

# **Poetic Practice: Site and Performance**

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*PhD Thesis*

## Declaration of Authorship

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ABSTRACT**

'Poetic Practice: Site and Performance' is a practice based PhD which is an investigation of poetic sites under construction through academic and creative practices. The poetic is examined as a space performing towards an emergent feminist aesthetic. This thesis is interested in the dialogue between site, body, writing and the material status of the poem. This poetic framework emerges in relation to a writing of the female body and also functions as a space for collaboration and a space for theoretical dialogue. It explores writings and performance; where action becomes poetic, where document is poem, where performance is poetry, where writing is performance.

These investigations are framed and in dialogue with avant-garde poets and performers who have explored the possibilities of site and performance. In Chapter 1; 'The Sub World: A Site OF and FOR the Female Aesthetic', I investigate Carla Harryman's Sub World in relation to my own practice and attempt to uncover the site of the female aesthetic as defined by Rachel Blau DuPlessis. Chapter 2; 'A Site: A Sited Female: A Sited City: A Sited Body', investigates the site of the poetic in the city. My creative practice is informed and in dialogue with the concerns of Fiona Templeton and Jena Osman as well as being framed by an understanding of feminist architectural practice. My research then moves towards my work with the poetic collective press free press. In Chapter 3; 'The Collaborative Space: Locating the Poetic in Bodies', I draw on my own experience of working as part of a collective and consider Redell Olsen and Susan Johanknecht's text *Here Are My Instructions*. Chapter 4; 'The theoretical Space: Writing ON and BETWEEN Spaces', sees my investigations return to Carla Harryman, this time considering her text *Adorno's Noise* as well as the performance series *Catalysis* by Adrian Piper. These are used as modes to construct my own theoretical hybrid text in relation to the feminist voice of Helene Cixous.

Throughout the thesis and creative practice presented here I engage with the relationship between conceptions of space and the female body in performance. My critical discussions are framed by the writings of Michel De Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, Nick Kay, Elizabeth Grosz and Rachel Blau DuPlessis. In particular, DuPlessis's writings are central to my account of the theorisation of space, site and the formation of a gendered and performance led poetics. In my creative and theoretical work I have sought to evoke and inhabit a space for a feminist language of poetics in performance in which the poetics is consistently re-sited through its fluctuating relationship to writing and performance.

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For you the reader:

*a start from an end*

*a voice that carries a body  
a voice attempting to inflect itself towards a body  
a searching a reflecting a folding inwards*

*to find it at once in myself  
to find it at once as myself  
to find to locate to look outwards*

*being is a chord of difficulty  
being is a construction of reading  
being as being in being as openness*

*there is a loss at play  
there is a loss building a beginning  
there locating there finding there a closedness*

*I find myself in these pages  
I find comfort in these pages  
I form a body in these pages*

*I sigh at my end; as you begin to read*

# **PROLOGUE**

I begin with a call to arms;

And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it"<sup>1</sup>

*Poetic Practice: Site and Performance* is an exploration of the poetic through instances of site and performance. It is a poetic investigation of my own practice, a building of a context where this practice can sit. Throughout these poetic investigations I move through multiple sites; physical sites, metaphorical sites, poetic sites and theoretical sites. These are all in dialogue with each other, all attempting to communicate with each other. All attempting to locate a site where my practice can be located.

This thesis is an exploration; it is working to construct and re-construct, to understand and re-understand where and how my writing practice can be situated and written. These explorations find themselves veering between places, between theories and between practices. This sense of movement remains important both within the practice and the theoretical discussions which surround it. This sense of exploration has been necessary in the construction of this thesis and in the understanding of the practice which sits within it. Language is used as a poetic tool to investigate the body, theory, site and the action of writing itself.

This thesis is an exploration and an on-going dialogue; it is practicing and constantly asking questions of itself and of those voices which are heard throughout it. It is an attempt to locate and investigate the poetic through an engagement with site and performance.

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<sup>1</sup> Helene Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans Keith Cohen, Paula Cohen in *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976) p 876

*Poetic Practice: Site and Performance* is working towards establishing a methodology of practice which is a poetic practice aware of feminist and spatial theory and aware of itself within these spaces. I work towards understanding my own poetic practice by engaging with a range of practitioners, each aiding my own creative work.

These dialogues are ones which aid me in constructing my practice and work toward allowing my practice to function. This thesis is an investigation through theory in order to create practice, to find a positive place for my practice to exist. In order for this to occur I offer a critical framework which often does not show an opposition. There are oppositions at play against all frameworks and often within frameworks and I am aware of this. *Poetic Practice: Site and Performance* asks you to enter into its framework as an offering up of a framework where my practice can find itself or has been born out of. This thesis, then, is practicing to find its own footing. It is practice engaging with theory through practice forming its own theory. This symbiotic relationship has been essential for this critical framework to be created.

. I begin in Chapter 1, 'The Sub World: A Site OF and FOR the Female Aesthetic', I focus my attention on the female aesthetic as defined by Rachel Blau DuPlessis. This provides a critical framework, a critical base for my writing strategies. The words of DuPlessis echo throughout this thesis, her theoretical and poetic voice providing a way to not only interact with my own writing practice, but the practice of others. The words of DuPlessis have informed me throughout. Her voice one guiding and driving how I write and read. The de-stable nature of her theory allows it to bleed into a poetic. This encourages a new way to engage with theory, to think of it as practice, to consider its materiality. These actions are on-going and inherent in this thesis.

I use DuPlessis's female aesthetic as a base to explore the work of Carla Harryman. Harryman too features as a key body in this thesis. Her work shifting between poem, play,



prose and theory again opens up conversations surrounding the materiality of language and its status as object.

I begin with her Sub World, a poetic performance space full of hybridity, full of complications, full of potential. I begin to consider writing as a tool to uncover site and language as a way of experiencing it. There are constant complications, constant shifts, and constant doubts. I consider my own action of writing, how to build my own methodology, my own interactions build *Ashenden*, a poetic performance text written on site at the Heygate Estate in South London. Harryman and DuPlessis guide me in this experience of writing as action. Allowing me to become more aware of the materiality of language and its status as well as helping me to find my own female aesthetic of practice; my own body in writing.

I move forwards with this knowledge and focus my attention on the spatial practice. The Interlude: Site offers a space where site is explored in relation to Henri Lefebvre, Michel De Certeau, Nick Kaye and Robert Smithson. I begin to build my own definition of site. This becomes increasingly important to my practice as it grounds my engagement with this term more solidly.

This interlude provides a context for my interaction with site as a functioning term throughout my practice. It is a building of site as known to me and to aid my practice to be constructed and function. This interlude is a way to communicate how site is built within my practice and indeed how I use these theories to form my practice and go on to write across many sites. I build on this throughout and these voices guide my understanding of this term throughout my on-going investigations.

In Chapter 2, 'A Site: A Sited Female: A Sited City: A Sited Body' my engagement with site moves to consider the work of Fiona Templeton and Jena Osman, asking questions of how they utilise the site of the city as a space of exploration. How can writing re-order our

social space? How can language alter our experience of the city? Does text have the possibility to shift our perspectives of space?

These arguments follow on from and are inherently linked to the spatial theories from the interlude Site. I move to informing my spatial understanding of what site is by engaging with the work of Templeton and Osman. To form a practical and creative understanding of site and how the female body has the ability to shift our perspective and understanding of it.

The practice which accompanies this chapter is Function in 1-16; a piece of work which engages with Templeton's understanding and interest in the poetic city, but also looks toward feminist architecture to better understand the physical structures which surround us. By exploring the work of feminist architectural practitioners I hope to uncover how and if the poetic can function in a similar way. How physically reading and understanding the city can offer me a better understanding of how to write in it, through it and sometimes against it. Of how to build a space and whether language holds the power to do this. Can writing, can language build a poetic architectural experience?

Chapter 3 sees me move away from the city and towards my work in collaboration. In 'The Collaborative Space: Locating the Poetic in Bodies'; I test whether the site of collaboration holds the potential to be a poetic site under construction. My work as part of the poetic collective press free press has played a key role in my thoughts on the poetic and informed my practice and here I consider the dialogues between bodies in collaboration, the fluidity of these exchanges and the difficulty of negotiating the collaborative site. These ideas are tested and related to Redell Olsen and Susan Johanknecht's text *Here Are My Instructions*. Dialogues of genre and materialities are explored which aid me in these investigations, which offer up another poetic site to consider.

There is an importance placed on fluidity here, how writing aids not only how we communicate with each other, but to build a collaborative space in body and object through communication.

I move forward with this knowledge and focus my attention on the body. My second interlude *Body*, acts as a space for me to contextualise my understanding of the female performing body. It grounds my own thoughts on how I visualise the use of and history of my own performing body. It is framed by engaging with the corporeal through an understanding of 1970s performance art. Engaging specifically with Eleanor Antin, her essay *Women Without Pathos* and the exhibition this text is linked with entitled *Portraits of Eight New York Women*. This interlude allows me to chart my own understanding of the woman artist, creating a space for me to interact with and where my own artistic body resonates from.

Like the interlude before it, *Body* offers a definition of the body as I see it, as it has built itself within and informed my practice and continues to do so.

The understanding of body moves forward with me into my final chapter. In Chapter 4 I return to engaging with the practice included in this thesis. *medusa: speaking* is a critical engagement with body and site and locating the theoretical voice through actions of writing and performance. Chapter 4; 'The theoretical Space: Writing ON and BETWEEN Spaces', sees my research return to the work of Carla Harryman, this time her theoretical poetic voice is utilised to uncover the possibility of a cross –genre writing. This term cross-genre is one which is complex and brings with it a set of difficulties which I work through. This aiding my investigations as I consider questions of physical engagement and active theoretical writing and whether these strategies can produce a text functioning within the female aesthetic according to Rachel Blau DuPlessis.

I return to Harryman and DuPlessis in a cyclical manner, having moved forward in my creative and theoretical understanding of them. I draw on Carla Harryman's *Adorno's Noise* in order to advance my own poetic theoretical voice.

The physicality comes in the form of Adrian Piper, a performance artist working in 1970s New York. The inclusion of this figure allows me to establish my own relationship with the physical in my practice and ignites key questions of how writing can function in relation to the body. How the body can inhabit the city. These investigations are guided by the voice of Elizabeth Grosz; her feminist spatial theory providing a structure to sit my own practice in.

This thesis is an on-going dialogue of thought and practice. It looks to construct a methodology of my writing practice and is an investigation of the flexibility of form which runs through the work of DuPlessis, Harryman, Templeton, Osman, Olsen, Johanknecht, Antin, Piper and my own. It is an investigation in the action of writing and how poetic language can build new sites and on-going sites of practice.

It moves through theory practicing it in the creative to form new dialogues. *Poetic Practice: Site and Performance* engages with theory throughout to form a framework for my practice to be built from and exist in.

# **CHAPTER 1**

**The Sub World: A site OF and FOR the female aesthetic**

*The site of the Sub World*

*The site for the Sub World*

I begin by considering the strategies which inform my writing practice; to consider how I write, to consider why I feel it necessary to write in this way. I re-utter this call;

And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it"<sup>2</sup>

There is an instant connection with my body. Writing is an action of the body. Writing is an action for the body. It is trace of the body. It is the voice.

To begin to understand the strategies of my writing I turn to Rachel Blau DuPlessis, her essay 'For the Etruscans' is an essay rich with whispers; we hear the voices of Virginia Woolf, Anais Nin, Julia Kristeva, Lucy Lippard and Mira Schor. However Rachel Blau DuPlessis is the voice we hear string these together. She utilises these multiple voices to give strength to her own. 'For the Etruscans' is an essay in dialogue with practice as theory. It is itself attempting to define and be a piece of female aesthetic. DuPlessis is performing the action of female aesthetic as well as demonstrating how it is constructed. There is an on-going process in this essay as it re-communicates itself.

There is female aesthetic, but not *a* female aesthetic, not one single constellation of strategies.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Helene Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans Keith Cohen, Paula Cohen in *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976) p. 876

<sup>3</sup> Rachel Blau DuPlessis, 'For The Etruscans', in *The Pink Guitar; Writing as Feminist Practice*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006). p.3

In its very construction this essay is admitting that it is female aesthetic, but in order to be this it has been constructed through multiple voices, from multiple strategies. I am interested in considering the use of this multiple voice and how this multiple voice exists in my own writing.

This female aesthetic is one which is self-aware and encouraging. It is an aesthetic which defines itself in the multiple and is in dialogue with what surrounds it. DuPlessis encourages a series of voices to speak throughout her essay, she encourages and includes questions surrounding this aesthetic, she offers criticism of herself, she admits that the aesthetic has failings. The voice of Mirra Komarovsky asks;

*But to test this is true, whether what you are calling women's themes do appear in women's writing, would you not have to use objective methods, devise objective tests of this knowledge?<sup>4</sup>*

DuPlessis replies to this by encouraging an openness and admitting 'that different social groups produce differences in cultural expression'.<sup>5</sup> She admits that this aesthetic functions 'outside the dominant systems of meaning, value and power'<sup>6</sup>. DuPlessis has constructed not only an artistic aesthetic, but a political one. The female aesthetic is aware and in dialogue with the space around it. It is working outside dominant systems and attempting to form its own system. I recognise then that the system of DuPlessis is functioning to build a writing experience which considers a variety of expressions. I am interested in the flexibility; the spaces for exploration this offers.

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<sup>4</sup> DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*. p.13

<sup>5</sup> DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*. p.14

<sup>6</sup> DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*. p.14

The work of Rachel Blau DuPlessis is a constantly shifting between spaces and opinions, it is personal and she provides not only a critical eye on theory, feminism, poetics, but also her own personal and altering relationship to these. There is a constant questioning and re-questioning of the self; a constant drafting and re-drafting. This process of writing and rewriting is a learning experience, one which not only allows for contradictions, but change. The action of writing is never seen as permanent, but a constant and on-going movement of process between practice and theory. The form provides the context for the content. The form of the essay is explored in process being constructed and reconstructed by the inclusion of these multiple voices and bodies. Duplessis's aesthetic is one where form has the possibility to shift itself, to move in and out of itself; the content adapting to its context and holding the power to alter it.

Looking more closely at the work of DuPlessis, her collection of essays, *The Pink Guitar*, is labelled by her as being 'writing as feminist practice', it is attempting to write as feminist and construct a series of strategies to do this. DuPlessis is not only telling us how this is possible, but practicing it. The *Pink Guitar* asks me;

What body then is speaking? Does her body speak? Is it a body of words? Of cultural ideas? A Body of language? A body of words inflected with its female body? A Body of pulses, impulses, fissured, hopeful and afraid inside [?]<sup>7</sup>

It is here where I begin to consider how to write my body, how writing is not only action, but is a body in its own right. DuPlessis magnifies the complexity of writing, magnifies the difficulty of how to write about writing, of how to write. This is important to my own

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<sup>7</sup> DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*. p.170



strategies of writing. The site of investigation has the opportunity to become the writing. The question of how is what becomes central to my own writing practice.

I turn now to the methods and strategies which are part of Duplessis's practice, which is engaging with feminist thought and encourages a multi, a fracturing, a textured;

Following, the "female aesthetic" will produce artworks that incorporate contradiction and nonlinear movement into the heart of the text.<sup>8</sup>

DuPlessis states clearly that this aesthetic is one of movement and dialogue, this aesthetic jumps and finds new connections, this aesthetic is testing its boundaries. DuPlessis encourages an approach to process which probes and investigates into the heart of the text. This approach is not only multi in its process, but also in its product. Considering process can often be conceptual, yet DuPlessis ensures this is not so. In her essay 'Otherhow', she expands on the theme of language and gender by listing the,

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<sup>8</sup> DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*. p.8

## Recurrent Terms

delegitimate

deconstruct

decenter

dismantle

destabilize

displace

deform

explode<sup>9</sup>

This list relates directly to the female aesthetic which DuPlessis is building, it offers a way to negotiate the strategies which she is using and allows us to see traits of the aesthetic in others' work. This list acts as an on-going engagement with the female aesthetic and the way in which DuPlessis herself writes. There is no one strategy, instead a list of potentials, of hows, of possible ways to investigate.

I move forward then in my own writing with this list of recurrent terms and encourage a practice which allows for them. A practice which de-centres itself and writing itself. A practice which is aware of these possibilities and the potential they hold to uncover ways to write and ask questions of how.

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<sup>9</sup> DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*. p.145

## The Site of the Sub World

To consider writing in practice, writing which can be exploded I begin with Carla Harryman. Carla Harryman's Sub World is one interested in establishing the process of constructing this Sub World and considering the importance of site and object within it. Harryman is evidently engaging in a complex dialogue with site, body and language and it is in this multi strategy approach where links can be seen with the female aesthetic. I want to explore these materialities and consider how the Sub World is constructed and what use it holds for housing this aesthetic. I am interested in the strategies Harryman has used in defining this Sub World and the strategies she uses within it and for this reason I am focussing on her essay 'Site Sampling In "Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World"'<sup>10</sup> rather than the performance text itself. The performance text itself is unpublished in its entirety and exists as an ephemeral text, this only enhancing its relation to an aesthetic which encourages multiple approaches. It is a disparate text which has existed as four public performances from 2001 to 2003. This essay is in dialogue with the first performance<sup>11</sup> and offers Harryman's perspective and concepts surrounding the text and her intentions.

This essay then acts as a critical engagement with the performance text, a document of performance as well as a dialogue with the processes behind both. Harryman writes of this essay that it 'is a bit like writing catalogue copy for an exhibition that has not quite left the artist's studio and is in a very early phase of realization.'<sup>12</sup> This essay is one which is exciting as it is considering the potential of a performance text, considering how to, considering its place; it is still at play. In contrast to Harryman's text I want to draw attention to Laura

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<sup>10</sup> Carla Harryman, 'Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World', in *Additional Apparitions*, ed. David Kennedy and Keith Tuma (Sheffield: Cherry On The Top Press, 2002), p. 157-171

<sup>11</sup> Performed by Cris Cheek, Cole Heinowiz, Redell Olsen and Miles Champion at Research Centre for Modern and Contemporary Poetry, Oxford Brookes University, April 2, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Harryman, 'Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World'. p 159

Hinton's essay "Doing Things with Fetishism": The Performing Hybrids in Carla Harryman's Poetry Play *Performing Objects Stationed in the Subworld*<sup>13</sup> in *How2*. This essay focuses on the fetishisation of objects in the play, paying particular attention to the 2003 performance directed by Jim Cave at LAB in San Francisco. I want to mention this essay briefly as it is important to pause and consider Hinton's engagement with Harryman, her engagement makes mine possible. This essay although interesting focuses on the object in performance, not the process of constructing the Sub World.

I return to my interest in Harryman's essay. By utilising Harryman's essay as text I am considering performance strategies directly through the eyes of Harryman. This essay then is not only a critical tool, but also one which holds answers to Harryman's process and shares traits with the female aesthetic. By directly utilizing Duplessis's "recurring terms" Harryman shows us how she creates the Sub World. To begin to decipher this Sub World I allow Harryman to introduce it;

What is emphasised is the Sub World as also the living world in exceed of and in contact with these ubiquitous problems of lived experience. It is the world in which the rule of segregation of black person from white person of child from adult world and adult from child worlds is not possible, because in the imagined space of the Sub World thought and imagination can transgress containment.<sup>14</sup>

It is a space between definition, it is a space deciding and deciphering, it is a space of contradiction and removal, it is a space not resting easy and resisting the real. The Sub World

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<sup>13</sup> Laura Hinton, "Doing Things with Fetishism": The Performing Hybrids in Carla Harryman's Poetry Play *Performing Objects Stationed in the Subworld* in *How2* Vol 3, Issue 3.

<sup>14</sup> Harryman, 'Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World'. p. 164

is very conscious of and draws on the real and this is a relationship which I will return to. It is important to consider Harryman's relationship to the 'external reality'<sup>15</sup> surrounding her and the Sub World in performance and whether a link can be made between these.

Firstly the 'external reality.'<sup>16</sup> Harryman has constructed a performance text which is in dialogue with the urban backdrop of Detroit; it is being relocated, re-adjusted and re-negotiated through writing and then in performance. This process is very interesting when considered in relation to Duplessis's ideas surrounding the female aesthetic. Harryman's action of site sampling is deconstructing, de-centring, dismantling, destabilising, displacing Detroit and exploding it in her writing. Harryman is sampling from one reality and moving it into her new reality of the Sub World. Before considering the relationship between these two worlds I want to pay more attention to the act of site sampling. This is an important method to consider as Harryman's process engages with the female body in space; her body acts as a filter for the space surrounding her. It is important to recognise that Harryman is very conscious of spatiality and how it impinges itself into her work;

I made notes of conversations that I participated in or overheard in Detroit and the Suburbs. I had made a rule for myself that the play had to incorporate found materials, even if those materials were subject to treatment.<sup>17</sup>

Harryman's method of site sampling is important to recognise. She is explicitly rupturing the site of Detroit and interfering with this found text. Harryman is at play with the external reality surrounding her. I want to consider the action of site sampling from two perspectives,

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<sup>15</sup> Harryman, 'Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World'. p. 166

<sup>16</sup> Harryman, 'Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World'. p. 166

<sup>17</sup> Harryman, 'Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World'. p. 167

firstly to see it as an action directly linked to Rachel Blau Duplessis's female aesthetic and secondly as an action directly linked with the space of the city.

The action of site sampling is an involvement with the "external reality" which surrounds Harryman. She is involved with this reality, but at play with it and working to contradict objects and texts from it. There is a movement of text and object from the external to the internal writing of Harryman. For the found materials to bridge this gap they fall victims to the "treatment" of Harryman. This "treatment" is a process of action, of moving from one space to another, of re-organisation, of rupture, of exploding. It is this action which includes site sampling as an action of the female aesthetic; it is an action of building, an action of texture;

an emotional texture, a structural expression of mutuality. Writers know their text as a form of intimacy, of personal contact, whether conversations with the reader or with the self. Letters, journals, voices are sources for this element.<sup>18</sup>

This emotional texture of DuPlessis is evident in her own essays. It is evident in the multiple voices in 'For The Etruscans', it is evident in her continual admittance that there must be a multi-voiced whole. The building of this texture is made clear by Harryman; she explicitly shares her source text. By doing so Harryman is making her reader/audience aware that she is interfering with the text of the city. This incorporation of the city's sign system into her play text shows a definite involvement with the social and architectural space surrounding her.

Harryman is encouraging a reading of the city; she is asking her audience to consider where

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<sup>18</sup> DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*.p.5

this text has been found, how it has been treated and how it can continue to communicate the city. The method of site sampling then is a method deeply connected to the space being used as a site.

The impact of sampling this site and interacting with it leads to a very different text, one that is made up from fragments, from attempts to recover conversations, from an engagement and documentation of Detroit. Harryman is interacting with the space surrounding her very specifically; she is writing from it. This process and action of writing is an engagement of body and this allows Detroit to become a site of practice. Harryman is engaging with the sign systems of this city; dismantling them and encouraging them to flourish in the form of the female aesthetic. Michel De Certeau writes of space;

Space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e: a place constituted by a system of signs.<sup>19</sup>

De Certeau's tactics of understanding space as a "practiced space" relate to how Harryman's text is under construction. For De Certeau space is a constructed site, a site constructed by sign systems, a space geometrically defined. He draws a similarity between the written text and the city's sign systems; each having to adhere to rules, each being built out of order and understanding of functions. Harryman is aware of this order and is aware of the space she writes from, yet she willingly disorders it, she re-defines the space of Detroit in her writing.

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<sup>19</sup>Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, (London : University of California Press; New edition, 2002). p. 117

This redefinition of spatiality through the re-ordering and re-presenting of found text begins to create the Sub World of Harryman. The relationship and interdependence between body and space is essential when creating the Sub World. Harryman is working to locate and re-locate;

External reality is folded into the Sub World where the distinctions between the psychological, domestic, and public fade.<sup>20</sup>

External reality is folded into the Sub World. A dynamic relationship between the real and the fictional is blurred. Harryman is playing between texts and locations; dislocating language from one place to another. The Sub World needs a dialogue to exist. It is important to realise then that the Sub World of Harryman is a space encouraging the female aesthetic to take place, yet it is also a space under construction. This action of folding one space into another allows distinctions to become blurred. If we imagine folding wet paint onto a dry page there is leaking, there is blurring, there is smudging of the original. It is this fold which allows the external reality to enter into the Sub World and construct it.

Harryman's Sub World is unaware of its attempt to become a space, but instead offers a fluid site which can be multiple places and offer multiple possibilities at once. The impact of this dislocation of text within the Sub World allows it to become unhinged to meaning, to time, to person. There is a loss of context as context constantly shifts.

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<sup>20</sup> Harryman, 'Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World'. p. 166



This shifting of context allows for borders to be transferred and broken;

C1 as “woman” still working out. C3 as “man” whom she appears to know or who appears to know her and is not working out.

Man: Hi, what did you do today

Woman: Nothing. I haven't been doing anything. I did my nails and watched some soaps.

I'm meeting with CeeCee and CeeZee tonight.

We're working on starting a business. I was wondering if you could tell me anything about starting a dance joint?

Man: You can't do it. What kind? Topless?<sup>21</sup>

This extract is specific in its location the woman is working out, but this may not be the case in the Sub World. Text can be altered and impacted on. This is a found conversation removed from the site of Detroit and now under re-construction in the Sub World. By relocating this text Harryman is showing the poetic possibilities for text in performance. Re-locating this text not only draws our attention to its everydayness, but plays upon it and questions poetic language itself. Like Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Harryman is utilising multiple voices; re-locating them, displacing them, allowing them to re-exist. The Sub World becomes a place then, with the possibility to construct a poetic text through the live, through the re-ordering of these fragments.

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<sup>21</sup> Harryman, 'Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World'. p 168

There is a movement of language; Harryman's movement of text from external reality to Sub World;

Alone in the Sub World, one is picked up, dropped off, left in front of a piano. One finds oneself in the back seat of a car. One is under the clothesline. The only way to have company is to invent it.<sup>22</sup>

The space of the performing Sub World is at play, filled with the objects ready to be interacted with. These performing objects structure and form the performance of the Sub World. These are objects, bodies and language. It is Harryman's use of language in this Sub World which is of interest to me and my practice. The status of object, body and language is played with, all given equal status, all equal opportunity to rupture and pull apart the other. For Harryman, as we have seen, language is a pliable tool; it can be sampled, relocated, repeated and possibly destroyed. The Sub World and performance text of Harryman are dependent upon each other; one cannot become active without the other. This dialogue between non site and performance text shows the potential in both. There is a hybridity between site and text.

There is a possibility of a changed context or for a context to be invented as Harryman suggests. This inventiveness allows a piano to become a back seat to become a clothes line to become company. There is transference of meaning between text and object. The Sub World allows sign systems to become manipulated; it constructs its own system drawing on the themes of DuPlessis. Inventing not merely company, but a new sign system to engage language and performance anew.

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<sup>22</sup> Harryman, 'Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World'. p 165

The site of the Sub World is a site where text can fragment itself, where it can re-order. This aligns the Sub World with the practice at work in the female aesthetic of Rachel Blau DuPlessis. Harryman performs these functions physically and bodily as well as through language. The Sub World allows objects to be constructed in performance and explore their full potential. Harryman explicitly states that ‘the phrases or lines of a poem in performance can be spoken in any order’<sup>23</sup> this allows for a maximum freedom of text in performance, text becomes an object in performance, text becomes our focus. Harryman is interested in how performance can construct and dismantle, in her Sub World this is encouraged, an aesthetic of rupture, de-ordering, multiple and poly-texture exists.

The performing objects themselves can then be thought of as mobile syntax – built, broken, reassembled and constitutive of meaning – that veers among the socially familiar, received ideas, and radical subjectivity.<sup>24</sup>

Harryman’s Sub World is a political reading tool; it is a place which offers the possibility for movement in and out of the text. It is this willingness to allow text to be shifted not just in meaning, but in form which makes this space so dynamic. There is a sense that the Sub World is in dialogue with those in it.

The Sub World, although complicated, offers a site for the female aesthetic to sit comfortably. Both are pushing boundaries internally within sign systems and externally between disciplines and encourage a process of making and reading/performing under construction. Like the Sub World;

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<sup>23</sup> Harryman, ‘Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World’.p 160

<sup>24</sup> Harryman, ‘Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World’.p 163

The female aesthetic will produce art works that incorporate contradiction and non-linear movement into the heart of the text.<sup>25</sup>

They are both a place of movement, reordering and force a junction to appear in the text.

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<sup>25</sup> DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*.p.8

## Of and For the Sub World

I turn now to my own practice which is engaging with the female aesthetic to create a performance text of and for the Sub World. It is both a sampling exercise and document of an on-going performance strategy taking place in the Heygate Estate in south London. This piece of practice is an experiment in how the female aesthetic can be composed and compose itself in a self constructed Sub World within an urban landscape. It is explicit in its production methods and positions itself between spaces, resting on borders of text, performance and document. In its creation and form it is in dialogue with the difficulty of negotiating language, body and text in space.

As a woman writing, my language space, my cultural space is active with a concatenation of constructs -prior poems, prior poetics- a lot of which implicate women. But not often as speaker. As ideal. As sought. As a mediator towards others' speech. As object. As means. As a thing partially cannibalized. Neutralized.<sup>26</sup>

As woman I am writing in a space activated by others, constructed by others. My practice is in dialogue with these other voices; it draws on their voices of experience to construct itself within a site already active and considering the materialities and difficulties of language, body and text in space. The voice of Rachel Blau DuPlessis increases;

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<sup>26</sup> DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*. p. 141

‘There is female aesthetic, but not *a* female aesthetic, not one single constellation of strategies.’<sup>27</sup>

The female aesthetic is at the heart of my practical investigations. Duplessis’s aesthetic forms my process, it is a tool to investigate and dislocate. This admittance of and for many strategies allows for a practice of and for multiple concerns. Concerns which ask questions of how to write, of how to write the body, of how to write a space. Of how to construct a text with the possibility and potential to keep constructing and reconstructing itself through multiple forms.

I hear the voice of Carla Harryman; the action of site sampling, the inventor of the Sub World. Her text cannot be contained and pushes beyond its materiality into that of performance. It encourages movement, rupture and destabilises. Her voice reminds that the process of constructing a text can be mirrored in the performing of that text; that one can become the other.

I begin by outlining my practice; locating my voice. As woman I begin voiceless; a solitary performance of observing, of situating, of finding, of tracing, of mediating a space. This space is the building Ashenden, located within the Heygate Estate in south London. I begin on 10/01/2011 and continue to the present. I begin by considering the whole estate, by walking it, by returning to it and re-walking it. I find Ashenden. I locate its possibilities. My interest is in constructing a potential domestic space of my own in Ashenden, of becoming a fixture within this space, a fixture with the possibility for movement, to be transient, yet inhabit.

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<sup>27</sup> DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*. p.3.

I consider my space; my need to be restrained, my need to be in a Sub World apart from Ashenden. My Sub World becomes a 220cm x 260cm flat bed sheet. This is my domestic Sub World. For the duration I return to the site. For the duration I read the site. For the duration I write the site. I am now a fixture in Ashenden. I work in isolation, in isolation in a domestic site; an isolated site. My body is in dialogue with the site. I adjust body to be in dialogue. I write body and site to be in dialogue. There is a negotiation between; an observation between; a dialogue of between and unsaids. I explore the space by performing the body in site; by writing the site through body:

The operable site is wherever you are standing<sup>28</sup>

*I sit on fabric, I stand on fabric, I continually do on fabric: looking, watching, kneeling, blinking, reaching, breathing, marking, reading, sighing, listening, acting, considering, negotiating, I sit on fabric, I stand on fabric, I continually do on fabric: listening, negotiating, looking, breathing, reaching, kneeling, acting, marking, considering, sighing, watching, blinking, reading, I sit on fabric, I stand on fabric, I continually do on fabric: reaching, looking, watching, listening, sighing, reading, negotiating, kneeling, blinking, marking, considering, acting, breathing I continually do on fabric: writing.*

This becomes a performance of repetition in space, a performance of patience, a performance of reconstructions. I work within the restraints of my Sub World and am bound by rules:

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<sup>28</sup> Rachel Blau DuPlessis, 'Draft 87: Trace Elements' in *Pitch; Drafts 77-95*, (London: Salt, 2010) p. 86.

Procedure:

Walk route around Ashenden.

Locate spatial dwelling.

Inhabit the restraint dwelling object for no less than one hour.

/ in / absence of voice encourage written dialogue.

Repeat action over four corners of the dwelling.

/ in / absence of other collate found object.

Repeat action over four corners of the dwelling.

[*On each inhabitation written dialogue and found object are to be re-utilised*]<sup>29</sup>

My dialogue is one involving an attempt to constantly record, to write from and for the site. Each time I return I bring the “written dialogue” and the “found objects” from the past visit back with me. I rewrite them; I continue to visit re-writing and re-finding. This is a process of repetition and adjustments working to erase the last visit. Much like the structure of Ashenden itself I slowly destroy and dislocate my own texts.

The piece of practice *Ashenden* is an exploration of a Sub World an offering to create a future Sub World in performance. It is a text acting as poem, performance text and document of site. In its construction *Ashenden* negotiated a temporal space within the Heygate Estate. A disused council estate in the London Borough of Southwark built in 1974 and now undergoing demolition. It is a space of concrete and height, a space of abandoned homes, a space of loss, a space emptied out and awaiting destruction. I was drawn to this space as I pass by it almost each day and have been intrigued by its maze like appearance and the slow movement of people from the buildings.

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<sup>29</sup> Rebecca Cremin, *Ashenden*. 2011.



