Writing performance : on relations between texts and performances

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2 Chapter Two: Performances in and through Texts

In this chapter, a dialogue between my experience of working with texts related to performances, and considerations of and theories on the characteristics of writing and texts by Émile Benveniste, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Derrida will take place. The text will switch back and forth between theoretical considerations to descriptions of concrete examples from artistic practice. The authors referred to are selected by personal interest. They do not necessarily agree on each other which is sometimes, but not always, made an issue. Rather, my approach is to process different theoretical perspectives in order to view the issue and all the questions coming with it from different angles.

The significance of texts related to performances can be understood on two levels: on the general level of contributing to history and research (touched upon in the previous chapter); and on the level of supporting or enabling the creation of performances, which will come into focus in this chapter.

The thesis inherent to this chapter is that text and performance are related and interrelated on different levels, both before and after the enactment or staging of a performance. I will look at relations which I consider interesting for the topic by "zooming" into specific relations in practices and analyze them in detail. In doing so I aim for a deeper understanding of theses texts.

"2.1 Functions of Texts for Performances" provides an overview of texts connected to performances and their functions within the process of creation. The aim of this overview is to create an awareness of the various roles and meanings texts can take on in relation to performances.

"2.2 (Making a Note in) Writing" is devoted to the characteristics of writing in general by looking at its etymology and at Freud's considerations of writing and memory.

In "2.3 Texts to Be Performed" the functions of texts within the process of creation will be investigated in depth.

In "2.4 Plato's *Phaedrus* and the Critique of Writing" Plato's text *Phaedrus* and the idea of the secondary status of writing will be presented.

In "2.5 Readings of Phaedrus" different readings of *Phaedrus* will be taken into account.

"2.6 Critique of Writing Performances" addresses the question whether or not it is possible to think of relations between texts and performances in a non-hierarchical way comes into focus.

In "2.7 The Potential of Text" will be discussed briefly, following Plato and Derrida.

"2.8 Theories of Performativity" will turn to the theory of performativity of Austin, and Derrida's critique on it will be presented.

In "2.9 The Role of Intention" I will consider the role of intention, and subsequently the term "différance" by Derrida.

In "2.10 Différance between Text and Performance" will address Derrida's notion of différance in relation to text and performance.

2.1   Functions of Texts for Performances

Performances are surrounded by texts. Texts are connected to performances on many different levels and have various functions for them: texts conceptualize, produce, present, mediate, announce, explain and make performances understandable. Texts have the potential to make performances memorable, to visualize them, to make them accessible, researchable, teachable and reproducible. Texts preserve and archive performances, they interpret, sell, change, rewrite and keep them alive. In this subchapter, first, texts that matter in relation to performances will be named. Second, the types that are specific to performances and their role in the process of creation will be described.

During the process of creating a performance, texts may serve the artist as inspiration, idea, and form finding. Such texts may include literary prose, poetry, theory, philosophy and texts in a broader sense, such as photographic images, films and paintings. These texts may appear in the final performance in the form of direct or indirect quotations, references, or paraphrases.

Other kinds of texts which play a role during the process of creating performances are texts written by the artists themselves. A first text is often written for the purpose of communicating the concept to a curator or for a subsidy application. Depending on the individual working methods, setting the performance on paper before enacting it

or going to a studio to rehearse is more or is less important. Developing a performance may include descriptive texts, declarations of intent, written forms of the concept accompanied by notes, sketches, drawings, graphics, diagrams, floor plans, spatial layouts, storyboards. In these forms written verbal language is often mixed with visual elements.

In the context of producing performances, the function of written notes in combination with visualizations is not only to support the process, and to reduce the rehearsing time, but also to prevent wrongly imagined or impossible actions. When, for instance, one draws a plan showing the placing of performers, in marking their position on a floor plan one can immediately see which future positions are possible, which directions they can go in, and which directions or steps are not possible from this position. The imagination in such cases is not always reliable, as mentally there are things possible that are not in practice. Texts in a broader sense have the function to correct the imagination in this context.

The last sort of texts which should be mentioned before approaching the function of texts within collaborative performance practice are texts that appear in a direct form during performances. Texts in a narrower sense may be read, spoken, sung or otherwise vocally interpreted. Texts might also be visually present(ed) as image, printed on a display or as projection (subtitles often have this form in theater and performance venues), or in paper form (like handouts), or can take on a three-dimensional form as a sculptural element, as part of the stage design.

Printed texts distributed to the audience at the entrance (like program booklets) or during the performance may have the aim to inform about the performance and might be taken home. Likewise, these texts can be part of the performance, providing the audience with opportunities for participation: audience members may be invited to read aloud a text that has been handed out, to decide on the course of the performance on the basis of the written information (for instance, by choosing scenes to be seen, or topics to be discussed; by selecting or rating a certain element, action or a specific performer; or deciding on the course of the performance or the end of the story, etc.); or audience members can, based on texts, participate on the stage or in the performance itself, join in the action on the stage or do something on their own.

These methods are practiced using written text or likewise spoken language. The advantage of written texts is that they account for a greater sense of commitment. A written instruction is received as being more neutral and hence is taken more seriously than an oral instruction given by a performer, who, after all, plays a certain role, and is read as a certain character. In general, texts can play a role in the work process, during the performance, or both.

In the following, I will turn to the functions of texts in collaboration-based performance practices. In this context texts are primarily used to communicate the concept or tasks to performers, and to structure the course of a performance.

During rehearsals scores, scripts, manuals, instructions, guidelines, rules, written cues and the like may be used in order to develop and/or implement the work with performers. In the rehearsing process prepared textual material may transform itself and might generate other, different texts which include new ideas, tasks, actions or movement material. The rehearsing process may be intended as a (re-)writing process, or the intention may be to strictly stay with a score and rehearse different ways of interpreting it.

In the case of working with musicians it is more likely (possible) to stay with a score and work on the interpretation, whereas notated actions often have to be adapted to the spatial conditions in which the performance takes place. In case of "performative structures" like rules, they are likely to be changed during the rehearsals, because how these rules work in practice and what dynamic they create among the performers has to be tried out and observed. A specific set of rules might work for one group of performers, but not for others. In "2.3 Texts to Be Performed" I will explain what I mean by "performative structures" in detail.

In working with performers, text can be used as a structuring device, in order to (partly) predetermine what happens during the performance. Conversely, texts can be used to deliberately leave open certain aspects. The latter possibility can be achieved for example with instructions providing blank spaces that must be "filled in"/improvised by performers in the situation of the performance or with rules that must be applied or reinterpreted according to the respective situation. This option will be discussed in depth later in this chapter, in the section "Creating Openness through Language."

However, one aspect should be briefly mentioned here: in the practice (of rehearsing as well as of performing in front of the audience) patterns permanently tend to arise at certain undefined junctures. In other words, even if one tries to keep things open in the performance, there is a tendency to repeat things and to draw on the existing repertoire, be it musical, vocal or movement-based, or to build such a repertoire in the rehearsing/performing process. For example: to repeatedly tell a story in a certain way, because this way has proven funnier than others and the audience always laughed; or to repeatedly use the same movement material when a certain instruction is given, instead of creating a new one in the very moment, because the body automatically favors a reaction according to trained habits. Performers tend to assume familiar roles, to apply strategies and methods which they are used to and feel comfortable with.

Besides working with a deliberately limited rehearsal time or replacing rehearsals with meetings in which one speaks about the performance but does not try things out, a good countermeasure is to give instructions that are not familiar to a performer's field of expertise (like dance, acting, or music). This method of "speaking in another language" can be deployed as a strategy to bring people to do things in a way or manner they otherwise would or could not. Besides mediating between the concept and the realization in general, texts provide important and interesting tools to work with performers in a multi- and interdisciplinary way or field.

After the staging of a performance and in connection with it, texts can potentially be produced by the artist, performers and audience members who were present. The artists themselves may write down various things, noting experiences or circumstances that should be considered next time or analyzing how the piece "worked." They may rewrite their announcement texts, explanations and artist statements, or even the title. They may give interviews, try to mediate their work; give lectures or presentations, update their websites and prepare teaching materials. Performers who participated in the performance but were not directly involved in its conceptualization may undertake similar written, descriptive, representative and reflective activities.

Furthermore, journalists, critics, curators or historians might write a text. Audience members may express their opinions, for example, on the Internet. People may post

feedback, press a "like" button on Facebook or describe their experience in private blogs.

These varying statements influence one another, views are exchanged and some become part of performance historiography. They can also affect how the artists see themselves and their own work. Although artists have a privileged position of reception with regard to their work, this does not rule out the possibility that aspects attributed to the work externally harbor a certain cognitive potential which might be integrated into the artist's own understanding and future statements about it. "External" statements in this sense add to understanding the work in a historical context or theoretical framework and thus can be the starting point for new questions or for follow-up projects. The research here is confined to texts produced by the artists themselves, and texts by art critics; historians and curators will not be further analyzed here.

Descriptions, Scripts, Scores, Instructions

In the following, the meaning of the terms performance description, script, score and instruction and their usages in collaboration-based performance practice will be briefly outlined.

The function of descriptive texts is to depict processes or objects by means of language as they are or were. This is to say, to find appropriate names and words for something perceived. The term "performance description" usually refers to a descriptive text, which captures a performance that has happened, although notes might be made during it. A description might include the course of actions as well as personal and sensual experiences of what was seen, heard, smelled, and so on.

Performance scripts in performance practices have functions similar to scripts in classical theater. Their purpose is to prescribe and maintain text to be spoken or sung and actions to be done. The term "performance script" attempts to capture or develop something not performed yet. A script might be performed by an artist him- or herself or given to other people who further work with or perform it. Besides the texts to be spoken or sung, scripts may contain instructions concerning how these texts should be spoken or sung and how to use body expressions or gestures in these contexts. Furthermore, there can be notifications on additional actions to be

carried out. The wording of the instructions in scripts is borrowed from mental imaginings, from the author's visualizations of the performance.

