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Collaboration Revisited: The Performative Art of Claude Cahun and Hannah Weiner

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COLLABORATION REVISITED: THE PERFORMATIVE ART OF CLAUDE CAHUN
AND HANNAH WEINER

by

PHILLIP GRIFFITH

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Phillip Griffith

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

Collaboration Revisited: The Performative Art of Claude Cahun and Hannah Weiner

by

Phillip Griffith

Advisor: Mary Ann Caws

In its most common usage in the artistic context, collaboration refers to a practice of creation in which two artists work together to produce a single artwork or object. Collaboration Revisited: The Performative Art of Claude Cahun and Hannah Weiner focuses on the nexus of photography, writing, and performance in the work of six female avant-garde artists from the transatlantic twentieth century, informed by the important place of surrealism in that history, to reconsider this understanding of collaboration. Instead of the notion of collaboration as founded in the experience of two artists working together in each others’ presence, I examine and theorize a novel form of collaboration between artists and their audiences that privileges the separation and absence of collaborative partners from one another. I call this novel form “performative collaboration,” borrowing the term from linguist J.L. Austin’s theory of language that enacts the action it names (as in the “I do” of the wedding ceremony’s marital contract).

Part one of this dissertation juxtaposes the work of multimedia artists Claude Cahun (French, 1894-1954) and Hannah Weiner (U.S. American, 1928-1997). Moving in turn through critical frames including the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and theories of
narcissism, theories of affect proposed by Rei Terada and Brian Massumi, and conversations around theories of performance, photography, and performative language, the three chapters of part one reveal the ways in which Cahun and Weiner inscribe a performance into the artwork and stage a direct address to future reader-viewers in order to inspire the repetition of those performances. The arguments advanced in these chapters account for my theory of “performative collaboration.” Part two turns to the work of Meret Oppenheim (Swiss, 1913-1985), Unica Zürn (German, 1916-1970), Bernadette Mayer (U.S. American, born 1945), and Adrian Piper (U.S. American, born 1948) to explore the role of the reader-viewer and critic in similar works that create instances of “performative collaboration.” I conclude the dissertation by turning to linguist Émile Benveniste’s theory of subjectivity in language, which makes its own account of linguistic performatives, to suggest that the reader-viewer or critic who participates in the “performative collaboration” of these works occupies a unique subjective position that evades the typical subject positions of “I” or “you.” In short, such a rich form of artistic collaboration involving audiences as participants poses a fruitful methodological challenge for scholars who become in turn collaborators in the very artworks that they choose to study.
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And finally, to my family and to my parents, who have truly always been there and made all of this possible in being so, there—thank you.
Preface.
The Critic as Collaborator, and Swimmer

After several years of work on this project, I begin with a question of and for myself. In all of this collaboration, where lies the critic? Where am I in the text?

As a kid, I swam, in the summers and then, briefly, for all twelve months of the year. Between the ages of ten and twelve, I competed year-round in meets hosting hundreds (or so it seemed to me at the time) of other adolescent swimmers. A swim team is always somewhat in crisis as a team (or so I was, as a member of the Dynamo Swim Club in suburban Atlanta, Georgia, where my parents had relocated our family from North Carolina in the early 1990s). So much of a swim team’s activity splits amongst the very individual struggles of its members alone in their lanes for the time of a race, so that the experience of belonging to the team can become a solitary one, not unlike the model of collaboration I explore in this project.

My coach, for one meet in Atlanta sometime in the middle of the decade, had assigned me to two events: the first, two laps of freestyle, and the second, two laps of backstroke. I approached the pool for warm-up, as far as I can remember, with trepidation, shy and left to a lane already teeming with strangers. By the time my first event arrived, the release of the headlong dive into the water was welcome, but by the end of my heat, I had climbed out of the pool humiliated, having attempted a flip turn too early at the end of my first lap, kicking desperately for the absent wall coming out of my somersault, and finishing the race, knowing I had been disqualified.

The second event, the two laps of backstroke, sharpened my humiliation. Nearing the end of the lane, I counted my strokes from the signal flags, ready to turn at the right moment, relieved when I made solid contact with the wall. My feet must have landed on the wall off kilter, however, for when I pushed off, into the second lap with a dolphin kick, I propelled
myself under the rope separating lanes and swimmers into my neighbor-opponent’s track of pool. Worse, I did not realize I had left my own territory, and so continued to swim. At the end of my second lap, I pulled myself out of the pool, hauling my weight upward against the starting block, aware that something was wrong and so not waiting, as was customary, for the end of the race to exit the pool. My father stood there pretending not to laugh. But no one else was in the lane, I insisted; I hadn’t seen or collided with anyone. He assured me, trying to reassure me at the same time, that yes, there had been someone else there.