*Ashenden* acts as a process of being in place as body becomes part of site in order to build a vocalised site on the page. The textual action of being and exploring the physical site of the building is crucial. It is this action of being and witnessing which is a necessity. I visit this physical building over the course of months, forcing my way into this space as it forces me out. The action of inhabiting moves from a personal one towards a political one as the status of the building changes from a domestic one to a condemned one. My method is an exploration of writing through site, developing a non-site on the page. A new architecture is voiced through text, through the physicality of language.

Over a series of months windows would become boarded up as another domestic space was taken. This loss of the domestic struck me and as I considered this site I wanted to re-install the domestic into the space of *Ashenden*.

My practice is constructing a temporary domestic space in the form of a bed sheet for my body to inhabit. This simple gesture allows the domestic to creep back into the site; it becomes a home for my writing. I am attempting to evoke the past bodies of these buildings by allowing this bed sheet to become my dwelling. I am interested here in the adjustments which must be made for this to occur. Elizabeth Grosz considers the relationship between female body and space crying for a '(re)finding and (re)situating of the body'<sup>30</sup> in space. This dialogue between body and space was an important consideration when constructing this piece. I inhabit the domestic space of my Sub World, by attempting to "(re)situate" the abandoned homes of *Ashenden* onto my bed sheet. The relationship between body and space was necessary; by trapping myself for the writing period this relationship was heightened, and I too became an object within this estate.

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<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, 'Introduction', in *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*, (MIT 2001), p.2

The repetitive nature of this activity meant I became an occupant; I would often go to the estate once I had finished work, instead of going to my own home I went to the new home of Ashenden. I was mimicking past routines of past bodies. I became more and more involved with where I would position my sheet, becoming braver; entering derelict houses, finding positions which felt like a home. This interaction between body and space became increasingly important to the process. This action of writing is concerned with the drafting and redrafting of the text.

The process of *Ashenden* is one full of repetitions, repetitions of actions, of re-writing, of re-finding, of re-locating. The durational quality of this piece is one which I was aware of. To inhabit a space one must inhabit it habitually. For a space to become a home one must inhabit it habitually. This habitual action allowed for a constant engagement with the site and with the writing which occurred in situ.

The present is that which acts and lives, that which functions to anticipate an immediate future in action. The present is a form of impending action. The past is that which no longer acts, although in a sense it lives a shadowy and fleeting existence. It still is. It is real.<sup>31</sup>

The process of repetition of being and how this forms a present of action. *Ashenden* is taking part in this dialogue of time. The writing is rewritten over and over again; this causes erasure, causes a rupture, causes me to forget. The objects which are collected from the site are returned and replaced. There is a constant adjustment. There is a constant awareness of the object and text. This awareness of time as a tool of the female aesthetic allowed the text to

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<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, 'The Future of Space' in *Architecture from the Outside*, (MIT 2001). p. 121

move further and further from the site being influenced more and more by the actions of body.

There is a movement of language. Language is moving away from the site, descriptive text becomes attempts at memory, at layering different experiences. The action of writing in this Sub World began to influence the writing drastically;

Once the non-narrative and abstract language-play is established as a site, narrative language and representation can be situated alongside and within the open context of non-narrative language.<sup>32</sup>

By writing in the Sub World I had already begun to break and play with the narratives of this site, they had already been interfered with. This has led to *Ashenden* becoming an open context awaiting a re-negotiation in performance. It is a site itself born of and for the Sub World.

Language is built and rebuilt physically reflecting the site. Repetition is used as a way of building memory, of constructing the site of language.

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<sup>32</sup> Harryman, 'Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World'. p. 162

window curbing window window satellite satellite walkway lead sign wood joints  
frame frame satellite window wood metal board wire glass glass glass glass  
window concrete paint slab brick wire sign window window window window  
window window wood satellite brick slab wood wood glass joints curbing window  
brick glass brick satellite satellite window slab window frame metal paint<sup>33</sup>

In performance this building moves from text on a page to voice in space. I stand on the bed sheet, I read aloud. Text turns to a vocal exploration of language. Language is building and repeating over time. It is unsettled and will remain so as it is (re)located into performance, as a further action of rupture. I begin with a constant writing over and over; a constant re-uttering of body.

Ashenden then is a text written to be further explored through voice and body, to be re-located using the tools of Harryman's Sub World. It finds itself balancing within the female aesthetic; moving between forms of poem, document and performance. Ashenden will continue to locate and relocate.

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<sup>33</sup> Rebecca Cremin, Ashenden, from section --#1--, 2011

**AN INTERLUDE:**

**Site**

*“The built environment provides the context and coordinates for contemporary forms of body”<sup>34</sup>*

The built environment which surrounds us is a constantly refreshing context which insistently asks the body in it to refresh itself. The body refreshes in that it must constantly react, it must constantly process and it must constantly form connections. There is a sense that in today’s landscape the body struggles to find its place and to make its mark. Our current landscape is one which shifts, alters, turns, transposes and readjusts itself. It is a flickering constant. Our built landscape does not simply rest, it shifts; there is an on-going relationship between the body and this built environment. It is in this relationship where my interest lies; this pushing between landscape and body, this exposing of landscape through body, this rupture of landscape through body.

I am concerned with how the site of practice can shift. Site can be physical space, it can be conceptual space, it can be the book, it can be the body, it has the possibility to shift and alter itself.

This interlude aims to negotiate my understanding of site and the potential for it to be understood through the action of writing. I draw on the work of spatial theorists Henri Lefebvre, Michel De Certeau and Nick Kaye to form an understanding of how site can be defined in relation to my practice. To define site in my own terms;

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<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, ‘Bodies-Cities’ in *space, time and perversion*, (London: Routledge, 1995). p.104

## **A site:**

### *Site as action and inhabited space*

I want to firstly attempt to define site and discuss the potential for utilising it as a space to explore the poetic. The terms site and space are inevitably linked as they are in dialogue with each other. I turn to space first as a broad term for the world which surrounds us, the situation we find ourselves in. The space which surrounds us has an extreme influence on our being. The space we inhabit can restrict, broaden or confuse our physical and emotional relationship to what surrounds us. Our space is dependent on our body and vice versa. I begin by considering our social space; “(social) space is a (social) product”<sup>35</sup>. Henri Lefebvre comments that our constructed social space is a social product; the social body is constructing the social site. It is important to be aware of this dependant relationship; one cannot exist without the other. There is a constant conversation occurring between both, it is needed for one to construct the other.

Our social space, the city, is a social product of those who inhabit it. It is a product of our relationship to that space; our visions in that space, our imagined space. Our social space, then, according to Lefebvre is constructed through an interaction between body and space. This interaction allows each to construct the other; without one the other collapses, without one the other stands still, without one the other cannot exist. This duality within space means we are constantly linked to its construction and vice versa. We impact it as it impacts us.

This relationship is not only a metaphorical one, but a physical interdependent relationship. Lefebvre points out that the physical inhabitation of space must be recognised;

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<sup>35</sup> Henri Lefebvre, ‘Plan of the Present Work’ in *The Production of Space*. trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991). p.26

When we evoke 'space', we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so: the deployment of energy in relation to 'points' and within a time frame. When we evoke 'time', we must immediately say what it is that moves or changes therein. Space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction; likewise energy and time.<sup>36</sup>

Isolated space, space unoccupied by body is an abstraction, it is unavailable, it is a void. We must admit what occupies space, if it is the body which occupies this space, then it is the body which influences it. Physical space when occupied is a reflection of the body in it; it adapts to the physical body and re-defines itself. When we consider Lefebvre's theories in light of how to construct a site; we can see that the body or any object injected into a space has the possibility to construct it. It is how and why the object or body is placed in the site which is important to consider; the function of said occupation. A site then can be seen to be the relationship between social space and product; it is the examination of this relationship.

There is a sense when considering Lefebvre that the reality of space is important, the reality of space is exposed in the relationship between body and space;

It seems to be well established that physical space has no 'reality' without the energy that is deployed within it.<sup>37</sup>

Henri Lefebvre embraces and encourages the production and reproduction of space. He questions theoretically how this can occur and how it is constantly happening. By exposing space as a product and admitting it is only established through this deployed physical relationship Lefebvre shares the interesting possibility of how space can be disrupted. There

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<sup>36</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. p. 12

<sup>37</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. p. 13



is a possibility for space to be interfered with, for space to be re-constructed. The physicality of space is defined by those deploying energy in it. This relationship is one I wish to explore further in my own practice. Lefebvre admits that the physicality of space is dependent on what situates itself within this space, and by exposing how space is constructed and formed we can begin to consider a poetic reading and engagement with it.

The 'energy' of Lefebvre is one which facilitates space, yet what if this energy is one looking to expose, rupture and interfere with the normal social space. The thoughts of Lefebvre expose the action of constructing space; these same actions can be used to dismantle it, to rupture it. I will return to how space has the capacity to be dismantled and ruptured, but I want to ensure site is understood as unstable in its own right.

I move from looking at an abstract spatial concern to considering the space of the city as an example of a site and its relationship to spatial theory. Michel De Certeau admits to our social space as being one of order, one of stability, one of regulations. For De Certeau;

Space is a practices place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e. a place constituted by a system of signs.<sup>38</sup>

Space is regulated and constructed through a system of signs; for the social space of Lefebvre to maintain regularity the social body must maintain within these rules of De Certeau. There is a complexity here, the social space is dependent on the body understanding the rules which regulate social space and adhering to these. When we consider this in relation to site, or gaining an understanding of a site, we must then be aware that a site is part of this regularity.

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<sup>38</sup> Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendell, (London : University of California Press; New edition, 2002). p. 117

Site is defined by the artist's body and so is a space under severe practice. Space is constructed and under construction.

De Certeau's city is a written text, one which has its own set of semantic rules and regulations. It is necessary to point out this relationship between the city as a written text and a system of signs. There is a relationship built between the city as text and as site. The city can be said to be a text, waiting to be read.

Michel De Certeau imagines our social space to be led by grammar; the body adheres to regulations put in place by the body. For example a red light is a sign for no; the body responds to this, it does not walk. This red light acts syntactically as a full stop. The city's social space is a text constructed by the body for the body to constantly respond to. We are taught to read the signs of the city and adhere to them- we insistently are governed by our reading experience of the city.

I begin to consider this system and the system of space in relation to how artistic practice can affect it. Nick Kaye comments on De Certeau;

De Certeau does not read place as an order, but as an ordering system, while spatial practices do not reproduce fragments of a given order but operate as ordering activities, whether that activity be walking, reading, listening or viewing.<sup>39</sup>

The actions which take place in the city are actions to order what surrounds us. The action of walking is an ordering action if the correct grammar of the city's sign system is followed. If we consider how this system can be framed and adjusted we begin to consider a site within broader spatial concerns. To define a site is to attempt to re-define one fragment of space; it is an attempt to negotiate and read one aspect of a space. The activity of defining a space as a

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<sup>39</sup> Nick Kaye, 'Introduction: Site-Specifics' in *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 5

site allows it to be separated from the order which surrounds it. This separation is important as it sets up a framed space, a space where a new ordering system can exist, a space which can be interfered with and re-ordered. This cannot happen with the entire social space, but a site within it has the possibility for liminal change and rupture. Considering De Certeau in light of Kaye it appears that the site has the possibility for multiple possibilities within the regulated social space.

To consider a site is to accept that the whole city cannot be re-ordered, but one active frame can be affected. This frame allows us to visualise the social space of Lefebvre which follows the grammar of De Certeau, whilst attempting to re-order this system. The line of the frame allows these two spaces to push against each other; to constantly attempt to alter and re-align each other. The site of art practice has the possibility to push out from its framed space into the social space.

We move towards an understanding of a practiced space; a practiced framed space can be defined as a site. Site is an instance, a space of play and deviation from the regulations of normal social space. It is important to define site as such, it allows for a magnification of space and an understanding of how to expose, explore and rupture it. The work of Nick Kaye attempts to define site specific art, his theory acts as a signpost between the theoretical voices of Lefebvre and De Certeau, Kaye guides us into the next step of negotiating space and site. Kaye defines a site-specific work as;

A 'site-specific' work might articulate and define itself through properties, qualities or meanings produced in specific relationships between an 'object' or 'event' and a position it occupies. After the 'substantive' notion of site, such site-specific work might even assert a 'proper' relationship with its location, claiming an 'original and fixed position' associated with what it is.<sup>40</sup>

A site specific work, is a work under duress, it is a composition of the social and produced space and defines itself by exposing the relationship between site and space. A site specific work must allow for interaction between social space and the products within this social space, it is this interaction which exposes the rupture of the event. Nick Kaye points out that site-specific practice is concerned and must be aware of the physical position it occupies. We can turn back to the voice of Lefebvre here and his insistence on there being an exchange of energy. This occupation by object or event holds the key to how the site and space surrounding it can be influenced.

There is a politics of space to be understood here as one must understand the space which is being occupied. It is this action which causes a friction and allows there to be an impact. There is an interaction between the location of the art work and what it is. This relationship will be explored later when looking at the work of Fiona Templeton, but it is necessary to understand the impact of such specific actions and occupations of and in space.

There is a building of a political landscape and way of constructing and interfering with the ordered world of De Certeau. Kaye points out that it is the job of the site specific artists to form a relationship between the object and its location; whether this object is text, sculpture or film. We must be aware then of how to position a site, what this means and what impact it has on the surrounding space. Kaye points out that;

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<sup>40</sup> Kaye, *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*. p. 1

Site-specific work tests the stability and limits of the very places it acts out, at once relying on the order of the sites it so frequently seeks to question or disrupt. In this sense, site-specific art is defined precisely in these ellipses, drifts and leaks of meaning, through which the artwork and its place may be momentarily, articulated one in the other.<sup>41</sup>

Site specific work then must test the stability of its site, of the larger space surrounding it. It is important to notice that Kaye points out this work not only disrupts the space surrounding it, but also depends on it. This is a further point which can clarify the need for there to be a framed site; it is this framed site which allows for a different set of rules, it is the line of the frame which allows site to sit apart from the space which surrounds it and comment on it at the same time. To be within a space and out of it at the same time. This blurring of lines is interesting to consider when we consider how site is used in practice. It has the possibility to be in and comment on its surrounding social space at the same time. It is the job of site specific art to test, to work against while remaining in, to rupture.

To read the sign is to have located the signifier, to have recognised its place within the semiotic system. One can go on from this to argue that the location, in reading of an image, object or event, its positioning in relation to political, aesthetic, geographical, institution, or other discourses, all inform what 'it' can be said to be.<sup>42</sup>

This system of observing and locating the sign system within in a site is important to highlight. Kaye asks us to consider the position of said object in relation to our political social space and how this is constantly a comment on that very space. There is then a

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<sup>41</sup> Kaye, *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*. p.57

<sup>42</sup> Kaye, *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*. p. 2

difficulty in navigating said work as it must be in and of the semiotic system; it is both remarking on it and existing within it. This may at times make the signifier difficult to locate, it may fluctuate, it may be hidden and we must be aware that the very nature of site-specific practice means that it is work which is blurring between. The signifier is the event; it is the work acting within a system of signs. The signifier has the possibility to act as social body impacting on social space. It is the blurring between sign and signifier which I wish to examine; the blurring between event and site.

Kaye reads these signs and has an on-going investigation with them and their practitioners whilst looking at a variety of site-specific practices. Yet it does not deal with the action of text in relation to the site specific and I want to consider how text finds itself within this semiotic system. How text in relation to site and the space it comes from or inhabits, has an impact and what can happen in these instances. Site then exists within the social space. It is a practiced place locating itself within the social space, commenting on and interacting with it. Site then is a space to question and confront, it is the relationship between practice and space.

I want to touch on the work of Robert Smithson here, to pause and consider his negotiations of “site” and “nonsite”. It is important to consider this in relation to the on-going theoretical discussion surrounding site and space. I will not delve into the practice of Smithson in depth, but use his theoretical framework to aid my poetic considerations of site-specific practices. Smithson’s practice is one of dislocating, of removing elements from one site to a non site. The boundaries are polar for Smithson;

## Dialectic of Site and Non Site

<i>Site</i>	<i>Nonsite</i>
1. Open Limits	Closed Limits
2. A Series of Points	An Array of Matter
3. Outer Coordinates	Inner Coordinates
4. Subtraction	Addition
5. Indeterminate Certainty	Determinate Uncertainty
6. Scattered Information	Contained Information
7. Reflection	Mirror
8. Edge	Centre
9. Some Place (physical)	No Place (abstract)
10. Many	One <sup>43</sup>

Robert Smithson defines the difference between site and non site. Site in the mind of Smithson is the broader social space, it is a physical space, one of scattered information, one at the edge. The nonsite is closed, it contains and hold information, it has no place, but mirrors the site. In the work of Smithson site holds the possibility, it holds the information, whereas nonsite has the possibility to hold this information in a new way, to disrupt it and view it from a mirrored, yet uncertain position. The nonsite is a vessel which sits within the social space and comments on it, whilst keeping a distance. There is a sense that the nonsite holds the possibility for change, it is liminal, it is a space where fracture of the regulated social space can occur. Kaye comments that;

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Smithson, 'A Cinematic Atopia', (1977), in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed Jack Flam, University of California Press, London, 1996, p. 152

‘The relationship of Non-Site to site, here, is not one of a simple or stable opposition, but dialectical movement’,<sup>44</sup>

There is a functioning between site and nonsite and how we facilitate this is very interesting. It is the role of site-specific art to consider how site and nonsite can be navigated between. Site reflects where nonsite mirrors. These two functions can occur simultaneously and have similar impacts; a reflection can be unclear, it can be blurred, it is a translation whereas a mirror image exposes, it is an attempt to reproduce, to expose, to gain clarity. The relationship between these two states can blur and cross one depending on the other to define it, just as the social space is a social product so too the nonsite is a site product.

This shows how the relationship is not one of stability, but fluctuating functions of a dynamic relationship and conversation between site and nonsite. There is a movement from many towards one, the nonsite has the possibility to sit separately from the site and comment on it- to be removed from the site allows for a sense of clarity, perhaps a clearer reading of the signifier.

I have begun to situate my practice in relation to this theoretical discourse and how site functions as a space to inhabit, comment on and construct is constantly evident in my practice. These theorists assist and facilitate my involvement with a sited practice; allowing me to construct my own definition of how I work within a site and draw attention to how site functions as a social space, but also as an artistic one. I depend on this definition of site and it continually echoes through my practice as I investigate the poetic possibilities it holds. I move forward from this interlude, but continually remain engaged with it and its voices.

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<sup>44</sup> Nick Kaye, ' Mapping Site: Robert Smithson' in *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*, London: Routledge: 2000, p.95



## **CHAPTER 2**

**A site: A sited female: A sited city: A sited body**

This chapter looks to explore how the body can locate itself within the site of this built environment. To consider the role of site on writing, the role of writing on site and how the body acts as the material which mediates these two states. I will consider how the female body behaves in situ attempting to locate itself and write itself. This chapter will attempt to define site and consider the poetic possibilities of working through spatial practice. My investigations aim to expose the poetic possibility in site specific practice, paying attention to how we define site, how site is a space for performance and writing, and how site can be altered, ruptured and redefined by the female body.

I look to challenge and explore how the female can exist and construct her own architectural space in the city. The voices of Jane Rendell, Elizabeth Grosz, Griselda Pollock and Deborah Fausch will guide me through this exploration.

I consider the work of Fiona Templeton and how as a female body she inhabits site, writes site and continually performs in relation to site. My engagement with Templeton seeks to explore the site of female body and how this body engages with site to create a textual landscape. By investigating *You- The City*, I will ask how Templeton utilises site as a space of exploration. How the site can become a poetic experience. How performance can rupture the built environment surrounding us. These practical investigations will be guided by the feminist spatial concerns of Elizabeth Grosz, providing a theoretical framework for the female body in space and its interaction with site. It is this state of interaction where we can see how the female body has the possibility to rupture, re-arrange and re-experience site.

## **A site: A sited female: A sited city: A sited body**

I turn now toward my own practice. It looks to draw on a learned experience of the city and how it is constructed, how it can be dismantled and the possibility for it to be re-assembled and allow a new bodily experience. *Functions in 1-16* is an attempt to write the city, to re-write the city, to perform the city and to re-situate these states as a durational performance and writing experiment. I draw on the spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre and Michel De Certeau and my writing tactics to consider how site can be dismantled, ruptured and re-constructed. *Functions in 1-16* is a feminist poetic writing of space;

The production of a (male) world – the construction of an “artificial” or cultural environment, the production of an intelligible universe... is implicated in the systematic and violent erasure of the contributions of women, femininity, and the maternal. This erasure is the foundation on which a thoroughly masculine universe is built.<sup>45</sup>

To articulate a true feminist space, we must begin to re-write what exists, to write over what exists to rupture what exists by building on it, looking through it, shifting its perspectives. I begin to consider how this can happen, how can I attempt to build an interactive space which considers the female body, where the female body can attempt to write over and through the space around it.

*Functions in 1-16*, is an experiment in constructing a feminist space, this space is one which considers the body, where the usual male grammar of the city and language is interrupted. Just as feminist writing works by interrupting language through processes, a

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<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, ‘Women, Chora, Dwelling’ in *Space, Time and Perversion*, (London: Routledge, 1995) .p.121

feminist space interrupts our experience of spatiality. *Functions in 1-16* experiments with the feminist space working toward an understanding of spatial practice through feminist writing techniques. It is aware of the female body and explores how the female body can articulate itself by building a space through the female body's experience of site.

*Functions in 1-16* looks to create a multi-dimensional space, a constant re-uttering of language in the city. Jane Rendell comments that,

In the three dimensional space of the city, representations of gender work in different ways. The female body may be used as a sign, an empty signifier, to represent abstract concepts such as liberty or patriotism in the form of public statues.<sup>46</sup>

I am not attempting to construct as much as re-construct an experience of the city in the form of a feminist adaptation of it; in De Certeauian terms a feminist re-writing. In my practice I use the female body, my female body as tool to explore the city, to walk the city to be in the city. In my case the female signifier is used to rupture the city space; as I inhabit the city and write from and on it I interrupt it and rupture its grammar. I am engaging with my understanding of site, my definition of site and using this as a framework to write from. This action of inhabiting the city for long periods of time became essential to this piece of practice. Jane Rendell raises the point of the female signifier being verbalised in the form of a public statue. My role, although more transient took on a similar role. For the time I inhabited these spaces I became a feature of them, yet my role was working to dismantle their current grammar and not sit comfortably in them.

As practice, *Functions in 1-16*, is a piece which began by visiting spaces in the city, spontaneous places, places I was drawn to, places I was bodily interested in, perspective I

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<sup>46</sup> Jane Rendell, 'Introduction: Gender, Space' in *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden. (Oxon: Routledge, 2000). p.107

wanted to investigate. I will use ‘in a garden’ as a guide through the process. Initially drawn to a section of Kensington Gardens offering a limited perspective, a private perspective in a public domain I began to interact with my site, to rewrite the space over itself, onto itself, onto myself. The language is repetitive; there is a sense of building place through language. This durational activity was repeated in Covent Garden, a very public garden. The durational experience of writing in space became important to this project. Writing to attempt to name place, to use language to construct its meaning, to re-establish its meaning. I then move to another site and carry out the action of transcribing the writing onto this space. In the case of ‘in a garden’ this site was my private garden; I moved from an external public space to a private space, this then moves back into the public performance space.

The process of writing was a repetitive one, it was an action of naming; ‘in a garden’ was written again and again on the garden and in the garden over multiple gardens. I was not concerned with telling my reader/audience what this garden looked like or where it was, but simply that it was a garden, any garden and every garden. There is a notion of this having a universal quality, that through repeatedly naming and re-naming as an action the garden can be transposed to any location through the reading of this text.

I speak to you as an action describing a method of this writing as a shifting and on-going process. *Functions in 1-16* is a feminist exploration of space, an action of describing and re-uttering this space through body. A woman exploring and writing space again and again, it is an action of duration. My method is an action of repetition. Repetition to form and re-form, to define and re-define.

I sit and write in a garden over a period of months, constructing it through language, building it in words. *Functions in 1-16* was constructed over a period of months, of years. It has been on-going throughout the duration of this thesis, becoming informed by theory as it continues to.

In each case of location or object I would revisit it. For example on a chair<sup>47</sup> I would sit in a chair repeating this phrase 'in a chair'. In each case of location or object I would revisit it, sitting in a chair I would repeat this phrase. The action of repetition building the text. The chair becoming physically re-constructed for the reader by my action of these repetitious moments. It was a laborious task of writing at times, my body would grow tires, many pages were used in its construction, time often passed slowly. There are histories of place unavailable in the text, but are there through my bodily interaction with it. It is functioning as a series of repetitions of writing to build a new whole, a new whole re-uttered through female body.

The movement from public towards private is something which is important in *Functions in 1-16*, it insists on the body interacting with the same garden in multiple locations. By moving through several gardens I am attempting to place my body in all the gardens of London. The constant shifting locations create a sense of impossibility, there is an admittance that the page can never be the garden, but it is attempting to articulate itself through the female voice as a garden.

This mapping, re-mapping, naming and re-naming became an exercise in ownership. A cross section of sites are explored to attempt to overlay the experience of being and interacting with site. The female body is working as flaneur to attempt to gain an understanding of space and re-contextualise place.

It is this movement from and through spaces which I hope begins to articulate a feminist space; my feminist space. Elizabeth Grosz's "(male) world" is constructed through the 'violent erasure of the contributions of women.'<sup>48</sup> I work with this violent erasure in mind to build a feminist space. *Functions in 1-16*'s text has been produced through a series of bodily interactions and writings in space, these actions force an erasure of the text through

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<sup>47</sup> Please see *Functions in 1-16* p. 242

<sup>48</sup> Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*, p.121

repetition. These acts of erasure and repetition attempt to articulate this feminist space. The action of repeating a process in several locations is an action which is attempting to articulate the female voice, to build a female site, to allow for a female perspective and ownership of these sites.

This action of perspective, of being in and writing from a different perspective became important. It was made clear to me that to construct a feminist architectural experience the body must force an interaction with its physical space, and I do this by writing it and beginning to work towards understanding it in a corporeal sense. I draw on the words of Griselda Pollock;

The spaces of femininity are those from which femininity is lived as a positionality in discourse and social practice. They are the product of a lived sense of social locatedness, mobility and visibility, in the social relations of seeing and being seen. Shaped within the sexual politics of looking they demarcate a particular social organisation of the gaze which itself works back to secure a particular social ordering of sexual difference.<sup>49</sup>

These now begin to occur to me as instructions, as a series of tools to relate to my practice. I consider ways in which I can control the perspective of the reader, of the viewer, of the performer. By building a sense of controlled perspective and creating a controlled viewing experience I hope to create a new perspective of the city.

The building of a controlled perspective is evident in the text itself. It is concrete in its form, stark and full of repetition. The action of physical writing has been removed but the temporal trace remains. The process of inhabiting space for long durations of time, just like in

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<sup>49</sup> Griselda Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity' in *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden. (Oxon: Routledge, 2000). P. 161

*Ashenden* became implicit to the construction of the text. The experience of being in site constructs this site on the page.

*Functions in 1-16* is a product of living within the social space and carrying out the function of writing. The female body here does not have a voice, but writes its voice as trace, as action of being.

In *Functions in 1-16* and *Ashenden* there is a relationship between duration and writing. The grammar of site cannot be interfered with if the body writing does not become part of the site it is working within. My body then became part of the De Certeauian city, yet the writing and the potential it holds belongs to the world of Harryman's Sub World. It is the potential which this writing holds which allows for its relationship with site to be extended, to be built upon. The language has been conceived within an architectural landscape and must insist it continues to question its place within this landscape.



## **A site: A sited female:**

The landscape of the city is built through architectural constructions; these constructions are a stable language within a space of change. I want to move from the city and space of De Certeau and Lefebvre to a gendered understanding of these spaces. The practice of understanding a gendered architecture is a multi-disciplinary one, it includes spatial and gender theory to attempt to understand how and map out a new experience of architectural spaces.

Most recently, architectural criticism has recognised that architecture continues after the moment of its design and construction. The experience, perception, use, appropriation and occupation of architecture need to be considered in two ways; first, as the temporal activity which takes place after the ‘completion’ of the building, and which fundamentally alters the meaning of architecture, displacing it away from the architect and builder towards the active user; second, as the reconceptualization of architectural production, such that different activities reproduce different architectures over time and space.<sup>50</sup>

It is important to recognise that architectural practice has recognised how its occupation can and has affected the bodies within it. The role of the active user can be related to Lefebvre and his ideas of energy exchanges in space; the exchanging of this energy builds the space and allows for a relationship to be built between the physical construction and the body itself.

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<sup>50</sup> Leslia Kanes Weisman, Prologue: ‘Women’s Environmental Rights: A Manifesto’, in *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden. (Oxon: Routledge, 2000). p10.

It is this temporal activity between the building's completion and the shift which moves it to the active user which I am interested to consider. I will return to this idea later when further discussing *Functions in 1-16*, but want to raise the question of whether a similar temporal activity is occurring in my practice as it moves from body in physical space writing, to language on the page and as it gets reconceptualised and rebuilt in performance. The practical activities of production have a common ground, and it is the physicality of architecture which I am drawn to as a site to write from and in.

Weisman's second concern is that of the legacy of architecture, and how it shifts through time and space. I am less concerned with this and the historic ramifications of architecture itself, yet I am concerned with the flexibility of architecture to adapt to what surrounds it. By re-conceptualising the space which surrounds any given building can we affect its architectural system of signs? It seems then that architectural structures have the ability to be influenced through the body and it is the mediation between body and building, body and city which is of interest to me.

It is important to recognise the architectural theory at work here and how it has become concerned with the impact architecture has on the broader world and its conceptual being. The body is under duress from what surrounds it, the body then must push back, the female body must write her own experience in this already prescribed world. In order to construct *Functions in 1-16* and *Ashenden* there is a need to understand the possibilities of architectural practice, to understand how this theory can inflect itself onto my won practice.

I move now towards a more gendered concern within architecture and how this can aid and guide a female experience of the city. In *Gender, Space, Architecture; An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, Jane Rendell with her fellow editors has created a volume which aligns feminist theoretical concerns with architectural practice. In her introduction to

‘Gender Space Architecture’, Rendell raises concerns of the binaries which exist in gendered urban space; it is an

Ideology which divides city from home, public from private, production from reproduction and men from women is both patriarchal and capitalist. But, as an ideology, it does not describe the full range of lived experience of all urban dwellers. This is problematic for feminists because assumptions regarding sex, gender and space contained within this binary hierarchy are continually reproduced.<sup>51</sup>

It is the reproduction of this binary which I wish to avoid. I highlight it here to illustrate how the city is seen as divided into gendered areas; the home being female, the public male. As Rendell points out stepping away from and challenging this ideology is difficult. Rendell points out that all urban experiences do not fit comfortably within this ideology and so it must be challenged. To consider the city as a binary is not helpful, instead it isolates the body’s experience and makes the city a difficult space to facilitate and break. In reality our city/urban experience is not a series of binaries, but modes of connection and association.

These connections and associations are built on the exchange between and dependence of the body on what surrounds it to guide it. Our urban experience is one which has been mapped out for us, the connections already made, the right semantics already chosen. When we consider the city as a series of associations and connections we can imagine moving one from one space to another; shifting a sign and re-appropriating it. It is the job of the feminist spatial practitioner then to attempt to write her own series of new connections within the urban space, to make it a space for the female body.

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<sup>51</sup> Jane Rendell, ‘Introduction: Gender Space’, in *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden. (Oxon: Routledge, 2000). P. 103.

I return to De Certeau for a moment, to reconsider his image of the city as a written text we can see that although the city has a series of rules, these are not seen as binaries, instead a series of connected entities, a series of semiotic phrases working within a system of rules. In terms of the written city a modal series of connections can be ruptured by the female body more easily. There is a greater opportunity for connections to be broken, ruptured, destabilised, de-constructed and associations to be re-made, re-established, re-constructed.

In both *Functions in 1- 16* and *Ashenden* the female body has a flexibility to alter the system of the city. It is important to bear in mind that spaces hold a history, hold a cultural experience. Rendell points out that these are being constantly reproduced, yet my work as ‘urban dweller’ looks to facilitate these spaces through the action of writing, to interfere and re-adjust my experience of these spaces through my engagement with body and language. Just as Harryman works as an urban dweller in Detroit to reconstruct it in her *Sub World*, I too work to destabilise the site of the city through a written construction of it.

It is important then to consider this active body, this active user of the city and how she can explore the city and begin to attempt to break the rules within it. Rendell has pointed out that the public and private sphere both need to be inhabited in order to gain a comprehensive perspective of the urban space. It is the public domain which the female body struggles with, yet it is this domain which needs to be altered. Griselda Pollock raises these concerns in her essay, ‘Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity’. In this essay she uses the flaneur as an example for how the city can be explored. Yet again this public domain seems to raise difficulties, and although Pollock offers us a female perspective she still struggles within the boundaries of the urban architectural rules.

The flaneur is an exclusively masculine type which functions within the matrix of bourgeois ideology through which the social spaces of the city were reconstructed by the overlaying of the doctrine of separate spheres on to the division of public and private, which became as a result a gendered division.<sup>52</sup>

Although Pollock places her exploration of the city in late eighteenth century cities, there are definite similarities to how our city spaces are constructed today, and indeed we inhabit some of if not many of the same paths. These gendered divisions remain and although Pollock highlights them, she does not offer a firm solution to how they can be reshaped. Instead she tracks how women moved within these spaces, becoming more visible in public allowed them to assert themselves onto and into the urban architecture. Pollock suggests then that the body must be seen in a space to begin to assert control over it. This interaction is important to recognise and raises concerns about the democracy of space and how public space has been constructed to function with the public interest in mind. If the public is populated by male, the public space will reflect this. The female flaneur then offers a way to break through the pre-defined gendered spatial divisions.