Likewise, "performance scores" in collaborative performance practices have functions similar to those of music scores. They are written before and are part of the creation of performances. Once written, a score may be used for several stagings, and by various artists/performers. Scores may contain a range of information, like what to play or do, how to move, where to go and so on. In contrast to scripts they can, but do not necessarily have to, contain text to be spoken. Besides written words, scores can contain symbols, codified and abstract signs. Performance scores often have aesthetic qualities and/or poetic dimensions.

"Instructions" can either be used as a means to produce an action/performance or they can be artworks in themselves which are exhibited or published (as in the case of Fluxus artists like Yoko Ono and George Brecht, a line of tradition which has been revitalized by Hans Ulrich Obrist's project *Do It*).

The main function of instructions is that they be carried out, but likewise they can be read (out loud). This potential is mentioned because reading or listening to an instruction creates in one's imagination a picture of it being carried out. Carrying an instruction out and imagining it being done are two different forms of receiving and experiencing it.

Roughly, there are two different kinds of instructions: those describing actions to be done (mostly stand-alone), and those specifying *how* a text should be recited (mostly a part of scripts and scores). The second tells whether a (scripted or improvised) text is spoken, screamed, whispered or hummed. It defines qualities like fast or slow, or with which emotion it happens. Instructions describing the *how* may not directly appear in the performance. They are interpreted in the performance, through the voice, for instance. Scripted text is not supposed to be negotiable, it ought to stay the same; but in the context of a performance, it is transformed into another materiality, into voice, air and sound waves. In the performance, these texts are transferred from the written to the spoken form.

2.2   (Making a Note in) Writing

Émile Benveniste, one of the most important linguists of the 20th century, offers in his last lectures, in 1969, a detailed etymology of the word "writing." He shows that there exists no common term for the word "writing." Every language developed its own term: "Homer was unaware of the meaning of *gráphō as* '*writing.*' … For Homer, *gráphō* only means 'scratching,' 'scraping,' 'cutting flesh' (e.g. II XVII, 599). Later 'scratch a marking into stone.'"[44] According to Benveniste, in Homer there is only a vague allusion to the existence of writing. This occurs when Homer recounts the tale of the hero Bellerophon: the king of Argos sends him to the Lycians, a people in Asia Minor, with a "folded" blackboard upon which were engraved ominous symbols of an evil message. The Lycian king was to kill him.[45]

Subsequently, Benveniste presents a list of meanings which will be reproduced here, because one can see that the word "writing" has been closely related to drawing, and is partly derived from the same word as "to paint."

> "– In Latin …: *scíbō* means 'scratching,' 'scraping.'
> – In newer German *schreiben,* but in Gothic *meljan* (see the German *malen*): 'blacken,' 'begrime,' Greek *mélas*, 'to stain with color.' It is thus about painted symbols, not about the engraving, but rather the painting.
> – In Old Norse *rita*, in Old English *writan*; meaning: 'to carve.'
> – In Slavic languages, borrowed from Iranian: *pisati*, in the sense of 'writing.'
> – In ancient Persian, *dipi* is the word that denotes 'inscription.' The word for 'writing' is independent thereof. It is made up of the verb prefix *ni* and the root *pis-*. *Ni* denotes the process of 'setting down': 'writing down,' and *pis-* the process of 'painting,' 'pricking' (see the technique of tattooing). The root word was borrowed from Old Slavic and the verb is etymologically related to the Latin *pingō,* 'to draw,' 'to paint.'"[46]

So, on a very general level writing means producing a trace which can be symbolic, coded or idiosyncratic. Why though do we need writing anyway, what is its function?

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[44] Benveniste, Émile, *Letzte Vorlesungen. Collège de France 1968 und 1969.* Zürich: diaphanes, 2015. p. 88f. Translated by LN.

[45] Cf. Ibid., p. 98.

[46] Ibid., p. 89. Translated by LN.

According to Sigmund Freud, writing has the function to supplement memory. In his text "A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad'" from 1925 he writes, "If I distrust my memory – neurotics, as we know, do so to a remarkable extent, but normal people have every reason for doing so as well – I am able to supplement and guarantee its working by making a note in writing."[47]

Freud compares our memory with the mystic writing pad of which he notes that it has the same qualities as memory. According to him, the interesting phenomenon is that as opposed to a sheet a paper, which provides limited space, the pad keeps everything ever written on it (which he calls continuous traces). Our memory just like this pad is endless in quantity and holds an innumerable amount of information. Following Freud, every experience is written into our unconscious and is saved there. Put simply, Freud thinks that the unconscious regulates what comes to the surface and what does not. Therefore not all of this information is on the surface all of the time. In other words, we cannot always remember everything that is saved in the memory; and coming back to Freud's statement we also cannot always trust our memory. Memory changes over the course of time, because it is dependent on the unconscious, on other memories and perceptions. This is why we use and rely on writing. It provides the certainty that the written, the scratched, the trace does not change.

Concerning performance this means that even though we have seen a performance and it is theoretically fully inscribed into our memory, because our memory is endless in quantity, we might not be able to fully remember it, or parts of it, after a certain time. Anticipated by Freud to a certain degree, the fields of brain and memory research have later shown that memory alters over the course of time. So the memory of a performance seen yesterday will not be the same in ten years anymore; it changes.

Therefore to produce a trace in the form of writing is usually interpreted as a fixing, as opposed to the ephemeral process of a performance. Even though this shares a comprehensible differentiation, it does not hold as a dichotomy when looked at closer. In fact, fixing means three different things here: (1) the duration or durability of

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[47] Freud, Sigmund, "A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad,'" in: id., *General Psychological Theory*, *Chapter XIII.* 1925. pp. 207-212, here: p. 207.

a medium; (2) the fixing of information; and (3) a non-processuality. Concerning the first, one could imagine writing in a medium in which the trace does not remain for longer than a performance might last, for example by writing into water or sand. The second, the fixing of content is certainly dependent on the possibility of being read, which applies to performance and text likewise. Concerning the third, it is obvious that a text and performance likewise change in our memory. One could say in memory both become processes.

Anyway, I want to keep in mind the characteristic Freud attributes to writing: what in English is translated as "making a note in writing" is in the German text designated by the word *Aufzeichnung,* which embraces drawn as well as written notes – in other words "text-based" and visual records. What is at stake here is the potential of writing to produce records.

This very general aspect of writing – its ability to record – provides the setting for the following analysis. A closer look will be taken at different forms of texts that are dedicated to be performed, in order to see what role this function of recording plays in which kind of texts.

2.3   Texts to Be Performed

Let us look of an example for an instruction that aims at triggering an action/performance in order to see what it can archive in relation to the performance. I imagine a scene in which someone drinks a cup of coffee during a presentation and at a specific moment spills coffee on their computer. In order to instruct a performer to do this action, I write down, "Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation and spill coffee on your computer."

It is not too difficult for a text to set a simple action like this with written language. However, when the aim is to describe one's own visual imagining of the situation more closely, or to define it in detail, for instance, what the spilling should look like, it gets more complex. Taking approaches from dance, this could involve saying something about the quality of movement, e.g. of the mouth's movement in the moment of spilling. In approaches inspired by theater practices or film direction this could mean mentioning a cause of why the coffee is spilled, e.g. the loss of

consciousness or of facial muscle control, or an emotion that should be expressed by spilling it, such as anger.

In order to specify the instruction one can add timing and write: "Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. Spill coffee on your computer *after ten minutes.*" or: "… *after the second paragraph.*" Or one could specify the action through statements of place and write: "Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. After the second paragraph, take the computer and go with it to the window. Once you have opened it, spill coffee on your computer." Or: "Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. After ten minutes take the computer off the table, go two steps backwards and spill coffee on the computer." Questions of placement are tricky though if one does not know the room in which the performance will take place. Two steps backwards might already be the end of the room; something might be standing there or the room might have no windows.

Nevertheless, through precise statements of time and positions in space, the timing and placing in/of a performance can be determined. Specifications like "ten minutes" or "after the second paragraph" do not give leeway for interpretation, they mean something concrete and specific. If there is just one window in the room the same goes for "open the window." The wording "two steps backwards" does not directly contain any leeway in terms of what it means, but depending on the performers' physical condition, body size and way of execution, the result can vary.

Making Performances Reproducible

It should be mentioned that every text or notation system in general (in music, theater and visual art) can only record certain aspects or parts of a performance. The performance itself is always also based on the unwritten (tacit) knowledge and conventions the writer and performers share or have. Any attempt to notate every detail of a performance necessarily fails in fulfilling this function because it would become endless and unreadable.

Still, there is the desire to determine and maintain performances using notations, which likewise concerns past or future performances. Descriptive text as a tool to capture (aspects of) past performances has already been mentioned: similar to photography capturing optical phenomena, or an audio recording capturing sound,

text can record the course of actions and other information. In the case of future performances, text can be used for this function as well. In this case, it represents the authors' imagined performance. The author can use text to describe the performance from his or her mind and to communicably capture a certain vision of it. In their most consequential form such notations can be conceived as a record of the author's thought.

Texts with the function to represent and make reproducible a performance hope to achieve or produce a specific result, rather than produce a variety of individual performances, by giving specific time and place statements, clear definitions and concrete naming. This reduces the possibilities of how the text can be read. By the same token of avoiding interpretation this reduces the responsibility of the acting performers in relation to the outcome. Determining the performance by describing it in detail means directing the performer towards the authors' intended way of acting or performing. Avoiding abstraction, generalities and categories further contributes to leaving as little room for interpretation as possible.