In the pool, even teammates become opponents during a race, competing for the higher place, the faster time. Each swimmer moves parallel to the others, staggered at different speeds, different points in space and time, separated by the invisible fluid barrier between lanes marked only on the pool surface by the lane rope. My incursion into my opponent’s lane had breached one of these barriers and threatened contact (for the second time that day, of course, I had been disqualified). What would have happened if I had caught up to my opponent, or he to me, after I intruded into his lane? Would we both have stopped, left to tread water, bewildered by the unexpected experience of encounter in the pool? Or would we have kept swimming, the one making room for the other beside him in the lane, the rhythm of our strokes flowing into one rhythm in the water, at least for the transitory time of that race?

At the beginning of this project, I discovered Barthes’ “fantasy” of Living-Together (Vivre-ensemble), of a communal way of life that allows its participants to live alone while together, out of respect for their individual moods and life rhythms, as signified by his term “idiomrhythm.” One of Barthes’ architectural models for this concept is the monastery and the monk’s cell, a room. In French, the word for a lane of pool is un couloir, a hallway.
In *How to Live Together*, the published lecture notes from the Collège de France course in which he developed this notion of idiorrhythmy, Barthes defines a fantasy as “a resurgence of certain desires, certain images that lurk within you, that want to be identified by you, sometimes your whole life, and often only assume concrete form thanks to a particular word” (6). Like poet Brian Blanchfield (also a native North Carolinian), who writes about idiorrhythmy in his essay “On Dossiers,” I share this fantasy and relate to it the possibility of a collaborative artistic encounter founded not in the presence of partners to one another, but in their absence.¹ Barthes refers to the notes for his Collège de France course not as a completed work of theory but as a dossier on his subject, one that collects “discontinuous traits,” like notes that he might scribble on index cards (19-20). (In some ways, it seems to me, the work of fantasy that Barthes proposes challenges the autonomy of the work of criticism, similar to the avant-garde challenge of the autonomy of the artwork.) In Blanchfield’s gloss, “A dossier then is a repository of otherwise loose relevant material, a file, on a subject” (97).

I present more than a dossier here; this is a dissertation. But, it began as a collection of notes and observations, attractions to certain texts and works, of blind intrusions into realms already occupied by Claude Cahun, Hannah Weiner, and the other artists I study. I have made the choice of where and when to intrude by a feeling of affinity, which challenges the discrete certainty of a “choice” as such in its arrival or its draw so much as an intuition, and then a compulsion. So, I let artists and artworks collect in my own dossier of affinity, and found ways

¹ Blanchfield discovers an idiorrhythmic space in the faculty offices at Rice University when he travels there for a job interview. He imagines, “Each scholar in her private quarters with a singular concentration, and a trade of ideas in the common areas” (107). His essay is, however, an avowed dossier on disappointment with academia. See Blanchfield 99.
to bring them together in an act of critical curation, through the *coulours* that connect each of the
rooms they inhabit.

These hallways exist, I contend and aim to show, but I have, in some part, at some point, imagined them, performed them as my own collaboration with these artists. In the idiosyncratic and autobiographical encyclopedia that Barthes entitled *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, the critic draws a distinction between dream and fantasy, reworking the terms of Surrealism to his own ends.² “The dream,” he writes,

> displease me because one is entirely absorbed within it: the dream is *monologic*; and the fantasy pleases me because it remains concomitant to the consciousness of reality (that of the place where I am); hence is created a double space, disconnected, layered, at the heart of which a voice (I could never say which one, that of the café or that of the internal fable), as in the movement of a fugue, assumes a position of *indirection*: something is woven, *braided*—without pen or paper, there is an initiation of writing. (87-88)

My daydream of swimming in unison with my trespassed-upon opponent, as well as that of a mode of collaboration crossing borders of space and time, might be a fantasy. (And both entail antagonism, a contest of wills. Strife might cause the fantasy to evaporate.) But what is criticism if not a fantasy, bound up in the unverifiability of the literary as Gayatri Spivak points out (*Death* 34), an imagined set of terms assiduously *performed* for the work, for my reader, for myself?