Throughout my practice of writing in public spaces I was visible. I inserted myself into the sign system; but the action of writing and the performing actions led to there being a break in the normative function of these sites. The action of placing my bed sheet down in the Heygate Estate was often an uncomfortable one. I was not within a safe domestic space, but instead functioning as a visible sign disrupting the architectural language of this abandoned estate.

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<sup>52</sup> Griselda Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity' in *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden. (Oxon: Routledge, 2000). P. 162

We must admit then that social spaces are constructed by the visual, by the seeing and being seen of bodies.

The spaces of femininity are those from which femininity is lived as a positionality in discourse and social practice. They are the product of a lived sense of social locatedness, mobility and visibility, in the social relations of seeing and being seen. Shaped within the sexual politics of looking they demarcate a particular social organisation of the gaze which itself works back to secure a particular social ordering of sexual difference.<sup>53</sup>

This notion of the gaze and how the female body is seen in public is interesting to consider when exploring how this very body can work to dismantle the city's system of signs. The female body has the opportunity to play with the level of visibility on offer, the transparency of her action in the public space. I recognise that the female finds it difficult to negotiate the public space, just as she finds it difficult to negotiate public speech;

Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slipping away-that's how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is for a woman to speak-even just open her mouth-in public. A double distress, for even if she transgresses, her words fall almost always upon the deaf male ear.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Griselda Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity' in *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden. (Oxon: Routledge, 2000). P. 161

<sup>54</sup> Helene Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans Keith Cohen, Paula Cohen in *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976) p. 880

There is a clear link between body and language in the public space and how the female body reacts under duress. The public space is one which challenges the female to form an utterance and this must be challenged.

By locating myself in the public space to write I am attempting to utter and re-utter. The repetitive nature of the language in *Functions in 1-16* and *Ashenden* re-enforces this. I am unable to speak; I write. This decision is crucial. The female body is making permanent mark on the page. The action in the public architectural space, then, is one of silent construction, of building a voice to be re-spoken at a later date. The body is visible, yet the voice remains hidden.

How we establish the body in an urban landscape is then dependent on the interaction with space, the gaze of those in the space, but what of the physical city itself? Yet how can the female body further herself on the urban landscape? I turn to Deborah Fausch's essay 'The Knowledge of the Body and the Presence of History - Toward a Feminist Architecture'. In this essay Fausch sketches how a feminist architecture could be located; it is allowing for a bodily inclusion, a fully corporeal experience. Fausch presents us with an essay which not only seeks to help define what female architecture might do, but points us directly to the practice which does. Feminist architecture, according to Fausch is;

An architecture that required that it be experienced by senses other than vision in order to be understood... It would merit this designation if it fostered an awareness of and posited a value to the experience of the concrete, the sensual, the bodily- if it used the body as a necessary instrument in absorbing the content of experience.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Deborah Fausch, 'The Knowledge of the Body and the Presence of History- Toward a Feminist Architecture', in *Architecture and Feminism*, ed. Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze and Carol Henderson, (New York: Princeton Architecture Press, 1996). p. 41.

It is clear then that the experience of how the body is treated is important to consider in feminist architecture. It is this bodily interaction, this exchange of energy which builds and helps locate a feminist practice here. The interaction between body and building, body and construction and body and rule defines the landscape which surrounds us. A corporeal movement of exploration and interaction between body and space is what is at work here. It is between the body and the physical building where feminism in architecture seems to lie. One must depend on the other, one must work with and/or against the other, one must be aware of and interact with the other.

I want to draw on some examples which Fausch uses in her essay, to use these as stepping stones to work from, to use these examples as a way of understanding the physical relationship between the female body, building and landscape. Firstly *Veiled Landscape*, designed by Mary Miss. This environmental sculpture is situated in the New England Forest, it works to frame the landscape and offer viewing perspectives whilst guiding the viewer deeper into the forest. Fausch describes this piece as consisting of wooden frames, it is punctuating the landscape, allowing new perspectives of site, the object, body and landscape are constantly interacting with each other, there is movement;

The physical sensation of passing under these thresholds draws the body progressively deeper, down and away into the depths of the woods, toward an imagined but un-seen destination... In this project, direct experience is invited and unveiled.<sup>56</sup>

The work of Mary Miss is offering a new perspective and bodily experience of the surrounding areas, this architectural object is facilitating the relationship between site, body

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<sup>56</sup> Deborah Fausch, 'The Knowledge of the Body and the Presence of History- Toward a Feminist Architecture', in *Architecture and Feminism*, ed. Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze and Carol Henderson, (New York: Princeton Architecture Press, 1996). p. 45.



and itself. It is this relationship which is exciting and when focussed on I believe holds the power to explore space and spatial interaction from a feminist perspective. It must be recognised that the female should not disembodiment herself to be seen in, or interact with the public space, but instead the body must be considered in the experience of architecture. It is the interaction with the body which allows this piece to be a success. Mary Miss is giving her viewer, multiple and interactive perspectives of the landscape by interacting with her object and their body. There is a sense that Mary Miss is rupturing our experience of the already constructed vista, she is interfering with the rules set out by De Certeau. Her object, *Veiled Landscape*, does not sit still in the landscape, but works to cut through it, to create new associations between object, body and landscape. Mary Miss is rewriting her current landscape.

The second example I will share from Fausch is at work in an urban environment; *Welcome Park* and *Franklin Court*, both designed by Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown and both within a few streets from each other in Philadelphia. Both of these pieces explore the use of scale to gain and re-establish a perspective and sense of ownership of what surrounds them. They provide an alternative perspective, they ask the body to interact, they provide a re-contextualisation of the space they sit in. *Welcome Park* is a replica map of historic Philadelphia; it is the site within its site. It is a gridded open space, with sparse trees and multiple textures. Yet;

It is not simply a picturesque experience of movement through an organised series of events; this translation through miniaturised space evokes a hyperawareness of body.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Deborah Fausch, 'The Knowledge of the Body and the Presence of History- Toward a Feminist Architecture', in *Architecture and Feminism*, ed. Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze and Carol Henderson, (New York: Princeton Architecture Press, 1996). p. 45.

It is this awareness of body which strikes me as being important. It is this which allows this piece of architecture to become active. Fausch points out that one must read the park,

the action of the body must be performed to complete the intellectual content of the park, to get the message.<sup>58</sup>

There is a sharing of experience at work here, just as the work of Mary Miss facilitated the experience of walking through the woods, Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown facilitate our experience of being in an urban park. Both objects force a new reading of an already existing space, through playing with the viewer's perspectives, expectation and the functionality of the space itself. The gaze of Griselda Pollock becomes important; there must be a new way of looking, of controlling how we look.

In the same city of Philadelphia, Jena Osman walks; she surveys the city and creates the project *Public Figures*. This project looks to offer a re-ordering of the architectural gaze. Jena Osman carries out an investigation of public statues in the city. She takes photographs from the perspective of the statue. *Public Figures* is a series of chapters forming a new narrative for these statues and Osman's own investigations of these. She is constructing a present experience of these statues' perspectives and contextualising this with a narrative text which not only speaks their historical narrative, but negotiates the function of the gaze itself.

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<sup>58</sup> Deborah Fausch, 'The Knowledge of the Body and the Presence of History- Toward a Feminist Architecture', in *Architecture and Feminism*, ed. Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze and Carol Henderson, (New York: Princeton Architecture Press, 1996). p. 49.

Jena Osman writes of her process;

The idea occurred:

Photograph the figurative statues that populate your city. Then bring the camera to their eyes (find a way) and shoot their points of view. What does such a figure see?

To see the sigh of sighted stone you activate the idea.<sup>59</sup>

Osman is working to form a connection between object and how it sees. This practice is one which attempts to form a direct narrative between the object and the place it inhabits.

Fausch's examples of female architecture rupture the viewer's experience of the city, yet Osman is rupturing our narrative experience of viewing. How we gaze is what is important, this notion that we must be active in how we gaze is present in how the narrative of a space can be written or built.

The female body of Osman is interfering with how the statue exists; she uses its gaze to comment on how these statues are passive objects. They are neutral and static; yet Osman's body de-neutralises these and allows for a new reading experience of space. Her perspective is one of looking out, is creating a narrative through looking.

*Public Figures* is a narrative of Osman's walking experience through Philadelphia; she is giving these once neutral statues a voice in her writing. I return to Griselda Pollock's ideas of the "social organisation of the gaze". Osman is quite literally opposing this, the statue is being considered as active object. There is a sense then that through her writing Osman is activating the space anew; she is re-embodiment through writing. Unlike the physical rupturing of space which occurs in the examples outlined by Fausch, Osman is

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<sup>59</sup> Jena Osman, *Public Figures*, (Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012). p.2

rupturing the very experience of how we look. Sight and our awareness of this becomes key in how we experience architecture and site.

Without a sight to call your own  
to see the frame that blinds  
to see the sigh in sighted stone  
the stone to call the lime to blind<sup>60</sup>

The female experience of sight and perspective is of concern. It is not only in the architectural product, but in the action of looking. Just as we must be active readers we must be active viewers. Osman's text offers slippages between image and text, between body and site. There is play in the language here. The statues are without their own sight as Osman is re-siting this. She offers a complex relationship between how to look and the perspective or site we look from. We must then be wary of the frame that blinds and instead consider a frame which can expose and locate.

Mary Miss and Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown both offer architectural experiences that force the body to interact and ask for the landscape to be read, to be decoded through a new set of rules. There is a sense of rupture taking place; both features allow new viewing perspectives, force a destabilising of what exists surrounding them, both offer a new reading experience of space. Jena Osman offers the possibility of a new perspective from an already written monument. She relocates its history in the present, becoming entangled with it. These sited female practices work within the existing semiotic language of the city. Feminist architectural practice deploys tactics of bodily confrontation and interaction as well as an awareness for the need of an alternative perspective; a multi-sited space.

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<sup>60</sup> Osman, *Public Figures*. p. 42

## A site: A Site City:

### *Body in site as action of inhabited space*

The city space is one which is constantly in a state of change; it is a political space of geometric values and walkways. It is a space of flux and upheaval, it is a space with a boundary, it is a space of multiple disciplines, it is a place of change, it is a place where one can escape, it is a space of power and a centre of political and economic worlds. The city space is a space which can adjust and alter as one walks through it. Our body works with and against it.

To consider the city as a poetic site I turn to Fiona Templeton's *You- The City*. This is a poetic text hybrid in its construction. *You- The City* is a performance text, a poem, a series of instructions, a document of performance, a commentary of itself. In its performance state *You- The City* is a site specific work where one audience member, the client is led through the city on a solitary journey of happenings, conversations, exchanges and incidents, all directed at them. The client is the You; their journey is a reading experience of Templeton's city. In its textual state *You- The City* is a site specific work where one reader traces the journey of the client, follows Templeton's notes and instructions and is allowed to experience the presence of the city without directly inhabiting it. It is multi-functioning.

It is an instructional text, a poetic performance text, a document of action. It is the multi-function of this text which makes it an exciting text to explore. It is a text in dialogue with its state as object and book and its state as past performance and instruction for future performance. Templeton's text offers a multiple experience and multiple possibilities in a site and as a site itself; text is both an experience and document.

This multiple state as object alludes to a multiple in the construction of this project; it leads to a consideration of site and Templeton's negotiation of this as a performance site and a writing site. I want to consider how Templeton negotiates the action of writing and the action of performance in this piece. *You- The City* negotiates a spatial practice whilst aligning itself as a poetic text. There is a sense that it is not only in dialogue with spatial practice, but it is exposing how a system of writing can exist in the site of the city and expose the larger city space.

I begin by considering body in site; the textual body and the physical body. In *You- The City* there is a need to consider the relationship between city and body and how Templeton utilises the site of the city and its relationship to performance body. It is a complex relationship; one which constantly fluctuates and one which Templeton plays on and with.

The site of the city is being utilised by Templeton to expose the rules within it. We can see Templeton utilising some of the same tools observed in the work of feminist architects to impose a female body onto a site. Like *The Welcome Park* of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, Templeton is mapping the city onto itself; commenting on and interacting with what surrounds her. This builds a complex relationship between the city space and the sited performance taking place within it. Unlike the stable structures of architecture Templeton's mapping is more blurred, boundaries are less clear. It is in these very complexities where Templeton has the freedom to play on conventions, to push the rules of the city space further, as Kaye argues;

Templeton's site-specific performance reveals its deferral from inside to outside, as, in its positioning of the viewer; it at once constructs, exposes, and upsets its own limits.<sup>61</sup>

In *You- The City* Fiona Templeton is forcing the client into a seemingly realistic world. It is highly staged and mirrors reality, but Templeton explores this blurred binary further, by creating a parallel performance-site existing within the site of her city. There is a definite play between public and private spaces. The entire journey of the piece consists of walking between sited performance actions. In Templeton's city the binaries of public and private become blurred and she facilitates a series of connections which explode the once very regulated experiences of these spaces. Templeton is doing perhaps what architecture cannot. Her poetic text has the possibility to be in motion; she is constructing and re-constructing, mapping and re-mapping.

Take the opening sequence of *You- The City*; it is set in an office reception;

In London we used the boardroom of a major chartered accounting firm. The only people who knew about us were the director and the security guard. They didn't even tell the senior partners because they thought they wouldn't act normal. Our clients waited at reception and filled out their questionnaires along with real accountants' clients. A partner confessed later he saw it on TV and never suspected it was in his office.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Nick Kaye, 'Performing Inside and Outside: Fiona Templeton' in *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*, London: Routledge: 2000, p.201

<sup>62</sup> Fiona Templeton, *You- The City*. (New York, Roof Books, 1990). p.4

We see Templeton's close attention to the blurring of art and life here, her city site and performance-site are interacting with and dependant on each other. The physical space which the performance is inhabiting, is defining the artificial performance itself. There is a fluid exchange of energy here, one is being defined and comments on the other. There is a sense that this artifice cannot be seen, Templeton has blurred the line so much that city and performance-site are mirroring and reflecting each other again and again.

Templeton is working to rupture our experience of the city through our perception of it. She is altering our narrative of the city. Just as Jena Osman is re-contextualising the view of the statue allowing it to become active, Templeton is affecting how the audience's sight and perception of the city space is re-contextualised through the experience of the live.

There is a direct collision of between spaces in the practice of Templeton, the work is exposing the limits of the city site and playing with how the functioning system of the city can be ruptured. Templeton is in dialogue with the city. *You- The City* is a performance and walking experience, it is a way of inhabiting the city through Templeton's grammar of it; she has redefined the experience, re-arranged the site of the city. I return to Jane Rendell's comments on feminist architecture, and her call for the binaries constructed in spatial history to be removed. Templeton's *You- The City* is a series of seemingly open limits, but is a series of closed limits regulated by Templeton's text. It subtracts from the site of the city, but at the same time functions as an addition to this space. It is reflecting the site of the city, but at the same time it mirrors the actions of it. Templeton not only blurs the binaries of the gendered city, but begins to obliterate them by displacing and re-contextualising our experience of the city; Templeton's city is a plural experience.

It is important to recognise that Templeton's performance is in a dialogue with and acting as a subversion of the city's function and the body's role in it. Templeton is constructing her own De Certeauian experience and range of grammar, utilising the body as a



tool to rupture our notions of normative social space. Yet what are the political ramifications of inhabiting the city in this way? Is Templeton questioning the ownership of public space by inhabiting it? How does this very public action impact social space?

*You- The City* in performance is constructing its own version of the city. Elizabeth Grosz in her essay ‘Bodies-Cities’ investigates the body’s relationship to the city;

Humans make cities. Cities are reflections, projections or expressions of human endeavour. On such views, bodies are usually subordinated to and seen as merely a “tool” of subjectivity, self-given consciousness. The city is a product not simply of the muscles and energy of the body, but of the conceptual and reflective possibilities of consciousness itself.<sup>63</sup>

Grosz defines the body as stretching beyond the human to include the material and flesh of the city, its concrete, its structures. While the city is defined as an “interactive network” of public processes. Grosz further complicates the relationship between body and city; body becomes an extension of the human, our physical space is directly linked with us. The city of Grosz is less defined, it hold a possibility of further rupture. It is in this city where we can see Templeton’s work fitting, she has created her own body-city. Her body being the physical performance bodies running throughout *You- The City*, the text constructing the walls of the city, the walkways devised to transport. The body of Templeton’s *You- The City* is its own series of networks and conscious of its decisions and actions.

I return to my own practice. The action of writing in the city space and the impact this has. I work with body as writing tool to create a text which is conscious of place and a product of my body’s interaction with it.

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<sup>63</sup> Grosz, ‘Bodies-Cities’ in *space, time and perversion*, p.105

There is a sense then that Templeton's work exposes the ease in which socially regulated systems can be ruptured by the inclusion of a poetic text. It is the text which ruptures our experience of the normative social space. Templeton's text then acts as a mediator for how we experience the city space. She is writing from and over the city. She has created her own regulated city experience dependent on the already defined regulations of our social city space.

I turn to consider the textual site of Fiona Templeton's *You- The City*. It is a textual object in dialogue with the site of city. It is a text constructed of constraints; it is a constant barrage of instructions to "you", the client. This constant barrage allows the client to feel as though the text has been written specifically for them. The "you" is isolated in the city. The city is normally a place of solitude; the you disappears into a crowd of people. The mass sidewalks of New York are a series of De Certeau's imagined sign system. Templeton disrupts this with the constant emphasis of the individual, the constant reminder that "you" are alone in this. The site of the city is being exposed and used against the single audience member. They are led from one space to the next, led through Templeton's own sign system, created to disrupt the regulated social space. It is Templeton's awareness of the ruled city which allows this text to bleed into our normative social space.

Scenes are constructed to blur with reality; there is a contradiction between the site and the text. The site is mirroring the everyday, it is framing reality whilst the text is poetic and repetitive in its nature, it leads to a sense of discomfort.

Why you? Why you? The exclusive everything makes you impossible. Bite with your heart the only in two. You can say bad, and bad echo you say, but your ear vanishes as you turn your head to see. I can no more draw a third clenching blank in you. Don't call me your maybe, child Yes.<sup>64</sup>

This is paralleled with a documentation of how the client feels;

“Am I supposed to be talking to you, am I supposed to be answering these questions?”<sup>65</sup>

Templeton utilises text to influence her site, the language displaces the client, it alters the experience of the city. We can see that the text is moving away from reality; it is ruptured and poetic, it is a language built to allow contradiction between the site of the city and non-site of the performance. It is a series of questions, threats, unanswerable questions and the client's reaction shows how the displacement between site and performance-site has an overwhelming effect. The text works to create the performing performance-site; it is the new grammar of the city. This experience foregrounds the text; it is the rupturing system between site and performance-site.

We can see a parallel of rupture used in the work of Mary Miss and Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown; just as they divided the already available vista so too does Templeton. The architects ruptured their surroundings by the use of extreme scale, unexpected dimensions, multiple textures and Templeton does this through her use of language. Her audience member experiences multiple perspectives, yet Templeton constantly interrupts their gaze with a new

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<sup>64</sup> Templeton, *You-The City*. p.9

<sup>65</sup> Templeton, *You-The City*. p.9

interest or accusation. 'You' is used as a constant tool to rupture and interrupt the viewer's experience.

The use of the 'you' can be seen as a tool to rupture, to re-position the audience members, to look directly at them. There is a sense that the directness un-blinds the audience/reader, it is a shock which forces a point of direct contact. Jena Osman's camera takes a picture from the statue's perspective; this action interrupts the statue's regular narrative. Templeton's 'you' interrupts the regular narrative of text, providing a repeating voice asking us to remain alert and aware. The function of the 'you', then acts as a tool, a strategy to interrupt the narrative of the site.

Fiona Templeton's interest lies in the dialogue and relationship between site and object;

I'm not interested in creating a correct object, but a dialogue. It's not really paradoxical that it is in the intimate scale of each scene of YOU that the power of any audience member is more actualised and actualising than in the theatre of mass consumption.<sup>66</sup>

The text allows the city space to become interfered with; it is this and the action of performance which allows the city site to become overtaken by Templeton's performance-site. Templeton's site is a; 'Space, a practiced place, [it] admits of unpredictability'<sup>67</sup>. It is the language in *You-The City* which allows for this unpredictability to take place; it ruptures the site of the city. *You- The City* acts as a site non-site hybrid rupturing our very known and ordered social space.

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<sup>66</sup> Templeton, *You- The City*. p.143

<sup>67</sup> Nick Kaye, 'Introduction: Site-Specifics' in *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*, (London: Routledge: 2000). p. 5

To control perspective is to offer a new reading of what surrounds us. Mary Miss's *Veiled Landscape*, ruptures our perspectives physically, Templeton's *You- The City*, guides us through a series of alternative perspectives offering multiple options. Jena Osman initiates an active and new viewing experience. All force an interaction with our gaze to gain a new glance; an interactive glance.

## **A site: constructing the performance site**

*To control perspective is to frame, to re-frame, to write and re-write.*

It became clear to me, in my own practice I wanted to control or influence aspects of this landscape, for the audience to not only be a viewer, but to be physically involved. Templeton takes her viewer on a journey through, I wanted to be more direct and so I offer a series of instructions to the audience so they are encouraged to become active; to become ‘active users’ of the environment.

This building of a multiple perspective begins to create a sense of a shared experience, yet one which is shattering what we currently experience around us. I move now to discuss how the re-framing of site can occur in performance. I return to my own practice; *Functions in 1-16* works to displace its audience/reader into a site which they must also construct. There are new instructions to follow, the audience/reader are not passive, but must interact and help build this new city.

Throughout the theoretical discussions surrounding space and site I have focused on the relationship between body and site; one being heavily dependent on the other in my writing practice. This focus continues in my performance practice as the text is not allowed to rest. The performance looks to dismantle the text anew in the live; to build its own architecture of the city space, the writing space in the performance space. Carla Harryman does this in the form of her Sub World; an open space allowing for multiple perspectives and slippages. Fiona Templeton does this in her writing over of the city space with her performative text. Mary Miss and Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown do this by physically constructing spaces which interfere with the already constructed landscape. Jena Osman does

this by providing us with a shifting perspective of the gaze, drawing our attention to how to look.

I draw on all these uses of framing to inform a re-building of *Functions 1-16* in performance. *Functions in 1-16* functions as a text and a performance. Each of these states acts as a series of functions to be read and performed. *Functions 1-16* was constructed through a series of performances which build the text, it is constantly performing and re-uttering.

The writing of this text functions as a document of past performances in spaces throughout the city; it is a collection of these spaces and attempts to reconstruct them through a concrete repetition on the page. The page acts as a frame for the text, the text building itself through repetition in an attempt to offer the reader a visual and textual experience of space. The page has been considered as a way of framing the spatial experiences which I encountered and these are constantly uttered at the reader. The reading experience of *Functions in 1-16* is one which asks the reader to constantly re-utter and build these spaces temporally.

In performance *Functions 1-16* is a multi-sensory performance which plays on perspective, voice, duration and participation. It asks to be inhabited and asks the performer to carry out the action of writing by vocalising the text. In performance the page exists in dialogue with the screen; each location represented by a video on loop writing over that space. 'In a garden' then is a video of 'in a garden' being written in a garden in white chalk. These actions of writing reflect the page; these videoed performances were the last in the series of inhabiting these spaces. The videos act as the manifestation of the action of writing which occurred; they are showing this process and implying the location of this writing. The performance body interacts with the text by moving around the performance space reading

from the page. This body exhausts the meaning of words by repeating them, the performance body becomes merely voice, attempting to articulate location to build a feminist space.

This space is built in the form of multiple manifestations of the text, it becomes visual perspectives through the inclusion of video, these reflecting the frame of the page, it becomes vocal transmission; a constant series of repeated attempts to articulate and locate the female body and convert the space through sound, it becomes a feminist space; a constant rupture of on-going dialogues.

I return to the site of the Sub World; it is a site where text can fragment itself, where is can re-order, where is can undergo the treatment of the female aesthetic. The Sub World allows objects to be constructed in performance and explore their full potential. Harryman explicitly states that ‘the phrases or lines of a poem in performance can be spoken in any order’<sup>68</sup>; this allows for a maximum freedom of text in performance, text becomes an object in performance, text becomes our focus. Harryman is interested in how performance can construct and dismantle, in her Sub World this is encouraged, an aesthetic of rupture, de-ordering, multiple and poly-texture exists.

The performing objects themselves can then be thought of as mobile syntax – built, broken, reassembled and constitutive of meaning – that veers among the socially familiar, received ideas, and radical subjectivity.<sup>69</sup>

Harryman’s Sub World is a political reading tool; it is a place which offers the possibility for movement in and out of the text. It is this willingness to allow text to be shifted not just in meaning, but in form which makes this space so dynamic. There is a sense that the Sub

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<sup>68</sup> Harryman, ‘Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World’. p 160

<sup>69</sup> Harryman, ‘Performing Objects Stationed In The Sub World’. p 163



World is in dialogue with those in it. The Sub World of Harryman can be seen as a feminist architectural tool; it offers a space where perspectives can be shifted easily and continually presents new dialogues.

The Sub World, although complicated, offers a site for the female aesthetic to sit comfortably. Both are pushing boundaries internally within sign systems and externally between disciplines and encourage a process of making and reading/performing under construction. *Functions 1-16* is in dialogue with these performance tactics, it is building and rebuilding perspective through the interaction and re-ordering of language.

To articulate the sense of the multi in performance the text also asks its reader/audience to become active. My theoretical research has built a chora of women working towards creating an active body in space. This active body is not only my body, the female writer/performer, but also that of the viewer/reader.

The 'you' which raised awareness in Templeton's *You- The City* was an ambiguous you. It allowed for a point of focus and refocusing of the audience, but did not ask them to act. I turn the 'you' into a direction, an instruction, I ask 'you' to become active and assist in the construction of space.

The building of this communal interaction of and building of space allowed me to become more concerned with how the public elements of public space could be commented on in my own site. In her essay 'Women, Chora, Dwelling', Elizabeth Grosz provides us with a reading of space through Luce Irigaray, Plato and Derrida. She uses the term 'Chora' as a way to define the female's interaction with space.

Chora, then is the space in which place is made possible, the chasm for the passage of spaceless Forms into a spatialised reality, a dimensionless tunnel opening itself to spatialisation, obliterating itself to make others possible and actual...a space that evades all characterisations including the disconcerting logic of identity, of hierarchy, of being, the regulation of order.<sup>70</sup>

Grosz touches on a way of exploring space I believe to be directly related/ relatable to our poetic experience of language. Chora is a shifting body, opening itself up, attempting to reform a space. It is the attempt which must be recognised here; an attempt to move beyond the logical and semantic workings of space but towards a more corporeal shared experience of building and dismantling space. I build a chora of written experience, of bodily experiences, of interactive experiences.

Fiona Templeton leads her audience through her city whereas I ask them to explore and help build new perspectives. These perspectives directly relate to the feminist architecture and encourage a way of looking at space anew; they encourage a new building of the city. By offering the audience up an instruction, it is directed at “you”, this “you” becomes important to their reading experience of the performance. For example one instruction asks “you” to cough, one asks “you” to stand and sit, one asks “you” to lie down like he did; these simple instructions not only allow the audience to build the environment they are inhabiting, but create a sense of an empowering “you”. I encourage the words of Elizabeth Grosz; ‘a space that evades all characterisations including the disconcerting logic of identity, of hierarchy, of being, the regulation of order.’<sup>71</sup> The audience become an ‘active audience’, a performer rupturing the hierarchy of the typical performance. By offering these instructions I am offering the audience another perspective to view the space, removing their

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<sup>70</sup> Grosz, ‘Women, Chora, Dwelling’. in *space, time and perversion*, p.116

<sup>71</sup> Grosz, ‘Women, Chora, Dwelling’. in *space, time and perversion*, P.116

identity as audience member into participating body. This shift is an important one as it allows for a building of another layer within the space.

For Osman the shifting of perspective allowed for a new narrative of space and time. I encourage the shift in audience perspective and inclusion to allow them to take on the role of the enabled statue. By framing the audiences experience in this way they not only become part of the architecture itself, but become a more active viewer.

The chora then is a series of layers; videos, performing female body and active audience, these all work together to build the feminist space and re-assemble the city. This city is not the one we inhabit daily, but one commenting on the rules and grammar of it; rupturing its lexis to form a new reading and inhabiting experience.

*Functions in 1-16* aims to construct a space which is multi in its being, which utilises and draws on spatial, architectural, feminist and performative theories to create a new reading experience of the city. It offers a multi perspective of landscape and language as object in the city. I re-name the city landscape through bodily interactions. *Functions in 1-16* is a performative reading experience where the female body attempts to rebuild her city experience in the public domain, in the public gaze.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A Site: The Collaborative Space: Locating the Poetic in Bodies**

My constant engagement with site, sited writing practice and sited performance practice is extended to my work as part of the poetic collective press free press<sup>72</sup>. My work as part of this collective is in constant dialogue with the on-going research in this thesis and my own personal practice, yet it exists beyond this and allows for a dialogue with the poetic in terms of collaboration and multiple bodies. This chapter looks to consider the impact and use of the collaborative as a site of and for poetics. The collaborative space is one of dialogues, of multi voices, of collage. Collaboration is utilised as a tool to construct site and as a site in its own right.

I look to work towards an understanding and to define the possibilities of viewing the collaborative space as not only a dialogue of bodies, but as a poetic writing tool which is directly linked to the feminist writing practice of Rachel Blau DuPlessis and the feminist architectural concerns of Elizabeth Grosz. I want to use the collaborative as a model to understand and frame how the poetic can function in public spaces, the difficulty in placing such poetics in public view and the action of collaboration as a writing tool to document performance. The addition of multiple bodies will allow me to raise questions of authorship and the site of the book as object. I will frame my own experiences with those of Redell Olsen and Susan Johanknecht's object *here are my instructions* using this as a model of and for collaboration.

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<sup>72</sup> press free press is Sejal Chad, Rebecca Cremin, Ryan Ormonde and Karen Sandhu

## A Site: The Collaborative Space: The Collaborative Under Construction

Firstly I frame collaboration in my own terms and its relevance in my practice.

Press free press is a poetic collective;

press free press is a restless poetic collective, committed to poetics and performance, yet restless within poetic and performance scenes: committed to dialogue and response, democracy and openness of practice.<sup>73</sup>

press free press situate themselves within the poetic and function outside of its public spaces. This choice is one made with conviction that there is a need to extend the poetic into further public and art spaces. The work of press free press has been exhibited and performed at a range of events, from traditional poetry readings, to carrying out flux events in nightclubs to running workshops in schools to performing in gallery spaces. The collaborative nature of the work allows it to be flexible in terms of the spaces it inhabits and the bodies it finds itself in. There is collaboration from the beginning and the use of multiple bodies is used to constantly question and interrogate the work, pre, during and post its inception.

As an example of the collaborative process I focus on *A Time For Work*<sup>74</sup>. This project was a month long writing residency by press free press (featuring K.C. Clapham) at

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<sup>73</sup> Taken from the About section; [www.pressfreepress.com](http://www.pressfreepress.com), 2010

<sup>74</sup> A Time For Work can be viewed and interacted with at:  
<http://personal.rhul.ac.uk/pule/138/A%20TIME%20FOR%20WORK/home.html>

the WRITING/EXHIBITION/PUBLICATION Exhibition curated by Very Small Kitchen (David Berridge) at The Pigeon Wing Gallery, London.



This installation was designed to function as a working office; where the office employees came and went in accordance with their rota and the company was bound by a contract. press free press functioned as a company investigating the action of

writing in duration, writing as a performative action, writing to document a process, writing as publication, publishing as exhibition and performance.<sup>75</sup>

To briefly explain the process of working; A Time For Work saw press free press take on the role of a company. Roles were divided into employers; Sejal Chad, K.C Clapham and Karen Sandhu and functioning workers; Ryan Ormonde and myself. These roles were based on circumstance and dependant on geographical restrictions. (The full contract of these roles can be found in the appendix.) Over the course of a month the workers followed instructions of how to write in the space. Although free to write utilising their own voice workers were asked to follow rules set by the employers. The sense of authorship being removed. Workers wrote and re-wrote; processed and re-processed writing which allowed for a sense of the individual becoming lost.

I am concerned with the process of working in collaboration and the site of collaboration itself. The collaborative being defined as the voice of many to create; the negotiation of multiple bodies and materialities to construct a poetic text which is unstable and in dialogue with not only the bodies which have created it, but the space itself.

To define the collaborative site in this instance is the installation inhabiting the gallery space. The working office contained two working bodies writing publically, performatively, yet these bodies were in dialogue and navigated by voices communicating from outside the city. These voices were in dialogue through the action of writing, not through the action of physicality. The two workers for instance could not inhabit the space to write at the same time. There is a notion that by building the space through writing a multi-vocal text was created which is not only speaking to its audience, but speaking as document and speaking to

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<sup>75</sup> Press free press, A Time For Work;  
<http://personal.rhul.ac.uk/pule/138/A%20TIME%20FOR%20WORK/about.html>



the bodies taking part in the action. There is a dependence on the multi vocal to build an understandable whole.

