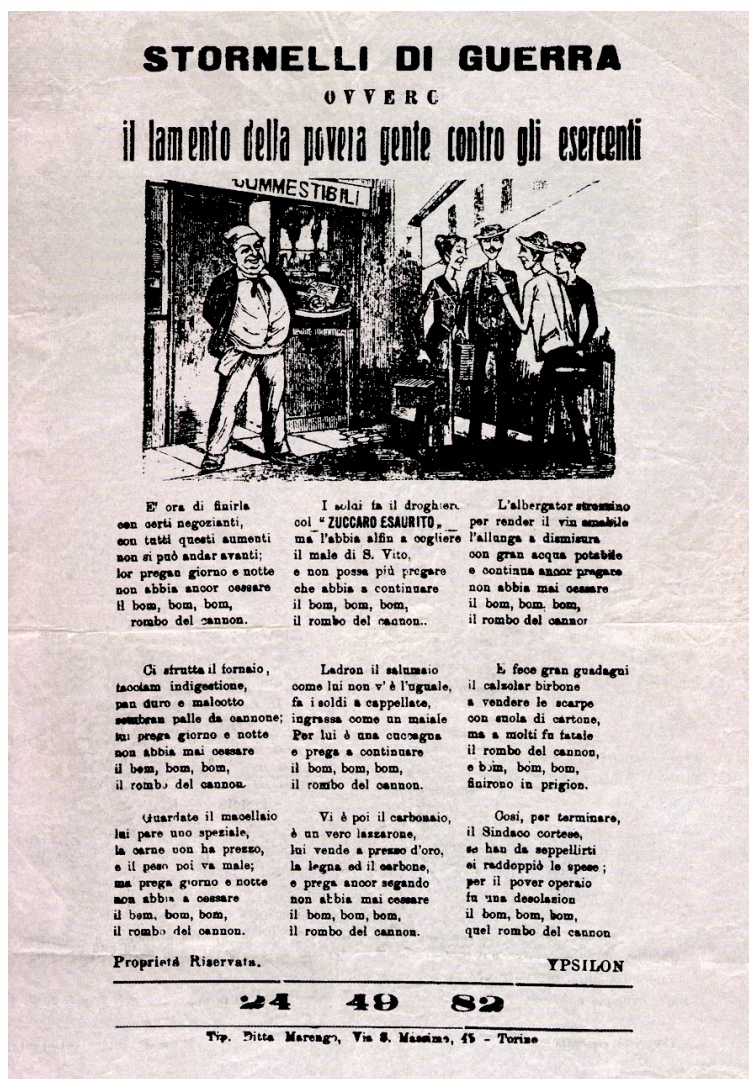
³¹³ Taussig, Michael. “Preface to the Thirtieth Anniversary Edition”, in *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), xii.

³¹⁴ Trump, Donald. Twitter posts, 4 Oct 2017, 4:29 AM and 9 May 2018, 4:38 AM,

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/915539424406114304> and

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/994179864436596736> (accessed 26 March, 2019).

³¹⁵ See also Leydi, Roberto and Vinati, Paolo. *Tanti fatti succedono al mondo: fogli volanti nell'Italia settentrionale dell'Otto e del Novecento* (Brescia: Grafo, 2001).



– force

(1) “When the consciousness of the latent presence of force [*Gewalt*] in a legal institution disappears, the institution falls into decay. [...] Lawmaking is powermaking, assumption of power, and to that extent an immediate manifestation of force. [...] For from the point of view of force, which alone can guarantee law, there is no equality, but at the most equally great force.” (Walter Benjamin³¹⁶)

(2) “If the gunman is the paradigmatic instance of force outside the law, interpretation is the force that resides within the law, and like the gunman it

³¹⁶ Benjamin, Walter. “Critique of Violence”, in *Selected Writings Volume 1 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 244, 248, 249. Benjamin’s term is *Gewalt*, which means both “violence” and “force.” Here I preferred to use “force”, since violence, etymologically, indicates an excess of force, but such excess implies the existence of limits. If law is itself the origin of such limits, *Gewalt* intrinsic to law cannot be “excessive”, since it precedes the limits imposed by law. Derrida: “*Gewalt* also signifies, for Germans, legitimate power, authority, public force. *Gesetzgebende Gewalt* is legislative power, *geistliche Gewalt* the spiritual power of the church, *Staatsgewalt* the authority or power of the state. *Gewalt*, then, is both violence and legitimate power, justified authority.” Derrida, Jacques. *Force of Law*, p. 234.

must be regulated and policed lest it subvert the law's claim to enact the dictates of general principles of justice and equity. [...] a mechanism is proposed with the claim that it will keep force – whether in the form of the gunman or the interpreter – at bay; and in each instance force turns out to be the content of the mechanism designed to control it. [...] The force of the law is always and already indistinguishable from the forces it would oppose. Or to put the matter another way: there is always a gun at your head. Sometimes the gun is, in literal fact, a gun. Sometimes it is a reason, an assertion whose weight is inseparable from some already assumed purpose. Sometimes it is a desire, the urging of a state of affairs to which you are already predisposed. Sometimes it is a need you already feel. Sometimes it is a name – country, justice, honor, love, God – whose power you have already internalized. Whatever it is, it will always be a form of coercion, of an imperative whose source is an interest which speaks to the interest in you.” (Stanley Fish³¹⁷)