"Have a drink during the presentation" offers the performer a choice, whereas giving the instruction "Have coffee in this green doted pottery cup" predetermines the drink and the cup. So it is suitable for reproducing the specific action repeated with the same cup. The accomplishment of detailed scripted actions demands a strong subordination to the text; the subjectivity of the performer plays a minor role.

Although, a record of the imagination differs from the record of something seen or experienced, this difference is not evident in texts related to performances themselves. Texts have the potential to record information and do not mind whether the information is imagined or perceived. The possibility to determine aspects of performances is owed to the ability of writing to represent information.

Creating Openness through Language

"To write is to produce a mark that will constitute a kind of machine that is in turn productive, that my future disappearance in principle will not prevent from

functioning and from yielding, and yielding itself to, reading and rewriting." [48]
(Jacques Derrida)

Yet it is also possible to use language to deliberately create an openness in instructions that has to be interpreted or decided upon in the actual situation of the performance. Here, the interpretation and the subjectivity of the performers come into play.

An example for an instructional statement which has to be interpreted concerning a time specification is: "Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. *After some time* spill coffee on your computer." The "after some time" expression requires a decision of how long "some time" means for the performer (or is) within the situation of the performance. (This kind of decision making by performers is also referred to as improvisation in performance practices.) In other words, the fact of not giving a concrete time specification creates some leeway for the performance.

Another example would be to say: "Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. Spill coffee on your computer at *a strategically opportune moment.*" Here, the performer can interpret him- or herself what "a strategically opportune moment" means in the context of the respective performance. However, this is not necessarily improvised during the performance, the performer can also decide on her or his interpretation beforehand, and may plan and create a specific situation to happen.

Openness can also be constructed in regard to the action itself – for example, by saying, "Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. After the second paragraph, *do something unexpected.*" Here, the performer can fully interpret the action, because "something unexpected" abstracts from a concrete action. "Something unexpected," is not even necessarily an action, it can also be waiting or saying nothing in a situation in which speech is expected, for instance.

Unlike the previous examples, in which there was more emphasis on determining the action and creating openness regarding specific aspects, in this case the "action" can be largely interpreted. Thus the same instruction carried out by different performers may lead to radically different outcomes.

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[48] Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in: id., *Margins of Philosophy.* pp. 307-330, here p. 316.

Besides abstraction, the use of umbrella terms increases the choices performers have towards the execution of an action: for instance, in writing "Have *a warm drink* during the presentation," instead of stating that it must be coffee.

The German choreographers deufert&plischke, who I studied with as a guest student in the MA Performance Studies program at the University of Hamburg in 2006, taught scores in conceptual choreography as "open arrangements" that are opposed to movement descriptions.

This definition of a score as an open arrangement interested me, partly because in the beginning I did not quite understand how to produce such a score. How can I as an artist not have a picture in mind of what will happen during a performance? How to not control the outcome and still take responsibility for the work? I began to search for this openness in (my) practice. The two most general aspects of constructing openness I found in language are the use of the just mentioned umbrella terms and abstraction.

However, there is another way of creating openness, which I found later, and which I call a "performative structure." By "performative structure" I mean a rule or a set of rules that, like a productive force or an engine, generates a performance. They can be designed like open or modular systems, just like the rules of a game that are temporarily valid laws necessarily producing a variety of individual outcomes. In the same way that the rules in chess only prescribe the possible moves and produce an infinite number of different chess matches rather than defining a specific match, these rules in performances do not determine the whole course of a performance, but just provide the structure in which it can happen.

Such a performative structure can, for example, be built on the construction "if …, then …" It may sound like this: "whenever … happens, you do…" This simple rule provides a structure for the course of a performance without determining it. It is very useful and thus often applied in performance work with unpredictable parameters, like unrehearsed performances, performative installations, or for an interaction with the audience.

Assume that the idea is that five performers walk around in an exhibition space and speak from time to time. In order to make a precise timing and spacing possible, one has to have a floor plan with exact measurements, and more importantly spend a

long time rehearsing in the space itself.[49] A rule like "Whenever a visitor looks at you, you start to sing," enables the performance to function without a long rehearsal time. Since this rule counts for all of the five performers, there might be needed a second rule that prevents them from singing at the same time, for the same audience member, or in too close proximity to one another. To avoid this, one can add another rule like, "If you hear the singing of another performer, you turn and walk in the opposite direction." Or "If you see one of your colleagues you go there and join him/her singing," and so on. These rules do not determine when and where the performers sing, but they give the performance a structure.

To sum up, one can understand that the aim of a movement description is to capture and represent an already existing movement and make it reproducible, whereas openly designed scores aim to produce something that did not exist before and is not yet defined. To give the same movement description to different dancers, the resulting movement in principle should be more or less similar to the one intended by its author; whereas an open score should produce a non-predictable or not predetermined outcome, which will vary significantly from performer to performer. Working with openly designed scores and performative structures not only involves the subjectivity of the performers, but creates a central place for it in the performance.

Looking back at the general characteristics of text, one could conclude that, besides the function to record, texts related to performances have the ability to be interpreted in and through performances. I will call this characteristic "the interpretative function" of text.

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[49] In the field of visual art, it is rare for artists to have the opportunity for a long rehearsal time within the exhibition space, because this is not part of institutions' time and space management/calculations. Prior to the opening of an exhibition, the set-up in the exhibition space takes place during the day. To work before that, in the morning or later in the evening, is mostly a problem with opening hours and insurance issues.

2.4   Plato's *Phaedrus* and the Critique of Writing

In this section, the text *Phaedrus* by Plato will be introduced and the passages that are decisive for the so called "critique of writing" will be reproduced. Thereafter, different readings of *Phaedrus* will be presented*.* This text lastingly shaped the idea that text is a record of speech and thus secondary to it, from which a hierarchy between them results. This way of thinking about text still impacts western philosophy and culture, and so I make a connection to the secondariness ascribed to performance documentation.

Phaedrus is among Plato's earliest writings. In this dialogue, two figures appear: Socrates, Plato's former teacher, and Phaedrus, a citizen of Athens, from Socrates' circle of friends. They meet on the street and Socrates lets Phaedrus convince him to go for a walk outside the city gates. Socrates does not usually leave the city, as he believes that trees and rivers can teach him nothing, as opposed to people in the city. The bait that leads to Socrates taking a walk after all is a speech by Lysias, a well-known logographer at the time. Lysias gave this speech the day before, which Socrates had not heard. Phaedrus promises to reprise the speech as best he can if Socrates accompanies him on the walk. It soon becomes apparent, however, that Phaedrus has a copy of the speech under his coat. As Phaedrus and Socrates settle down under a large, beautiful plane tree, Phaedrus reads the speech to Socrates.

In his speech, Lysias makes a case for engaging with a lover who is not in love. Socrates is not convinced by the quality of the speech and holds an impromptu speech on the same point. He covers his head while he gives this speech, so as to not be distracted by shame while looking at Phaedrus. Afterwards, Socrates gives another speech arguing the opposite case, the reason being that he fears revenge from the god Eros, who he believed he insulted in his first speech. The second speech represents a counter-speech, which is meant to recant the first speech. This one is given with his head no longer covered. The speech is very long and excessive. It is about the immortality of the soul and various divine inebriations, one of which deals with amorousness and Eros. After Socrates has finished, Phaedrus admires the beautiful speech.

A discussion develops among them about what makes a speech beautiful, and about the difference between good or bad writing. One question is if the one who speaks

beautifully has to know the truth about what is being spoken. Examples are, mostly, speeches in court or in front of the Assembly, i.e. political speeches. It is said that through the art of speech (rhetoric), wrong things can be presented as true and right things as untrue. The listeners and especially those who don't know can thus be deceived. (Different aspects of rhetoric, and good and beautiful speeches are further discussed, but these will not be elaborated upon here.)

After the discussion about rhetoric, Socrates wants to investigate the qualities of writing. He says that the question is one of the aptness and ineptness of writing, what features make writing good, what inept.[50] He tells the following story,

> "Well, this is what I've heard. Among the ancient gods of Naucratis[51] in Egypt there was one to whom the bird called the ibis is sacred. The name of that divinity was Theuth,[52] and it was he who first discovered number and calculation, geometry and astronomy, as well as the games of checkers and dice, and, above all else, writing.
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> Now the king of all Egypt at that time was Thamus,[53] who lived in the great city in the upper region that the Greeks call Egyptian Thebes; Thamus they call Ammon.[54] Theuth came to exhibit his art to him and urged him to disseminate them to all the Egyptians. Thamus asked him about the usefulness of each art, and while Theuth was explaining it, Thamus praised him for whatever he thought was right in his explanations and criticized him for whatever he thought was wrong.
>
> The story goes that Thamus said much to Theuth, both for and against each art, which it would take too long to repeat. But when they came to writing,

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[50] Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*. Translated by Alexander Nehamas, Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995. p. 78.

[51] Ibid., p. 78, Footnote 177: "Naucratis was a Greek trading colony in Egypt. The story that follows is probably an invention of Plato's … in which he reworks elements from Egyptian and Greek mythology."

[52] Ibid., p. 78, Footnote 178: "Theuth (or Thoth) is the Egyptian god of writing, measuring, and calculation. The Greeks identified Thoth with Hermes, perhaps because of his role in weighing the soul."

[53] Ibid., p. 79, Footnote 179: "As king of the Egyptian gods, Ammon (Thamus) was identified by Egyptians with the sun god Ra and by the Greeks with Zeus."

[54] Ibid., p. 79, Footnote 180: "'Thamus they call Ammon': Accepting Postgate's Emendation of *Thamus* for *theon*. This implies that in Socrates' account Thamus is a god as well as the king."