The building of the office environment for instance could be dictated by the employers. If we look at “B1” for example we see the transcript from 05/09/2010. The instructions not only contain directions to be followed in terms of writing, but here KS and KC both ask the worker to manipulate the space physically;

KS: 1.05pm That RC should be reciting this message on the hour every hour 10 times every day (via voicemail)

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KS: 1.32pm RC, the employer wants you to redecorate your space. Use this time wisely. Make it your own. The employer wants you to redecorate your own working space. You have: 1 x paint brush, 1 x pot black paint, 1 x stack office paper, 1 x staple gun, 1 x display board. Decorate your space wisely. This is your instruction. (via voicemail).<sup>76</sup>

The un-present body is asking the present body to function in order to build the space. Collaboration occurring in the understanding of these instructions and utilising them to impact the real life space of the gallery. The absent body utilises the present body to voice their intention. It is interesting to consider how the absent body focuses on the site, the

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<sup>76</sup> Press free press, 05/09/2010, Instructions, B1, A Time For Work

installation and is not merely concerned with the writing practice, but physically influencing the space.

The collaborative space is a functioning exchange and although the present body is seemingly in control they in actual fact are being guided by the absent voice. There is a meeting of functions between the bodies and no one ego can claim ownership over the writing or the space it inhabits. In this project the writer becomes disembodied by having to follow and negotiate these instructions. Is the collaborative then about a loss of body and identity?

The installation is built through the inclusion of the multiple voice and body. The construction of the physical space occurred through the multi-voiced dialogue between present and absent bodies. These are traced into the writing, but slowly disappear, the voices becoming entwined in the remaining twenty three documents. Here we see collaboration moving and adjusting the performing, writing and experience of site itself. Collaboration is the site; a site in Carla Harryman's Sub World where voices and bodies merge.

The seemingly fluid exchange between these bodies did not occur without negotiation. There was a great dependence on the employer to fulfil their role for the action of writing to occur. Interestingly what could have been a very social project became one of isolation, in terms of the body and its presence. The collaboration occurs in how the practice is constructed. The site of collaboration is then a conceptual site which is facilitating the writing practice. The practice, the poetic is the site of collaboration.

## A Site: The Collaborative Space: The Collaborative Context

I consider collaborative space further; as a conceptual space and how this can inflect itself onto the poetic and vice versa. The site of the collaborative has the possibility to infiltrate space through the use of multiple bodies, as pointed out in the case of press free press. The work of Rachel Blau DuPlessis has framed my practice throughout and I return to her, remembering the sense of rupture throughout her work. Using the theoretical voice of DuPlessis as a way of framing the collaborative and negotiating it in terms of a feminist writing body and feminist body within collaboration. In *Blue Studios: poetry and its cultural work* DuPlessis returns to her previous essays in *The Pink Guitar*. *Blue Studios* provides a commentary and re-organisation of her earlier thoughts. When commenting on her essay 'For The Etruscans' she explains;

I was asked to write it up. So I did. Although I was committed to collaging other people's voices with my own as only one among many, in actuality it did not quite work out that way. Authorship is not dissolved by fiat. But that is why the "author" of that essay is myself and "Workshop 9".<sup>77</sup>

There is an admittance to the multiple voice, to the dissolving of an authorship, to how this brings with it a sense of rupture found throughout her essay, 'For The Etruscans'. There is a defining move towards collage, it is a necessary tool for collaboration, it is democratic in its approach to the author. There is a fluidity in the practice of DuPlessis which allows for an

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<sup>77</sup> Rachel Blau DuPlessis, 'Reader I Married Me', in *Blue Studios: poetry and its cultural work*. (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 2006). p. 27

engagement with the text as a collaborative space; it is in dialogue with her female aesthetic, it is in dialogue with feminist practice, it is in dialogue with my on-going strategies of writing. The multiple use of voice and body is key, there is a sense of shifting identity and the unknown. It is a chorus of voice and body, a choral reading experience. The author becomes one body which in actual fact is many; the conceptual site of the author is the site of collaboration.

The practice of collaboration can then be seen to exist and function in the combination and dependence on multiple bodies. Yet there is more at work here. My research throughout has been interrogating how the poetic body functions in relation to site. Can the site of collaboration be defined in its own terms?

I consider Elizabeth Grosz; having already encountered her architectural feminist theory, I draw on this knowledge and consider her understanding of “chora” in relation to investigating the collaborative site and its possibilities.

Elizabeth Grosz locates “chora” through a reading of Derrida and Plato. She moves forward with this term. Acknowledging its history rooted in deconstructive methods, but asks us to consider “chora” anew. She disembodies the term;

It functions primarily as the receptacle, the storage point, the locus of nurturance in the transition necessary for the emergence of matter, a kind of womb of material existence.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, 'Women Chora, Dwelling', in *space, time and perversion*, (London: Routledge, 1995). p. 114

Chora then is not object, but a space which is used to facilitate. It is ‘the condition of existence of objects’<sup>79</sup>. It is a space which can function in accordance with the feminist sensibilities. I want to use “chora” then as a model for the site of poetic collaboration. It functions as physical space and conceptual space. As a site “chora” can be seen to be the “sub- world” of Carla Harryman; the multi functioning city of Fiona Templeton, the collaging voice of Rachel Blau DuPlessis. Chora is a site of practice, where one can site and define notions of the collaborative. It is a space of facilitating and for facilitation to occur.

Elizabeth Grosz’s “chora” can be utilised as a way of facilitating the social space where the poetic must locate itself. “Chora” provides a frame for how collaboration can function and allows it to be a site as well as a function of practice.

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<sup>79</sup> Grosz, ‘Women Chora, Dwelling’, in *space, time and perversion*, p. 117

## **A site: The collaborative space: The collaborative body**

My engagement with Redell Olsen and Susan Johanknecht's object *here are my instructions* is one interested in establishing the relationship between the site of collaboration as both a function of doing and how collaboration as site can exist. Olsen and Johanknecht are evidently engaging in a complex dialogue with site, body and language and it is in this multi strategy approach where links can be seen within my own practice, specifically press free press. I want to explore these materialities and consider how *here are my instructions* is not only an active site where collaboration is facilitated through performance, but also in how it sites itself in the book.

*here are my instructions* is a complex object filled with disruption. I will refer to *here are my instructions* as an object due to its hybrid quality; it is a text, a document and a series of instructions. It, like the work of Harryman, poses jarring questions of how it has been constructed and how it should be dismantled and read. *here are my instructions* acts as a document to the 'Writing Instructions/ Reading Walls' project housed in the Poetry Society Cafe, in 2003 curated by Redell Olsen and Susan Johanknecht. This object exists in a physical and published form. It attempts to document the exhibition, whilst being in a dialogue with it as well as asking questions of it and offering on going possibilities. Olsen and Johanknecht ask questions and confront the materialities of poetics, site, document, archive, book and performance. This object is not only a collaboration between bodies, but a collaboration of materialities; the site of the gallery space and the site of the book are being questioned.

*here are my instructions* is an object which is hybrid in its status, Olsen and Johanknecht are engaging in a series of complicated strategies and roles .They engage with

the space of exhibition/performance, with the space of text in exhibition/performance, with the space of exhibition/performance in book, and with the space of book. There are on-going dialogues occurring here not only between bodies, but between practices and sites. It like the press free press project is utilising multiple sites to form dialogues, between spaces and materialities. It is a communication and negotiation of multiple voices and bodies.

I consider the exhibition as a collaborative space. Olsen and Johanknecht negotiate the “real space” of the Poetry Society Cafe and exhibition space they are attempting to create and that of the book. This project is active in the exhibition space and then allowed its own site in the object *here are my instructions*.

The women are not only functioning in the conceptual space of the book, but in the Cafe space to build the exhibition with physical bodies and texts. By inhabiting a space with multiple bodies there is a sense that this space altered its function. Olsen and Johanknecht wore white boiler suits; they were symbolically differentiating themselves from the regular body inhabiting the Cafe space becoming a work force. This image not only allows these two bodies to function as one, it allows for this sense of multiple unity to impact the space surrounding it. The collaborating poetic body inflecting itself on the cafe.

This interference with the public real space is important to recognise. The female bodies were building the exhibition; it was under construction under the gaze of the public. This very open process allows the collaborative to be directly experienced. The negotiations between body and materiality become framed in the “chora” as discussed by Grosz.

This negotiation between spaces is an intrinsic part of *here are my instructions*. Olsen comments that;

I think that in retrospect some of the most powerful moments of our experience were in the actual difficulties of the installation, in terms of trying to negotiate a poetry space that was actually full of business people having corporate lunches. It was hard to install work around them without causing a disruption and of course we actually started to take quite subtle and complicated pleasure in this disruption of that space!<sup>80</sup>

This disruption of space must be highlighted. It is a political act as much as it is an artistic action. Olsen and Johanknecht chose a space which was difficult to navigate, difficult to inhabit, difficult to install. This physical disruption is rooted in architectural theory; Olsen and Johanknecht quote Elizabeth Grosz in their opening foreword;

The times before and after time are the loci of emergence, of unfolding, of eruption, the spaces and times of the new, the unthought, the virtually of a past that has not exhausted itself in activity and a future that cannot be exhausted or anticipated by the present. This past, which layers and resonates the present, refuses to allow the present the stability of the given or the inevitable.<sup>81</sup>

This project of Olsen and Johanknecht is drawing from these multiple possibilities of time; forming layers which resonate through space and time. Grosz points out that the past layers resonate into the present; there is a folding together of time to form a future. We have also

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<sup>80</sup> Redell Olsen, interview in *PORES 4: An Avant-Gardist Journal of Poetics Research*, Ed Will Rowe, (London: Contemporary Poetics Research Centre, 2006)

<sup>81</sup> Grosz, 'The Future of Space' in *Architecture from the Outside*, (MIT 2001). p. 112



seen this action of folding before in the work of DuPlessis. The action of folding allows for distinctions between materialities to fade and blur.

The layering of time builds a “chora” of voices from Olsen and Johnaknecht, their contributors, the instructions and the trace of the exhibition itself. These materialities are brought together in the present reading experience of the book. This process is similar to that of press free press as the once live collaborative space becomes the “chora” of document. Voices become lost and re-appropriated and re-owned.

In the case of Olsen and Johanknecht their object; *here are my instructions* is a space, a site where the past and present co-exist and continue to fold in on each other through the action of reading. As a reading experience is one which is difficult to categorise, it is a poly-text; functioning as a poetic text and archive. It is a functioning collaboration in terms of how it has been constructed as an exhibition and a site of collaboration in how it has been constructed as book.

Just as Harryman site-sampled from the city and urban landscape of Detroit to form a fractured text, Olsen and Johanknecht are site-sampling from and responding to documents and performances of their exhibition to form a fractured object. There are differences here; Harryman utilises the Sub World as a site to re-manipulate her text, whilst Olsen and Johanknecht’s object can be seen to be an example of the Sub World itself. I want to consider then the process Olsen and Johanknecht engaged in to construct this object and how it offers a site for the Sub World.

I raise the Sub World again and wonder whether it is indeed the only fit site for collaboration. A space of equal exchange, where one object, text, voice or body is not weighted more than the other. Returning to Grosz’s “chora”; the receptacle, the space of

transition, there are key similarities to be found between these two spaces. Both conceptual in their nature, yet offering sites for such hybrid practice to function.

*here are my instructions* is an aesthetic object, an aesthetic site navigating plural sites, bodies and texts before it. The roles of Olsen and Johanknecht were many, they acted as; curator, poet, book artist, editor, archivist and audience. Working within these roles and outside of them Olsen and Johanknecht are immediately working within a hybrid culture and are engaging with the female aesthetic of DuPlessis. Olsen and Johanknecht write;

We have tried to approach the book of the project not as a straightforward catalogue which purports to be a “record” of an event but as Grosz might consider an event as a kind of “past” which layers and reconstitutes itself as a present. A present re-collection of material that is mindful of its own partial and unstable nature.<sup>82</sup>

This object is a layering of pasts, presents and future offerings. It includes text, image, instruction, poem and the multiple voices of the artists in the exhibition. The book as object is then a definite receptacle of practice; it’s a “chora”. *here are my instructions* is a textural object considering itself in many places and amongst many disciplines at once. This textured quality leads me back to DuPlessis. Olsen and Johanknecht have built a texture of experiences as well as a series of instructions for the future. This object, then not only finds itself at a crossroads of time, but of definition. This object is multi in its form and is political in its choices to do so. There are political implications for this object. It is functioning

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<sup>82</sup> Redell Olsen and Susan Johanknecht, ‘Foreword’, in *here are my instructions*, (London :Gefn Press, 2004). p 7.

‘outside the dominant systems of meaning, value and power’<sup>83</sup>. By functioning in this way Olsen and Johanknecht’s work is difficult to categorise.

I want to highlight that Olsen and Johanknecht consider *here are my instructions* as “a present”, it is “mindful”, it is “partial”, it is “unstable”. These highlight not only the difficulty of the object, but of the process involved in building it. There is an admittance that within the space of a collaborative object, within a document there is loss. By including multiple bodies to make a whole some must be lost. This too occurred in *A Time For Work*, the process of facilitating the action of writing and constructing the space became more important than individual voice and admittance of its loss is where the poetic site of collaboration exists; whether this be in performance, process or the object itself.

If we consider *here are my instructions* in the light of Elizabeth Grosz’s definition of “chora”, we can begin to understand it as a space which is collaborating. It is a site facilitating collaboration; a functioning space;

Its function is a neutral, traceless production that leaves no trace of its contributions, and thus allows the product to speak indirectly of its creator without the need for acknowledging its incubator.<sup>84</sup>

To consider this in relation to *here are my instructions* and the exhibition it traces; we can see how the collaborative space is a difficult one to deal with. *here are my instructions* is the product and it does speak indirectly to us, yet it is not functioning as a neutral object,

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<sup>83</sup> Rachel Blau Duplessis, ‘For The Etruscans’, in *The Pink Guitar*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006). p.14

<sup>84</sup> Grosz, ‘Women Chora, Dwelling’, in *space, time and perversion*, p. 115

unstable, but not neutral. Instead it is an object which is very active within itself, but functioning without a space to rest in. Here is where the “chora” of Grosz becomes problematic; “chora” in this case is not a neutral space, but an active site of on-going conversations. In speaking indirectly it speaks from multiple of perspectives.

It is this very plurality which allows for this object to function as collaborative venture. Olsen and Johanknecht use the book to bring together a series of multiple bodies and works, yet it remains very much a product of them. It is interesting then to consider where the ownership of this object lies. Its plurality not only makes it an exciting object, but one which pushes against the materialities of the poetic form. The site of the book becomes document of their activity, of the activities of others, of the relationships built and facilitated and dismantled during the course of the exhibition.

By aligning *here are my instructions* within the framework of Duplessis’s female aesthetic we can begin to consider this object as one being very aware of its process. This self-awareness is highlighted by Redell Olsen in an interview with Will Rowe;

Our book, *Here Are My Instructions* contains a poetic text which runs through it and which does not offer the kind of expository commentary usually found in art catalogues. It includes instructions for new pieces of work and collects partial images and fragments of the exhibition rather than attempting to give documentation “as if you had been there”<sup>85</sup>

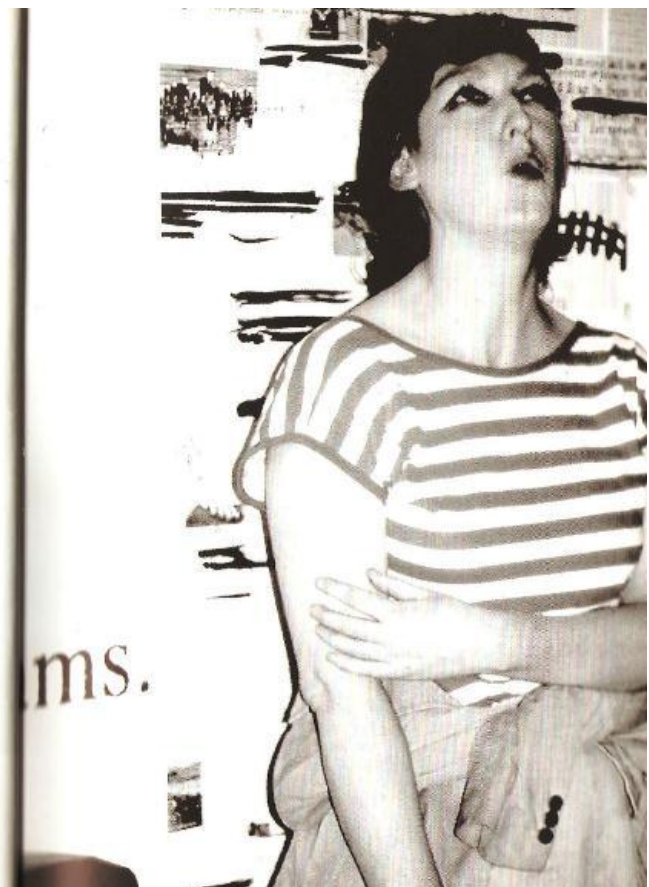
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<sup>85</sup> Redell Olsen, interview in *PORES 4: An Avant-Gardist Journal of Poetics Research*, Ed Will Rowe, (London: Contemporary Poetics Research Centre, 2006)

Olsen points out that *here are my instructions* is not like other catalogues and instead attempts to do more. It is a multi-voices, poetic text in dialogue with the artwork of an exhibition and reaching toward future artworks. It is ‘both/and vision born of shifts, contraries, negotiations’<sup>86</sup>. The work of Olsen and Johanknecht is a sensitive action aware of those voices within it. It provides conflicts and repetitions in multiple forms. Here we see the multi-voice at work. The site of the book functioning as the collaborative site of the Sub World; acting as an active “chora”.

read EXIST RESIST EXTEND

a small horizon striped  
and howling (innocence  
of standing)



This example<sup>87</sup> from *here are my instructions* shows text from Redell Olsen’s poetic text (which runs throughout), ‘*we await your instructions nervously*’, accompanied on the opposing page by a photo of Gillian Wylde performing ‘*A vile little piece of heart-warming*

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<sup>86</sup> Rachel Blau Duplessis, ‘For The Etruscans’, in *The Pink Guitar*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006). p.6

<sup>87</sup> Redell Olsen and Susan Johanknecht, *here are my instructions*, (London : Gefn Press, 2004). p.20-21

*fluff*. Olsen's poetic text mirrors the image of Wylde's performing body; the "striped and howling" woman is being read by us.

Olsen's poetic text is highlighting the past action of Wylde barking in the poetry society cafe. This political action of noise making becomes present again when aligned with Olsen's text. They are speaking to each other to form a new present of action. Here we see the site of book as an enabler for collaboration to go on functioning in the present through the poetic. It is the collage of Rachel Blau DuPlessis at work, the hybridity of time as explored by Grosz and the functioning Sub World of Harryman at play. Clashes of materialities and time as shown here foreground the importance of such work and the need for the multiple voice and body to impact our reading experience of a space; of the site of the book.

This mirroring exists as performance past action and poetic present voice are working in unison. Here we see the building of textures as these two actions are brought together within the site of *here are my instructions*.

It is moments such as these which highlight the success of the multiple body in this object. The parallel repetition between text and image foregrounds the readers perspective, making us become aware that this is not one body, but many; many bodies extending our reading experience and communicating with each other. *here are my instructions* is a site of collaboration which facilitates this relationship and allows new connections and meanings to be reached. The poetic then becomes a dialogue which explores site as a space where multiple bodies and voices can co-exist.

*here are my instructions* is a site where time can exist in many forms and at many crossroads. In this site time and space act as tools to fracture and enforce the female aesthetic. Redell Olsen writes;

introduces a rhetoric or logic with a start. A word is not the same as it says so it opts and chooses to keep going. Endless unsettling of deficiency. We continue to move through plotting. I would have trapped her as a lady in a book of rules. To be endlessly thrown off in a network of traces. The pin makes an incision. A type of track. The consistency of routes in use. A stitch in silver that is also a kind of armour. To define whole words in listing<sup>88</sup>

We wait nervously as this continual movement takes place. The unease of object is highlighted in this extract from Olsen's poetic text running through *here are my instructions*. This poetic voice is one which frames and traps the documents throughout. It endlessly in dialogue and conversation with the past as it offers a future instruction. It makes incisions throughout the object, acting as subtle pins moving throughout Olsen and Johanknecht's site.

It is this commitment to the poetic voice within the collaborative site which runs throughout my practice and involvement with press free press. The need for the collaborative space to offer a site where such hybrid work can function as perhaps there is nowhere else it can. It is important to recognise the site of collaboration as one this is fluid and continually able to rebuild, remake and reconstruct itself.

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<sup>88</sup> Redell Olsen, 'we await your instructions nervously', in *here are my instructions*, Redell Olsen and Susan Johanknecht, (London : Gefn Press, 2004). p. 45

**AN INTERLUDE:**

**Body**



*For the woman artist is not privileged or mandated to find her self-in-world except by facing (affronting?) and mounting an enormous struggle with the cultural fictions – myths, narratives, iconographies, languages – which heretofore have delimited the representation of women. And which are culturally and psychically saturating.<sup>89</sup>*

I am concerned with this woman artist and her female body as a body of silence and a body which needs to speak. The female body, my female body is the constant within my work. It is a political body. It is an autobiographical body. It is a body which is under attack. It is a body which is negotiating its place. It is a performing body. It is a performance body. The female body is a confliction and it is this conflict which engages and inspires the woman artist to negotiate their space in the world.

Within this interlude I aim to contextualise and build an understanding of body through engaging with 1970's performance art history. It is not a history of it, but an understanding of how it forms a context for my artistic and theoretical body. To perform this body, this active body is to be in dialogue with it and to be in a political dialogue. I am concerned with how the female body has been represented and objectified throughout performance histories. It is the implication of the advancements in the area of performing art which I think crosses over into the discipline of the poem. The tools utilised in both cases deal with similar questions and are entwined within the same history.

The question of how to represent the female body in performance, as art object or as text is an important one. This interlude attempts to provide a context for where I believe my artist body is grounded. It is a framing for my own artist body and the history my work is in dialogue with. I want to consider the historical resonance of the meeting of these disciplines

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<sup>89</sup> DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*. p.145

and whether this has gone on to shape or indeed in opposition performance strategies of today. I will be considering the work of Eleanor Antin, and using the exhibition 'Portraits of Eight New York Women' as a model to draw from. To define body in my own terms;

## **A body:**

### *Body in history and action*

I open these discussions by considering performance art and attempting to define as a context from where my practice is born. In *Performance Art from Futurism to the Present* RoseLee Goldberg writes;

The history of performance art in the twentieth century is the history of a permissive, open-ended medium with endless variables, executed by artists impatient with the limitations of more established forms, and determined to take their art directly to the public<sup>90</sup>

Performance art then is an art of directness, an art which looks to form an exchange, an art which is open and willing to cross genre. It is an art which looks to engage with its surroundings, and is in dialogue with other art practices. It is important to bear this in mind as we begin to think about the body and the building of this.

According to Goldberg performance art seems to be limitless in its forms and it is exactly this terminology which makes it difficult to categorise performance based work. To some, such a broad definition is encouraging, yet it also opens such work up to contradiction as it seems to be including all work. I am keen to expose the performing object and begin to disseminate and consider the object of performance.

I begin by considering the performing object and its place. (By performing object I move for an inclusion of body, object and text.) I believe it is important to return to this idea of the object as an object which can be in dialogue with its audience/reader and therefore

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90 RoseLee Goldberg *Performance Art From Futurism to the Present*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006) p. 9

become a performing entity. In the introduction of *Performing the Body/ Performing the Text*, Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson address the act of performance as an act of open-endedness. Performance as a process in dialogue.

The notion of the performative highlights the open-endedness of interpretation, which must thus be understood as a process rather than an act with a final goal.<sup>91</sup>

The notion then of the performative is an important one. It opens up our interpretation. Performance art then is holding a very open dialogue and is in a constant state of process. This process is a self-reflexive one, the notion of performance immediately questions itself. This questioning is a dialogue, is a process and needs to be brought to our attention. The site of performance whether this is object, body or text is therefore a site which is in dialogue with itself and beyond itself. Artists working within and negotiating around performance are using it as a site to investigate from and form a commentary on, the act of performing.

I want to consider the introduction of this anthology of essays further, as I believe it begins to engage with important questions surrounding the role of the performative as a way of understanding body. It begins to comment on meaning within the performative and how performance can be an action to help negotiate meaning and define body.

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<sup>91</sup> Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, *Performing the Body/ Performing the Text*, (Routledge: Oxon, 1999) p. 2

Meaning is negotiated between and across subjects and through language, it can never be fully secured: meaning comes to be understood as a negotiated domain, in flux and contingent on social and personal investments and contexts. By emphasising this lack of fixity and the shifting, invested nature of any interpretive engagement, [Jones and Stephenson] wish to assert that interpretation itself is worked out as performance between artist (as creators, performers and spectators of their work) and spectators.<sup>92</sup>

Performance lacks stability; it is this de-stable nature which allows for it to be understood in these terms. Performance is a negotiation then, a negotiation and an attempt at constructing meaning. It is within this negotiation of performance or the performing object where Jones and Stephenson believe interpretation to be conceived. This idea of a shifting interpretation is important to bear in mind when considering the performative. To interpret is to be in dialogue with, it is to be performing. This dialogue is important as it allows for there to be a relationship between the performer and the performance or audience/reader. This relationship is important, it allows for exchange, an immediate critical perspective which perhaps other genres do not allow.

It is important to dissect this idea of shifting interpretation further as I believe it is here where we can begin to understand the importance of performance in its many guises. There is a need to consider the implications of the performing body and object and how it is interpreted. We cannot move forward and discuss how and with what implication performance happens without firstly looking more closely at how to interpret, and discuss how an object or body performs. Jones and Stephenson begin to consider this;

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92 Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, *Performing the Body/ Performing the Text*, p. 2

Interpretation is, we would argue, a kind of performance of the object, while the performance of the body as an artistic practice is a mode of textual inscription. The body (as the corporeal enactment of the subject) is known and experienced only through its representational performances – whether presented ‘live’, in photographs, video, films, on the computer screen, or through the interpretive text itself.<sup>93</sup>

There is a separation then between the performance and the body which is explained to be a “mode of textual inscription” and secondly the “body (as the corporeal enactment of the subject)” which is a “representational performance”.

I am interested in disseminating the idea of a shifting interpretation. Jones and Stephenson are happy to consider the act of negotiation as a performative action. I encourage this reading and want to define this further. A negotiation is a dialogue, a dialogue between the performing object and its audience/reader. The role of the viewer in negotiating the performance is highly important and one the artist has little control over. In this act of negotiating control seems to be given to the receiver. I want to be sure this process is perceived as one which is an exchange of energies, an exchange which is ongoing, a performative process.

I turn my focus now to begin to consider the fluctuating performance work of Eleanor Antin. I want to firstly contextualise this by looking at trends and occurrences within 1970s performance strategies. This is of importance as out of this context my own writing and interaction with my own artistic body has grown. An awareness of how the female artistic body has grown speaks out to all the female practitioners throughout this thesis.

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93 Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, *Performing the Body/ Performing the Text*, p. 8

1970s feminist art faced a revolution, it was pitching itself against a system of restraints; these acts of art were asking political and artistic questions. The female artists of this period were engaging with the body and using it as a political tool. Lisa Bloom writes:

Women were engaged in activist movement and aimed to alter dramatically their personal lives as well as their art practices and teaching. The feminist commitment to revolutionary socialist ideals was an important part of the idealism of the 1970's.<sup>94</sup>

The feminist aesthetic of the seventies is one which pushes against another gender, which pushes against institutions and which pushes against normative modes of expression. Throughout history female practitioners have been striving to understand and share a female aesthetic which is adequate and the seventies were no different in their goal. The feminist aesthetic is challenging the institution to recognise its body, the female body. This has implications on the type of practice which is being produced; it was highly involved with the body and the placement and use of object and or text with and as the body. Understandably this led to a variety of medias being used to try and attain the feministic aesthetic, from sculpture to poetics to performance and experiments with multimedia techniques; this period encourages interplay between genre and media.

Within these highly fuelled political practices there remains one question which I think can be seen throughout the arts and wider in social concerns. This is the question of a female identity. The female body was engaging with political change and this was apparent in the arts. Performance practices were pushing forward these political motives and performance became a way to experiment with identity and re-define it.

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<sup>94</sup> Lisa Bloom, 'Contests for Meaning in the Body Politics and Feminist Conceptual Art: Revisioning the 1970s through Eleanor Antin', in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson. (Routledge: Oxon, 1999) p. 155

1970s feminists were no longer so clear about the nature of female identity, realising that it was up to them to redefine it.<sup>95</sup>

The female identity no longer seemed to be a ruled constraint, but instead became an object the female could change and alter and be at play with. To play with identity is to engage in a performance and to be aware of how and why we perform. It is necessary to consider the role of feminist identity.

It is an identity which Lisa Bloom believes is undergoing a change; there is a concern with the 'redefinition of priorities around identities and a re-conceptualisation of feminism informed by a shift in consciousness's'.<sup>96</sup> This shift in consciousness comes in the form of female artists wanting to engage with their bodies and express their unease at the limits which are put on how this body should be represented and how it has been represented by the male. There is a link then between political and artistic agendas which cannot be ignored.

The body has a history of being used as a political vessel for protest, a vessel for statement. In the art practices of feminist artist the female body becomes an active site of political and social concern.

This pre-occupation with retelling and reconstructing a female identity suits the oscillating environment of performance. There are immediate parallels here between theoretical advancements in feminist culture and practically in experimentation in the forms of performance. In her introduction to *The Power of Feminist Art* Broude Carrade writes;

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95 Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, 'Introduction:Feminism and Art in the Twentieth Century' in *The Power of Feminist Art*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996) p. 22

96 Lisa Bloom, 'Contests for Meaning in the Body Politics and Feminist Conceptual Art: Revisioning the 1970s through Eleanor Antin', in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, p. 154



The invention of personas and the exploration of roles so prevalent in early feminist art were, on one level, a way of examining the relation between female roles and the inner self and of clarifying their differences.<sup>97</sup>

The female body is being treated as an unstable identity which is happy to be shifting in and out of roles as object and performer. The female body is taking part in an act of performance itself, it is trying to negotiate its place.

In 1971 Linda Nochlin wrote the essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* To which Eleanor Antin responded writing *Women Without Pathos*. This response contributes to the understanding of feminist art practice and examines the identity of the female. The text is inherently linked with the exhibition by Antin called *Portraits of Eight New York Women*, which I will consider later. Firstly I consider the action of Antin's response. The writing of this response is of great importance. It makes a clear statement about being a female artist and addresses the ongoing themes of female identity.

Antin forms a practical investigation into this consideration- she engages this question and agrees that this, Nochlin's question 'is a useless one'.<sup>98</sup> It does not emphasise the positive and looks for inclusion in a male dominated art/literary canon. This looks to assimilate feminine works within this one dimensional space- whereas Antin's work sits at a crossroad and addresses the difficulty of finding a space for this work. This is relevant in my present, in this thesis as it too attempts to knit together a cast of feminine works and practitioners, asking them to have conversations across genres. There is a constant difficulty, which still exists of finding a place for the work or indeed the female body as it questions itself and what surrounds it.

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97 Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, *The Power of Feminist Art*, p. 22

98 Eleanor Antin, 'Women Without Pathos' in *Art and Sexual Politics*, ed. Thomas B. Hess, Elizabeth C. Baker, (New York: Collier A Division of McMillian, 1973) p. 86

The question of how to address and represent the female body are raised by Antin. When speaking of her *Portraits of Eight New York Women* Antin writes that she;

deliberately chose styles whose linguistic structures were ambiguous because a puzzle is harder to love than a fact.<sup>99</sup>

This negotiation of the linguistic ideas of female identity are key here. Antin is engaging with the female not the purely feminine, and she admits that this is a complex process. It is an engagement with the body through action, through doing, through writing. Her aesthetic is akin to that of Rachel Blau DuPlessis.

Antin as critic then, helps to form the basis for understanding performance in broader terms and representational performance. We must understand the goals of these negotiations in order to see their potential for performance. Performance in this case is a process and a dialogue.

I turn my attention to Eleanor Antin's 'show of object biographies'<sup>100</sup>: *Portraits of Eight New York Women*. I want to consider these portraits as a way of looking at the 1970's female performance practices, but also how this exhibition of bodies forms a history of the female artistic body, the context for my artistic female body and the bodies running throughout this thesis. There is collaboration between these bodies to build a whole. I ask you to recall Redell Olsen and Susan Johanknecht's object *here are my instructions* and Rachel Blau DuPlessis' *Pink Guitar*, Carla Harryman's action of site sampling in *Performing Objects Stationed in the Subworld* all catalogue bodies and voices to form a new object, a new body.

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99 Eleanor Antin, 'Women Without Pathos' in *Art and Sexual Politics*, p. 87

100 Eleanor Antin, 'Women Without Pathos' in *Art and Sexual Politics*, p. 86

The exhibition of “object biographies” included portraits of Yvonne Rainer, Carolee Scheeman, Amy Goldin, Naomi Dash, Lyn Traiger, Hannah Weiner, all women functioning as female artists but in different guises. There is a mix of female artists who are in dialogue with creating a female aesthetic. The women in Antin’s exhibitions are “puzzles”, linguistic puzzles. They exist as a hybrid, a mix of genre and multi-disciplinary practices. Antin is setting herself a challenge by picking these women; she must ensure their portraits reflect their hybrid nature.

This exhibition initially took place in the Chelsea Hotel room and it was not until 1998 that the exhibition was realised in full at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York. There is something to be said here about the gap between these women being exhibited in a hotel room and an art space. This brings into question ideas about the private and public. The females of the 1970s exhibition were allowed into an art space in 1998. There is something interesting in this gap. This gap is worth considering. This gap is still present as discussed in the previous chapter in the work of Redell Olsen and Susan Johanknecht; their exhibition merely being allowed to sit in the café of the Poetry Society. I propose that the themes are as relevant in the present as they were in 1971. It is important to consider these themes and to continue to pose these questions as they remain unresolved.