(3) “Legal interpretive acts signal and occasion the imposition of violence upon others: A judge articulates her understanding of a text, and as a result, somebody loses his freedom, his property, his children, even his life. [...] When interpreters have finished their work, they frequently leave behind victims whose lives have been torn apart by these organized social practices of violence. Neither legal interpretation nor the violence it occasions may be properly understood apart from one another. [...] The judges deal pain and death. [...] From John Winthrop through Warren Burger they have sat atop a pyramid of violence [...] Legal interpretation is (1) a practice activity, (2) designed to generate credible threats and actual deeds of violence, (3) in an effective way.” (Robert M. Cover³¹⁸)

(4) “law is always an authorized force, a force that justifies itself or is justified in applying itself, even if this justification may be judged from elsewhere to be unjust or unjustifiable. No law without force, as Immanuel Kant recalled with the greatest rigor. [...] there is no law that does not imply *in itself, a priori, in the analytic structure of its concept*, the possibility of being “enforced,” applied by force. [...] the operation that amounts to founding, inaugurating, justifying law, to *making law*, would consist of a *coup de force*, of a performative and therefore interpretative violence that in itself is neither just nor unjust and that no justice and no earlier and previously founding law, no pre-existing foundation, could, by definition, guarantee or contradict or invalidate.” (Jacques Derrida³¹⁹) – see also *institution*

– *history*

“There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far

³¹⁷ Fish, Stanley. “Force”, in *Washington and Lee Law Review*, Number 3, Volume 45, Summer 1988, 885, 895, 898.

³¹⁸ Cover, Robert. “Violence and the Word”, in *Violence. A Reader*, ed. Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 293, 298.

³¹⁹ Derrida, Jacques. “Force of Law. The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority’”, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 1992), 233, 241.

as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.”
(Walter Benjamin³²⁰)

* **microhistory**

“Tolstoy leaps over the inevitable gap between the fragmentary and distorted traces of an event (a battle, for instance) and the event itself. But this leap, this direct contact with reality, can take place only on the terrain of invention. It is precluded by definition from the historian, who has at his disposal only fragments of things and documents. The historiographical frescoes that seek to communicate to the reader, through frequently mediocre expedients, the illusion of a vanished reality tacitly remove this constituent limitation of the historical vocation. Microhistory chooses the opposite approach. It accepts the limitations while exploring their gnoseological implications and transforming them into a narrative element.” (Carlo Ginzburg³²¹) – see also **fact**

– **institution**

(1) “a complex of positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organising relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment.” (Jonathan Turner³²²)

(2) What makes a discourse a philosophical discourse and not just a political discourse is that when it poses the question of the *politeia* (of the political institution, of the distribution and organization of relations of power), at the same time it poses the question of truth and true discourse on the basis of which these relations of power and their organization will be able to be defined, and it also poses the question of the *ethos*, that is to say, of the ethical differentiation to which these political structures can and must give space. (Michel Foucault³²³)

(3) “if there is no outside for us, it is not because the institution is perfectly closed, or exists as an apparatus in a “totally administered society,” or has grown all-encompassing in size and scope. It is because the institution is inside of us, and we can’t get outside of ourselves.” (Andrea Fraser³²⁴)

(4) “A legal world is built only to the extent that there are commitments that place bodies on the line. The torture of the martyr is an extreme and repulsive form of the organized violence of institutions. It reminds us that the interpretive commitments of officials are realized, indeed, in the flesh. As long as that is so, the interpretive commitments of a community which resists

³²⁰ Benjamin, Walter. “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, in *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, transl. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 256-257.

³²¹ Ginzburg, Carlo. “Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It”, in *Threads and Traces. True False Fictive*, trans. Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2012), 209.

³²² Turner, Jonathan. *The Institutional Order* (New York: Longman, 1997), 6.

³²³ Foucault, Michel. *Le Courage de la vérité. Le gouvernement de soi et des autres II. Cours au Collège de France (1984)* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2009). Lecture of 8 February 1984.

³²⁴ Fraser, Andrea. “From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique,” in *Artforum* n. 44, September 2005, 282.

official law must also be realized in the flesh, even if it be the flesh of its own adherents.” (Robert M. Cover³²⁵) – see also *force*

– *intensity*

(1) “I divide the field of experience into two main categories: substances on one hand, and on the other hand, intensity. As for substances, it is possible to establish their boundaries, to define their themes and subject, to trace their cartography; intensity, on the other hand, doesn’t have a unique place. [...] Philosophy – thought – is in this sense an intensity that can activate, animate and run through any field. It shares this character of tension with politics. Even politics is an intensity; even politics [...] doesn’t have a unique place: it is evident, not only in recent history, that suddenly religion, economics and even aesthetics may acquire a decisive political intensity, and become an occurrence of hostility and strife. It goes without saying that intensities are more interesting than essences. [...]