Theuth said: '0 King, here is something that, once learned, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory; I have discovered a potion for memory and for wisdom.'[55] Thamus, however, replied: '0 most expert Theuth, one man can give birth to the elements of an art, but only another can judge how they can benefit or harm those who will use them. And now, since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality. Your invention will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing. And they will be difficult to get along with, since they will merely appear to be wise instead of really being so.'"[56]

This story is a myth that Plato himself invented for the sake of writing this text, it does not exist in mythology. Socrates in the text *Phaedrus* adds to it,

"Well, then, those who think they can leave written instructions for an art, as well as those who accept them, thinking that writing can yield results that are dear or certain, must be quite naive and truly ignorant of Ammon's prophetic judgment: otherwise, how could they possibly think that words that have been written down can do more than remind those who already know what the writing is about?

PHAEDRUS: Quite right.

SOCRATES: You know, Phaedrus, writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offsprings of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent. The same is

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[55] Ibid., p. 79, Footnote 181: "'A *potion* for memory and for wisdom': *Pharmakon* ('potion') can refer to a medicinal drug, a poison, or a magical potion."

[56] Ibid., p. 78f.

true of written words. You'd think they were speaking as if they had some understanding, but if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, it continues to signify just that very same thing forever. When it has once been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support."[57]

Besides the quoted passage that presents the critique of writing, in *Phaedrus*, various themes are present. It deals with the relationship between language and insight, language and communication, the role of rhetoric in political life and the mythological versus a philosophical world view.

Besides these canonically repeated aspects, I would like to remark that not only writing, rhetoric and speech, but likewise the body and sexuality build the main threads of the texture of which *Pheadrus* is made. The text is on the level of narration as well as on the level of content not without the erotic. On the level of narration, it is the (homo)erotic setting of intellectual middle-aged men following handsome young men in order to lie down in the midday heat under the shadow of a tree, of which the translator Kurt Hildebrandt notes in the German Reclam edition that this plane tree is a chaste tree: "a tree similar to a willow whose fruits were used to reduce the sex drive."[58] On the content level they both exchange speeches about love and sex. Due to a lack of deep knowledge in ancient Greek culture I am not able to analyze these aspects and the symbolic language of *Phaedrus*. For now, I can just stay with this passing remark that the discourse (or the critique) of writing is not disconnected from the body and sexuality in the scene Plato's provides for us readers.

The critique on writing can be summed up as follows: Thamus, the god of gods, depreciates writing by calling it a potion not for remembering, but for reminding. Writing is a potion (or "pharmakon" as Derrida calls it) which is useless and external

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[57] Ibid., p. 80f.

[58] Platon, *Phaidros. oder Vom Schönen*. Translated by Kurt Hildebrandt. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012. p. 95. Translated by LN.

to the body. It weakens the ability to remember and supplements what Plato calls the "living speech"; it is not alive itself.

2.5   Readings of *Phaedrus*

In the following, different readings of *Phaedrus* that are considered relevant to the context of this research will be presented. I will first look at the deconstructive reading of *Phaedrus* by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, followed by an account of the perspective on this text of the German classical philologist of Kurt Sier, and finally Benveniste's view of the text. Thereafter, the discussion will be applied to performance documentation.

According to Derrida the secondariness of writing is one of the fundaments of western philosophy. In the text "Plato's Pharmacy" written in 1968 and published as a chapter of his book *Dissemination* he points out that the hierarchy between writing and speech can be described as being analogous to "The hierarchical opposition between son and father, subject and king, death and life, writing and speech" which "naturally completes its system with that between night and day, West and East, moon, and sun."[59]

Let us accompany Derrida reading Plato for a bit. We are at the beginning of *Phaedrus*, when Derrida writes, "Operating through seduction, the *pharmakon* makes one stray from one's general, natural, habitual paths and laws. Here, it takes Socrates out of his proper place and off his customary track."[60] The walk leads Socrates and Phaedrus along the river Ilisos where Socrates remembers a myth that purports that this is the place where Boreas is supposed to have kidnapped the virgin Oreithyia while she was playing with *pharmakeia*.

Derrida uses the word *pharmakon* in order to describe an ordered polysemy he sees in Plato's dialogue: On the one hand, it can be translated as remedy, on the other as

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[59] Derrida, Jacques, "Plato's Pharmacy," in: id., *Dissemination*. Translated by Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 61-171, here: p .92.

[60] Ibid., p. 70.

poison, drug or magic potion.[61] In Friedrich Schleiermacher's 1817 German translation, which is still used today and upon which Léon Robin's French translation is based, and which Derrida works with, *pharmakon* is translated as potion, to be understood in the sense of remedy, and thus not containing the negative and threatening connotations, according to Derrida.

Derrida writes, "Writing (or, if you will, the *pharmakon*) is thus presented to the King. Presented: like a kind of present"[62] which Theuth, a half-god, presents to the king of the gods. This present, following Derrida, is an artefactum, an artificial creation of uncertain value, for it is the king who can give it value. However, the god-king does not accept the present; he depreciates it by pointing out not only its uselessness but its menace and its mischief.[63] According to Derrida, the "god-the-king-that-speaks" is acting like a father by whom the *pharmakon* is rejected, belittled, abandoned, disparaged."[64] Further he writes, "*Logos* is a son, then, a son that would be destroyed in his very *presence* without the present *attendance* of his father. His father who answers. His father who speaks for him and answers for him."[65] Without the father, the son "would be nothing but, in fact, writing."[66]

This misery of writing needing a father like the way Socrates formulated it, is ambiguous, according to Derrida: it is the distress of the orphan, who has at the same time achieved emancipation from the father, and is self-sufficient. The desire for orphanhood could be read as subversion with the aim of patricide.[67] So Derrida asks: "Isn't this *pharmakon* then a criminal thing, a poisoned present?"[68] About the status of the orphan, he writes:

> "The status of this orphan… coincides with that of a *graphein* which, being nobody's son at the instant it reaches inscription, scarcely remains a son at all

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[61] Cf. Ibid., p. 71.

[62] Ibid., p. 75.

[63] Cf. Ibid., p. 76.

[64] Ibid., p. 76.

[65] Ibid., p. 77.

[66] Ibid., p. 77.

[67] Cf. Ibid., p. 77.

[68] Ibid., p. 77.

and no longer *recognizes* its origins, whether legally or morally. In contrast to writing, living *logos* is alive in that it has a living father"[69].

In this context *logos* means "spoken discussion"; Plato calls it "living speech." Derrida deals with the father theme at length, but I will leave it at that and focus on a second theme, which is pivotal for the so-called critique of writing, namely the secondariness of writing. We will stay with Derrida's text, which again will be cited at singular points.

Derrida interprets Theuth, the god of writing, as a subordinate character: he is of secondary importance, because, when he presented his *tekhnē* and *pharmakon* to the "king, father, and god," he let it drop, and Theuth did not respond.[70] He was not able to defend his invention, but subordinated himself, and the value of writing, to the verdict of the king. Derrida associates Theuth with Hermes, the messenger of the gods who also bears the role of an intermediary.[71] He characterizes Theuth with the following words: "Language, of which he is depositary and secretary, can thus only represent, so as to transmit the message, an already formed divine thought, a fixed design. The message itself is not, but only represents, the absolutely creative moment. It is a second and secondary word."[72] But as a god of secondary language, Theuth is also the god of linguistic difference (between the spoken and the written) who can "become the god of the creative word only by metonymic substitution, by historical displacement, and sometimes by violent subversion."[73] A metonymic substitution means the replacement of an actual expression through another, which corresponds to the first. Derrida writes:

> "One day while Ra was in the sky, he said: '*Bring me Thoth,*' and Thoth was straightway brought to him. The Majesty of this god said to Thoth: '*Be in the sky in my place, while I shine over the blessed of the lower regions* ... You are in my place, my replacement, and you will be called thus: Thoth, he who replaces Ra.'"[74]

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[69] Ibid., p. 77.

[70] Cf. Ibid., p. 86.

[71] Cf. Ibid., p. 88.

[72] Ibid., p. 88.

[73] Ibid., p. 89.

[74] Ibid., p. 89.

Thoth becomes his father Ra's substitute during his absence in the night. In this very moment the hierarchy is turned upside down and Thoth is placed in the position of the god of the gods, his father (Ra). The god of language thus becomes Ra's (the sun god) substitute, in his absence and necessary disappearance. Like the moon is the supplement for the sun, writing is the supplement of speech which can subvert the hierarchy. At this point, Derrida delves further into Egyptian mythology. I only want to note here that the god of language is naturally also the god of death. Likewise the *pharmakon*, writing, was accused of substituting the breathless sign for the living voice.

Sier provides insights to this text from another perspective. He writes that, on the face of it, the critique of writing acts on the assumption that some people insult Lysias as a "logographer," because they take issue with the written pre-formulation of his speeches which in the written form can even be given by others. At the end of *Phaedrus*, however, the use of writing as a medium of communication remains unobjectionable as long as the author is aware of the limitations of the medium, and does not wrongly believe it is able to communicate information and insights with clarity and security.[75]

Accordingly, following Sier – and I fully align myself with this point – Plato's critique of writing is not a critique of writtenness as such but rather a critique of an unreflective attitude towards written texts, and expectations that even oral logoi cannot offer per se.[76]

Another insight is offered by Benveniste's perspective, who summarizes the so-called critique of writing as follows:

> "In *Phaedrus* (27Sc-276b), Plato depreciates writing in favor of speech. What makes writing (*gráphē*) bad is that it equals drawing (*gráphō* means both 'writing' and 'drawing'). What comes from drawing appears alive to us (*zōgraphía)*. Were one to ask these images, however, they would veil themselves in solemn silence. It would be the same case with written words

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[75] Cf. Sier, Kurt, "Der Mythos von Theuth und Thamus. Phaedrus 274c-275c," in: *Platon als Mythologe, Interpretationen zu den Mythen in Platons Dialogen.* Markus Janka, Christian Schäfer (Eds.). Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2014. pp. 323-337. here: p. 329f.