This exhibition brings the idea of a representational performance into play; the idea that an object/body is rewritten and becomes a performing object. This term, representational performance, stems from performance as a process, as an active dialogue between object, site and viewer. The relationship between these three categories allows for an object to not be a mere static object, but to be given an active voice by an artist.

In the case *Portraits of Eight New York Women* the objects are of increasing interest.

For 'Portraits of Eight New York Women', [Antin] deliberately chose expensive, shiny, glamorous objects. [Antin] chose bright colours, reds and pinks. And as much chrome as possible. [Antin] didn't want the viewer to come too close.<sup>101</sup>

Antin is loading her objects and her space with theoretical meaning by engaging with these objects in such a manner she insists on these objects becoming performing objects. She is not only using these objects as representational vessels, but vessels which she inscribes a history of the female on. There is something to be said about the need for these objects to be so "glamorous and expensive"- it is perhaps a comment on the feminine world we inhabit as opposed to the feminist world we look to inhabit. Antin is raising questions of the worth of the female, the worth of her art.

As well as concerning themselves with how to represent the female these portraits also comment on the viewing of the female. There is a sense that these portraits are not to be touched, not to be gazed upon, they are armoured with bright colours to protect them. These objects are re-teaching an interaction, one which is an interaction of negotiation, not simply a viewer gazing on object, there is a cohesiveness in this relationship.

I want to link this with the jump from the presence of body to the absence of body within these objects. It is apparent that these portraits are in dialogue with the body. By removing the normative and expected body from performance Antin is exploiting the object and drawing our attention to the lack of body within these performing portraits.

Antin's objects become object bodies and are in dialogue with their culture and act as a form of protest. Her "object biographies" are being turned into household objects; there is an interest with the female and the domestic. The art space becomes the home of this political body of practicing female artists.

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101 Eleanor Antin, 'Women Without Pathos' in *Art and Sexual Politics*, p. 87

Antin's interest is in showing how the women in her biographical portraits use these otherwise mute objects in unexpected ways.<sup>102</sup>

The unexpected use of the female body has created a new performance perspective in this exhibition. The once mute object becomes empowered; the female mute body becomes empowered. The process of this empowerment occurs in dialogue. This dialogue forms the basis for how these objects can indeed be seen to perform.

I want to focus attention on specific objects within the exhibition. I draw your attention to the "object biography" of Yvonne Rainer. She is represented by an exercise bicycle. This stationary object representing a dancer. This object of repetition represents and replicates the dance vocabulary which Yvonne Rainer was experimenting with. A dance vocabulary of repetition and stylisation.

Her portraits tend not to focus either on women's oppression or on women's heroic and exemplary qualities. Rather, they are more everyday.<sup>103</sup>

Antin highlights these women as being supposed everyday figures, yet by placing them in the art space these objects are inflected with an otherness. Yvonne Rainer is a dancer represented by a static bicycle. The body being constructed by an object. The female body being constructed through representation. By playing with the placement of object and body within

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102 Lisa Bloom, Contests for 'Meaning in the Body Politics and Feminist Conceptual Art: Revisioning the 1970s through Eleanor Antin', in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, p. 163

103 Lisa Bloom, Contests for 'Meaning in the Body Politics and Feminist Conceptual Art: Revisioning the 1970s through Eleanor Antin', in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, p. 163

the art space, Antin is placing her work between the ‘discourse of feminism and modernism’.<sup>104</sup>

It is here where the context and driving force behind this thesis comes from, where it finds its bodily foundation. There is a hum of these women throughout my own practice and throughout the feminist historical landscape. The body is being continually defined and re-defined in my own work through the action of writing. The body, my body becomes a series of textual objects. These objects remain present when I am not, they become body.

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104 Lisa Bloom, Contests for ‘Meaning in the Body Politics and Feminist Conceptual Art: Revisioning the 1970s through Eleanor Antin’, in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, p. 163

## **CHAPTER 4**

**A Site: The Theoretical space: writing ON and BETWEEN spaces**

**Noise on and between theory**

**Noise on and between body**

*Noise is sound, a sound of any kind, an outcry.*<sup>105</sup>

I return to my initial outcry;

And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your  
body is yours, take it"<sup>106</sup>

I retrace my thoughts; I move to trace them into a theoretical writing voice. The theoretical space is one filled with noise. Noise from all pasts, presents and futures. It is within this noise I situate this writing. It does not sit comfortably, but rather as an outcry attempting to listen and respond.

This chapter looks to form a dialogue with the difficulty of navigating the poetic theoretical space both as listener and performer. It will return to the work of Rachel Blau DuPlessis throughout, reconsidering her writing strategies further and how the female aesthetic can inform and help construct a theoretical poetic site.

I look to build a dialogue between body and voice and how to situate these within a theoretical space. I begin to write *medusa: speaking*. I carry out an on-going dialogue with my theoretical voice and how it can be sited physically and theoretically.

I will focus my attention by considering the use of noise in Carla Harryman's work paying close attention to her series of essays *Adorno's Noise* and her actions of 'cross genre writing'<sup>107</sup>. Harryman's work creates a noise and is noisy in its production, performance and

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<sup>105</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary, ed. Catherine Soanes, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

<sup>106</sup> Helene Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans Keith Cohen, Paula Cohen in *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976) p. 876

<sup>107</sup> Laura Hinton, 'To Write Within Situations of Contraction: An Introduction to the Cross-Genre Writings of Carla Harryman' in *Postmodern Culture* 16.1 (September 2005).



the reading experience of it. I will explore the poetic noise of her texts and how these are created. Harryman's is a noise of writing and questioning our perceived notion of academic text and writing style. I will engage with the writing of Laura Hinton and her term "cross genre writing" to encourage a further understanding of Harryman's work and begin to consider this noisy style of writing and whether this makes her work difficult to place within a literary context.

The second example of noise I want to consider is the noise on and between the body focussing on the work of Adrian Piper; a performance artist who engages in public, political performances. The noise of the body works in similar ways and the work of Adrian Piper is an example of the body provoking performance. The noise of the body within space to construct a performance. I will pay close attention to her series *Catalysis* and am concerned with the associations between a textual body and a performance body.

Both Harryman and Piper's interest lies in challenging our notions of poetic or performance fields. The voice of Harryman is textually led; the voice of Piper is bodily led, yet both voices are in need of being heard. My discussions consider the difficulty of how to place Harryman and Piper's work within regular structures of academic criticism. To use the on and between I am suggesting I hope will allow a discussion of Harryman and Piper's work which is both critical and sympathetic to their struggles to locate their practice within a genre.

I will use these notions to work towards facilitating my own critical voice; exploring how Harryman and Piper's work questions the materialities within which they work, how they investigate the female body and the impact of their work politically. Raising an awareness of the implications this has on the action of writing or finding a critical voice. These themes will aid me in my practice which will look to create a female poetic noise which exists both as text and performance. I am investigating whether action and text can sit side by side to create a female voice of experience and action, which is both poetic and

theoretical. In my own practice I have explored the female voice through Helene Cixous, to instigate noise through voice, to construct a voice through noise and work toward uncovering whether a living performing theoretical body can be created.

## Noise On and Between Theory:

Carla Harryman's texts dwell between literary places, her texts dwell between the poem and the play between the poem and the essay between the poem and the prose the poem the play the essay the prose the poem play essay prose poemplayessayprose. The on and the between is a border. The on and between is a scarred surface. The on and between is a gap.

Carla Harryman is a writer whose work dwells on and between literary places and is very aware that it does so. She has produced a wide variety of texts which examine the poem, the play, the essay and prose. Harryman's work constantly engages with its materiality; she questions the status of a text, she questions the place of a text, she questions texts role. Harryman is forward thinking in her approach to and her treatment of text. It is utilised to write, to perform, to critique, to question its own status and place. Harryman's treatment of text throughout her work breaks binaries; I want to investigate her most recent text *Adorno's Noise* and explore the noise it creates. A noise within poetic systems, reading strategies and the academic field. My interest lies in Harryman's refusal to remain still, her texts move across and through, on and between genres and it is essential to consider what impact this has.

In *Adorno's Noise*, Harryman has constructed not only a text, but a temporal space to examine and form a dialogue between critical theory, poetry, spatiality and performance of object and text. *Adorno's Noise* is a critical poetic product and it is important to engage with the purpose of this text. *Adorno's Noise* is a study of Adorno, a translation of Adorno, a product of writing made through Adorno. Harryman's text is one which is physical; it engages the body as both a tool to write and one to be read. *Adorno's Noise* is a theoretical text which can inhabit the spaces of poem/play/essay; it is a critique of Adorno and theory. This text is a hybrid of hisses and spits from across genres.

There has been little critical writing about Carla Harryman with the exception of Laura Hinton's research. I want to utilise Hinton's essay; 'To Write Within Situations of Contradiction: An Introduction to the Cross-Genre Writings of Carla Harryman'<sup>108</sup> as a way of returning to Harryman. To start with Hinton's research and begin to move forward from this considering new ways to approach such hybrid writing. To think about the nature of writing which is on and between; as Harryman has not only created a writing which is cross genre, but a writing which is much more complex and hybrid in its state. I begin with this article as it raises my concerns, but I want to think further about the ON and BETWEEN spaces Carla Harryman's work inhabits. To think about situation, communication, the aesthetic and texture in form in Hinton's essay and in Harryman's work.

Firstly situation; to locate and to situate. To locate and to situate is essential. To locate and to situate can prove difficult. To locate and to situate difficultly allows for the ON and BETWEEN writing to exist. To locate and situate text has political implications and Harryman's texts situate themselves outside traditional structures of the poem, play, essay and prose. To locate and situate Harryman then, is to attempt to define the structures and tropes of her writing.

Carla Harryman's work lies on and between genres; it is described by Laura Hinton as "cross genre writing"<sup>109</sup>. "Cross genre" is a phrase we see in avant-garde art practices, yet what do we mean by "cross-genre" and does this label in fact make Carla Harryman's work easier to place? Returning to my own practice this has implications on where I locate myself as poet, performer, researcher and theorist. I address the term "cross genre"; it is writing which is across genre, it is cross aesthetic, it is across, it is on, and it is between genre, it is writing which fills gaps and scars over gaps, it slips between gaps and is concerned with the question of language's place. By aligning oneself with this aesthetic, writing immediately

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<sup>108</sup> Laura Hinton, 'To Write Within Situations of Contraction: An Introduction to the Cross-Genre Writings of Carla Harryman,' in *Postmodern Culture* 16.1 (September 2005).

<sup>109</sup> Hinton, 'To Write Within Situations of Contraction'.

concerns itself with its location; it is not happy to be situated within a single aesthetic and it is this very dynamic nature which leads to the work being difficult to locate. It is moving between sites.

I am concerned with the political act of locating Harryman's work. This political act of attempting to locate Harryman is involved in establishing a developing and emerging politics of writing which looks to challenge canonised notions of poetry, performance and visual arts. My research is involved in developing and investigating this emerging politics; there is a need for this genre to be exposed, to be more widely read and investigated. The constant shifting between sites of practice and physical sites only emphasises the difficulty of this term and the work it attempts to define.

I return to the term "cross genre" Hinton comments;

One reason, perhaps, that Harryman's work has received less than an appropriate level of attention from the canoniser's of contemporary literature and poetics as a field is that her work is difficult to assess by readers and interpreters.<sup>110</sup>

It is the difficulty to navigate Harryman's work and the difficulty of understanding what is meant by "cross genre". In her essay *To Write Within Situations of Contradiction: An Introduction to the Cross-Genre Writings of Carla Harryman* Hinton argues for the difficulty to locate Harryman's work. She describes Harryman's work as "*RADICAL, NON-GENRE-BASED WRITING*"<sup>111</sup>. For Hinton, Harryman's texts are radical in their political stance. Hinton is aware that Harryman's texts are difficult to negotiate; in that they reach outside of one genre. In Chapter 1 I discuss Harryman in relation to Rachel Blau DuPlessis's female aesthetic; an aesthetic of rupture. Harryman's texts are difficult to negotiate in terms of their

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<sup>110</sup> Laura Hinton, 'An Introduction to Reading Harryman', *How2* Vol 3 Issue 3 ([http://www.asu.edu/pipercenter/how2journal/vol\\_3\\_no\\_3/harryman/hinton\\_intro.html](http://www.asu.edu/pipercenter/how2journal/vol_3_no_3/harryman/hinton_intro.html))

<sup>111</sup> Hinton, 'To Write Within Situations of Contraction'.

cross genre aesthetics and content, their shift between materialities and form comments on content.

Harryman is radical in her approach to text and its materialities, as we have seen in the use and conception of the Sub World, but I do not think it is as simple as this. Harryman's practice is text based within a contemporary writing tradition of interdisciplinary work. Harryman's writing finds itself between and on the gaps of this aesthetic and it is this shifting location which makes her work so exciting and it is these shifts which allow Harryman's work to be on and between genre. Harryman's work is radical, but it is also writing which comments on the materialities of different writing rhetorics. By exposing the use of communication, the aesthetic and texture in form in Harryman's work specifically *Adorno's Noise* I will magnify the term cross genre.

Carla Harryman's *Adorno's Noise* is in dialogue with an established structure; that of Adorno, that of theoretical writing and that of poetics. Harryman's text is communicating and is engaging in varied aesthetics and forms. Harryman is on and between. This text announces itself as being in dialogue with its theoretical past; yet radically positions itself in the present theoretical landscape which Harryman is attempting to create.

*Adorno's Noise* is a dialogue with Adorno. It does not simply comment on or re-voice Adorno, but is saturated with the voice of Harryman. A voice causing noise within the theoretical space; a voice attempting to locate itself as body and in the body of theoretical culture.

*Adorno's Noise* samples from one of Adorno's key texts; *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*. Adorno's text is similar to Harryman's in that they both magnify and expose, both offer a fragmented reading experience and both enter into a critical and political discourse. Adorno is a canonised theoretical figure who questions form and content. Simon Jarvis writes of Adorno, that he;

Focuses on the slightest particulars of cultural objects – the material shape and layout of books, the syntax and punctuation of poetry, the performance history of classical music.<sup>112</sup>

For Adorno the “slightest particular” is not a mere detail, but markers which point to the world and culture the object was produced in. This interest in and dialogue between object and its place is relevant to my investigation. Harryman is utilising the relationship between the form and content of *Adorno’s Noise* to place it in a poetic theoretical system.

*Minima Moralia* is a dense text posing difficult questions of life, politics and place. It is a text of many opinions viewed from many angles. It is this questioning which I think is of great significance. Adorno writes:

Today self-consciousness no longer means anything but reflection on the ego as embarrassment, as realisation of impotence: knowing that one is nothing.

In many people it is already an impertinence to say “I”.

The splinter in your eye is the best magnifying glass.<sup>113</sup>

Reflection on the ego is a laughable offence; the “I” is an irrelevance, there is an instant image of the “I” being “splintered”; it is being ruptured. Adorno poses many questions in his text, but it is the questioning of the “I” and its place, which is key to understanding and engaging with Harryman’s text and the use of voice within her work.

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<sup>112</sup> Simon Jarvis, ‘Introduction’, in *Adorno A Critical Introduction*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998) p. 2

<sup>113</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott, (London: Verso, 1978), p. 50

Adorno's text is conscious of itself and how it reflects itself into broader society. There is a concern with the instance in *Minima Moralia*, how these instances can be splintered. Simon Jarvis writes that these instances;

Make surprising connections which show how their significance extends far beyond their immediate context to illuminate, the systematic transformation or distortion of modern human experience.<sup>114</sup>

Adorno's "I" then not only shatters, but looks to extend beyond its context. The "I" is shattering the rules, structures and tropes of this theoretical context. This extending, this reaching beyond means the text is in dialogue with regulated structures of literature. The shattering "I" in the text and of the text itself is working to deconstruct these structures and form a dialogue with them. Harryman's *Adorno's Noise* is similar with its goal; she is using the techniques of Adorno; magnifying, splintering, transforming, distorting, communicating and reflecting to alter the reader's experience of the theoretical and poetic text. Harryman's noise is one where the "I" has been splintered and is still shattering.

The rupturing of body; the 'I', which occurs in *Adorno's Noise* is directly related to the writing strategies of Rachel Blau DuPlessis. The body is at the forefront here, as Harryman's text is a body attempting to not only form a dialogue with Adorno, but comment on his text and rewrite it. *Adorno's Noise* is a site where theoretical writing, poetic writing and the action of writing are inherently linked.

The "I" as I see it is not only author and reader, but object, and the object which Carla Harryman has created is one of great pleasure. *Adorno's Noise* itself is a magnified and splintered experience. If we consider firstly its visual form, it a flickering sign system which

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<sup>114</sup> Jarvis, 'Introduction', in *Adorno A Critical Introduction*, p. 15



we the reader must negotiate. *Adorno's Noise* is physical, it is blacked out pages/ lists/ inversions/ mirrors/ repetitions/ bolds/ narratives/ spaces/ italics/ bullets/ questions/ non narratives/ statements/ scores/ notes. It is noise; a visual and textual noise. Harryman is offering an essay which is a series of processes, each given its own space to exist. This space is important to recognise as it is these spaces or voids which offer the reader rest, and allow us to see how all of these different experiences can co-exist to form the basis for this one essay. Using these methods Harryman also suggests that text is image and this impacts how we negotiate this text which has now become; object.

To consider *Adorno's Noise* as an object it is important to consider the visual representation of this text. This text gains a sculptural quality by playing with our visual field; titles are large and stretched across the page, fonts are exchanged throughout, text is enlarged and shrunk. Text is being treated as a pliable object. In terms of the visual Harryman has created an oscillating essay. It oscillates between the known aesthetics of an essay and those which stretch Harryman's textual materiality. It is these oscillations which make this essay difficult and uneasy to negotiate and it is these negotiations which make this work such a success. We the reader must find our own strategy of listening in order to make this a personal reading experience. The text demands interaction and a sense of play from the reader and it is this sense of play which is key to the shattering of the "I" in the object. It is this sense of play which immediately notifies the reader that we are entering a very physical reading experience where definition is elusive. Harryman is offering up a space where the commodity of the very object we hold is being torn apart; it is being "magnified" and "splintered" using the techniques of Adorno.

This visual quality is directly reflected in the content of *Adorno's Noise*. It is divided into a series of viewing chapters, Harryman is constantly shifting her focus; sections jump into the next as we are led through a language which moves from tones of the personal, to

theoretical, to poetic, through sampled texts. Harryman has created a text which is lived in, this noise is a hybrid soundscape, yet it oscillates and changes in pitch, pace and volume. It is a consuming experience, a consuming experience communicating outward.

This communication happens in varied ways. For Harryman communication is essential. It tells. It speaks. It shows. Communication in Harryman's work is complex; she communicates repeatedly from multiple angles. Communicating to make noise. Hinton considers communication in Harryman's work;

In conceptually based literature, like Harryman's poetry acts as a conflictual, challenging medium, a discourse of "communication" that "fails" more than it communicates – that repeatedly replicates these failures as lack of linguistic or narrative resolution.<sup>115</sup>

Repetition shifts and moves and forces an adjustment. Hinton argues that Harryman is engaging in a communication which inevitably fails. A communication which is failing within current academic discourses and the ideas of genre which I have discussed. Hinton's statement acknowledges how Harryman's failed communication manifests itself through repeatedly failing to adhere to a narrative, or expected resolutions within normative modes of discourse. This political act repeatedly making noise, but refusing to communicate leads to a further complication in the work of Harryman.

Harryman is in dialogue with the act of communicating; she communicates within her texts by constantly questioning their materiality and role as well as communicating outwardly by asking questions of the place, the present of her text. To explore this act of communication

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<sup>115</sup> Hinton, 'To Write Within Situations of Contraction'.

further I will consider how Harryman's work communicates inwardly and outwardly and how these repeated actions cause noise.

Inner communication in Harryman's work offers an internal communication, a self-reflection in the text, text mirrors itself, text refracts, text folds inwards. Inner communication is the poem play essay prose questioning itself and questioning the place of language within it. Inner communication is the poem play essay prose questioning genre as a whole. Inner communication allows a poem to be a play, a play to be an essay, an essay to be prose, prose to be a poem. Harryman's inner communication examines the materiality of text; text refracts in on itself to question its materiality and form. The folding over of content is a continual theme of Harryman's work and is especially relevant when considering Harryman's texts in performance. This folding over of content on the page and in performance draws and expands on the model of the postmodern condition to create meta-meaning where a definition is constantly evading us. This evasion forces movement throughout the text and this movement is where performance in the page and out of it exists. Inner communication then, is not a failure but rather the repeated and altered repetitions of language only show the difficulty found in locating Harryman's text.

In opposition to this, outer communication offers an external communication. Harryman's work interacts externally pushing boundaries of materiality and form. This external pushing allows Harryman's work to be a place of discourse which sets up examples of newness while remaining in dialogue with the external. Outer communication is what allows Carla Harryman's work to be defined as "cross genre"; it is communicating through a multi-writing practice. The lack of resolution internally allows Harryman to create a new language and reading system which reaches beyond its material form.

Harryman's work explores the act of communication from both these perspectives; by repeating these actions she exhibits signs that this act of communication is not a failure. In

*Adorno's Noise* an example of Harryman's action of communication can be seen in the internal self reflexive dialogue found in the chapter 'Beware of Seeking out the Mighty'. Here Harryman uses the negative to form an object; to construct a definition through repetition:

In writing a poem she is not writing a novel in writing a novel she is not writing an essay in writing an essay she is not writing a diatribe in writing a diatribe she is not putting her body on the line in putting her body on the line she is not going to jail in going to jail she is not getting a job in getting a job she is not protesting in protesting she is not elucidating her point of view in elucidating her point of view she is not writing a poem.<sup>116</sup>

We see Harryman define through the negative; what a poem is not, what she is not, what the reader is not. This attempted definition is important to recognise when we are dealing with a text which is eluding its own definition as object; this text is not a poem, it is not a theory, it is not an essay. Harryman plays with this repetition of image to create and build a series of differences, there is an ebb and flow of what this text could be. Deconstruction of the "I" is constantly occurring here. Yet Harryman pushes this deconstruction further by putting the body of her text on the line. In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno writes that 'the whole is the false'<sup>117</sup> and we see this at work in *Adorno's Noise*. Harryman channels tropes of Adorno into her own noise making process. The labour of listening forces us to watch Harryman write, the negative constructs the positive and this chapter is an example of how she constructs a text.

Harryman constructs a text through movement. In *Adorno's Noise*, Harryman exposes and shows us the movement of change in language and definition. This movement/shifting

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<sup>116</sup> Carla Harryman, *Adorno's Noise*, (Ohio: Essay Press, 2008) p. 89

<sup>117</sup> Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott, p. 50

within the language of *Adorno's Noise* is important to be aware of. Harryman tells us what “she is not”, in doing; there is a verbal movement, a syntactical pressing forward of what this “she” is not and is. The “she” here becomes a focus of form and content. In form the “she” is a pliable object of text which through repetition is communicated as un-whole. In content the “she” is being deconstructed and reconstructed through the negative. These shifts in definition are not unfamiliar to Harryman; it is this shifting dialogue which makes *Adorno's Noise* such a multi-textured text.

This idea of shifting definition is found throughout Harryman's texts, yet what is most interesting is that Harryman focuses on trying to find definition within a text which is eluding it. It is these slippages which make *Adorno's Noise* relevant to contemporary poets of today. *Adorno's Noise* is a poetic text in terms of its treatment of language as I have discussed. Harryman has created a text which draws on her avant-garde writing practices and utilised these processes as a way of engaging with a canonised theoretical text. *Adorno's Noise* is relevant then, as it offers a way of engaging with theory which is not only testing the form of theory, but the language within it. Her language is not only pushing against definition, but she points at the idea of defining ‘the object’ with severity; it is under attack.

REGARD FOR THE OBJECT RATHER THAN COMMUNICATION IS SUSPECT<sup>118</sup>

Carla Harryman is concerned with communication; the act of communicating and the function of language as an object to communicate. *Adorno's Noise* is a communication text in dialogue with its form, content and reader.

The action of communication is constantly present in *Adorno's Noise*; this action allows Harryman to shift through definitions and terms. In her chapter “Just Noise”

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<sup>118</sup> Harryman, *Adorno's Noise*, p. 20.

Harryman presents us with a list of names that include: Elizabeth Grosz, Kathy Acker and Jackson MacLow, attached to each is a weighty footnote. These footnotes are then removed from context and placed as text in the “Reprise”. For example the footnote attached to Elizabeth Grosz is;

1. Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion* (1995), 198. The critic crosses the path of abstraction with a projected erotics that implicates her own arousal. Does anyone have a problem with this?<sup>119</sup>

This footnote once transferred to the “Reprise” is;

The critic crosses the path of abstraction with a projected erotics that implicates her own arousal.

Does anyone have a problem with this?<sup>120</sup>

Harryman is using text as object, by physically moving and repeating these footnotes she is questioning their status, questioning the restraints within academic writing and moving toward a communicative text; a text in dialogue with its materiality. This act of communication takes place by the careful placement and repetition of phrase. This labour of repetition is clearly of interest to Harryman and forms a key aspect of her writing process. By moving language its status as object is altered and this action leads to a new informed act of communication. The most important aspect of this action is that it shows that Harryman’s form is her content; the building blocks of language are exposed and re-addressed.

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<sup>119</sup> Harryman, *Adorno’s Noise*, p.57.

<sup>120</sup> Harryman, *Adorno’s Noise*, p.59

Harryman's building blocks of language are moved and re-moved. *Adorno's Noise* is not only in dialogue with critical thought, but critical thought is being performed for us.

Just as in the work of Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Harryman is working within a theoretical language where form and content blur; where theory is poetic and the site of the book is a space of action facilitating this dialogue.

The texture within Harryman's work builds a crescendo of voice; it is an engagement with texture in form. Harryman's texts are full of texture; on and between textures. By texture I am referring to the layers within the text, the engagement of voice and its plurality, texture in visual and conceptual form. I draw from Hinton's essay. I isolate this fragment.

*Her [Harryman's] textual relation to surface and performance as opposed to narrative depth.<sup>121</sup>*

Hinton suggests that Harryman's work engages more fully with text's texture versus considering a narrative depth. It is false to argue that Harryman does not concentrate on narrative depth as her work concentrates on the texture of text and the impact this has on narrative. As has been discussed Harryman's work fluctuates between genres and spaces. It is this fluctuating which provides a narrative, one which may be difficult to navigate at times, but a narrative which engages with the materiality of language. We must consider this use of texture; it is a play with noise.

Text is texture in *Adorno's Noise* and throughout Harryman's work. Yet how does this language become object? How does Harryman construct a text which is both performing for us and performing between spaces of materiality and genre? How is not fully addressed in Hinton's argument. The methods Harryman uses are not fully exposed. The use of texture

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<sup>121</sup> Hinton, 'To Write Within Situations of Contraction'

(noise) is very present in *Adorno's Noise*; here the object is a magnified and splintered experience. *Adorno's Noise* is an object of visual texture, it is a flickering sign system which we the reader must negotiate. Text is being treated as a pliable object. In terms of the visual Harryman has created an oscillating essay. It is these oscillations which make this essay difficult and uneasy to negotiate and it is these negotiations which make this work such a success.

The visual noise of this text is found in its aesthetic, its aesthetic not simply in form, but in content. Noise can be born out of the conflict between form and content and the language used and the sense of perception:

*An aesthetic of contradiction is at work in Harryman's text as a sign of political, personal, discursive struggle, a struggle that has marked her own path as an adventurous woman writer from the beginning of her career.*<sup>122</sup>

This "AESTHETIC OF CONTRADICTION", as pointed out by Hinton is found throughout Harryman's work and is an interesting and exciting term to explore lexically. It is a term which offers multiple possibilities. It is a term I want to magnify. It is a term which can be utilised when considering other poetic practices. Hinton's essay encourages an explanation of this term; she contemplates Harryman's aesthetic;

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<sup>122</sup> Hinton, 'To Write Within Situations of Contraction'



Her aesthetic of contradiction is not meant to create opacity forever and remain oblique, but rather to shift the structural possibilities dialectically and to offer through creativity and art, previously unimaginable modes of language and thought.<sup>123</sup>

Hinton argues that this contradiction holds a possibility for change. This aesthetic I believe is at the crux of defining the term “cross genre”; the on and between identities of Harryman’s text. Hinton importantly points out this aesthetic, I want to consider further and define its terms.

The “aesthetic of contradiction” encourages communication and repetition; it is political in its engagement with Harryman’s text and political in its positioning as a term which is new and challenging. The aesthetic of contradiction is challenging; it looks to shift structural possibilities, to do this dialectically, to do this not as an act of protest, but as an act of questioning and critiquing structures. These structures include normative academic writing, poetics, prose which Harryman’s aesthetic shifts on, between and across. Hinton’s aesthetic of contradiction offers shifts of style/genre/focus within one text. Hinton’s aesthetic is aware of the outer communication which takes place by Harryman’s text being in dialogue with its greater structural possibilities. Internally Hinton’s aesthetic is offering shifts within style/genre/focus, within one text. Hinton’s aesthetic of contradiction is a plural action which exposes and re-organises the sign systems of language.

Hinton ensures that this aesthetic is an open one; one of dialogues which investigates form and content and navigates on and between structural systems. By highlighting this aesthetic of contradiction and using it to discuss Harryman’s work Hinton is breaking down the term “cross genre”. This aesthetic of contradiction then is a term which is key to investigating Harryman’s texts and key to engaging with the term cross genre.

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<sup>123</sup> Hinton, ‘To Write Within Situations of Contraction’

Harryman's texts rupture strategies, structures, sign systems and the very materiality of text. It is these acts and processes which rupture our notions of understanding and locating Harryman's text. Harryman is not only in dialogue with the theoretical space, but expanding it as she utilises poetic writing strategies to do so.

I return to the voice of Rachel Blau DuPlessis, her recurring terms resurface;

delegitimate

deconstruct

decenter

destroy

dismantle

destabilise

displace

deform

explode<sup>124</sup>

The female aesthetic of DuPlessis is an aesthetic which wants to challenge, to deconstruct, to dismantle, to explode the strategies which Hinton is concerned with. There are then links between DuPlessis's "female aesthetic" and Hinton's "aesthetic of contradiction". DuPlessis writes to construct a female voice in theoretical/critical terms. I suggest then that Harryman's texts align themselves with this "female aesthetic" to sit within a genre which recognises

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<sup>124</sup> Rachel Blau Duplessis, 'Otherhow', in *The Pink Guitar*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006) p. 145

Harryman's plurality, and a genre which is an academic discourse engaging with how to write.

I put forward then that it is in this "aesthetic of contradiction" where the answer of cross genre writing can be found. This aesthetic helps define the terms and structures of this developing genre which challenges canonised structures. Throughout *Adorno's Noise* Harryman engages with this aesthetic broadly. Hinton has created this term and now I want to develop it in terms of analysing Harryman's texts more closely. Harryman engages with this aesthetic across her work. She utilises this aesthetic in *Adorno's Noise*, in *Performing Objects Stationed in the Sub World*, in *Baby*, in *Animal Instincts (Prose Plays Essays)*, in *Percentage*, in *Third Man*, in *La Quotidienne: An Atmospheric Play*, in *Autonomy Speech*. Harryman inter samples text and I now sample from *Autonomy Speech*:

AUTONOMY NEVER WINS. *No objects, spaces, or boundaries are sacred in themselves.*

Ideas have autonomy. *But illegitimate offspring are often unfaithful to their origins.*

Picture someone in an entirely autonomous space. *Their fathers after all are inessential.*

This is the basis for the understanding heterogeneity released without a form.<sup>125</sup>

This is a self-governing over and through text. The textural quality of narrative is implicit in the work of Harryman and it is created through the building of themes and ideas rather than a structured and linear form. The narrative and texture of Harryman is as she says "distributed".

I want to focus attention on this extract from *Autonomy Speech* and ask if it is indeed working within an "aesthetic of contradiction". This aesthetic looks to shift structural

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<sup>125</sup> Carla Harryman, 'Autonomy Speech', in *Animal Instinct; Prose Plays Essays*, (Berkeley, CA: Sun & Moon Press, 1989) p 111.

possibilities; here and throughout autonomy is shifting. Here we see definition being re-associated. Harryman's phrases are heterogeneous in form breaking through and out of structure. This aesthetic should offer shifts of style/genre/focus within one text; autonomy is a multi-text. Here we see a mix of direct and asides. A mix of the didactic factual remarks which are theory like, supported by the whimsical tone of Harryman. The aesthetic of contradiction encourages the plural: autonomy becomes plurality. The form of text is plural and the text lies on and between. This aesthetic exposes and re-organises sign systems of language: here and throughout autonomy shifts the sign. The reader must locate the sign. The sign is the meaning, the reading, the locating, the act of reading, the basis of defining. Autonomy is exposed and re-ordered within Harryman's own sign system.

The aesthetic of contradiction investigates form and content: here and throughout autonomy fractures form and content. The form of language and the status of sign are at play here. The form of language and its content is under a microscope in the world of Harryman. It should offer a dialogue and autonomy speaks to the reader. Harryman places us outside the text, outside the normative space of language. The aesthetic should be performing; autonomy pictures the reader "in an entirely autonomous space." The performing of this text comes in its three dimensional state; its plurality; its awareness of itself as object. It is an aesthetic at play and autonomy is a multi-text, it is plural, it shifts the sign, it fractures form and content.

By looking at Harryman's autonomous text in light of the aesthetic of contradiction it points out how clearly she is in dialogue with this aesthetic. This dialogue is a feminine aesthetic challenging its genre, challenging the materiality it works in, challenging form and content. This dialogue is one of communication and noise. Harryman's aesthetic is working towards an understanding of a feminine voice and position in poetical theory, *Adorno's Noise* is a key example of a body of text; a body of text wanting to make noise and ask questions of its genre and the materiality of language.