Philosophy isn’t a substance, but an intensity that can suddenly animate any field: art, religion, economics, poetry, passion, love, even boredom. It resembles something like the wind, the clouds, or a storm: like these, it suddenly shakes, transforms and even destroys the place where it takes place, but just as unpredictably, it passes and disappears. [...] I have always thought that philosophy and poetry aren’t two separate substances, but two intensities that animate the same field of language in two opposite directions: pure sense and pure sound. There’s no poetry without thought, just as there’s no thought without a poetic moment.” (Giorgio Agamben³²⁶)

(2) “the essential in univocity is not that Being is said in a single and same sense, but that it is said, in a single and same sense, of all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities. Being is the same for all these modalities, but these modalities are not the same. [...] The essence of univocal being is to include individuating differences, while these differences do not have the same essence and do not change the essence of being – just as white includes various intensities, while remaining essentially the same white.” (Gilles Deleuze³²⁷)

– *mode*

(1) “Mode is [...] an affection of the thing, «which determines its ultimate state and its reason for existing, without, however, adding to it a new essence but only by modifying it». [...] it is a question of defining a paradoxical state of being, insofar as it is totally deprived of an essence of its own and yet is really distinct from that to which it adheres as a mode, namely, by modifying it. [...] «modal being cannot subsist by itself nor be separated from that of which it is a mode» [...] We are accustomed to think in a *substantival* way, while mode has a constitutively *adverbial* nature, it expresses not “what” but “how” being is. [...] Common nature and singularity, essence and existence are only the two appearances generated by the incessant *ductus* of substance.

³²⁵ Cover, Robert. “Violence and the Word”, in *Violence. A Reader*, ed. Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 295.

³²⁶ Giorgio Agamben interviewed by Antonio Gnoli. “Credo nel legame tra filosofia e poesia. Ho sempre amato la verità e la parola”, in *La Repubblica*, Milano, 15 May 2016. My translation.

³²⁷ Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2001), 36.

And singular existence – the mode – is neither a substance nor a precise fact but an infinite series of modal oscillations, by means of which substance always constitutes and expresses itself. [...] Mode expresses this “rhythmic” and not “schematic” nature of being: being is a flux, and substance “modulates” itself and beats out its rhythm – it does not fix and schematize itself – in the modes. Not the individuating of itself but the beating out of the rhythm of substance defines the ontology that we are here seeking to define.” (Giorgio Agamben³²⁸)

(2) “I considered the theory of narrative a relevant area of study precisely because it is *not* confined to any one academic discipline. For narrative is a mode, not a genre. It is alive and active as a cultural force, not just as a kind of literature. It constitutes a major reservoir of the cultural baggage that enables us to make meaning out of a chaotic world and the incomprehensible events taking place in it. And, not to be forgotten, narrative can be used to manipulate. In short, it is a cultural force to be reckoned with.” (Mieke Bal³²⁹)

– *narrative*

(1) “any report of connected events, real or imaginary, presented in a sequence of written or spoken words, and/or still or moving images” (Wikipedia³³⁰)

(2) We currently use the word *narrative* without paying attention to, even at times without noticing, its ambiguity, and some of the difficulties of narratology are perhaps due to this confusion. [...] A first meaning [...] has narrative refer to the narrative statement, the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events [...] A second meaning [...] has *narrative* refer to the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of this discourse. A third meaning [...] has narrative refer [to] the event that consists of someone recounting something: the act of narrating taken in itself. [...]

I propose [...] to use the word *story* [‘histoire’] for the signified or narrative content [...], to use the word narrative [‘récit’] for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself, and to use the word *narrating* [‘narration’] for the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place. [...] Story and narrating thus exist for me only by means of the intermediary of the narrative. But reciprocally the narrative (the narrated discourse) can only be such to the extent that it tells a story, without which it would not be narrative [...], and to the extent that it is uttered by someone, without which (like, for example, a collection of archeological documents) it would not in itself be a discourse. As narrative, it lives by its relationship to the story that it recounts; as discourse, it lives by its relationship to the narrating that utters it. Analysis of narrative discourse will thus be for me, essentially, a study of the relationships between narrative and story, between narrative and narrating, and (to the extent that

³²⁸ Agamben, Giorgio. *The Use of Bodies: Homo Sacer IV*, 2, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 155, 164, 172-173. Agamben quotes Francisco Suárez, in *Francisci Suárez e Societate Jesu Opera omnia*, vol. 25 (Paris: Ludovicum Vivès, 1861), 256, 263.

³²⁹ Bal, Mieke. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 24, 25.

³³⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative> (accessed March 29, 2019).

they are inscribed in the narrative discourse) between story and narrating. (Gérard Genette³³¹) – see also *story*

* *narrative artifact*

“a *text* is a finite, structured whole composed of language signs. [...] A *narrative text* is a text in which an agent relates (‘tells’) a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof. A *story* is a fabula that is presented in a certain manner. A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors. An *event* is the transition from one state to another state. *Actors* are agents that perform actions. *To act* is defined here as to cause or to experience an event. [...] Since ‘text’ refers to narratives in any medium, I will use this word with an emphasis on the structuredness, not the linguistic nature of it; to keep this in mind I will use it interchangeably with ‘*artifact*’”. (Mieke Bal³³²) – see also *form*

– *past*

(1) “What really matters about the past is what we cannot remember. The rest, what memory conserves or retrieves, is mere sediment. A part of time passed has really become part, like a digested nutrient, of the living organism; it continues to be past but it is the only true living past and it lives in the brain and the blood, ignored by memory.” (Furio Jesi³³³)

(2) “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” (William Faulkner³³⁴)

(3) “Memory is not a record of a fixed past that can ever be fully or simply erased, written over, or recovered. [...] And remembering is not a replay of a string of moments, but an enlivening and reconfiguring of past and future that is larger than any individual. Remembering and re-cognizing do not take care of, or satisfy, or in any other way reduce one’s responsibilities; rather, like all intra-actions, they extend the entanglements and responsibilities of which one is a part. The past is never finished. It cannot be wrapped up like a package, or a scrapbook, or an acknowledgment; we never leave it and it never leaves us behind.” (Karen Barad³³⁵)

– *performative*

“To name the ship is to say (in the appropriate circumstances) the words ‘I name, &c.’. When I say, before the registrar or altar, &c., ‘I do’, I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it. What are we to call a sentence or an utterance of this type? I propose to call it a performative sentence or a performative utterance, or, for short, ‘a performative’. The term ‘performative’ will be used in a variety of cognate ways and constructions, much as the term

³³¹ Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 25-29.