[76] Cf. Ibid., p. 332.

(*lógoi*). They could not defend themselves, if one were to go from one to the next; they could only signify (*sēmainein*), but would have left the world of living relations."[77]

Benveniste infers that the close, characteristic relation that language and writing have was not recognized immediately.[78] Our current culture has a close relationship to writing, "We live in a culture of the book, the read, the written book, a culture of writing and reading. Our life is constantly, on all levels, shaped by writing."[79] Further, he concludes, "This creates an ever closer, ultimately internal coherence between writing and language itself, between speaking and even thinking, which cannot be separated from its real or imaginary textualization."[80] Benveniste advocates recognizing an entanglement of language and writing, which reaches far into our ideas about spoken language and shapes it from the inside.

To understand where Plato's idea that writing supplements and even threatens comes from, one has to consider the context in which the text was written. The dialogue *Phaedrus* dates back to 365 BC.[81] At that time a transition from a primarily oral culture to a written culture, as we know it today, was taking place in the Ancient Greece. Writing in general (in fact different writing types) existed long before Plato's lifetime, but it was precisely during his lifetime that writing became central to culture and tradition, which is also to say for the cultural deliverance of knowledge and authority. Plato's examination of the value of writing must be understood against this backdrop of great cultural change, and the politics involved in it.

Derrida notes another aspect which plays a role here: "The structure and history of phonetic writing have of course played a decisive role in the determination of writing as the doubling of a sign, the sign of a sign."[82] This means that the use of phonetic writing, as we know it and with which we are familiar, allows for an empirical

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[77] Benveniste, op. cit., p. 90. Translated by LN.

[78] Cf. Ibid.

[79] Ibid., p. 63. Translated by LN.

[80] Ibid.. p. 63. Translated by LN.

[81] Cf. Sier, op. cit., here: p. 323, Footnote 3.

[82] Derrida, op. cit., p. 109f.

conclusion that claims that the spoken word preceded its transcription or recording (*Aufzeichnung*).

Benveniste, however, believes this argument evades the question of the relationship between writing and language. His thesis is that the relationship between the modern language as we know it[83] and writing is not a general relationship, but rather a special one.

From Benveniste's perspective, the problem of secondariness as a philosophical problem does not pose itself, since it is not necessarily a given. Spoken language is not primary and transcribed through writing, but rather, reality can be equally expressed in language (oral) or in writing (text). So Benveniste also opposes "its traditional meaning as a (secondary) graphic system of signs,"[84] but uses another vocabulary for expressing it than Derrida.[85]

2.6   Critique of Writing Performances

The premise here is that the critique of writing initiated by the interpretation of Plato's text has coined also the understanding of performance documentation as being secondary to performance, analogous to the hierarchy between writing and speech. The following will outline what the critique of writing means for performance.

Texts written after performances or documentations thereof are considered secondary to the live-act. This means two things: It means that these textualizations are chronologically in second place and thus subordinated in the sense of being less original. The textualization follows the performance, so it comes, chronologically speaking, second. That is clear and would not be a qualifier in itself. It would not be a problem, were it not connected to a second aspect that Derrida also pointed out in

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[83] Benveniste points to Ferdinand de Saussure's sign theory here.

[84] Lüdemann, Susanne, *Jacques Derrida zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2011. p. 70. Translated by LN.

[85] Benveniste speaks of language and writing, whereby language is the spoken language. For Derrida there is the general form of writing, which includes writing (written language) and speech (spoken language). In my vocabulary the more general dimension is called language, which includes the equal forms of expression of writing (written language) and speech (spoken language).

regard to writing, namely that this "second" has not a self-sufficient position: it is always dependent on, and stays connected to the first, because it is derived from it.

In the context of performance this problem is called the referentiality of performance documentation, which means that the documentation always references the (original) performance. Whereas the performance is an "autonomous" (self-sufficient) medium in itself, and an original form of artistic expression, the documentation does not lose this reference, and stays dependent on it. Derrida explained this hierarchical relation with the son and father metaphor: the father can live without the son, the son needs the father in order to come into existence. The chronological first is viewed as more original and thus having more value than the second, which does not only follow but has no identity in itself. Applying Derrida's wording performance would be in the position of the father, the sun, life, origin, speech which writing/performance documentation, just like Thoth, replaces and substitutes. Thoth has no identity himself; the very act of identity is to distinguish himself from the other, which he imitates, which he becomes the sign of and representative for.[86]

In the context of performance theory Jones suggested dealing with this hierarchy in understanding performance documentation as a supplement in the Derridean sense.[87] Turning the hierarchy upside down would mean saying: documentation is not dependent on performance, but performance is dependent on documentation. When taking this idea strictly the problem arises that a performance that is not documented is not a performance. So Jones argues that both are necessary.

Let's go back to Socrates who in Plato's dialog criticizes the idea that writing merely *records* spoken language. What is the problem with that anyway? For Plato, the problem is that the transmission of the truth depends upon the speaker understanding it. The text itself understands nothing and can thus not adequately reproduce the truth. When asked, the text always says the same thing.

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[86] Derrida, op. cit., p. 93.

[87] Cf. Jones, op. cit.

Derrida analyses this problem with the following words, "While the phonic signifier would remain in animate proximity, in the living presence of *mnēmē* or *pychē*, the graphic signifier, which reproduces it or imitates it, goes one degree further away".[88]

The further the signifier (e.g. writing, painting, performance documentation) distances itself from the presence of the living spirit and the being of things in general, it equally distances itself from truth, that is to say it further sinks into the hierarchy of classical philosophy, which Derrida questions.

Applying Plato's logic to the performance context would mean that the bodily presence of the artist during a performance in front of the audience enables this act (due to the living spirit). From this perspective a text given to someone else in order to be performed would be already a "fatherless" text (disconnected to the intention of the one who speaks through it). But one can pose the question: to what extent does the performer of the text become its new father or mother? I will come back later to the role of intention in texts and performances.

Another crucial point in the context of *Phaedrus* is that the text knows nothing itself, thus it is a pure bearer, messenger. The first problem about this is that it needs the living presence of its author/father in order to explain itself and defend itself against misunderstandings from readers. The second problem connected to this fatherlessness, according to Plato, is that the text does not know to whom it should speak to and to whom not. It circulates uncontrollably and possibly lands in the wrong hands. Both points are well comprehended. Translated to the art context this points to at least two things: first, to the difference of whether an artist is present or not once an artwork is received. The presence of an artist *in* performance that involves him- or herself is self-evident and applies to many, even, most performances in visual art. However, one could argue that this does not guarantee that the artist, *after* the performance, is present in order to answer questions about it. The second point is that the reading of texts defies the control of their authors. This is certainly true, and can also be understood as the potential of texts (which will be talked about in the next section).

Another point that could be read into this as problematic (referring back to Phelan) is that the documentation – written notes, transcriptions, recordings (*Aufzeichnungen*) –

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[88] Derrida, op. cit., p. 110.

threatens the live performance because they are identified with reproduction, whereas performance is not. So, reproduction seems to threaten the uniqueness of performances. It fixes it, and thus it is not uncontrollable anymore.

Here, with the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, the question could be posed as to what extent the fixing of meaning is a characteristic of writing only. In the 1990s, against the backdrop of the new interest in writtenness and orality, Gadamer wrote that, we are "invited to inquire into the common basis that underlies the orality of speech and writing. One will ask: Is something like an urge for fixing not always contained in the use of words? Words have their meaning."[89]

According to Gadamer, both written and oral forms of communication are attempts at a fixing of meaning. This means that regarding the production of meaning there is no difference between written and spoken texts. Certainly performances do not necessarily (only) contain words, but to analyze the difference between the verbal and non-verbal form is beyond the scope of this work.

The American performance and theater theorist Rebecca Schneider, according to whom the performance of a text (theatrical script) can be understood likewise as a record of that text, writes:

> "… the villainy that can occur between setting something down and taking it up again is not necessarily delimited to *performance*. The afterlife of a written word, set down and yet changing hands, jumping from body to body, eye to mouth, as text is interjected into text, is not entirely dissimilar to the promiscuous tracks of actorly acts."[90]

Aligning oneself with Gadamer and Schneider one can conclude that this recording aspect not only inhabits texts, but likewise performances. Besides that, speaking from my experience of artistic practice, the aim to fix information about a certain performance differs from the attempt to fix its meaning. Whereas the first is an intentional act and possible, the second is neither possible nor desirable.

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[89]Gadamer, Hans-Georg, "Unterwegs zur Schrift?," in: *Schrift und Gedächtnis. Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation.* Edited by Aleida and Jan Assmann, Christof Hardmeier. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag München, 1993. pp. 10-23, here p. 10. Translated by LN.

[90] Schneider, Rebecca, "In the Meantime. Performance Remains," in: id., *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment.* London/New York: Routledge, 2011. pp. 87-110, here: p. 88.

In my view, the meaning of performances in collaborative performance practices is decisively shaped by using the interpretative function of writing and not fixing all aspects; even though writing potentially has this function as well. The interpretative function is connected to the potential of texts, namely the game; it means creating space for the subjectivity of the performers and the eventfulness of the performance itself.

2.7   The Potential of Text

Although *Phaedrus* was within the history of philosophy mainly received as a critique of writing and Derrida's reading of it as a critique of the critique of writing, there is a positive potential discovered by Plato already and which was perceived by Derrida and performed by his reading-writing. I am interested in this potential of text, because it affects my practice of collaboration-based performance practices.