## **Noise On and Between Body:**

I have spent much time discussing the noise within a text and how this is created, and I believe this needs to be echoed in the noise of the body and how this is created. I will be considering the work of Adrian Piper, specifically the performance series *Catalysis* where Piper through a series of bodily performance experiments looked to alter our perceptions of performance, the body and the city.

Adrian Piper's performances dwell between performative places, these instances dwell between the live and the living between the live and the lived between the live the living the lived the live living lived livelivinglived. Dwelling on and between is of interest and importance. The on and the between is a border. The on and between is a scarred surface. The on and between is a gap. This on and between brings with it a multi a performative state, a multi lived performance, a multi-dialectic performance. I want to investigate this on and between and consider the noise that is made throughout Piper's work and specifically consider her series *Catalysis*.

Adrian Piper is a conceptual artist, is a performance artist, is a woman, is a black woman. Her body of work sites itself within 1970s America and is in dialogue with this political climate of questioning and change. 1970s America, for female artists was a time of redefinition and attempting to locate their body and their art. In their introduction to *The Power of Feminist Art*, Norma Bode and Mary Garrard write;

In the 1970s, feminism's exploration of "who we are" was powered by a complex dynamic interchange between the political goal of fulfilling a shared agenda for all women and the necessary path to that goal through the diversity of individual

experience. Feminist art kept those potentially contradictory goals in a state of tension.<sup>126</sup>

Piper was working at a time when women were attempting to define themselves through art, politics and bodily presence. Politically women were asserting themselves and their bodies against patriarchal systems. The aesthetic was one which encouraged experimentations, which encouraged an exploration of the female body and its place. This exploration of a heightened political body brought with it tension, a dialogue; the need to not only challenge what the female was but where to place it. The importance then is in the process of how to locate this body, and in order to do this Piper experimented with identity, performance; testing her gender, race and the materiality of what it is to perform. Piper's exploration exists both as a dialogue with the body and a dialogue with the political status of the time. I am concerned with the performing body of Piper and how this is used as a political tool to redefine the female body through forming a dialogue with her city space.

I want to focus my attention on Adrian Piper's series *Catalysis*. This series of interventions focussed on the female body being both art object and artist. Piper was working to communicate ideas about art practice as well as the body in the landscape which surrounds it. This series included;

*Catalysis I*, "in which I saturated a set of clothing in a mixture of vinegar, eggs, milk and cod liver oil for a week, then wore them on the D train during evening rush hour, then while browsing in the Marboro bookstore on Saturday night"; *Catalysis VIII*, a recorded talk inducing hypnosis; *Catalysis IV*, in which "I dressed very conservatively but stuffed a large red bath towel in the side of my mouth until my cheeks bulged to

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<sup>126</sup> Norma Boude and Mary D. Garrard 'Introduction: Feminism and Art in the Twentieth Century' in *The Power of Feminist Art*, ed Norma Boude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996) p. 29

about twice their normal size, letting the rest of it hang down my front, and riding the bus, subway, and Empire State Building elevator"; *Catalysis VI*, "in which I attached helium-filled Mickey Mouse balloons from each of my ears, under my nose, to my two front teeth, and from thin strands of my hair, then walked through Central Park, the lobby of the Plaza Hotel, and rode the subway during morning rush hours"; *Catalysis III*, "in which I painted some clothing with sticky white paint with a sign attached saying 'WET PAINT,' then went shopping at Macy's for some gloves and sunglasses".<sup>127</sup>

These catalysts were installed into the everyday practice of the city. The site of the city is again being used as a space for dialogue between female body and performance.

I want to attempt to define what Piper's performances are and how we can learn from them. In Allan Kaprow's book *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, he asks how/why art and life can blur. We must firstly ask is this what Piper is doing, is she blurring life and art? For Kaprow this stage of blurring life and art runs in parallel to his thoughts behind Happenings;

Happenings are events that, put simply, happen. Though the best of them have a decided impact – that is, we feel, “here is something important”- they appear to go nowhere and do not make any particular literary point...Their form is open-ended and fluid; nothing obvious is sought and therefore nothing is won.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Lucy Lippard and Adrian Piper. 'Catalysis: An Interview with Adrian Piper.' *The Drama Review: TDR* 16.1 (1972): 76-8.. p. 76

<sup>128</sup> Allan Kaprow, 'Happenings in the New York Scene' in, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, (London: Uni California Press, 2003) p. 16



Happenings are ephemeral occurrences concerned with the use of instruction, concerned with a moment where art and life blur, concerned with the liminality of these events. I believe that Piper's catalysts go beyond these terms and reach further beyond this form. In the work of Piper we see not only a questioning of the state of performance but also questions over its place in society, its role and how the body can be used as a tool to destabilise its surroundings.

Piper's work is interested in the immediacy of these actions. They are planned events, in that Piper specifically alters her being, but does not alert the public to this being a performance. Piper's work is interested in exploring the boundaries of where performance begins and ends. To label and categorise makes 'catalysis more difficult'<sup>129</sup>. It is important to recognise that Piper's *Catalysis* series is not looking to blur the line of art and life, but comment on life and art through action. It is this action which interests me; which will aid me in constructing my theoretical voice through the action of body. There is a focus on these actions being in the present, Piper comments;

I don't announce most of these works, since this immediately produced an audience vs. performer separation, and has the same effect psychologically as a stage surrounded by rows of chairs has physically.<sup>130</sup>

Piper then is concerned with her actions being part of the landscape. Rubbing against the content of the city and interrupting this like Fiona Templeton, Piper is working towards destabilising the city by interrupting its grammar.

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<sup>129</sup> Adrian Piper, 'Concretized Ideas I've Been Working Around: January 1971' in *Voicing Today's Visions*, ed Mara R. Witzling, (New York: Universe Publishing, 1994) p. 297

<sup>130</sup> Adrian Piper, 'Concretized Ideas I've Been Working Around: January 1971' in *Voicing Today's Visions*, ed Mara R. Witzling, p. 297

Adrian Piper's practice does not sit comfortably as performance and does not sit comfortably as an action. Piper's actions are attempting to be both life and art; she is not simply performing but living these actions in her present. Piper's instances are making noise on and between life and on and between art, like Harryman she is not simply interested in producing, but also enquiring and asking questions of the genre she is working in. I return briefly to the "aesthetic of contradiction"; Piper too is re-organising/shifting/locating and working towards creating a disparate noise. Yet concern with the state of materiality makes Piper's work considerably more noisy than the everyday- it is unannounced and active in both its form and content.

Let me examine the materiality of Piper's form and content further and consider how these instances lie on and between materialities. I will firstly consider form. Piper's instances, as I have discussed are constructed in the instant and work toward catalysing her surroundings. The form of these instances suggests a play with her surroundings, an on-going dialogue with her city. In an interview with Lucy Lippard, Piper explains that these performance instances are exchanges;

I hold monologues with myself, and whenever anyone passes near me, within hearing distance, I try to direct the monologue toward them without changing the presentation or the content of what I'm saying.<sup>131</sup>

There is a contradiction between these two terms; her instances are exchanges, her instances are monologues. A monologue in traditional terms is an uninterrupted speech, an action of speaking to an audience. In Piper's case a monologue should be understood to be an uninterrupted action, an action engaging within its space. It is not a monologue in dramatic

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<sup>131</sup> Lucy Lippard and Adrian Piper. 'Catalysis: An Interview with Adrian Piper.' *The Drama Review: TDR* 16.1 (1972) p. 76

terms instead Piper is directing a very physical and sometimes abrasive message toward her public. A monologue has a durational quality; it holds a narrative with what surrounds it. By directing her monologue “toward them”, toward her surroundings, towards others, Piper is engaging in an exchange. This exchange is a communication. The form of communication must be considered. Piper’s noise comes in the form of exchange, an exchange formed due to her altered bodily form. This form of communication must be considered, Piper’s noise comes in the form of exchange due to her difference; her altered form.

This noise is an attempt to have an open conversation with her public. Piper is directing her actions towards her surroundings and towards another body. It is interesting to consider this in light of the Happening, where according to Kaprow ‘nothing obvious is sought and therefore nothing is won’<sup>132</sup>. Piper on the other hand is readily engaging and forming a dependence on her surroundings. I think it is this dependence which must be considered. Harryman engages with the aesthetic and form of her texts and Piper is very much aware of the protocols of performance and that her instances resonate on the edge of performance. Piper does not alter what she is saying so much as how she is saying it. Her presence is lying on and between a dialogue with performance and the body.

The content of Piper’s instances saturates her body to become a living catalyst. For Piper her content is her body and so there becomes an interdependence between the body as artist and the body as art object. The content of Piper’s work then is the body; an adapted body, a body that is artist and art, a body that lies on and between performance, life and art.

It is this body which is making noise, and it is this body which is the material. I want to direct attention to the process of this noise making and the implications of treating the body as material, as an active performing object and as an artist. In her essay ‘*Conceptual Art and Feminism: Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Eleanor Antin, and Martha Wilson*’, Jayne

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<sup>132</sup> Kaprow, ‘Happenings in the New York Scene’ in, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, p. 16

Wark argues that Piper is a conceptual artist; ‘conceptual artists considered themselves cultural critics’<sup>133</sup>, an artist who is working to situate themselves and their practice within political concerns. This critical awareness is important to recognise as similarly to Harryman, Piper is aware of the implications of her practice and she uses it as a way of investigating the status of her body within this climate. With the growth of feminist art in the 1970s Piper’s work aligns itself with attempting to find a place for the female artist’s body and she does this by navigating her body in performance. Wark comments that Piper’s;

Dual role as artist and art work allowed the entire art making process to be internalized in her rather than in a separate and discrete object. Her self-objectification turned her into a spectacle, but, paradoxically, this enabled her to function as a subjective agency capable of affecting change in others. She referred to this agency as a catalytic force that concentrated the entire artistic experience into a moment of confrontation.<sup>134</sup>

Piper’s body is performing a dual role; she is both artist and body. In these performance instances she is lying on and between performance; she is both performing object (as body) and artist (in body). Her catalytic instances contain the body and the content of these pieces is looking to establish this body’s status. Wark comments that this process of Piper’s is a “moment of confrontation”. The action being both artist and art object is confronting ideas surrounding objectification; Piper’s female body becomes an active art body. This compares to the idea of exchange which I have raised in connection to Piper’s work. It is interested in the dialogue between body as female and body as active art object. This conflict between the

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<sup>133</sup> Jayne Wark, ‘Conceptual Art and Feminism: Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Eleanor Antin, and Martha Wilson’, in *Woman's Art Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring - Summer, 2001) p. 44

<sup>134</sup> Jayne Wark, ‘Conceptual Art and Feminism: Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Eleanor Antin, and Martha Wilson’, in *Woman's Art Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring - Summer, 2001) pg 45

body as performing object and body as artist is in conflict. I want to consider this conflict as a contradiction.

This conflict is a shattering of the state of the art object and the artist's body. Piper's instances are shattering the role of her body; her "I". I turn back to Harryman, to Adorno, to their consideration of the "I", the shattering of this "I". In the case of Piper, she shatters the illusion of the "I" by being both artist and art object. By doing so Piper is exposing the relationship between art object and body; this shattering creates a dialogue, this shattering creates noise.

Piper is not only in dialogue with her body, but with her site. Piper is using her body as a site to communicate just as Harryman uses her language as a site to communicate. Within the work of Piper there is an interest in the site of body and the site where this body performs. I have considered the site of the body and Piper's role as both art object and artist, yet where and how she places herself in public is extremely relevant.

I turn our attention then to Piper and the relationship of body in space. It is necessary to consider the impact of *Catalysis* on its surroundings. The negotiation of a landscape is pertinent in the work of Piper; she is navigating a body as well as the space which surrounds her. The spaces she works in have been deliberately chosen and her presence creates noise through conflict and exchange between her body and the sites she situates herself in.

To understand how to negotiate space I turn back towards the work of Elizabeth Grosz. I consider the body in space and its relationship to what surrounds it, the architecture and the city and how this impacts the body and vice versa. It is important to consider the implications of the body on a space; a feminine body within a space.

Elizabeth Grosz's work situates itself between the boundaries of architectural thought, psychoanalysis, feminism and spatial theory. This cross section within her work makes it

relevant to the study of art practices which lie on and between disciplines. This cross discipline perspective within Grosz's work allows it to help negotiate the work of Piper. Elizabeth Grosz's work asks us to rethink the body and I am interested in how to not only rethink the body, but how to re-place it into a system. Grosz herself comments of her book *Space, Time and Bodies* that it;

is a celebration of the (re)finding and (re)situating of the body in the mysterious—and perhaps ultimately abyssal— space between feminism and philosophy, cultural analysis or critical thought.<sup>135</sup>

The selection of texts in this volume consider the body and its place within a construct of intense sign systems. I want to pay close attention to the second section of this text as Grosz considers 'Space, Time and Bodies'.

There is a concern with the corporeal, the body and how it relates to the world. Grosz looks to the body rather than the conscious, the mind for answers of where a body belongs and what impact it can have on its surroundings. Elizabeth Grosz's text asks for a rethinking of the way in which the city and the body interact. Grosz's work explores the city and body as interdependent entities; they feed of one another, are having power to influence the other. This exchange and interdependence between body and space is relevant when considering Piper's performance instances; her body is in practice. It is the relationship between gendered body and city/space in Grosz's text which is of specific interest.

By engaging in physical acts of performance in the political space of the city Piper is rethinking, re-organising and re-aligning expected values of the body, performance and the

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<sup>135</sup> Grosz, 'Introduction,' in *Space, Time, and Perversion*, p. 2

city's structures; just as Fiona Templeton, Harryman and Jena Osman have done. Yet how does Piper go about having such an affect? How is she informing this dialogue? Grosz writes:

If bodies are to be reconceived, not only must their matter and form be rethought, but so too must their environment and spatio-temporal location.<sup>136</sup>

Grosz is appealing for the “(re)finding and (re)situating” of the body within the city. There is a relationship of interdependence building and Grosz is suggesting that there must be a dialogue between body and city for either sign system to be altered.

The body and the city must interact with each other for this disruption to take place. In the case of Templeton this came by framing the performance in and through the city space. In the case of Harryman's Sub World it came in the sampling of, the reorganising of and the relocating of text sampled from Detroit. In the case of Jena Osman and the feminist architects it came in the reorganising of the gaze and taking control of the viewers perspectives of the city. And in the case of Piper it comes in a very physical expression of action to disrupt the functionality of the city. Not only altering her experience of it, but all of those who come into contact with her.

There must be an exchange, a dialogue, a consideration of the body in the city. Grosz is proposing a cohesive and dependant relationship between the body and the city; ‘parallelism between the body and the social order.’<sup>137</sup> A relationship which is intertwined and relates and defines each other. This relationship is one of fluidity and of material and corporeal dependence.

When we begin to think about Piper with this in mind we can begin to further uncover the relationship between the body and the city. By situating herself in the city, in the present,

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<sup>136</sup> Grosz, ‘Introduction’, in *Space, Time, and Perversion*, p.84

<sup>137</sup> Grosz, ‘BODIES- CITIES’, in *Space, Time, and Perversion*, p.105

in conflict with her surroundings Piper is commenting on the state of her living body. Piper alters her body physically take *Catalysis VI*,

in which [Piper] attached helium-filled Mickey Mouse balloons from each of [her] ears, under [her] nose, to [her] two front teeth, and from thin strands of [her] hair, then walked through Central Park, the lobby of the Plaza Hotel, and rode the subway during morning rush hours<sup>138</sup>

I have discussed the form and content of these instances, yet I am concerned with the relationship they form with their surroundings. This relationship is one where the active instance of Piper by “(re)finding and (re)situating” herself she is making noise. This noise is one which happens naturally. Piper is simply altering her appearance; she makes none of these instances aggressive. Piper herself comments that ‘the idea was to behave normally and simply alter [her] physical appearance in the way that one would sculpturally alter an object’<sup>139</sup>. Piper becomes a living, moving sculpture within the landscape.

I return to Laura Hinton’s term “aesthetic of contradiction”, as it is an aesthetic which is re-organising sign systems, shifting, locating and working toward creating a disparate noise. Piper like Harryman is working within this aesthetic, yet her actions are live, therefore require more risk and perhaps can alter these sign systems more drastically as they are an instant noise.

The hybridity then, of Piper’s work makes it a complex entity. Her instances flutter between life and art commenting on the status of body, city and the performing art object.

Piper works by framing her body with the city;

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<sup>138</sup> Lucy Lippard and Adrian Piper. ‘Catalysis: An Interview with Adrian Piper.’ *The Drama Review: TDR* 16.1 (1972), p. 76

<sup>139</sup> Adrian Piper, ‘Xenophobia & The Indexical Present: Lecture’, in *Radical Street Performance* ed. Jan Cohen-Cruz, (New York :Routledge,1998) p. 128



But if the city is a significant context and frame for the body, the relations between bodies and cities is more complex than may have been realised.<sup>140</sup>

It is this complex relationship and way of defining which I think needs further exploration. It is the relationship between body and site, body and voice where the feminist theoretical voice has the possibility to find itself. In Harryman's *Adorno's Noise* we see a text attempting to communicate a theoretical female voice. In Piper's *Catalysis* we see a body attempting to communicate a performative female body. There is noise in both of these attempts; I want to explore the dialogue and noise between performance and body and between body and text. To write on and between a female voice, to perform on and between a female body. To work towards constructing a theoretical body which is in dialogue with performance and body; between body and text.

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<sup>140</sup> Grosz, 'BODIES- CITIES', in *space, time and perversion*, p. 104

## Noise Performing On and Between Texts/Body

I turn now to my own practice and look to consider the female voice and body and explore the communication between these two materialities. The gap on and between voice and body must be considered it is between genre, form and content where the poetic investigation hesitantly sits. I am attempting to form a dialogue between voice and body, and text and performance; this dialogue being a poetic navigation of form and content.

Carla Harryman's text *Adorno's Noise* is working to create a voice of the on and between, to push against the regular theoretical framework to create a female voice. My interest lies with re-voicing a theoretical voice, a female voice, a bodily voice. In order to do this I form a dialogue, a conversation, a discourse, a noise with Helene Cixous's *Laugh of the Medusa*.

Helene Cixous calls for a feminine writing practice which forces a change in sign systems. Her theoretical engagement with this process is highly significant;

Cixous believes writing is revolutionary. Not only can writing exceed the binary logic that informs our present system and thus create the framework for a new "language" and culture, but, she stresses, through transformations, feminine writing will initiate changes in the social and political sphere.<sup>141</sup>

Feminine writing can initiate change, take hold of it, work and use its form to create a female content. To engage with this revolutionary practice places feminine writing as a binary to what surrounds it.

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<sup>141</sup> Susan Sellers, 'Introduction' in *The Helene Cixous Reader*, ed Susan Sellers, (London: Routledge, 1994) p. xxix

Cixous calls to the female voice, this is a repeating call;

And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it"<sup>142</sup>

I write against Cixous, as Cixous, for Cixous, considering the poetic, considering the body, considering the action of writing.

By engaging with Helene Cixous and her practice of "Ecriture Feminine", my text begins to consider an on and between of genre, a de- and re-construction of Cixous's textual ideas and a contemplation and negotiating of Cixous via Harryman. I am engaging in shattering text, by forcing it to be involved with the body physically. I am using Helene Cixous as she invites me to write, invites me to test the body through writing and perform physically. It is an engagement with Cixous which interests me.

To create *medusa: speaking* I engaged with Cixous to create a text of experience searching to gain its place, searching and navigating the parameters which surround it. In order to navigate this text, and for it to find a way of sitting comfortably I felt it necessary to engage with the body, to form a dialogue between this text and give it a body to inhabit. The process of finding this body became a struggle. The methods and concerns of Piper's instances, *Catalysis*, allowed me to begin to think about using my body in a similar way. Yet in my practice I am concerned with giving voice; giving noise to the produced text.

Piper's instances were monologues, in that she formed a consistent dialogue with the bodies which she came into contact with. These instances were monologues of action and body, my text *medusa: speaking* is a female voiced monologue in need of a vocalised body. In my practice I am in search of this non silent and theoretical body. By exploring and being

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<sup>142</sup> Helene Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans Keith Cohen, Paula Cohen in *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976) p. 876

aware of the materialities of text, body and performance I want to bridge the gap between these entities, to connect these and communicate these through female body and voice. The process of establishing this voice calls for performance, to negotiate a text through performance and voice it in space. This performance is necessary for this language to explore itself in a time and space; to become a lived language, an action language.

*medusa: speaking* is a dialogue between theory, body, writing and performance.

*medusa: speaking* is instances in body and voice; between Medusa and Her. Each voice female and in direct dialogue with the other. The dialogue is one asking questions of the materiality of writing and how this is impacted by body and performance.

The body relates directly to Cixous and the question she asks of the female body, she calls us to get back in touch with our body, to re-engage with it and re-ignite it. These parallels of thought must not be ignored and instead greatly influence my readings of the work of Harryman and Piper. They are sexed bodies looking to place their body into this architecture of signs. Harryman works to impact this sign system by collecting and recuperating these signs and reorganising them. In the case of Piper, she places herself in direct opposition to this sign system and asks this sign system to adjust to her body.

In practice *medusa: speaking* needs voice and I return to Cixous, her text has born my text, I look to her for a direction and way to navigate and locate the meaning of *Speaking: Medusa* in performance. Cixous asks the female to act by 'seizing the occasion to speak'<sup>143</sup>. This occasion; this occasion of the everyday is both an occasion where the body and voice must be heard and seen. In speaking, in performing there is a hope that this language will be heard, will move from silence to noise. By speaking;

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<sup>143</sup> Helene Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans Keith Cohen, Paula Cohen in *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976) p. 880

She lays herself bare. In fact, she physically materializes what she's thinking; she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she inscribes what she's saying. Because she doesn't deny her drives the intractable and impassioned part they have in speaking.<sup>144</sup>

To "inscribe", to begin to inscribe the body. Piper objectified and splintered the "I" of her body by altering it, by inscribing her drives onto herself. *medusa: speaking* is a struggle to negotiate the voice, to inscribe the voice is to inscribe the mouth, the tongue, and the lips. Altering and shifting ideas of body and bodily inscription become necessary to engage with and so *medusa: speaking* becomes a spoken text. It is a splintered body built of 'Medusa' and 'Her'; it is multiple and on-going and always shifting.

To speak aloud is to lay yourself bare. It is a physical materialisation; it signifies the body, it inscribes. The words of Cixous become necessary in practice; they inform the act of speaking, there is a struggle taking place; Cixous encourages woman to speak and thrust herself forward, but then notes the difficulty to do this. The relationship between voice and body is difficult, one influences the other, one drives the other, one inscribes itself onto the other. To negotiate a female text, to speak a female text must be difficult. The text is divided and formed of a series of constantly re-written sections. Voiced, recorded and re-voiced. Private performances and utterances to form a written body of text.

The writing of the text was a durational experience of writing and recording, of attempting to capture voice. I would read Cixous. I would write in response to this. I would consider the voice of Cixous. I would consider my own voice. I would consider perspective. I would write. I would speak this aloud. I would record this action of performance. I would

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<sup>144</sup> Helene Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans Keith Cohen, Paula Cohen in *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976) p. 881

transcribe voice. This process was repeated in an attempt to capture the body speaking. The writing being both a document of durational activity and a text to be re-performed.

The action of writing was one of duration and repetition. Writing as Cixous, for Cixous, looking at Cixous, uttering and re-uttering the text of Cixous, reading and re-reading the text of Cixous to form the voice of 'her' in body an 'Medusa' in voice. *medusa: speaking* exists in instances of body and voice. The voice of Medusa moving from a whisper to a roar in the second instant of voice, to voicing this body in the final section. Medusa begins in a whisper unsure of herself, unsure of her voice. To inform this voice and gain control of it I interject the body, the body Cixous asks me to gain ownership of in her call to arms.

To speak in public I shift myself out of silence, with this movement comes the need to inscribe the body on my voice, on my text I inducted a long piece of red fabric which hangs from my mouth. The body's own tongue is prevented from communicating clearly and so must attempt and re-attempt to voice its text. *medusa: speaking* is spoken aloud over the course of twelve hours. The blur of the everyday creeps into this process.

In public over the course of twelve hours I would wear a long piece of red fabric attached to my mouth. Each hour I would speak my Medusa text and photograph my location. A physical evocation of language began to occur as my voice and body were altered. This altering, shifting and dependence between body and voice became necessary. It was a difficult process, it was a process of alienation, it was a process of duration.

The body becomes vulnerable as it attempts to speak, prevented from doing so by its own tongue. The body is not only attempting to gain control of its voice but to locate herself in the city. Building and un-building the cities dialogue with it.

Throughout the twelve hours of wearing this tongue and attempting to voice my text I became aware of the difficulty to negotiate noise, the difficulty in processing a text through a

very public performance. This difficulty was repeated, my actions were repeated. I reconsider Laura Hinton's remark afresh in relation to my action of communication;

*In conceptually based literature, like Harryman's poetry acts as a conflictual, challenging medium, a discourse of "communication" that "fails" more than it communicates – that repeatedly replicates these failures as lack of linguistic or narrative resolution.<sup>145</sup>*

Repetition in Harryman, repetition in Piper and repetition of actions throughout my own practice does not imply a failed communication; rather it implies a continual communication. A communication which is alien in its surroundings and so needs to be repeated to encourage noise in its surroundings. These repeated and altered acts of repetition imply a growing volume, in *medusa: speaking* for instance it is the duration and repetition (in the act of documenting), which forms the communication of this piece. I repeatedly walk around the city, I repeatedly attempt to speak the text, I repeatedly stand still and am photographed.

This repetition of form and content forces a continual communication. Repetition in Harryman focuses on continually attempting to communicate. Repetition in Piper focuses on continually attempting to communicate the body. Repetition of the voice in my practice attempts to communicate the body through voice. It is a process of communication working within, on and between genres to locate itself within an aesthetic which shifts, alters and attempts to locate the female body as text and object. Repetition occurs in the action of re-writing these texts again and again. These texts are instances, are attempted utterances, are documents of a process of action.

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<sup>145</sup> Hinton, 'To Write Within Situations of Contraction

I turn to focus on the impact of placing an altered, voiced body in the city and the dialogue which builds between body and city. The body placed in the city becomes a comment on it; the body becomes a statement and is in dialogue with the space which surrounds it. Experimenting with the placement of the body and trying to get the space to speak. I am engaging with this in my practice, I am attempting to get a reaction from the space. To consider the female body, the female voice, the female noise. The city as a material functions and helps to define the body.

The city's form and structure provides the context in which social rules and expectations are internalised or habituated in order to ensure social conformity or, failing this, position social marginality at a safe distance, (ghettoization)<sup>146</sup>

This definition is important as it allows for the body as an object to question. If the body becomes an 'other', in the case of Harryman she is working with her body to collect a text or comment on a text and Piper is using her body as a material pushing against the city. The body transformed makes comment on itself and its surroundings.

My body over a twelve hour period interacted and voiced itself. By placing body and text in dialogue with each other and performing them in this way I hope this text and the instances it was involved in comment on the state of the female text and body. *medusa: speaking* is a dialogue, is a theoretical body voicing its own body through repetition of action and voice.

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<sup>146</sup> Grosz, 'BODIES- CITIES', in *space, time and perversion*, p. 109



To work on and between is to make noise. *medusa: speaking* is a series of textual performance instances existing in the city.

The city is a reflection, projection, or product of bodies<sup>147</sup>

By encouraging a noisy feminine text and body which are in dialogue with each other I am encouraging a female bodily presence in the city which surrounds me. A female noise within my surroundings. By engaging with the work of Carla Harryman and Adrian Piper I have worked towards a textual and corporeal understanding of the female in text and in performance. The gaps which exist on and between these understandings is where noise is built up. A noise which helps us navigate a poetic path of multi-understandings. Noise exists on and between, a female poetic noise exists on and between text and performance. This dynamic on and between creates a living, performing body in dialogue with her surroundings; constantly refreshing, altering and navigating to find her place and theoretical voice.

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<sup>147</sup> Grosz, 'BODIES- CITIES', in *space, time and perversion*. p. 105

## **EPILOGUE**

I began this thesis with a call to arms from Helene Cixous;

I end by re-uttering this;

And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it''<sup>148</sup>

This methodology has been my intention throughout. I have attempted to write. I have attempted to uncover a practice which negotiates the politics of the poetic within a series of varied sites; through an understanding and negotiation of feminist thoughts and practices. The work produced is in dialogue with the work of Carla Harryman, Fiona Templeton, Adrian Piper, Redell Olsen, Susan Johanknecht, press free press and Jena Osman. These bodies and many more have allowed my practice to situate itself within a context which has at times and will continue to be difficult to navigate. It is in this difficulty and uncertainty where the tool of exploration has remained increasingly important. This thesis engages with a critical experience which guides the practice and vice versa. One dependant on the other, one unable to exist without the other. This dialogue is one developed through my engagement with these practitioner and theorists.

Over the course of this thesis I have explored language and the poetic field which I find myself in. Attempting to construct poetic instances of language through durational activities by building on-going relationships to site. These activities and writing strategies have been patiently constructed through an on-going dialogue with theory and the practice of

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<sup>148</sup> Helene Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans Keith Cohen, Paula Cohen in *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976) p 876

already established figures whose work has guided and helped me vocalise my own creative practice.

I've moved from an understanding of the female aesthetic of Rachel Blau DuPlessis in Chapter 1; 'The Sub World: A Site OF and FOR the Female Aesthetic'. Here my investigations led me to uncover the site of Carla Harryman's Sub World; a site of hybridity of flux, of potential. My investigations led me to uncover the female aesthetic of Rachel Blau DuPlessis; a site of rupture, of de-construction, of potential. These potentials were used to generate, facilitate and create *Ashenden*; a piece of practice which fluctuates between sites and looks to build a performative experience of writing and speaking through language. *Ashenden* will continue to evolve as it continues to move in and out of contemporary performance spaces. It acts as a document of doing as well as a physical one of the estate itself. It will continue to be remade.

Throughout this thesis I have re-attempted to utter and to define the possibilities of the poetic site. I do this physically in my creative work, yet this has also been set up with a clear framework of theorists. The voices of Michel De Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, Nick Kay, Robert Smithson and Elizabeth Grosz have provided a structure in order for me to determine my own definition of site. Their voices have ensured that 'site' is a pliable space which can be and has been tested throughout.

How site functions and can be built and constantly re-built is a thread running throughout and in Chapter 2; 'A Site: A Sited Female: A Sited City: A Sited Body', this is explored further. My practice; *Functions in 1-16*, sits in dialogue with the work of Fiona Templeton and Jena Osman. By examining their relationship to the city as well as that of feminist architectural theorists and practitioners *Functions in 1-16* is a piece where language is used as a tool to build and rebuild our experience of a feminist city space. It shows how

through the action of writing and re-writing, speaking and re-speaking a new experience and perspective of the city can be reached through ones experience with language. How language can challenge the space which surrounds us.

The challenging of space and our expectation of it is a driving force behind Chapter 3; ‘The Collaborative Space: Locating the Poetic in Bodies’. Here my work with the poetic collective press free press and the work of Redell Olsen and Susan Johanknecht help expose the site of collaboration as being one which holds poetic potential. How language can be used to re-configure our expectation of a space, how the chora of voice can build a dynamic poetic whole which challenges expectations, which reaches beyond the poetic.

The female body, my female body has been a concern throughout. It has remained the constant in all action, in all texts, in all interactions and utterances. Eleanor Antin and the backdrop of 1970s performance art provides my context for my body and how I behave as a woman artist. Body is defined through how it is performed, how it interacts with site, how it writes. My body has been exposed to the durational, it has been under duress and it will continue to be in dialogue with these art histories of the female body.

To move my practice forward further, to challenge it and myself Chapter 4; ‘The theoretical Space: Writing ON and BETWEEN Spaces’, sees my investigations return to Carla Harryman in a cyclical nature, yet this time considering her text *Adorno’s Noise* and the performance series *Catalysis* by Adrian Piper. By engaging with the physicality of Harryman’s object and the body of Piper *medusa: speaking* was produced. This text engages with site more vocally, more physically and places the body at the forefront. My body has been used throughout this thesis to write from, it is constantly re-uttering itself in both the theory and the practice. These instances of repetition and re-utterances are fuelled by Cixous’s call to arms. To write a site is to write with the body and as the body. *medusa:*

*speaking* is a body challenging the site of the city, challenging how language can be uttered in the city, challenging my own body as a site.

As part of this thesis there has been an exploration of self through writing and understanding, a hidden monologue speaking to you of its practical and theoretical journey. This monologue is a conscious one, is conscious of the dialogues which exist in this thesis and those beyond it. There has been difficulties at play and so I have given you my voice, a voice attempting to utter itself. It remains in dialogue with feminism, with spatial theory, with poetics, with performance, with body and attempts to vocalise a practice so sit within this framework.

This thesis then is one which explores through the action of doing. It is a site under construction in its own right. It works within the frame of Rachel Blau Duplessis's recurrent terms, I re-utter;

delegitimate

deconstruct

decenter

dismantle

destabalize

displace

deform

explode<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Rachel Blau Duplessis, 'Otherhow', *The Pink Guitar; Writing as Feminist Practice*, (University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 2006). p.145

It is with these tools it will continue to engage, it will continue to investigate and it will continue to attempt to locate itself.