³³² Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997, second edition), 5-6.

³³³ Jesi, Furio. *Spartakus. The Symbolology of Revolt*, ed. Andrea Cavalletti, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Seagull Books, 2014), 119.

³³⁴ Faulkner, William. *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random House, 1951), 73.

³³⁵ Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), ix.

‘imperative’ is. The name [...] indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something.” (J. L. Austin³³⁶)

– *possession*

“The modernist subject preferred to conceive of itself as the *active* figure facing a *passive* world of matter that is acted upon. [...] Consequently, the most abject figure of savagery to the modern subject – the symptom of the exclusion and asymmetry – was “possession”, the condition of passive experience where the subject fully became a medium, and was fundamentally made, animated, and moved. [...] Animism was explained by a primitive incapacity to distinguish between object and subject, reality and fiction, the inside and the outside, which allegedly led primitive people to project human qualities onto objects.” (Anselm Franke³³⁷) – see also *ecstasy*

– *power*

“power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised, and [...] it only exists in action. [...] power is not primarily the maintenance and reproduction of economic relations, but is above all a relation of force. [...] power is properly speaking the way in which relations of forces are deployed and given concrete expression”.

“Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. [...] One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society”. (Michel Foucault³³⁸)

– *pre-political*

“the world of people who neither write nor read many books – often because they are illiterate –, who are rarely known by name to anybody except their friends, and then often only by nickname, who are normally inarticulate, and rarely understood even when they express themselves. Moreover, they are *pre-political* people who have not yet found, or only begun to find, a specific language in which to express their aspirations about the world. Though their movements are thus in many respects blind and groping, by the standards of modern ones, they are neither unimportant nor marginal. [Such] men and women form the large majority in many, perhaps in most, countries even today, and their acquisition of political consciousness has made our century the most revolutionary in history. For this reason the study of their movements is not merely curious, or interesting, or moving for anyone who cares about the fate of men, but also of practical importance.” (Eric Hobsbawm³³⁹)

³³⁶ Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 6-7.

³³⁷ Franke, Anselm. “Animism: Notes on an Exhibition”, in *e-flux journal* n. 36 - July 2012, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/36/61258/animism-notes-on-an-exhibition/> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³³⁸ Foucault, Michel. “Lecture 7 January 1976”, in *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books 1980), 89-90; Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 93.

³³⁹ Hobsbawm, Eric. *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 2-3.



– *puppet*

(1) “Characters human and inhuman, close to objects. What looks like a wooden block or ball, a bundle of rags, a thin silhouette of perforated leather, assumes a voice and personality. In the right hands, a mere strip of paper moved by a string, yielded to accidents of air, can do it. All acquire intentions, what looks like will, even if this belongs to things we think can have no will. All acquire different souls and spirits, all have different stories to tell. [...] The word derives from the Latin *pupa*, for little girl or doll, a word still used in entomology to describe the mysterious, more passive middle stage of an insect’s metamorphosis, as the larva is covered in a chrysalis, and awaits reemergence as a winged thing. [...] English Protestant reformers employed the word to mock the Roman Catholic use of images and relics, the ceremony of the Mass, indeed, the whole architecture of Catholic ritual. The homemade dolls found in the possession of accused witches, allegedly used to inflict harm by magic, were also called puppets.” (Kenneth Gross³⁴⁰)

(2) “Male plantation workers sometimes make secret contracts with the devil in order to increase productivity, and hence their wage. Furthermore, it is believed that the individual who makes the contract is likely to die prematurely and in great pain. While alive, he is but a puppet in the hands of the devil, and the money obtained from such a contract is barren. [...] The contract is supposed to be made in the deepest secrecy, individually, and with the aid of a sorcerer. A small anthropomorphic figurine, referred to as a *muñeco* (doll), is prepared, usually from flour, and spells are cast.” (Michael Taussig³⁴¹)

³⁴⁰ Gross, Kenneth. *Puppet: an essay on uncanny life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 10-11.

³⁴¹ Taussig, Michael. *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 94-95.

(3) “Ernst Kantorowicz argued that the figurines exhibited at the funerals of English and French sovereigns gave palpable expression to the legal doctrine of the king’s double body; The effigy was the eternal body of the king inasmuch as he was associated with a public institution (*dignitas*); the corpse was his ephemeral body inasmuch as he was an individual.” (Carlo Ginzburg³⁴²)

* *burattino*

(Italian for “hand puppet” or “glove puppet”): “a doll with a hollow head of a person or animal and a cloth body; intended to fit over the hand and be manipulated with the fingers”³⁴³.