Plato formulated this potential of writing with the following words: "When he writes, it's likely he will sow gardens of letters for the sake of amusing himself, storing up reminders for himself 'when he reaches forgetful old age' and for everyone who wants to follow in his footsteps, and will enjoy seeing them sweetly blooming."[91]

"He" refers here to anyone, and no one specific is meant. What is called "amusing" here in English is in the German translation *das Spiel*, "game." Derrida refers to it by the Greek *paidia*, in English "game." The game is the positive potential of texts that Plato names. This means that the reader can play with texts in a specific way that he or she cannot play with speech. Derrida takes up the idea of play as the essential feature of texts when he writes,

> "A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game. A text remains, moreover, forever imperceptible. Its law and its rules are not, however, harbored in the inaccessibility of a secret; it is simply that they can never be booked, in the *present*, into anything that could rigorously be called a perception."[92]

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[91] Plato, op. cit., p. 82.

[92] Derrida, op. cit., p. 63.

To name the game as the essential feature of texts means to stress the role of being read. In Derrida's sense this reading is a form of writing. "Reading is not passive. It must '*produce* a significant structure.' Without doubt, it already does this by not duplicating the text, but rather creating its own text."[93]

With his way of reading of *Phaedrus*, Derrida opposes its history. He writes,

> "Only a blind or grossly insensitive reading could indeed have spread the rumor that Plato was *simply* condemning the writer's activity. Nothing here is of a single piece and the *Phaedrus* also, in its own writing, plays at saving writing – which also means causing it to be lost – as the best, the noblest game. As for the stunning hand Plato has thus dealt himself, we will be able to follow its incidence and its payoff later on."[94]

With "nothing here is of a single piece" Derrida means that a text is not a one-dimensional piece, but that a text creates a web (French: *toile*) which can be understood in play with its structure, which is to say, through the activities of reading and re-writing. The reader (author) through his/her reading weaves a supplementary thread that adds to the web, which is simultaneously restored and given to read by this act. Derrida writes: "If reading and writing are one, as is easily thought these days, if reading *is* writing, this oneness designates neither undifferentiated (con)fusion nor identity at perfect rest; the *is* that couples reading with writing must rip apart."[95]

In other words text does not exist without a reader giving meaning to it. In active reading, the reader does not reproduce it, but always has to make a "cut" in order to produce meaning from the text, to give attention to some aspects and to leave out others. This means that the reader (author) is violent to the text in any event. The potential of this violent "play" is owed to the inner logic (the structure) of text.

Although the general potential of text and the intention of an author/artist are two different things, I dare to say they are not completely unconnected. The openness

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[93] Lüdemann, op. cit., p. 76. Translated by LN.

[94] Derrida, op. cit., p. 67.

[95] Ibid., p. 63f.

that texts in collaboration-based performance practices are aiming for is enabled through (amongst other things) this potential.

To recapitulate: in his *Phaedrus,* Plato criticizes writing for not being alive. In his view, writing, as a recording of speech, is secondary to it. In "Plato's Pharmacy", Derrida reads Plato's *Phaedrus* in a deconstructive manner and reverses these hierarchies between text and speech. Gadamer offers yet another perspective, according to which not only text, but also a performance of text aims to fixate meaning. In my view, one has to differentiate between the aim of fixating in the sense of preserving information or to fixate meaning in a more general sense. In performance practices, the aim to fixate information is connected to the recording function of texts. It is crucial for performance texts such as scores, scripts and instructions. Schneider offers a perspective from which performance likewise has this aspect of recording. In my view, and now switching back to texts again, the potential of texts in collaboration-based performance practices lies in their function to be interpreted.

2.8   Theories of Performativity: Austin and Derrida

In this section the key points of the notion of performativity, as coined by the British language philosopher Austin who in the 1950s, gave language a new function – acting – will be summed up. He states that speech not only describes, but under certain conditions literally acts within social reality. Furthermore, Derrida's lecture "Signature Event Context" will be looked at; this was held in 1971 at a conference on the topic of communication in Montreal and draws into question some points of Austin's theory as well as coins the terms "dissemination" and "iterability." The latter will be made productive for performances in the art context.

Austin developed the theory of the performativity of language[96] in his lecture series titled *How to Do Things with Words*,[97] which was given at Harvard University in 1955. In the first lecture his considerations involve written and spoken utterances. At the

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[96] The lectures were published posthumously in 1962, but the theory developed there remained fragmented. Austin never wrote a book about it himself.

[97] Austin, John L. *How to Do Things with Words. The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955.* Oxford: University Press, 1962.

very beginning then, he considers texts for his analyzes, but he does not pursue this way and soon excludes written utterances and focuses on oral utterances only.

In that first lecture Austin states that philosophers until now have been satisfied by describing reality through declarative sentences, which are considered to be either true or false. In other words, Austin accuses philosophers of reducing their analysis of speech to its truth value. The exceptions – as Austin acknowledges – are philosophers who in recent years have begun to concern themselves with the fact that there are also sentences that are syntactically absurd, and therefore meaningless.

Austin calls attention to the fact that for grammarians questions, exclamatory sentences, imperatives, optative sentences and concessive clauses exist alongside declarative sentences, which means that the declarative sentence is merely one among many other types of sentences.

In order to classify utterances that have not found a place in traditional schemata, Austin suggests the category "performative sentences," "performative utterances," or in short "a performative." He explains: "The name is derived, of course, from 'perform,' the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of just saying something."[98]

These utterances are not merely descriptive, but they are acts when performed in the first person singular present indicative active. He gives examples such as the words "I do" within the marriage ceremony, the "I bet … " in gambling or "I name …" as it is used in the christening of a ship.

In the course of this analyses Austin recognizes that this new category gives rise to a problem, namely that there are no utterances that are pure speech in a strict sense. Utterances are always accompanied by gestures, facial expressions and other physical elements that belong to the conventions of the context in which the utterance is performed.

In his second lecture, Austin examines the prerequisites for the success of performative utterances and possible reasons why they might fail. He calls the cases

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[98] Ibid., p. 6f.

in which the prerequisites are not met "infelicities" or "unhappy utterances" and begins to classify them. He creates three groups of infelicities: A, B, Γ, each of which has subdivisions. A and B are misfires: the act is purported, but void. In the case of the third category Γ is abused: the act is professed, but hollow.[99]

According to Austin, performative utterances spoken by an actor on stage and/or in soliloquy are also hollow or void, and therefore belong to the group of infelicitous acts. "Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use-ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language,"[100] according to Austin. He further writes: "Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances."[101] To sum up, Austin calls acts done by speech within a framework of social conventions "performative utterances" or "performatives." Such speech-acts cannot be true or false like constative utterances can, but they can succeed or fail, as Austin says.

In his text "Signature Event Context," Derrida attests to linguistics and communication sciences the general premise that context constricts the polysemy of so-called natural languages and that utterances are thus reduced to a meaning. The fact that the polysemy of words, terms and sentences is reduced by the context means that we know how a linguistic remark is meant because it is said in a specific situation. Derrida doubts this and attempts to show "why a context is never absolutely determinable, or rather in what way its determination is never certain or saturated,"[102] neither in oral, nor in written communication.

Besides this, Derrida looks at Austin's speech act theory and critiques it for focusing only on oral statements and excludes written material, such as texts, from the category of speech acts. Furthermore he reproaches Austin for focusing on ordinary language and excluding speech acts, which in Austin's opinion deviate from this daily type of usage and which he calls parasitic. Derrida also disagrees with the possibility

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[99] Cf. Ibid., p. 18.

[100] Ibid., p. 22.

[101] Ibid., p. 22.

[102] Derrida, Jacques, "Signature Event Context," in: id., *Margins of Philosophy*. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: The Harvester Press, 1982. pp. 307-330, here: p. 310.

of failure of speech acts, stating that it is the structure of every utterance to possibly fail; otherwise it cannot succeed. Following Derrida's understanding, failure is the necessary precondition of every speech act. Succeeding and failing cannot be separated from each other.

Derrida mainly criticizes Austin's theory of performativity because he recognizes the classical hierarchy between the written and the spoken word in it, which he sees as an essential feature of western philosophy (and thus metaphysics).

The argumentation in "Signature Event Context" unfolds as follows: from the structural unsaturation of the context, Derrida concludes the necessity of generalizing and displacing the classical notion of writing. In order to dissolve the hierarchy between the written and spoken word, he first looks at the core attributes of the weaker part (writing) to subsequently show that these attributes also match the stronger part (spoken language), and thus can be regarded as prerequisite for both. As soon as these core attributes are a prerequisite for both, they cannot be thought of hierarchically any longer; both, writing and speech, are forms of the generalized term of writing.

Following the classical philosophical notion of writing, the absence of the receiver is characteristic of writing. Derrida adds the absence of the sender. The latter leaves behind a sign that survives beyond the present actuality of intention (in French: *vouloir-dire*) and the individual's life. However, according to Derrida, this absence is not only specific for writing: sign language and spoken language also presuppose a structural absence. Every sign has to potentially function in the absence of a sender and a receiver, he argues. He further emphasizes that every sign has the power to break with the context of the origin in which it first appeared and to be read in other contexts.

Derrida describes the characteristics of writing with his own terms "iteration" and "dissemination." The fact that writing structurally does not provide a tool of limiting the proliferation of meaning produced by its context he calls "dissemination." Dissemination is opposed to polysemy in Derrida's view. It does not mean that a word has more than one meaning, but that the production of meaning created by the circulation of the sign in different contexts cannot be stopped, reduced or controlled. He writes:

"Every sign … spoken or written … can be *cited* … thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring."[103]

Another characteristic of writing introduced by Derrida is "iterability." Iterability means that every sign must be repeatable; it must be citable and it thereby creates a double of itself. Iterability is not (only) the repetition of the same; it is a repetition which has a difference at its core; each time a sign is cited this inner difference is activated.