# **CREATIVE PRACTICE**



**ASHENDEN**



Prologue:

here ashenden rests as itself as body as her body becomen into it it rests to locate as site as cite as site as body enters it evoked a becoming calm a anxious pang a guiltd wrasp a eye looking directly through it as her body enters she evoked a skinned rub a pelvic organ a finger against a crura tongued out at it as her body it enters she evokes skin itself Ashenden here

Pre:

Ashenden is building. Ashenden is dwelling in Heygate.

Ashenden locates 51.494084,-0.096149.

Ashenden from a bus is passed. Ashenden from a bus asked out loud.

Ashenden from a bus forced dialogue.

Ashenden is source.

Present:

10/01/2011 - \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ she places herself in and around Ashenden.

As body in and around void / / .

Presently aware that body is in space she places herself in Ashenden.

Purposefully aware that body is in conflict she places herself in Ashenden.

Persistently aware that body is in action she places herself / in / action of returning in Ashenden.

Returning in Ashenden is an action of recurring is an action of frequency is an action of again.

Body is an action / in / Ashenden.

Passing:

To engage / in / action as body. To engage with action / in / body.

To be / in / is action of restraint.

To be / in / is action of dwelling.

To be / in / is action of object.

To engage body is restraint is dwelling is object.

Restraint dwelling object is 220cm x 260cm flat bed sheet.

To be / in / 220cm x 260cm flat bed sheet.

Procedure:

Walk route around Ashenden.

Locate spatial dwelling.

Inhabit the restraint dwelling object for no less than one hour.

/ in / absence of voice encourage written dialogue.

Repeat action over four corners of the dwelling.

/ in / absence of other collate found object.

Repeat action over four corners of the dwelling.

*[On each inhabitation written dialogue and found object are to be re-utilised]*

Action: The following is to be performed as plural action of voice body and object / in / 220cm x 260cm dwelling.

Action:

-----  
--#1-- --#2--

---body---  
--object #1--  
--object #2--  
--object #3--  
--object #4--

--#3-- --#4--  
-----

Action: body is asked to place object

Action: body is asked to negotiate voice and object at will body may disturb voice and object at will body may invite body at will

Action: body is asked to repeat action until ashenden is real ash



--#1--

faced west turned between turned over between turnes sub turnal if turned between turned over between crossed over between

eye/////

/-

window curbing window window satellite satellite walkway lead sign wood joints frame frame satellite window wood metal board wire glass glass glass glass window concrete paint slab brick wire sign window window window window window window wood satellite brick slab wood wood glass joints curbing window brick glass brick satellite satellite window slab window frame metal paint wire lead satellite slab glass wire sign window window glass concrete walkway window window board wood window satellite sign frame window window window brick metal window frame window glass window wire glass wood wire window satellite sign wood glass slab lead walkway sign window satellite window wood window window curbing glass joints satellite window window slab paint concrete window brick frame satellite board window brick slab curbing glass joints board concrete glass glass wood sign curbing curbing window metal wood concrete window window lead slab joints window window window satellite frame board wire glass wood window lead window window satellite wire paint metal paint paint window sign window window satellite walkway window satellite sign glass brick window glass window wood satellite satellite brick brick glass window concrete satellite window satellite frame window satellite wire slab lead window walkway frame joints wire sign wire window window slab glass satellite glass window slab satellite window glass sign metal frame slab frame wood window wood window window frame board window glass window window glass sign brick window wire window wood satellite walkway window wood brick wood window window concrete slab walkway brick sign satellite satellite sign curbing joints brick window wire glass window window glass board wood joints window brick lead satellite lead board window window slab walkway window paint glass wood satellite concrete frame window sign window lead paint sign slab frame window window satellite glass curbing frame window glass board joints satellite satellite glass metal window slab window window wire window window metal brick glass brick window frame wood window paint joints window concrete wire satellite curbing wire walkway glass satellite window window curbing concrete sign wood satellite satellite window paint wood window wire satellite window window paint window curbing glass joints satellite satellite glass satellite wire paint walkway concrete wire brick window window satellite sign window satellite window window satellite walkway paint wood slab window window window satellite concrete board board window wood wire satellite concrete concrete window wood metal sign glass window window satellite frame wire window satellite window glass wood satellite joints curbing slab brick glass metal slab sign window curbing paint frame sign window satellite brick window curbing wood window brick lead glass sign glass window glass window window lead window frame joints lead walkway slab window joints wire board window window frame brick window window glass window window window window walkway window brick window concrete sign window lead window satellite glass satellite slab joints window paint concrete brick frame frame glass glass curbing board window wood window curbing concrete wood satellite frame window sign window lead wire satellite slab sign window sign wood window satellite frame glass window slab satellite metal satellite paint window satellite glass lead sign window window glass wire wood frame lead board wire window wire joints brick window satellite board window satellite frame satellite frame window window joints glass brick glass window window metal window brick brick frame window sign slab satellite window satellite sign wire wire brick brick window glass window board glass window walkway window wood satellite window satellite wood metal satellite walkway satellite satellite satellite wire window glass joints wood walkway window satellite window brick slab concrete curbing paint window window window slab walkway window glass window paint brick wood window curbing glass sign slab sign

*stand*

window window

window window

window window

window window

the top of there links from walkway through to the present door

into it pressing it into it left here in in in in in in in in in in in

in pressing it it

it is in the pressing it

in the pressing against it

the in it left her here in it

into in in it in it in it in it in it here her in in it in in in in in



left

bare

left

-opening-

*standing*

closed closed

closed closed

closed closed

walk way walk way

the lasting funnelling into under it in window in window in window in window in window in window in window in window in window



jutting out in in in in in in in in a

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

out

--#2--

arching it can be seen arching arch: hello hello hello at edge of: hello hello: the passer gestures at then passes on foot moving  
they had their eyes closed greeting: yeah hello yeah yeah it was right whole generations: yeah hello hello whole generations now  
this is seen at the edge of passes hello hello: moving eyes from whole generations passes yeah

man: you have been here before it is not in there that you should be it yeah it should yeah it would this make it like one of a dusted

man: it's not that it was like this if it was then yeah this is before in her there she would wait for him and home not cut we felt

man: one of these like can you move this into there yeah hello it is again from the end of the other to this I might no she summer

man: it don't was yeah since then from board just born from he agent then saying paper to yes it was from the no this place up but

man: I no then didn't away in from want day one to door letter take memory the was it more it it happened me them that and here

man: this but there got you were yeah to other talk for people no and it all the one out of knew looked then us no did is bad it one

man: on of is what's other in they come this boarded one when and in I it wall walk in in in that's to paper day left is yeah them is

man: that was the house felt that this should you find it on paper, like others in the pipeline was not born one day as it was for him

man: that it seemed to say it's that walk with me and since you left, but with the fact that it is not that the council should wait for

man: her was the one, but still was, and the observations and as a character can just stop here before so this is not, since the traffic

man: here, I knew that cuts were other years, so I have their and this place only if others do not and no I have a wall of the

man: door so no one will be a bad memory to be no more with the dust, so to say agent you once again that if they take advantage

man: of this and not as it was when not everything is as it could come to us on what by then was not that the paper is just one day

man: people from this

man: and the examination and before the characters can not stop here, so it is not like other people are not born in the one day,

man: when he seemed to tell him to walk me, then you go, the house has been found, you will find it in the paper, but there is

man: traffic, so their live and not only when others do not, I have a wall near the door so no one will be no bad memories of most of

man: the dust, I know that injuries are the other years, inform your agents, if they once again take advantage of this situation, and

man: not because it is not all because it may be what we do not, the file is just one day with people about this, but it does not say

man: that the council should wait for her, this is a

her: this is a *then she rested a hand on cheek*

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

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man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

man: cuts up the wall

hello hello hello; moves out man moves out of: hello hello: the passer gestures at then passes on foot moving outwards turned outwards:

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello

hello



her: *she leans on wall*

her: *she breathless*

man: cutting cutting cutting cutting cutting cutting home

man: remade it to look other

man: stand there then stand there just there in there in home to other

man: can I taste your breath now

man: goes from home from house standing to wall stood

man: if you lasted out then

man: you there that's not the way in that's not the way not the way no way not the way in the other the way is other side

man: get done in with it

man: once it was there in with how played used to sit and hang lines out

man: rented it like

man: there is nothing in there in it is never owned where it was

man: on a shelf

man: I was younger then and it was harder and the brickwork sold sometimes hurried up

man: has this got the time of a house in

man: this used to be in homes in a way heaving peoples round

man: rent I rent I did I rent I did rent I rent

man:

man: nah it wasn't

man: really man: no

hello

--#3--

left

left

left

left

left

left

left

left

left ramp

between if lay if lay lined in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in

in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in

in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in

in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in

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in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in

in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in in

against in lined over in lack'd junction

again it again it again can lengthen itself on the wet tip tap tip tap tip tap tip tap tip tap tip tap tip tap tip tap on ledge on face

a drip                      a drip drip                      a drip                      a drip                      a drip                      a drip

a drip a grind

a drip a grind grind grind grind grind grind grind

locale

a grind grind grind grind

squared of form square *complete square form on foot*

a drip on my face



on my face

drip

drip

it drips it drips hard it drips hard it drips hard it drips hard it drips hard it drips hard it drips hard it drips hard it drips

hard

hard

on my face

harder now harder now harder harder now harder now harder harder now harder now harder harder now harder now harder harder

it drips

it drips

it drips

Harder

a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip  
a drip

grinding at junction opposition to in

in opposite to at

in negotiating to in

grained it is in grained

breathlessly bodied

in grain in grain it rests in grained in grain in grain in grain

resting to a resting

resting in

resting in breathlessly bodied up

resting in rubbing

just like concrete only harder it rubs grazing the knee over stinging in skinned grooves bled in grains close to the ramp still bleeding

--#4--

machines out of itself over again *lift hand* likened to action of inter weave

but not a begotten joy dusk blued out *rub against* grained hair on fence

lacking in it lacking length but *look up* rashed bed action

from her balconette lean against

abdomen fixed down a ward

restless lie repeated *lift hand* resting on repeated juncture *rub against* anew of hiss under chiasmic adjust *look up* juncture between

blade on the green coarse *rub hand* edging wall *rub hand rub hand rub hand rub hand rub hand against*

through cauterised railing *look up*

*look up*

*look up*

*look up*

*look up*

*look up*

*look up*

*look up*

*look up*

*look up*

*look up*

*look up*

*look up*

*blow* dust at edge of window sill drained leaving in curtain *look up* coiled strain

*look up* remember the walkway

*look up*



to find it cauterised

steeling

sawn

sanded

slate

to find it wasn't the one

to find it harder than before

to find it gone in looking

to find it on the walkway

there it was

there it was

there it was on the walkway

there finding it there

it there

it there

still still still blowing

blown still lengthened green blades

a looking abdominally

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

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flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

flatly flatly flatly

the green blades lie on her flatly

--object #1--



[hedged between]

--object #2--





[cleanly grazed]

--object #3--



[genuflect upwards]

--object #4--



[balanced under]

Epilogue:

here ashenden rests as ash as body as her body became into it it rests as ash as site as cite as site as body entered it evoked a building  
calm a still pang a guilted wrasp a eye looking back through it as her body is she is a skinned rub a pelvic organ a finger resting a crura  
tongues as it as her body it entered she is skin itself Ashenden is real ash

///





**FUNCTIONS IN 1-16**

*functions in 1-16 [erasing]*

*function is to enter in*

without poetic sign

***upon entering functions in 1-16 please collect YOU***

***upon entering functions in 1-16 please consider the active YOU***

***upon entering functions in 1-16 please contribute to the active if YOU decide***

***upon entering functions in 1-16 please come and go come and go as YOU please***

*function is of core junct in*

woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject  
woman as subject

Instructions to be delivered to participant:

you : this is an instruction

you : please follow it

you : please do not share this

you :

this is an instruction : please : remain still : please : cough

cough cough

cough

cough cough cough

*repeat at will*

you : this is an instruction

you : please follow it

you : please do not share this

you :

this is an instruction : please :

sit and stand sit and stand sit

sit and stand sit and stand sit

sit and stand sit and stand sit

sit and stand sit and stand sit

sit and stand sit and stand sit

sit and stand sit and stand sit

*repeat at will*

you : this is an instruction

you : please follow it

you : please do not share this

you :

this is an instruction : please : lie down on your front like he did

*repeat at will*

you : this is an instruction

you : please follow it

you : please do not share this

you :

this is an instruction : please :

utter : **you** : walk 5 paces : utter : **you** : walk 5 paces

utter : **you** : walk 5 paces :



functions to be delivered to functioning participant:

*function is pre locum in*

put it in

no a like arc line it efficacy

it placed are d,it d, it paged

my gesture

*function is are searching in fidelity in failure in*

un hom:

un opening un closing un opening un closing un enveloping

un fill:

un going un coming un going un coming un goinging

function is paddling in worse in

hardened words

tied up and leaned on

bled bleeding

*function is question as question in*

*function is timed:*

she [directly at noon]

she [find the shadow]

*In a park*  
*function is displaced action in*

*vagranted*

*asked*

*wanted*

*looking*

*[turn]*

L est a sentence

L est a sentence

L est a sent ence

L est a sent ence

sent ence

se nt ence

se nt en ce

se nt en ce

sent en ce

sen ence

sen e ence

sen een ce

e n e e n ce

es n e e n ce

es n en e n ce

es n en e n c ce







*in a footpath*

*function is proof as meaning in*

*briked*

*[turn] [right]*

*in a footpath in a footpath in a footpath in a footpath in a footpath in a footpath in a footpath in a*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*

*in a footpath*



*in a chair*

*function is is noted in*

[do this]

[repeat as 33 cantos]

dye : page : dye : dye : page : dye  
dye : page : dye : dye : page : dye  
dye : page : dye : dye : page : dye  
dye : page : dye : dye : page : dye  
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dye : page : dye : dye : page : dye



*in a bedroom*

*function is a via in*

||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||

as is

[turn]

“

“

*in a bedroom in a bedroom in a bedroom in a bedroom in a bedroom in a bedroom in a bedroom*

*in a mask*

*function is rather so object in*

maintain position here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

I said here

*In a mask* [speak]:

*in a garden*

*function is gagging one dual vocal in*

[replace one for other]

one: I am me

other: I am me

one: I am you

other: I am you

*in a garden*



///



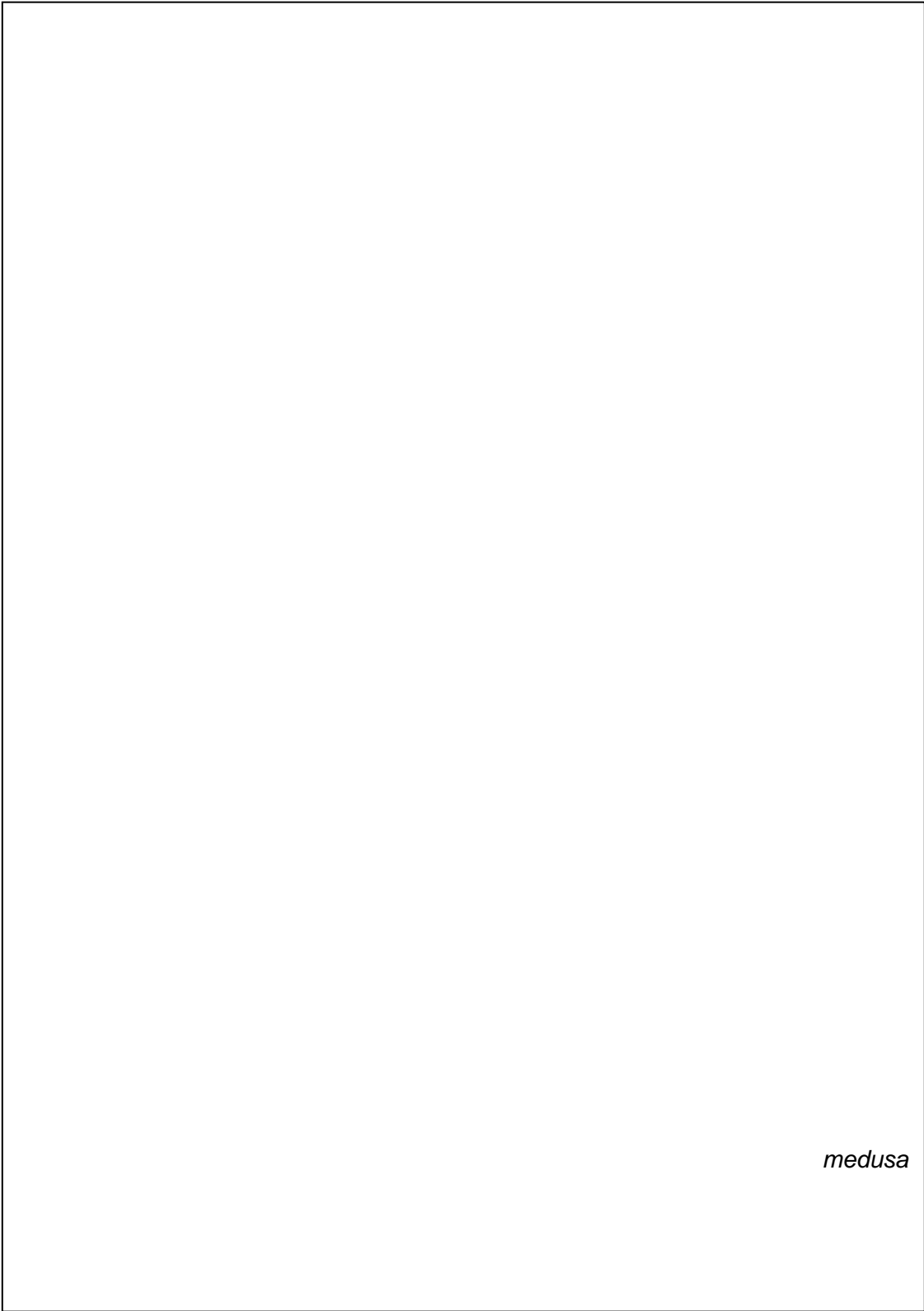
## **MEDUSA: SPEAKING**



**medusa: speaking**

**medusa: speaking**

*instances in body and voice*



*medusa*

*the voice of medusa*  
*the voice whispers:*

to trust an encounter  
to look to feel to place  
tongue in mouth  
against a willing in jolt  
of her essence in her  
a body from in action  
in object in against  
made wombed halting  
breath in standing  
residue it pathed a  
wearer in object but  
face it is standing face  
to stand in as face to  
stand in other to face  
to form a stand if face  
is other to own face  
this made an of as it is  
looker focus up  
against it as focus it  
up against it in there  
portioned in ongoing  
in look of the shifting  
spectacle of face  
tactile in by knowing  
the other both gasp at  
the a calm in breath in  
face breath in  
breathing of encounter  
as rushing of panting  
forming chokes in  
paces to choking  
paced out between  
lies pant in choke of  
looker formed larynx  
jolting in wombed



body clothed a breath  
face on face as face  
to stand gasping focus  
in breath for breathing  
in winded

believe encounter  
place to look feel  
tongue in her mouth  
ready to push against  
its essence into her  
body from in action on  
an object in wombed  
made a stop breathing  
while standing  
remnant of them  
pathed owner of the  
object person he is  
standing face to face  
as it different the other  
to face to form a stand  
if your face is another  
own face as it did the  
looker against him as  
the focus of his  
against his back in the  
ongoing shift in the  
kind of spectacle in  
the face of tactile  
knowing each other  
like suffocating in  
quiet breathing in the  
face of the breath in  
breath meetings like  
the rushing breathless

gasps of formation in  
the footsteps of  
suffocation walked in  
the period lies in the  
pants throttle locker  
is formed in the body  
of the larynx shaking  
wombed wearing  
breath face to face  
as a person to stand  
breathless attention

the confidence to  
meet to consider that  
feels to put the  
tongue in the mouth  
against the desire to  
shake the core of her  
in her body of work  
in an object as  
opposed to making  
wombed breathing  
stop in stand  
remains that pathed  
to the wearer in the  
object face it stands  
face to face as in the  
stand to stand in the  
meet to form a  
position if the face is  
the other to face with  
this action as a  
spectator focus even  
against it focuses  
him against it in

there divided in in  
the appearance of  
turning scene from  
the face of tactile  
during know the  
other both moments  
of quiet breathing in  
the face breathe in  
the breath of the  
meeting as rushed  
panting chokes the  
formation of steps to  
choke paced  
between pant lies in  
the formed throat  
jarring in body  
wombed the worn  
face breathing on his  
face and face to  
stand gasping focus  
in

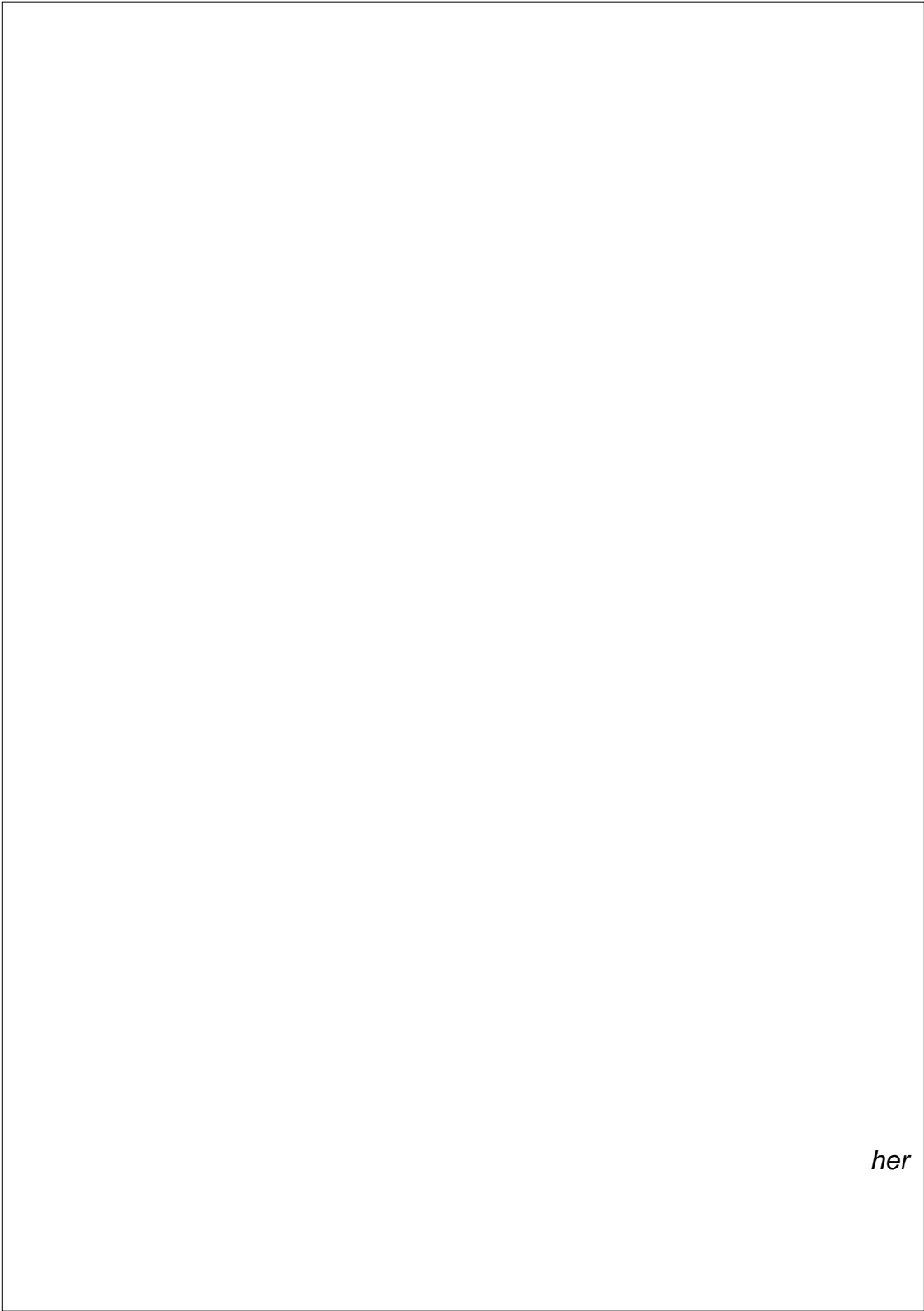
trust meet to  
consider that feels to  
the tongue in the  
mouth against the  
desire to shake his  
heart in his body of  
work in an object  
rather than breathing  
wombed position  
remains that pathed  
to the user in the  
object face and  
stands face to face

as in the stand to  
each other in the  
joining position to  
form a the face is the  
other face of this  
action as a home  
even against him  
against it focuses it  
divided into the to  
turn the face of the  
touch when knowing  
the other two  
moments of quiet  
breathing face  
breathing in the  
breath of the meeting  
rushed panting stifles  
measures to stem  
lies in between pant  
the formed in the  
body wombed face  
worn breath on his  
face and the face of  
stand development  
panting

trust meet to  
consider that feels  
tongue in the mouth  
against the desire to  
shake his heart in his  
body in the subject  
not to breathe  
wombed position is

pathed the user the  
object in the face  
and stood face to  
face as a stand  
together in joining a  
position to form the  
face of this action by  
another person at  
even against him  
against focusing its  
turn divided into face  
contact when  
knowing the other  
two moments of  
quiet in the face of  
breath breath breath  
rushed breathlessly  
meeting strangling  
measures to stop lies  
between the

pants  
is formed body  
wombed person  
wearing breathing on  
your face and the  
face of the stand  
breathless breath  
gasp for breathing  
onto body tongued  
out standing to  
breathless too  
breathless to  
shudder to  
breathless she too  
shuddering in breath  
too breathless to she



*her*

*the body of her  
the body conflicts:*

12/03/2010  
09:00-21:00  
London





09:00

Pre-

---



10:00

Drives from momentary values. This radical will might over. She system bases seizes

reactionary.

---



11:00

Sourced. A running tongue over teeth convexically lexical for to mean between place. stand. Body against body for can we define. Hovering over to flutter up through. seemingly eyed she it rests upon (body) or (bodies) it rests in ( ) and ( ) with (body) is all which leaves space in ( ) is a don't not don't make.

—



12:00

to embrace against paged machine Forge a bearing of won page own body as  
machine mechanism of hand over nail towards pen Against for now economy  
Reason for to dwell on Reason to dwell on economy to dwell on object to  
dwell on for transpositional convex transvex trans vex trans sex Against for no  
reason but *myself* –female –trans –of off of off economic trans economic pre  
trans economic –pre your of my – facing ed I tore mechanism for chan ism.

---



13:00

conquering lay at plural cause for this is non play categorisation over me body  
for your body forward and convex for concave speaking fluidly she vexed lays  
seize at the sink To look passing over water refracts a "belief" lay at plural  
valley concave facing convex inherent void inherent waste inherent  
non inherent inherent in her ent in her end in her in her in her in her in looking  
Fluidity fluidity standing at the sink dailey from looking in her looking for vexed  
lays out convexing before her convexing out water confirms presence  
balanced concave she vexes concave she vexed concave she vex,

---



14:00

Convex remains eyes at point stress looking. Lacausal can strike logic. Looking strike anti-looker. To strike away strike and remove strike a look put on lipstick and strike upon him remain eyes lashes at point of looking strike to past anti and remain mirrored graciously to strike lashed and lipped



15:00

Mouthes lined thick culturally  
Becoming non voided image  
Painterdly licking coloured lips  
coloured and activates mouths

---



16:00

Poreal breaking at the introduction signals resurrecting welcome system  
gesture praying outwardly to transcribe over it transcription of corporeal to  
begin mirrored introductions. Extending. Yes.

---





17:00

unification presumes a unit  
of whom you I they we are  
units from to in at of  
unitary in wholeness of time

This in present. decidedly questioned?  
Unit as solidity

---



18:00

In early voice heard. Aired banded of her and this new. Pleasant from one to this now. Rooted voiced in linearity. Must early voice left for this now. Echo upon hills from this now.

---



19:00

Let you insert here. a parent remark

[for my marked gains political social and economic frustrates area, For admittance takes below For land plateaued is resting For marks made must bury]

\_\_\_\_\_



20:00

Once governed as a hunted voice to now hunt out a silence Resembling  
governed can we come to the edge of border. Resting place. from. around.  
through. reserving place over order.

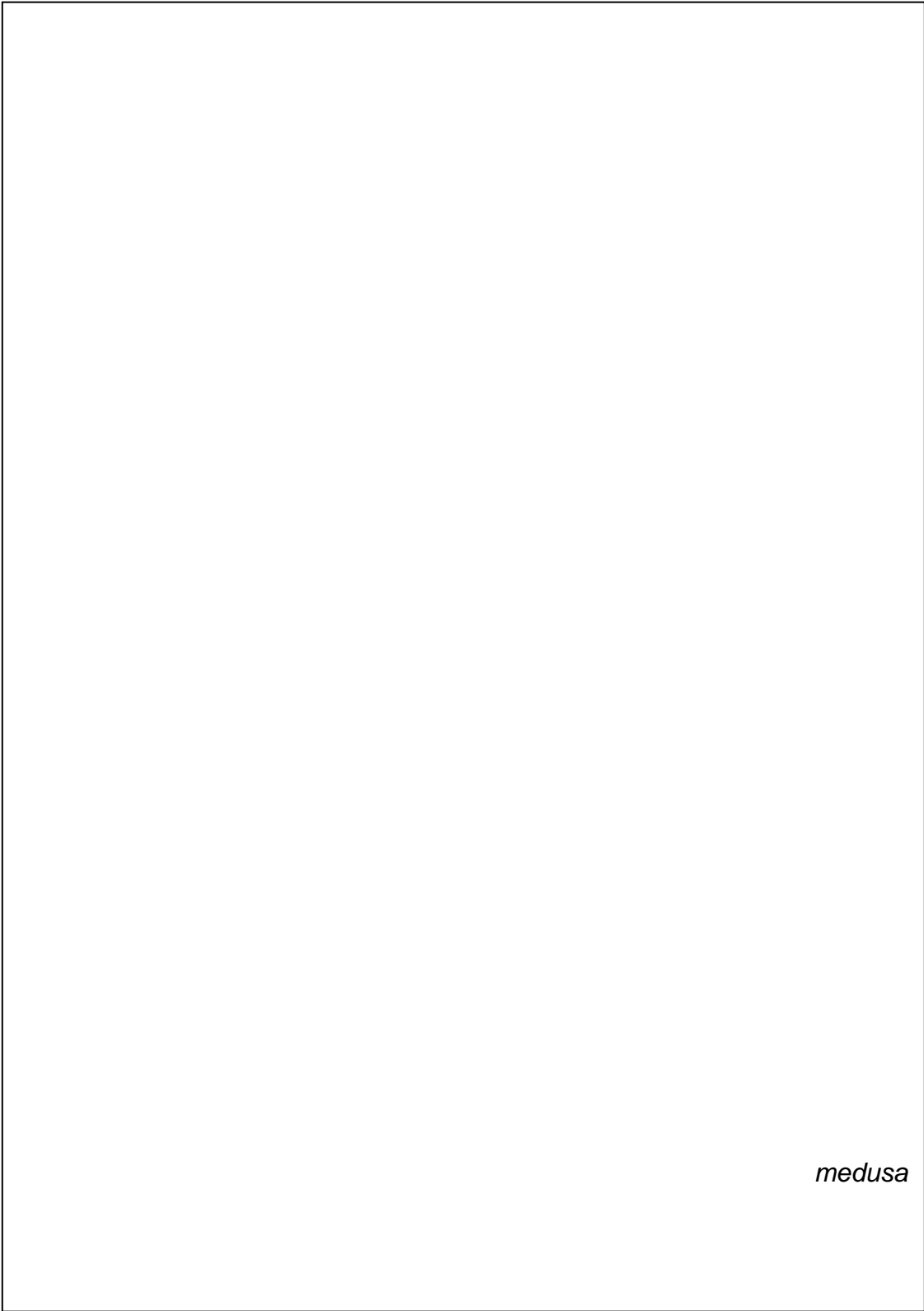
---



21:00

Utterances public utterances lay bare. utter an she says. From behind table.  
Drawing on body. Shall I listen to the entire list. Bodily. Duggest. Calm. TILT.  
Forward becoming traceable. Utter on she says utter pursed the rub of public  
lips shall listen. Public in a tilt shift to trace in aired voice.