* *marionette*

(1) “also called “string puppet”, any of several types of puppet figures manipulated from above by strings or threads attached to a control. In a simple marionette, the strings are attached in nine places: to each leg, hand, shoulder, and ear and at the base of the spine. By adding strings, more sensitive control of movement is achieved. Among European puppets, marionettes are considered the most delicate and difficult to master; some are capable of imitating almost every human and animal action.” (The Encyclopaedia Britannica³⁴⁴)

(2) “as the image in a concave mirror turns up again right in front of us after dwindling into the distance, so grace itself returns when knowledge has as it were gone through an infinity. Grace appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness. That is, in the puppet or in the god.” (Heinrich von Kleist³⁴⁵)

– *relational*

(1) “*Reality is relational*. [Quantum mechanics] does not describe things as they are: it describes how things occur and how they interact with each other. It doesn’t describe where there is a particle but how the particle shows itself to others. The world of existent things is reduced to a realm of possible interactions. Reality is reduced to interaction. Reality is reduced to relation.” “we must not confuse what we know about a system with the absolute state of the same system. What we know is something concerning the relation between the system and ourselves. Knowledge is intrinsically relational; it depends just as much on its object as upon its subject. The notion of the ‘state’ of a system refers, explicitly or implicitly, to another system. Classical mechanics misled us into thinking that we could do without taking account of this simple truth, and that we could access, at least in theory, a vision of reality entirely independent of the observer. But the development of physics has shown that, at the end of the day, this is impossible.”

“The physical world is thus seen as a net of interacting components, where there is no meaning to the state of an isolated system. A physical system (or,

³⁴² Ginzburg, Carlo. “Representation”, in *Wooden Eyes: Nine Reflections on Distance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 64.

³⁴³ <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/it/burattino> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁴⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/art/marionette> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁴⁵ Kleist, Heinrich von. “Über das Marionettentheater”, in *Berliner Abendblätter*, Berlin, 12-15 January 1810 (English translation: “Essay on the puppet theatre”, in *Partisan Review*, January-February 1947).

more precisely, its contingent state) is reduced to the net of relations it entertains with the surrounding systems, and the physical structure of the world is identified as this net of relationships.” (Carlo Rovelli³⁴⁶)

(2) “A *medium*, however, is not a *realm*, because its distinctively spatial quality – its status “in between” – indicates that it can never be construed as self-contained or self-regulating. Rather, it is relational and situational, depending decisively on alien or extraneous instances that, in the case of theater, are generally identified with the spectators or audiences.” (Samuel Weber³⁴⁷) – see also *situational*

– *research*

(1) “a detailed study of a subject, especially in order to discover (new) information or reach a (new) understanding” (Cambridge Dictionary³⁴⁸)

(2) “«Research» [...] is to be understood as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.” (Research Assessment Exercise³⁴⁹)

* *artistic research*

(1) “Art practice – both the art object and the creative process – embodies situated, tacit knowledge that can be revealed and articulated by means of experimentation and interpretation. [...] Art practice qualifies as research if its purpose is to expand our knowledge and understanding by conducting an original investigation in and through art objects and creative processes. Art research begins by addressing questions that are pertinent in the research context and in the art world. Researchers employ experimental and hermeneutic methods that reveal and articulate the tacit knowledge that is situated and embodied in specific artworks and artistic processes. Research processes and outcomes are documented and disseminated in an appropriate manner to the research community and the wider public.” (Henk Borgdorff³⁵⁰)

³⁴⁶ Rovelli, Carlo. *Reality Is Not What It Seems: The Journey to Quantum Gravity*, trans. Simon Carnell and Erica Segre (New York: Riverhead Books, 2017), 91, 170; Rovelli, Carlo and Laudisa, Federico. “Relational Quantum Mechanics”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2013 Edition <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/qm-relational/> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁴⁷ Weber, Samuel. *Theatricality as Medium* (Fordham University Press, New York, 2004), 43.

³⁴⁸ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/research> (accessed 29 March 2019). According to the same dictionary: “Study: to learn about a subject, especially in an educational course or by reading books”, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/study> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁴⁹ The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is conducted jointly by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DEL). The RAE is managed by the RAE team, based at HEFCE, on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies. Research Assessment Exercise, “RAE 2008: Guidance on Submissions” <http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2005/03/rae0305.pdf> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁵⁰ Borgdorff, Henk. *The Conflict of the Faculties. Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012), 53.

(2) “a claim to specificity clashes with a claim to singularity. What does this mean? One aspect of the work claims to participate in a general paradigm, within a discourse that can be shared and which is manufactured according to certain criteria. More often than not, scientific, legalistic or journalistic truth procedures underly this method of research. These methodologies are pervaded by power relations as many theorists have demonstrated. On the other hand, artistic research projects in many cases also lay claim to singularity. They create a certain artistic set up, which claims to be relatively unique and produces its own field of reference and logic. This provides it with a certain autonomy, in some cases an edge of resistance against dominant modes of knowledge production. [...] While specific methods generate a shared terrain of knowledge – which is consequently pervaded by power structures – singular methods follow their own logic. While this may avoid the replication of existing structures of power/knowledge, it also creates the problem of the proliferation of parallel universes, which each speak their own, untranslatable language. Practices of artistic research usually partake in both registers, the singular as well as the specific; they speak several languages at once.” (Hito Steyerl³⁵¹)

*** *research in and through art***

“The exceptional thing about research in and through art is that practical action (the making) and theoretical reflection (the thinking) go hand in hand. The one cannot exist without the other, in the same way action and thought are inextricably linked in artistic practice. This stands in contradistinction to ‘research *into* art’, such as art history and cultural studies.” (Janneke Wesseling³⁵²)