These characteristics apply in the art context to both text and performance. Iterability means here that a performance is different each time it is performed. Each staging is a repetition and yet it is different at the same time. Let's say a performance was performed on three consecutive days. Empirically this means that it was different each day – for example, the voice of the performer was louder, the performers made a specific movement or played a tone faster, the technician forgot to close the curtain after the first scene, so they had to do this or that in another way. However, Derrida's iteration also means something else. It means that a difference occurs in relation to the meaning of something, which does not necessarily change the empirical condition. Otherwise why should it apply to texts? The fact that a performance is slightly different each time it is performed does not necessarily mean that a difference occurred in terms of meaning. These are two different things. It rather corresponds to the fact that a text and a performance are likewise different each time they are read/seen.

According to the notion of iterability, neither text nor performance can be fixed as to its meaning. For performance, iterability means that the present body like every other sign breaks away from itself in the moment of its emergence (by citing itself), and creates a double that transcends the moment of the performance. It means that the possibility of performance documentation and its repetition precedes the performance itself.

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[103] Ibid., p. 320.

2.9   The Role of Intention

John R. Searle, one of the most important proponents of analytical philosophy, who was a pupil of Austin, felt attacked by "Signature Even Context." He wrote a reply, which together with the English translation of Derrida's text was published in the journal *Glyph* in 1977. Searle's defense paper was in parts polemic, which led to a likewise polemical answer from Derrida a few months later, under the title "Limited Inc a b c."

As for the debate between Derrida and Searle, the focus here will only be on the role of intention – I will not go further than that, and consequently this can involve a certain reduction of some of their points. This debate will be looked into because this research inevitably leads to the question of intention: What role does intention in writing a text to be performed by someone else mean in relation to the one who performs it, and to the outcome?

Derrida writes about the role of intention in Austin's theory:

> "Austin's analyses permanently demand a value of context, and even of an exhaustively determinable context, whether de jure or teleological … One of [the] essential elements – and not one among others – classically remains consciousness, the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject for the totality of this locutory act."[104]

In classical philosophy since Descartes, intention has been confined to the mind and unconnected to usage and context. The meaning of an assertion is determined by the intention of the mind. When Derrida critiques intentional consciousness he most likely has the work of his teacher, the phenomenologist Eduard Husserl, in mind.

For Austin's theory, the intention of the speaker does not actually play a central role. On the contrary, the intention of the speaker is not decisive for the failure or success of a speech act. For Austin, the meaning of a word is its usage in language, not the intention of the speaker. The usage is dependent on the context which itself is defined by conventions. Conventions make possible the speech act. It does not matter what the intention of the speaker was, or how the utterance was actually meant, or even if it was honest or not. Austin writes:

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[104] Ibid., p. 322.

> "… we shall call in general those infelicities … which are such that the act for performing of which, and are such in the performing of which, the verbal formula in question is designed, is not achieved, by the name MISFIRE: and on the other hand we may christen those infelicities where the act is achieved ABUSES."[105]

For example, "I promise to meet you tomorrow at 4.00 p.m. in a café near Amsterdam Central Station to tell you about my new research project" is an achieved speech act in the sense of Austin. The act of promising is achieved because the conventions of the promise are fulfilled: saying a time that is appropriate for a meeting, naming an existing place that is known to both parties, and that is reachable for both parties, and stating a reason for the meeting that is plausible, and so on. It does not matter if I ever intended to come or not. According to Austin's terms, the given example belongs to the category of infelicities, but is still an achieved speech act.

For Austin, it is not the intention of the speaker but the context that is decisive. The meaning of a word or utterance is its usage in language, and this usage is determined by the conventions of the context in which it is uttered. Concerning the role of the context Derrida has indeed another position. The question that remains open in Austin's theory is: whether meaning is created by the conventions of the context. If this is the case: How has this convention (and the resulting context) produced itself (as meaning and pre-condition for it to appear)?

For Searle, the intention of the speaker plays the same role in spoken and written communication. What fundamentally differs from Derrida's view is again the role of the context of the utterance. For Searle, intention is not behind language, but is realized through it. Intention is in language, language is not used in order to express intention. This would be the "outer relation" of intentional meaning theory which Derrida actually critiques. Searle writes: "To the extent that the author says what he means the text is the expression of his intentions."[106] For him, the meaning is the intention of meaning: "understanding the utterance consists in recognizing the illocutionary intentions of the author … realized by the words uttered." In Searle's theory, the convention used should guarantee that the intention of the author may be

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[105] Austin, op. cit., p. 16.

[106] Searle, "Reiterating the Differences. A Reply to Derrida," in: *Glyph*, Vol. 1. 1975. pp. 198-208, here: p. 202.

read by others. The author "just" has to use the conventions in the right way. Misunderstandings that occur are either accidental or owed to empirical circumstances, whereas in Derrida's theory, they are constitutive of communication and the use of writing and signs in general.

To conclude: Derrida's concept of signs creating new contexts which in turn influence the meaning of the sign gives reception and interpretation a value in themselves, and thus can be made productive for understating artistic practice, especially in collaboration-based performance practice in which texts are performed by people other than the author of the texts.

Following my definition, the intention of the author is the part of the concept of an artwork that can be put into language. Thus it may contribute to the understanding of an artwork. However, firstly, this is not necessary for reading it, and secondly, it does not at all guarantee understanding.

In my view, meaning is neither produced exclusively in writing a text (to be performed) nor exclusively in its performance. The meaning is produced in and through their mutual relation. In collaboration-based performance practices this very fact is made productive through writing texts with the purpose of not being performed by the author, but by performers.

In my experience, the interpretation (function) of texts can make visible aspects or produce meaning the author did not intend. This means that the reading of texts, and the reception of artworks in general, potentially creates new works. (This aspect will be re-addressed in the next chapter.) Each text/artwork may be made productive apart from the author's/artist's intention.

2.10 Différance between Text and Performance

In the last section of this chapter another term by Derrida will be introduced which also touches upon the relation between texts and performances: "différance."

Différance must be understood in reference to the differentiality of linguistic signs as developed by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.[107] Derrida radicalizes and generalizes Saussure's idea that the meaning of signs is constituted through their differentiation from other signs. In the case of différance it is about a differentiation in the sense of a production of meaning that spatializes/temporalizes itself.

The difference between the French word différence (as it is written according to proper grammar) and the neologism différance with an "a" is not audible in the spoken language, it is only noticeable in the written form. This is also where the term "space" enters: it is the space that the sign claims for itself in order to become visible. The temporal aspect is called "suspension" in Derrida's jargon. This means, firstly, that the production of meaning, which always includes a shift in meanings as well, is a process (for example, the process of reading); and, secondly, in the case of signs, it is about a reference (to a reference) to a presence, which thereby is suspended. Because one cannot hear the difference, but only read it, it inverts the traditional hierarchy in philosophy between the spoken and the written word.

Différance questions identities which can be substituted in thought through signs. Western logic is based on the "Principle of Contradiction" and the "Law of the Excluded Middle." The first means A and Not-A cannot be valid at the same time, and the second means either A or Not-A has to be valid – there is no third possibility. These laws both postulate the absolute identity of things.

For Derrida, différance is, "the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation."[108] As he writes, the

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[107] Cf. Posselt, Gerald, "Kommentar zu Derrida, Jacques (1988): 'Signatur Ereignis Kontext'" in: Derrida, Jacques, *Randgänge der Philosophie.* First Edition, Wien: Passagen. pp. 291-314," in: *produktive differenzen - forum für differenz- und genderforschung,* http://differenzen.univie.ac.at/bibliografie_literatursuche.php?sp=11

[108] Derrida, Jacques, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in: id., *Writing and Difference.* Translated by Alan Bass. London/New York: Routledge, 1978. pp. 351-370, here: p. 369.

game "is always [a] play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence."[109]

The following performance script of mine was written and performed in 2010. It is submitted here in order to illustrate the différance that occurs between text (re)presenting a performance and performance (re)presenting a text.

Winner's Performance – An Appropriation

[Performance to be done by three female speakers: the author, a performer and an audience member. Props: one small and one larger plinth. Performer – standing beside the larger plinth, it stands upright and is empty.]

PERFORMER: This performance includes quotes and reworked text fragments by: Carl Andre, René Descartes, Marcel Duchamp, Oscar Wilde, Paul Cézanne, Gustave Flaubert, Douglas Huebler, Vincent Huidobro, Michelangelo, Kazimir Malevich, Franz Liszt, Peter Roehr, Sol LeWitt, Richard Serra, Roland Barthes, and Charles Baudelaire.

[Author – standing on the small plinth]

AUTHOR: Questions and answers

1. Who is an artist?

A. An artist is one who says she is an artist

B. An artist is one who has a diploma from an art academy

C. An artist is one who makes art

D. An artist is one who makes money from art

E. An artist is none of these things, some of these things, all of these things

2. What is art?

A. Art is what an artist says is art

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[109] Ibid.

B. Art is what a critic says is art

C. Art is what an artist makes

D. Art is what makes money for the artist

E. Art is none of these things, some of these things, all of these things

3. What is quality in art?

A. Quality in art is a fiction of the artist

B. Quality in art is a fiction of the critic

C. Quality in art is the cost of making art

D. Quality in art is the selling price of art

E. Quality in art is none of these things, some of these things, all of these things

4. What is the relationship between politics and art?

A. Art is a political weapon

B. Art has nothing to do with politics

C. Art serves the state and political parties

D. Art serves the revolution

E. The relationship between politics and art is none of these things, some of these things, all of these things

5. Why do I do this?

A. I do this because art is my life's work

B. I do this because art is my commercial business

C. I do this because art will die if I stop

D. I do this because art will continue unchanged if I stop

E. I do this because of none of these things, some of these things, all of these things

[Placing the big plinth on its side and the small one on top of it: winners' rostrum –all three step up.]