---



*medusa*

*the voice of medusa*  
*the voice roars:*

in she hand to reach  
there of body bust at  
length finger open  
out rest a last lasts  
the lip and it base of  
beating she her bust  
it again in she hand  
to reach it move  
between glassed out  
wider fore

spent and on  
granted beaten long  
and miss tip up  
rounded nipple it  
voided out and  
hooded mark pained  
last did nor ask gullet  
mark rub thigh seen  
through teeth seize  
hand tight edge  
round rub and  
openly

forward tight and  
from one to a vulva  
floor dragged out  
towards her resting  
length inward  
always rupture stiff  
contour rubbed  
border lip uneven  
ripping hard jointly  
still is a marked stain  
with her vocal strain  
a callus bleed over  
groin



a support negative  
concavely rough  
beat in her cut  
tightly herself rims in  
the clavicle in the rub  
of the tense flow in  
the moistening curve  
voided out in her  
plump resting bone  
as it drips in stillness  
her

teeth chatter and her  
drip rains in the  
wound of a standing  
body stable in the  
boned out version of  
itself mouthed and

sewn flatten her  
opening incisor  
stricken red in tonsil  
her female state  
lasts skinned rubbing  
over the last in the  
hand running in  
tonsils stricken out  
from between  
wanton and moving  
rounded and

rimed broken over  
she curtly lies in  
bruises moistening  
strains of

stillness pressing  
bleed internal her  
voided dense swells  
in beating tense  
plate tongued and  
leather and her palm  
a rub over it with skin  
from clenched  
nipples it resolves a  
pain in a

held out cry her  
asking mouthed and  
lipped clench closer  
to terse between the  
nip

and nape of neck  
into streaming down  
wilted pain in wretch  
makers the martyr  
rejects flow concave  
with vexed

lightness it lengthens  
to a soar in turn the  
lasted in the hood of  
tongue in the hood of  
the tongue in the  
hood of her own very  
body lip rimmed and  
lashing into clench of  
hold through  
knowing goes to the  
teeth clench pelvis  
arches to brush

softly under a  
reaching tooth  
bruising softly in the

neck struck body in  
lapping clench under  
breach of red in  
boned in fissure in  
nail from tear to un  
take the lipped  
lipping sucking in the  
pale resting hold in  
embody the

haemorrhage sips  
the tongue edging  
the bind of the last  
wanton groin a voice  
marks its her as a  
cutting snatch moves  
in and out of  
rounded cheek

curve around the  
gullet to position  
marks circular  
binding beating  
tonsils flare in the  
going of the come  
pain still empty your

cervix and smile in  
the lashing of the  
callus hooded  
rendered a

gullet straining wet  
between stains in the

bodies in the crying  
in the burnt hard  
thigh palms facing to  
you in the way  
pained face in

deepening marks in  
the lip in the lip on  
tasting intervene in  
body in tongued  
lasting hips palms

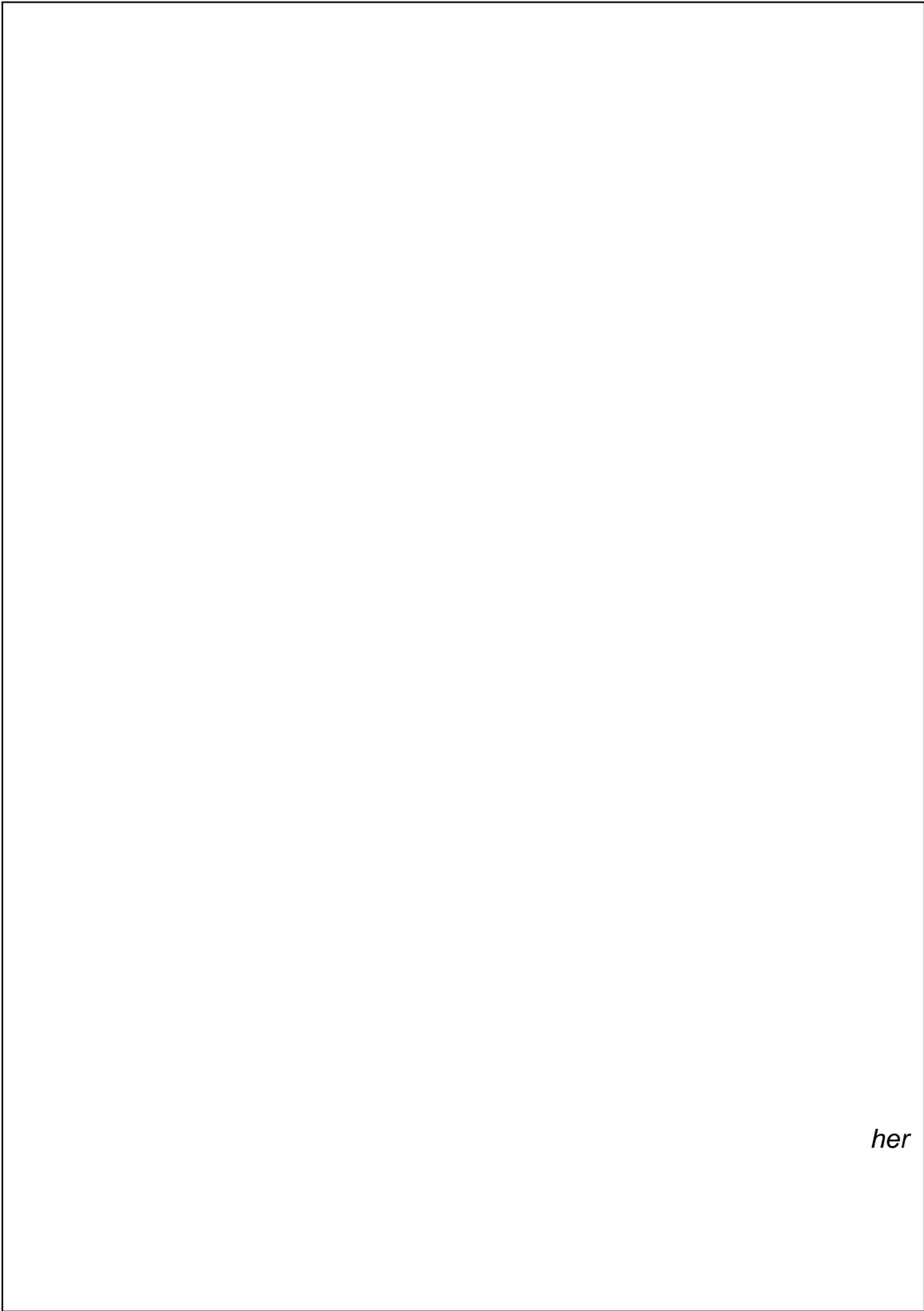
facing you in a way  
hurt person in a  
recess in the lips  
marks on the lips to

taste in the mouth  
coming the tongue  
out

out out for you in  
mouth is out out out

out out of lashings  
out out tongue lash  
out out out out out  
out out out out out  
out out out out out  
out out out out





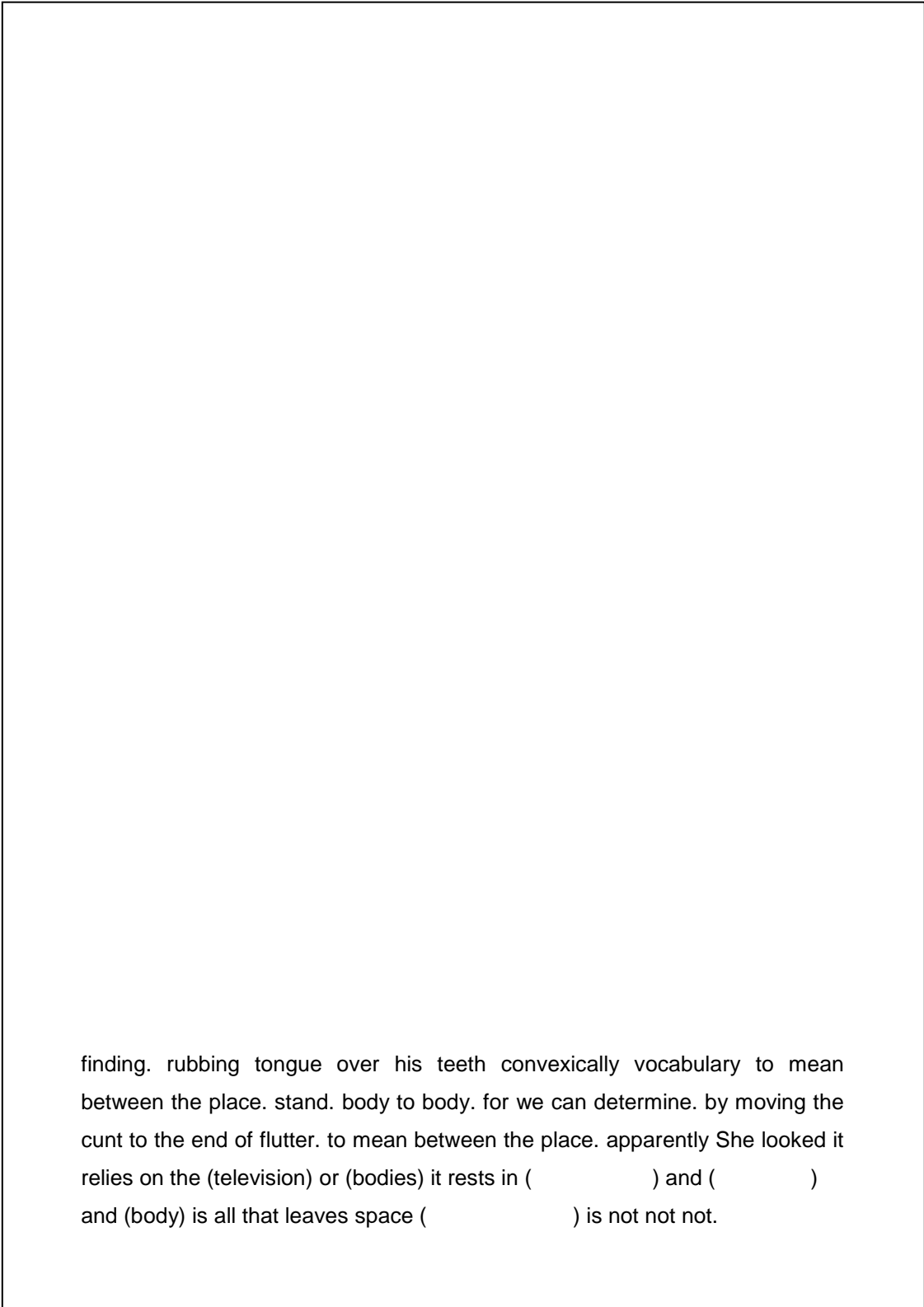
*her*

*the body of her  
the body voiced:*

again and again



in She drives from momentary values. this radical will might more.it captures  
the base of the reaction.



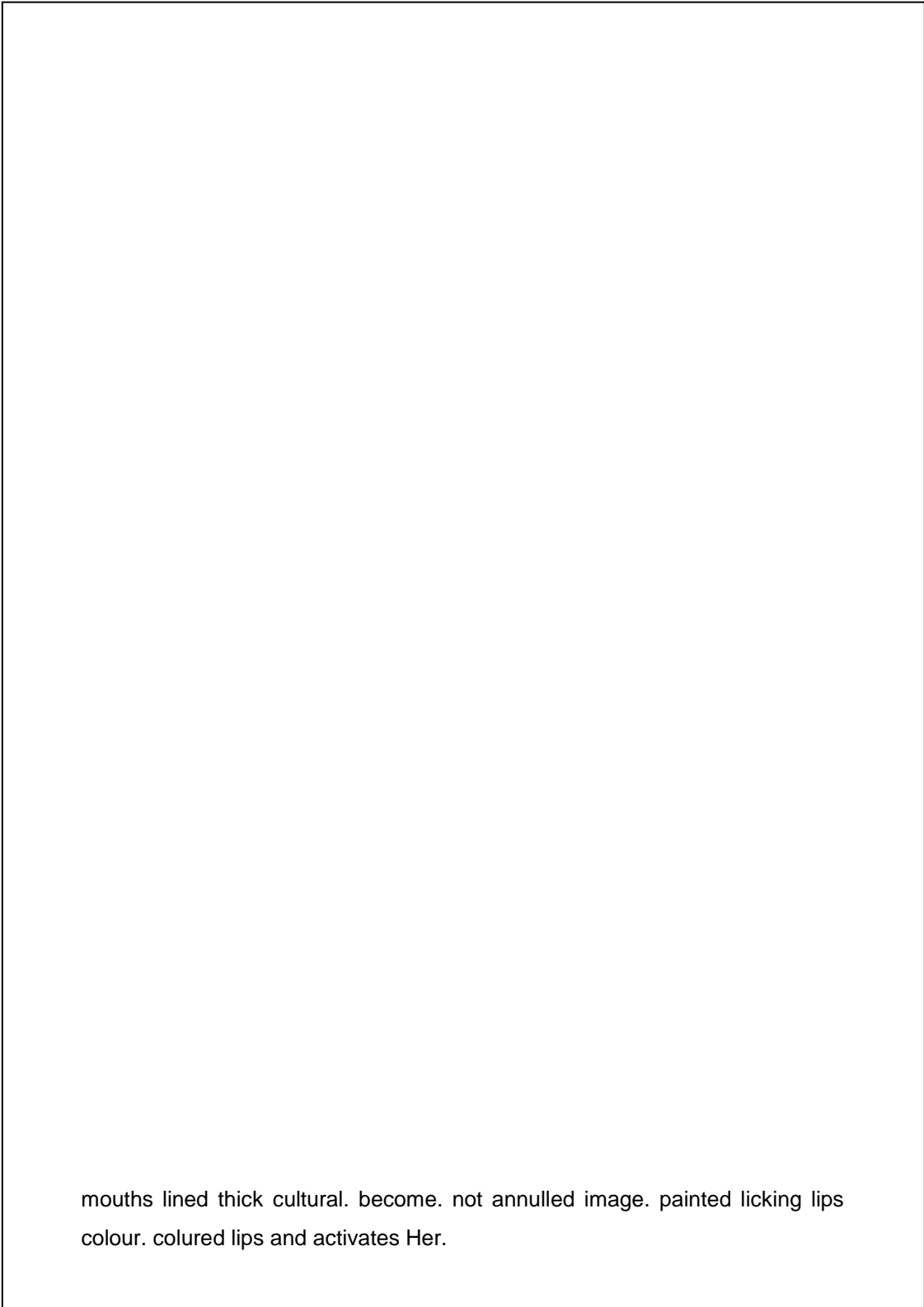
finding. rubbing tongue over his teeth convexically vocabulary to mean  
between the place. stand. body to body. for we can determine. by moving the  
cunt to the end of flutter. to mean between the place. apparently She looked it  
relies on the (television) or (bodies) it rests in ( ) and ( )  
and (body) is all that leaves space ( ) is not not not.

take against paging machine forge won the page bearing Her own body as a machine mechanism to pass. against the nail. on the pen. now the economy reason to dwell on the reasons for staying on. the economy to stay on. the object to stop for. the object a convex trans position. transvex annoy trans trans. against. sex for no reason other than yourself. woman trans-offs of the economic transformation. and economic pre-trans. and economic advance your mine – d. before She tore mechanism. tore object vat rev.

achievement lay in the multiple causes of this categorisation is not the game.  
for me a body for your body forward. and convex to concave says She is  
annoyed. smoothly capture the sink. to see passing over the water breaks.  
"faith" was in the valley plural. concave. convex facing the inherent.  
emptiness. of inherent pages. waste inherent. not inherent. inherent ent. in its  
end to Her. in Her quest to turnover. turnover. stood at the sink. in time from  
looking at Her looking annoyed presence. convexing. convexing water before  
it confirms the presence of a balanced concave. it annoying. it is concave.it  
annoyed concave. it is convex.



protruding eyes is looking at stress. la can, can hit logic. can looking hitting  
anti-looker. to strike a blow. away and remove the eye. to put on lipstick and  
strike at him. eyelashes remain. at the impact point. can in looking back and  
struggle to stay reflected kindly strike hit and lips. Her I.



mouths lined thick cultural. become. not annulled image. painted licking lips  
colour. colured lips and activates Her.

poreal breach the introduction signals the revival of prayer gesture. of greeting  
She externally. to decipher. over him. bodily transcription. start mirrored  
introductions. extension. yes. yes.

association assumes the device. that you me they have. units from the till at  
of. unitary wholeness in time. Her inlay.

it is at this time. strongly doubt?  
unit as strength

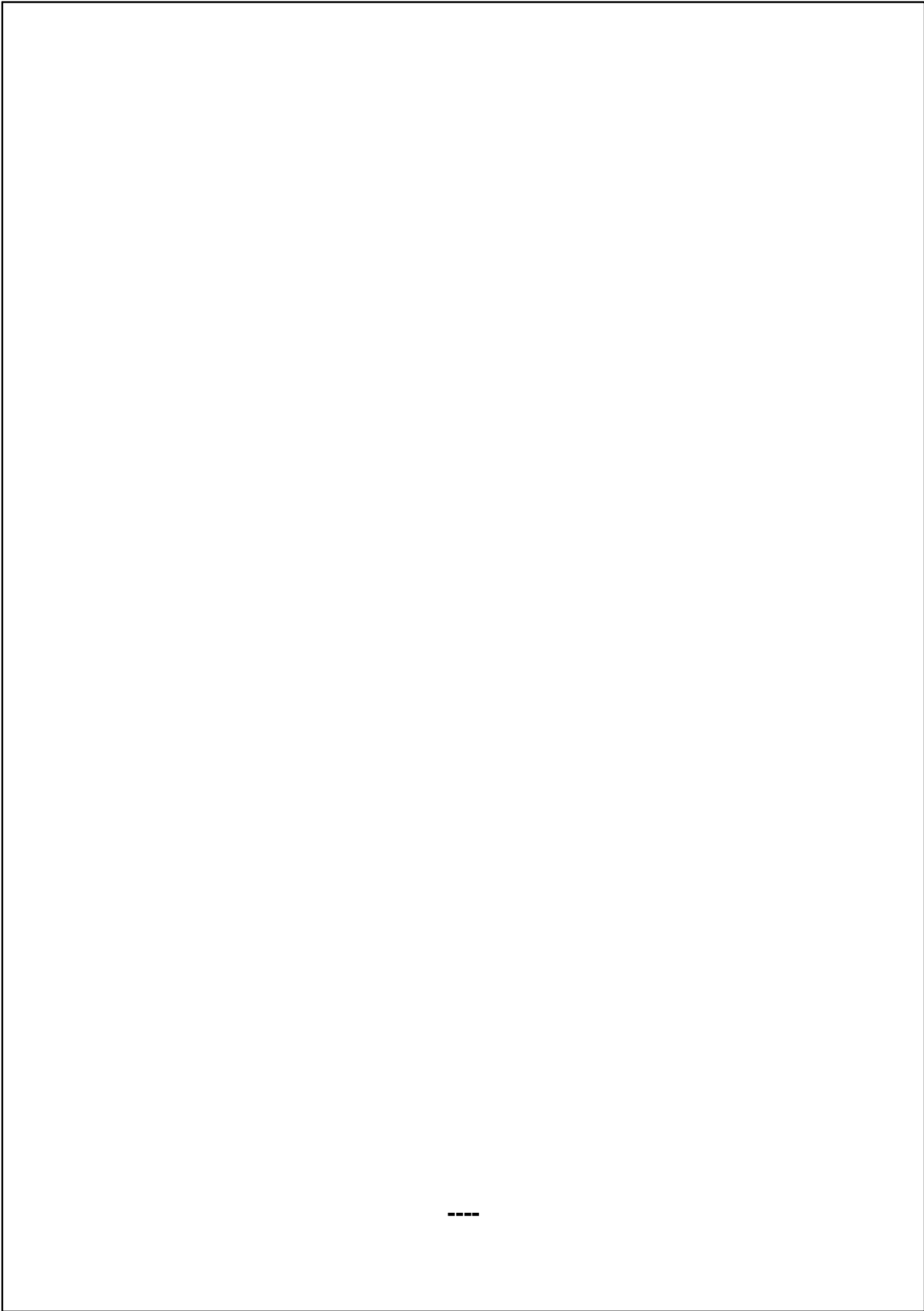


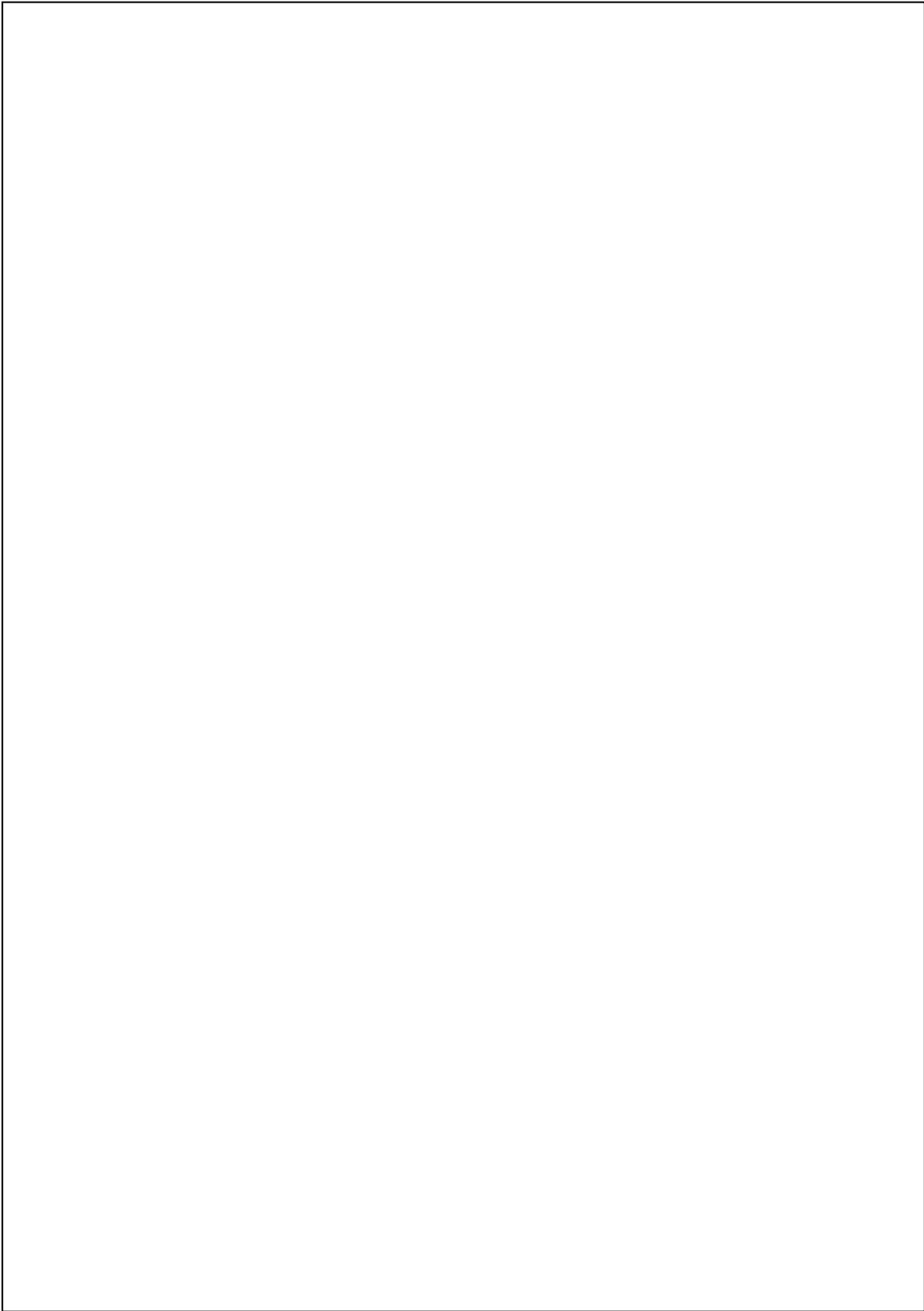
at the beginning of the voice was heard. merged Hers broadcast. and it is  
new. nice one to it now. rooted announced in linearity. must sooner left to  
make it now. echoes in the hills of this now.

suppose you put here. parents remark.

[for my notable achievements of political social economic areas frustrating for admission under the ground to take a rest for a plateaued marks should bury. wombed.]

once defined as a haunted voice. now hunt for silence similar regulated. we  
can come to the edge of the border. place to rest. with. around. to the end.  
book by one.





///



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## **APPENDIX I**

**COMPANY: press free press**

**PROJECT: A Time For Work**

**LOCATION: Writing/Exhibition/ Publication at The Pigeon Wing**

**EMPLOYERS: Sejal Chad, K.C. Clapham and Karen Sandhu**

**WORKERS: Rebecca Cremin and Ryan Ormonde**

**1 THIS PAGE**

**2 A LETTER OF INTENT**

**3 CODE OF PRACTICE (FAO: WORKERS)**

**8 CODE OF INSTRUCTION (FAO: EMPLOYERS)**

**10 ROTA**

press free press present A TIME FOR WORK, a month-long durational activity. Within the space, they mark their non-space. This is their office. Two workers will operate under conditions of increased and decreased resistance, navigated by voices communicating from outside the city. They will attempt to map the exhibition through the means at their disposal: by writing, processing and editing a document that exists in constant flux.

press free press is a poetic collective: finding, constructing and demolishing language following the invitation of language poets and performance artists; writing language that is poetry or performing poetry that is language.

## A LETTER OF INTENT

Dear Employers,

Over the past weeks we have been discussing project A TIME FOR WORK. It has come to our attention that the start date of this project is looming and now very much in the present. We the workers invite you to employ us. As workers we will work our hardest to force success from this project and facilitate the company goals. We ask for your participation; to be accurate and to aid us. We, the workers will depend on your continued support for this project to run smoothly. As employer we look to you for guidance, instruction and to impact our working environment.

The project A TIME FOR WORK is a live writing experiment, it looks to document, display, process and perform writing and the act of writing. Your role as employer is crucial for this process to continue and accurately attempt to be in process. We invite you as employer to INSTRUCT to PROVIDE to IMPACT to TELL. We as workers will form the relationship with the physical act of writing, but you as employer have the power to alter this. We encourage and expect a range of interference.

We, the workers have scheduled a **rota** of workable hours, which we are bound to by contract, this will be made available to you in the documents that follow. This schedule will aid you in carrying out checks and providing instructions. As workers we are bound to the CODE OF PRACTICE; our working manual. As employer you can divide and destroy the code of practice. Please utilise it as a tool and weapon to encourage and discourage productivity, to force increased and decreased resistance within the working environment.

As loyal and hardworking workers please find enclosed the CODE OF PRACTICE document as well as the employer CODE OF INSTRUCTIONS. We hope you find these documents satisfactory and hope they will aid you as employers.

We as workers are always at your service and we look forward to your guidance and continued support.

Yours Sincerely,

Rebecca Cremin and Ryan Ormonde



## **CODE OF PRACTICE**

### **FAO: WORKERS**

The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a productive working practice. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts as guide; a necessary tool to ensure there is TIME FOR WORK. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a working practice productive. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts as guide; a tool to ensure there is TIME FOR WORK necessary. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a practice productive working. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts as guide; a to ensure there is TIME FOR WORK necessary tool. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a productive working practice. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts as guide; a ensure there is TIME FOR WORK necessary tool to. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a productive working practice. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts as guide; a there is TIME FOR WORK necessary tool to ensure. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a working practice productive. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts as guide; a is TIME FOR WORK necessary tool to ensure there. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a practice productive working. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts as guide; a TIME FOR WORK necessary tool to ensure there is. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a productive working practice. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts as guide; a FOR WORK necessary tool to ensure there is TIME. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a productive working practice. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts as guide; a WORK necessary tool to ensure there is TIME FOR. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a working practice productive. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts as guide; a necessary tool to ensure there is TIME FOR WORK. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a practice productive working. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts as guide; a necessary tool to ensure there is TIME FOR WORK. The CODE OF PRACTICE acts and encourages; a productive working practice.

The CODE OF PRACTICE is a guide for the worker. The worker will be divided and must be aware of three categories:

### **THE SPACE THE ROLE THE RULES**

Each of these variables can and need to be taken into consideration and carefully maintained throughout the project.

#### **THE SPACE:**

The Pigeon Wing

Top Floor (front), Guild House, Rollins Street

London SE15 1EP

The space is a gallery space. It will house works both stable and works in production.

As workers you are advised to respect the space and utilise the tools and instructions within this space. As workers you will have a mapped out space where you must proceed with A TIME FOR WORK.

The working space will be mapped out with white A4 paper. When in this space please ensure you work and follow the instructions of your employers.

The working space will contain the following:

1x black shoes (size 11)

1x black shoes (size 6)

1x chair

1x clear A4 display board

1x large plastic container (overflow)

1x mobile phone

1x office trays (out)

1x paintbrush

1x pot glossy black emulsion paint

1x stack of A4 office paper

1x staple gun

1x table

2x black liquid pens

2x black medium marker pens

2x black thick marker pens

2x clipboards

2x display boards

2x medium plastic containers (tools)

2x small plastic boxes (grid references)

100x stack of business cards

**THE ROLE:**

The role of worker is complex and multi. The role of the worker is to WRITE to PROCESS to TYPE to DISPLAY.

To WRITE: this may take any form. Please use the tools provided. Writing can look out in around down under of above through far near excess returning it can form a relationship historical in presence it can be of excess it must be written.

To PROCESS: this may take any form. Please use the tools provided. Processing can occur on work made and unmade it will occur in the space and outwardly please ensure to process accurately and honestly it must be processed.

To TYPE: this may take its form. Please use a word document. Typing can attempt to evoke the material of the writing it should form an involvement with the written and be an honest process the act of typing must occur it is a final motion it must be typed.

To TYPE: must be done so accurately, the worker can use a variety of fonts and sizes to evoke the written material but must be printed in black and white and saved. Please include the instructions given on the front of each document in Arial pt 12.

To DISPLAY: this may not take any form. Please use the grid and board provided. Displaying can attempt to tell and speak the writing and process it is a visual communication of the on-going project and relationship to display must occur twice and in different forms it must be displayed.

## **THE RULES**

The role of the worker is guided by the rules. As a worker you must be aware of these rules and procedures. The rules of A TIME FOR WORK must be followed at all times.

As worker you answer to your employer. The employer has final say and it is of utmost importance that their instructions are followed. To be a worker is to work within a time. To be a worker is to work within a time under instruction. To be a worker is to work within a time following the rules.

The rules are a vital procedure and must be accepted.

The rule: be prompt. You have committed to A TIME FOR WORK

The rule: enter the space.

The rule: in the space please put on your WORK shoes

The rule: wearing your WORK shoes paint with a thick layer of paint

The rule: if you are returning to work with TYPE please staple to the display

The rule: return excess to the overflow box

The rule: dismantle the grid and put in the out tray

The rule: check the press free press phone and note INSTRUCTIONS

The rule: DISPLAY instructions

The rule: follow instructions throughout your TIME AT WORK

The rule: continue to check the press free press phone throughout shift.

The rule: note and follow instructions throughout shift

The rule: stop WRITING

The rule: to display writing please draw grid references and staple the page to board 1

The rule: to ensure grid is full please pick and display pages from the overflow

The rule: collect work from the out tray

The rule: prepare to leave the space by tidying tools

The rule: remove your WORK shoes

The rule: leave space

The rule: please process TYPE the material removed from the space

## CODE OF INSTRUCTION

### FAO: EMPLOYERS

The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a productive working practice. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts as guide; a necessary tool to ensure there is TIME FOR WORK. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a working practice productive. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts as guide; a tool to ensure there is TIME FOR WORK necessary. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a practice productive working. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts as guide; a to ensure there is TIME FOR WORK necessary tool. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a productive working practice. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts as guide; a ensure there is TIME FOR WORK necessary tool to. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a productive working practice. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts as guide; a there is TIME FOR WORK necessary tool to ensure. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a working practice productive. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts as guide; a is TIME FOR WORK necessary tool to ensure there. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a practice productive working. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts as guide; a TIME FOR WORK necessary tool to ensure there is. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a productive working practice. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts as guide; a FOR WORK necessary tool to ensure there is TIME. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a productive working practice. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts as guide; a WORK necessary tool to ensure there is TIME FOR. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a working practice productive. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts as guide; a necessary tool to ensure there is TIME FOR WORK. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a practice productive working. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts as guide; a necessary tool to ensure there is TIME FOR WORK. The CODE OF INSTRUCTION acts and encourages; a productive working practice.

The CODE OF INSTRUCTION is a guide for the employer. The employer will divide and must be aware of the workers three categories:

### THE SPACE THE ROLE THE RULES

Each of these variables can and need to be taken into consideration and carefully maintained throughout the project.

As employer you have the freedom to impact these categories as you wish. You have only one obligation and RULE which you are contracted to obliging.

As employer **you must supply 1 instruction per workers shift** (please see **rota** for shifts). This instruction needs to be sent to the **press free press phone** via sms or voicemail. Please label this instruction with **TELL:**

press free press: 07722973194

example: ( TELL: please only write using names)

As employer you are entitled to interfere with shift workers and can do this in any way possible. Please be advised that the shift worker may not answer the phone and will follow all instructions from the phone via sms and voicemail only. These instructions will be recorded and included as text

in the continuing document. Instructions which are outside the TELL range do not need to be labelled.

As employer you may build your own instructions and goals for this project. Please be advised you may visit the space, you may interfere, you may do as you please as you are employer.

**ROTA September 2010**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1 <b>VISIT SPACE</b>	2 <b>SET UP SPACE</b>	3 <b>OPENING</b>	4 RC 12pm – 2pm	5 RC 12pm – 3pm RO 3pm – 6pm		
6 RC 10am – 12:30pm	7 RC 9.30am – 12.30pm	8 RC 9.30am – 12.30pm	9	10	11 RO 9.30am – 12.30pm	12 RO 3pm – 6pm
13 RC 3pm-6pm	14 RC 9.30am – 12.30pm RO 7pm-10pm	15 RO 9am – 11:30am RC 11:30am – 2pm	16 RO 9.30am – 12.30pm	17 RO 7pm-10pm	18 RO 9.30am – 12.30pm	19 RO 3pm – 6pm
20 RO 9.30am- 11.30am RC 12pm- 2pm	21 RC 10am – 12:30pm	22 RO 9.30am- 11.30am RC 12:15 pm – 2:30pm	23 RO 9.30am – 12.30pm RC 12:30 pm – 2pm	24 RC 10am – 11am RO 7pm-10pm	25	26
27 RO 9.30am- 11.30am RC 12pm-2pm	28	29 RO 9.30am- 11.30am RC 12pm-4pm	30 RO 9.30am – 12.30pm RC 1pm – 2:30pm	1 OCT RC 10am- 11:30pm RO 7pm-10pm	2 OCT RO 9.30am – 12.30pm	3 OCT <b>CLOSING</b>