*** *practice as research***

“Practice as Research involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, in respect of the arts, a practice (creative writing, dance, musical score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice) is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry.” (Robin Nelson³⁵³)

– *responsibility*

“The Latin verb *spondeo*, which is the origin of our term “responsibility,” means “to become the guarantor of something for someone (or for oneself) with respect to someone.” [...] In archaic Roman law, in fact, the custom was that a free man could consign himself as a hostage – that is, in a state of imprisonment, from which the term *obligatio* derives – to guarantee the compensation of a wrong or the fulfillment of an obligation. The gesture of assuming responsibility is therefore genuinely juridical and not ethical. It expresses nothing noble or luminous, but rather simply obligation, the act by

³⁵¹ Steyerl, Hito. “Aesthetics of Resistance? Artistic Research as Discipline and Conflict”, in *transversal*, Vienna: Eipcp, January 2010. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0311/steyerl/en> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁵² Wesseling, Janneke. “Introduction”, in *See It Again, Say It Again: The Artist as Researcher*, ed. Janneke Wesseling (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2011), 2.

³⁵³ Nelson, Robin. “Introduction: The What, Where, When and Why of ‘Practice as Research’”, in *Practice as Research in the Arts. Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, ed. Robin Nelson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 8-9.

which one consigned one-self as a prisoner to guarantee: a debt in a context in which the legal bond was considered to inhere in the body of the person responsible.” (Giorgio Agamben³⁵⁴)

– *revolt*

“I use the word *revolt* to designate an insurrectional movement that differs from revolution. The difference between *revolt* and revolution should not be sought in their respective aims; they can both have the same aim – to seize power. What principally distinguishes *revolt* from revolution is, instead, a different experience of time. If, following the ordinary meaning of the two words, *revolt* is a sudden insurrectional explosion, which can be placed within a strategic horizon but which does not in itself imply a long-distance strategy, and revolution is a strategic complex of insurrectional movements, coordinated and oriented over the mid- to long term towards ultimate objectives, then we could say that *revolt* suspends historical time. It suddenly institutes a time in which everything that is done has a value in itself, independently of its consequences and of its relations with the transitory or perennial complex that constitutes history. Revolution would, instead, be wholly and deliberately immersed in historical time.” (Furio Jesi³⁵⁵)

– *situational*

“The primary interest of Peking Opera is not to present a meaningful action through a coherent plot, but rather to use both action and plot to foreground the significance of the performance. This alters the function of both narrative and its staging. [...] the ‘thread’ refers to the general plot of the play, while the ‘pearls’ are the specific scenes of the play. Each scene is an integral part of the play. This suggests that the scenic “pearls” can be separated from, and are therefore not entirely dependent upon, the “thread.” Judging from the performance I saw, such independence could well be described as “*situational*” – with the proviso that “situation” here includes not merely the actions represented on stage but their presentation as well. The latter deploys its own significance, one that is neither separable from nor reducible to an extra-theatrical, referential “plot.”” (Samuel Weber³⁵⁶) – see also *relational*

– *story*

(1) “When the Baal Schem, the founder of Hasidism, had a difficult task before him, he would go to a certain place in the woods, light a fire and meditate in prayer; and what he had set out to perform was done. When a generation later, the Maggid of Meseritz was faced with the same task, he would go to the same place in the woods, and say: “We can no longer light a fire, but we can pray.” And everything happened according to his will. When another generation had passed, Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov was faced with the same task, [and] he would go to the same place in the woods, and say: “We can no longer light a fire, nor do we know the secret meditations belonging to the prayers, but we know the place in the woods, and that can be

³⁵⁴ Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (Zone Books, New York 1999), 21-22.

³⁵⁵ Jesi, Furio. *Spartakus. The Symbolology of Revolt*, ed. Andrea Cavalletti, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Seagull Books, 2014), 46.

³⁵⁶ Weber, Samuel. *Theatricality as Medium* (Fordham University Press, New York, 2004), 25.

sufficient.” And sufficient it was. But when another generation had passed and Rabbi Israel of Rishin was called upon to perform the task, he sat down in his golden chair, in his castle, and said: “We cannot light the fire, we cannot speak the prayers, we do not know the place, but we can tell the story of all this.” And, once again, this was sufficient.” (Gershom Scholem³⁵⁷)

(2) “the art of storytelling is coming to an end. Less and less frequently do we encounter people with the ability to tell a tale properly. More and more often there is embarrassment all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed. It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences.” (Walter Benjamin³⁵⁸)

(3) “Meaning “recital of true events” first recorded late 14c.; sense of “narrative of fictitious events meant to entertain” is from c. 1500. Not differentiated from *history* until 1500s. As a euphemism for “a lie” it dates from 1690s.” (Online Etymology Dictionary³⁵⁹) – see also *narrative*

– *theatre*

(1) “I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.” (Peter Brook³⁶⁰)

(2) “When an event or series of events takes place without reducing the place it “taken” to a purely neutral site, then that place reveals itself to be a “stage,” and those events become theatrical happenings. [...] Theater is [...] considered to be a place not just of dissimulation and delusion but, worse, self-dissimulation and self-delusion. It is a place of fixity and unfreedom, but also of fascination and desire. A prison, to be sure, but one that confines through assent and consensus rather than through constraint and oppression.” (Samuel Weber³⁶¹)

(3) from Greek *theatron*, literally ‘place for viewing,’ from *theasthai* ‘to behold’, akin to Greek *thauma*, ‘miracle.’³⁶²

– *tradition*

(1) “Tradition as the discontinuum of the past in contradiction to history as the continuum of events.” – “The history of the oppressed is a discontinuum.” – “The task of history is to get hold of the tradition of the oppressed.” – “The continuum of history is the one of the oppressors. Whereas the idea of the continuum levels everything to the ground, the idea of the discontinuum is the foundation of real tradition.” (Walter Benjamin³⁶³)

³⁵⁷ Scholem, Gershom. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 349–50.