PERFORMER: The speakers are:

AUTHOR: The author

AUDIENCE: An audience member

PERFORMER: The performer

[All embrace while standing, building one body.]

AUTHOR: To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim.

AUDIENCE: Man should not be present.

PERFORMER: Let us always remember that depersonalization is a sign of strength ... We must be mirrors which reflect the truth outside ourselves.

[End of standing embrace.]

AUTHOR: We don't emphasize enough that the work of art is independent of the artist. The work of art lives by itself, and the artist who happened to make it is like an irresponsible medium.

PERFORMER: What you are saying is that the artist is the picture's way of getting itself painted. To make this claim is quite legitimate and reasonable, but it also implies that the work of art exists in a certain sense before it is there on stage or on canvas.

AUTHOR: Yes, it has to be pulled out … It's a kind of race between the artist and the work of art.

PERFORMER: In art we are interested more in the creative force of the artist than that of the viewer, and besides, the former implies the latter to a greater degree than vice versa.

AUDIENCE: I not only see, but I also watch.

I not only listen, but I also interpret.

I not only think, but I also recognize.

AUTHOR: I feel identical with what I do. In performances I realize in an unrestricted manner everything that is important for me. I believe I am free.

AUDIENCE: Through me and with me; without me is without you, too.

PERFORMER: The artist's will is secondary to the process he initiates from idea to completion. His willfulness may only be ego.

AUDIENCE: The artist's will may only be ego.

PERFORMER: The production process is at best mechanical and should not be tampered with. It should run its own course.

To work with a plan that is pre-set is one way of avoiding subjectivity. After that, the fewer decisions made in the course of completing the work, the better. This eliminates the arbitrary, the capricious, and the subjective as much as possible.

AUDIENCE: This eliminates the subjectivity of the artist as much as possible.

PERFORMER: What the work of art looks like isn't too important. It can look like anything. No matter what form it may finally have, it must begin with an idea. Once given physical reality by the artist, the work is open to the perception of all, including the artist. The work of art can only be perceived after it is completed.

AUDIENCE: This performance can only be perceived after it is completed. After it is completed, it is open to the perception of all, including the artist.

PERFORMER: The artist may not necessarily understand his own art. His perception is neither better nor worse than that of others. An artist may perceive the art of others better than his own.

A work of art may be understood as a conductor from the artist's mind to the viewer's. But it may never reach the viewer, or it may never leave the artist's mind.

AUDIENCE: This performance may never reach the viewer.

PERFORMER: When an artist learns his craft too well he makes slick art.

AUDIENCE: An artist should never learn his craft too well.

PERFORMER: These sentences comment on art, but are not art.

AUTHOR: I don't make art; I am engaged in an activity; if someone wants to call it art, that's his business, but it's not up to me to decide that. That's all figured out later.

AUDIENCE: Through me and with me; without me is without you, too.

AUTHOR: The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more. I prefer simply to state the existence of things in terms of time and/or space. More specifically, my work concerns itself with things whose interrelationship is beyond direct perceptual experience. Because the work is beyond direct perceptual experience, awareness of the work depends on a system of documentation. This documentation takes the form of photographs, maps, drawings, and descriptive language.

AUDIENCE: The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; the artist does not wish to add any more. The documentation takes the form of photographs, maps, drawings, and descriptive language.

PERFORMER: Through me and with me; without me is without you, too.

[All embrace while standing, building one body.]

AUTHOR: The hand guided by the intellect can really achieve something.

AUDIENCE: The artist who wants to develop art beyond its painting and performing possibilities is forced to rely on theory and logic.

PERFORMER: Today more than ever, it is necessary that the artist also be an intelligent person and know a lot of things outside her own field.

AUDIENCE: All that is beautiful and noble is the result of reason and calculation.

[End of standing embrace.]

AUTHOR: I think, therefore I am.

PERFORMER: I think, therefore I am confused.

AUDIENCE: I don't understand.

AUTHOR: We acknowledge that: Art is universal.

The work of art should be entirely conceived and formed by the mind before it is produced. Technique should be mechanical. Absolute clarity should be strived for.

PERFORMER: It is the objective of the artist who is concerned with conceptual art to make his work mentally interesting to the spectator, and therefore usually he would want it to be emotionally dry. There is no reason to suppose, however, that the conceptual artist is out to bore the viewer.

AUDIENCE: An artistic work is a fetish object and this fetish *desires me.* It chooses me, by a whole disposition of invisible screens, selective battles: vocabulary, references, readability, etc.; and, lost in the midst of a text there is always the other, the author. As institution, the author is dead: her civil status, her biographical person have disappeared. But in the text *I desire* the author: I need her figure as she needs mine.

PERFORMER: On the stage of the text, no footlights: there is not, behind the text, someone active (the author) and out front someone passive (the spectator); there is not a subject and an object.

AUTHOR: The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas – for my body does not have the same ideas I do.

AUDIENCE: I not only see, but I also watch. I not only watch, but I also desire.

AUTHOR, PERFORMER, AUDIENCE: Contemporary Authors' Manifesto. They are choreographers, journalists, curators, designers, painters, architects, perhaps scientists. Through their works they position themselves in the social sphere and shape it in the process.

In order to secure the financial means needed to fulfill their yearnings and aspirations, they employ a variety of skills. They work on topics and projects; they work on requests, for applications, for advised positions; they work alone, in groups, with formal and informal managers; they give instructions and ask for advice. They fulfill strict guidelines and open-ended assignments; they seek and shape their own fields of work and activity; they work under time pressure or without any visible output. They work for institutions, for colleagues, and for themselves. They put varying degrees of knowledge, experience, and subjectivity into their work; they identify sometimes more, sometimes less with what they say.

The contemporary authors don't write; they speak! They speak through different media; through their works and within them; their photographs, their paintings and writings, their movements on stage, a monument they erect, a school or city library

they design: they all speak. And the authors know that these things will be heard by society. However, they don't try to say something that means the same thing to all people all of the time; they know that their readers each find different meanings in their works, that they are used differently and that approaches to their works are determined, in large part, independently from them. They try to accomplish their work as best they can within a given framework.

The authors don't believe in their autonomy. They are aware of their construct, of their dependence upon being seen and their yearning for recognition. They know that their artistic speaking is traced back to their persons and that the listeners always want to understand where the speaking is coming from. And that therefore their persons will be always put into relation to their works. They actively shape this relation! Because they know that it is their work on this relationship that constitutes their authorship. The authors don't hide; they speak loudly and clearly. The contemporary authors are present.

[Exeunt, scripts left behind on the plinths.][110]

Winner's Performance is based on this script, which is held in the hands of the speakers during the performance. After the performance, the script was published in the artist book *If Analyses Could Be Poems ... Works between Text and*

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[110] This performance script consists mainly of appropriated text material and contains unlabeled quotes from:

> Roland Barthes: *The Pleasure of the Text.* Translated by Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.

> René Descartes: *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Oxford: University Press, 2008.

> Marcel Duchamp: quoted in Robert Genter, *Late Modernism: Art, Culture, and Politics in Cold War America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

> Theo van Doesburg: Manifesto "The Basis of Concrete Art" quoted in Anna Moszynska, *Abstract Art.* London: Thames & Hudson, 1990.

> Gerd de Vries (Ed.): *On Art, Artists' Writings on the Changed Notion of Art After 1965.* Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1974.

> *Wetterleuchten! Künstler-Manifeste des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 2000.

The German quotes were translated by Jennifer Taylor.

Performance[111] where it can be read as you just read it here. The only difference is that in the book the text is shown in the form of a scan of the script as it was used.

Since the script was held in the hands of the performers, the viewers of the performance knew that this script already existed before the performance, which means that it can be considered primary in reference to the performance. Furthermore, in the first paragraph of the script it is made clear that the script consists primarily of previously existing text material from other authors. That means that the script is a text that not only refers to other texts, but it also quotes from them. From this one can conclude that the text is not a transcript of an oral speech/gesture. The fact that the script is a text which can be read independently of the performance is demonstrated at the end of the performance again. The performers leave the scripts on the plinths and leave the gallery so that the audience can read the text after the performance, look something up in the text and compare the written words with what they remember of the text heard during the performance.

The performance consists of reading the script aloud, combined with a simple choreography in the space, which is communicated via instructions that can also be read in the script. Through the oral recitation of the written text, through the bodily presence of the performers and through the new contextualization, various shifts in meaning arise. Thus in "Why do I do this?" the word "this" takes on a reference to the space-time of the performance, which obviously differs from the original intention of the author being quoted. The word "I" is appropriated by the performer as well; during the performance it refers to her. The original author means his own art production by the word "this"; in the performance it becomes an indicator of the performance itself. Another example is the assertion "Man should not be present." The statement, which was meant in the original text categorically and metaphorically, takes on an ironic and humorous meaning in the performance. It is ironic because a person is obviously present, who through his presence foils the statement, and it is humorous because the metaphoric statement appears to be taken literally. These changes of meaning can be associated with the différance of Derrida. They are not in the script or in the performance, but they occur between them: they occur during the performance,

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[111] Nein, Lilo, *If Analyses Could Be Poems … Works between Text and Performance.* Vienna: Schlebrügge.Editor, 2013.

because of the (present) text, and in the script, because of the (imagined) performance.

In general différance is a movement in which the production of meaning takes place: the movement between reading and writing. The Derridean game of deconstruction is a conscious fertilization of this movement in this performance script. The notion of translation, which will be elaborated on in the following chapter in order to describe a specific relation between text and performance, necessarily exhibits certain aspects of this différance.