³⁵⁸ Benjamin, Walter. “The Storyteller. Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov”, in *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books 1969), 83.

³⁵⁹ https://www.etymonline.com/word/story#etymonline_v_22128 (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁶⁰ Brook, Peter. *The empty space* (New York: Touchstone 1968), 7.

³⁶¹ Weber, Samuel. *Theatricality as Medium* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 7-8.

³⁶² See <https://www.etymonline.com/word/theater> and <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/theater> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁶³ Benjamin, Walter. *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Hermann Schweppenhäuser and Rolf Tiedemann, 7 vols. (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 1236. See also Benjamin, Walter. *Paralipomena and Notes of the Theses On*

(2) “Inventing traditions [...] is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition” “in spite of much invention, new traditions have not filled more than a small part of the space left by the secular decline of both old tradition and custom; as might indeed be expected in societies in which the past becomes increasingly less relevant as a model or precedent for most forms of human behaviour” (Eric Hobsbawm³⁶⁴)

(3) “contrary to what one might think at first sight, the breaking of tradition does not at all mean the loss or devaluation of the past: it is, rather, likely that only now the past can reveal itself with a weight and an influence it never had before. Loss of tradition means that the past has lost its transmissibility, and so long as no new way has been found to enter into a relation with it, it can only be the object of accumulation from now on.” (Giorgio Agamben³⁶⁵) – see also *transmission*

– *transmission*

(1) “Whoever until this day emerges victorious, marches in the triumphal procession in which today’s rulers tread over those who are sprawled underfoot. The spoils are, as was ever the case, carried along in the triumphal procession. They are known as the cultural heritage. In the historical materialist they have to reckon with a distanced observer. For what he surveys as the cultural heritage is part and parcel of a lineage which he cannot contemplate without horror. It owes its existence not only to the toil of the great geniuses, who created it, but also to the nameless drudgery of its contemporaries. There has never been a document of culture, which is not simultaneously one of barbarism. And just as it is itself not free from barbarism, neither is it free from the process of transmission, in which it falls from one set of hands into another. The historical materialist thus moves as far away from this as measurably possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.” (Walter Benjamin³⁶⁶)

(2) “An old man, who was an executioner in 1937, once asked me, “how long can a person hang on? How long a man is a man? I’ll tell you: the leg of a Viennese chair in the anus or a nail to the scrotum, and the man is gone.” And here is the question I ask myself, after listening to an executioner and his torture practices. Why have the leg of a Viennese chair in the anus or a plastic bag on the head in prison passed on from generation to generation? Why is Dostoevsky not transmitted? We do not have an answer for such a question.” (Svetlana Alexievich³⁶⁷)

the Concept of History (1940), trans. Sami Khatib in collaboration with Jacob Bard-Rosenberg, 2015, <http://anthropologicalmaterialism.hypotheses.org/2128> (accessed 29 March 2019).

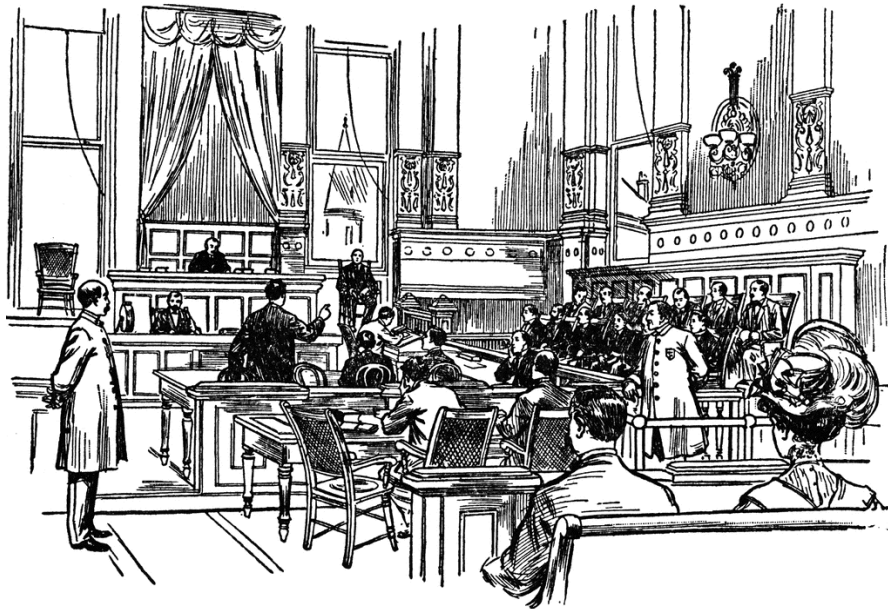
³⁶⁴ Hobsbawm, Eric. “Introduction: Inventing Traditions”, in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4, 11.

³⁶⁵ Agamben, Giorgio. *L'uomo senza contenuto* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 1994), 162.

³⁶⁶ Benjamin, Walter. *Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen. Zur Kritik der Gewalt und andere Aufsätze* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1978). English translation by Dennis Redmond, 2005, available at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁶⁷ Svetlana Alexievich interviewed by Francesca Mannocchi, “Svetlana Aleksievic: «La paura fa scegliere governanti primitivi»”, in *L'Espresso*, Milano: 18 October 2018,

(3) “art abolishes the gap between the thing to be transmitted and the act of transmission and again comes closer to the mythic-traditional system, in which a perfect identity existed between the two terms.” (Giorgio Agamben³⁶⁸) – see also *tradition*



– *trial*

(1) A formal examination of evidence by a judge, typically before a jury, in order to decide guilt in a case of criminal or civil proceedings. (Oxford Dictionary³⁶⁹)

(2) “Ideally, a jury trial creates a separate, isolated information space, which is insulated from the outside. The jury is presented with a crafted body of evidence and called upon to make a decision.” (Charles Nesson³⁷⁰) – see also *evidence*

– *truth*

(1) “We intuitively know that truth – reality, no-nonsense hard fact – has to do with a contract, an agreement, a convention. It does not belong to a person, but to a society, a group of people who have agreed that things are a given way because that way is more convenient to their present interest or more conducive to their survival. This convenient truth could be about the flat shape of the Earth, the existence of God, the indissolubility of marriage, the need for (and characteristics of) progress, the superiority of European culture, or the need for the total destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to end

<http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2018/10/18/news/la-paura-fa-scegliere-governanti-primitivi-parla-la-scrivitrice-premio-nobel-svetlana-aleksievic-1.327908> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁶⁸ Agamben, Giorgio. *L'uomo senza contenuto* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 1994), 171.

³⁶⁹ Oxford Dictionary, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/trial> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁷⁰ Nesson, Charles. “What You Have Said in the Dark: The Evolution of Media in the Courtroom and the New Challenges of Containing the Jury's Information Space”, in *St. Thomas Law Review* n. 24, 2012, 385-386.

the war. In the face of such commonly accepted truths – and it is from these that the tissue of history is formed – to propose, to present, to describe and to tell a different version of the story, a different truth, is sometimes a courageous act of dissidence and resistance. Or an act of lunacy. Or both. This resistance has its source in the need to protect ourselves from the truth. But not, or not only, because this truth is too painful or too boring to bear, but because it is imposed on us”. (Dora García³⁷¹)

(2) “There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. [...] I would say that we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function: we must speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit.” (Michel Foucault³⁷²)

(3) “When you tell me [Trump] should testify because he’s going to tell the truth so he shouldn’t worry, well that’s so silly because it’s somebody’s version of the truth, not the truth. [...] Truth isn’t truth.” (Rudy Giuliani³⁷³)

* *post-truth*

“relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” (Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year 2016³⁷⁴)

– *use*

(1) “a zone of indetermination between subject and object (the agent is in some way also object and place of action) and between active and passive (the agent receives an affection from his own action). [...] *it expresses the relation that one has with oneself, the affection that one receives insofar as one is in relation with a determinate being.* [...] every use is first of all use of self: to enter into a relation of use with something, I must be affected by it, constitute myself as one who makes use of it. Human being and world are, in use, in a relationship of absolute and reciprocal immanence; in the using of something, it is the very being of the one using that is first of all at stake. [...] To the affection that the agent receives from his action there corresponds the affection that the patient receives from his passion. Subject and object are thus deactivated and rendered inoperative, and, in their place, there follows use as a new figure of human praxis.”

“just like the poet, so also are the carpenter, the cobbler, the flute player, and

³⁷¹ García, Dora. “To Protect Us From the Truth”, in *Fiction as Method*, ed. Jon K. Shaw and Theo Reeves-Evison (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), 172.

³⁷² Foucault, Michel. *Il faut défendre la société. Cours au Collège de France (1975-1976)* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2014), Lecture of 14 January 1976.

³⁷³ Rudy Giuliani talking to Chuck Todd, host of NBC’s *Meet the Press* TV program on 19 August 2018. See <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/aug/19/truth-isnt-truth-rudy-giuliani-trump-alternative-facts-orwellian> (accessed 29 March 2019).

³⁷⁴ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016> (accessed 29 March 2019).

those who, with a term of theological origin, we call professionals – and, in the end, every human being – not transcendent title holders of a capacity to act or make: rather, they are living beings that, in the use and only in the use of their body parts as of the world that surrounds them, have self-experience and constitute-themselves as using (themselves and the world).” (Giorgio Agamben³⁷⁵)

(2) “The shift in methodology I am arguing for here is founded on a particular relationship between subject and object, one that is not predicated on a vertical and binary opposition between the two. Instead, the model for this relationship is interaction, as in ‘interactivity’. It is because of this potential interactivity – not because of an obsession with ‘proper’ usage – that every academic field, but especially one like the humanities that has so little in the way of binding traditions, can gain from taking concepts seriously. [...] Depending on the background in which the analyst was initially trained and the cultural genre to which the object belongs, each analysis tends to take for granted a certain use of concepts.”

“It is meaningful to activate the look only in the use of objects. Unread, a novel remains a mute object; unread, an image remains an equally mute object.” (Mieke Bal³⁷⁶)

³⁷⁵ Agamben, Giorgio. *The Use of Bodies: Homo Sacer IV*, 2, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 28-30, 62.

³⁷⁶ Bal, Mieke. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 24, 25, 49-50.