Whatever the answer to that question, I am in the work, performing the work of affinity and collaboration in the temporal and spatial missed encounters affinity reveals. Michel Foucault lauds the contribution of André Breton to the cultural field for his connection of two figures: writing and knowledge. In the liaison that he forms between the two, Breton finds, according to Foucault, that “imagination is not so much what is born in the obscure heart of man as it is what

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² Rosalind Krauss assigns Barthes’ *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* to a category she calls the “paraliterary,” in which the text is received as one by neither the critic nor the not-critic, but rather as one by the writer. See Krauss “Poststructuralism and the ‘Paraliterary’.”
arises in the luminous thickness of discourse” (“A Swimmer” 173). Foucault’s sense of the
Bretonian imagination, like Barthes’ understanding of fantasy, eschews the monologic in favor
of a relation, necessarily collaborative, in discourse. Like Breton, in Foucault’s description, I am,
or try to be herein, a “swimmer between two words.”
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Introduction.  
The Time of Collaboration

“Si l’aventurière a supprimé ici tout ‘l’attirail des faits,’ s’est faite homme et femme invisibles, c’est que la collaboration du lecteur est indispensable” (Cahun Écrits 770). So avers the Surrealist photographer and writer Claude Cahun in a handwritten note in the front cover of an edition of Aveux non avenus, a 1930 text with photomontages that she composed with her partner, Marcel Moore. The text subverts the codes of autobiography while presenting, according to its title, a collection of confessions. Like the “attirail des faits [autobiographiques]” that the text and its aventurière-author refuses, these confessions are, too, suppressed (“non avenus”). Instead of a memoir written in a realist style, the reader encounters the Aveux on a shifting terrain of memory, dream, and identity – a confusion of the pronouns “je” and “tu” as Cahun says elsewhere in her note. The game – one of several tropes favored by Cahun for the artistic venture – is set, and the reader has an equal part in the rules of engagement.

Collaboration Revisited: The Performative Art of Claude Cahun and Hannah Weiner is an investigation into a specific mode of collaboration. What I propose is a mode of art making particular to avant-garde experimentation in which artists inscribe their own performances into texts and images to future, performative effect. In other words, each of the artists whose works I examine imagines, and makes accommodation for, a future collaborator who will continue the performance of her work. As found in the tradition of linguistic performatives first theorized by J.L. Austin, the performativity inherent in the work by these artists recasts the ontological and epistemological stakes of the collaborative endeavor. Collaboration, though typically imagined as foregrounding a type of presence, arises from the very absence of collaborative partners from one another in the model I propose.
In his lectures in linguistics, *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin challenged the attention that linguistics and philosophers reserved for constative, or descriptive, utterances by proposing a new category. Austin identifies the difficulty of assessing the truth-value of a specific class of utterances. These utterances, which Austin names performative utterances, are not simply true or false but rather perform the action they announce given a correct set of conventional conditions to allow for the performance. As examples, Austin offers the marriage ceremony (“I do take this man/woman”) and the conferral of names (“I name this ship”) (4-6). Outside the discipline of linguistics, Austin’s performatives have offered insight into the construction of gender, as in Judith Butler’s work, into rereadings of Barthes’ theory of the photographic punctum, as in Margaret Olin’s work, and into the afterlives of certain performance artworks, as in Peggy Phelan and Kathy O’Dell’s work on performance. David Herd argues for the importance of the conventions of performativity, that is those conditions that make an occasion the proper context for the use of a performative utterance, to understanding the avant-garde, whose groups and movements necessarily respond to a specific historical occasion or disruption (42). In this study, performativity accounts for the space between text, image, and performance that each of the artists under question explores in turn.

Whereas Austin’s theory delimits the conditions under which a performative utterance might succeed or fail, Emile Benveniste’s work on pronouns offers a more general linguistic convention responsible for no less than the emergence of subjectivity in language. In an essay of that name, Benveniste asserts that subjectivity arises when a speaker assumes the personal pronoun “I,” positing him or herself as the subject (224). This discourse, or “language in action” as Benveniste defines it, is inherently dialogic as the “I” necessitate the you in the structure of address that it establishes. Further, the speaker who utters the “I” establishes what Benveniste
calls the instance of discourse in the essay “The Nature of Pronouns,” or the present tense situation in which the I is both referent, or speaking subject, and referee, or subject of speech (218). Instead of the conventions that allow a performative utterance to succeed or that cause it to fail, Benveniste asserts that it is the subjectivity of discourse that makes the performative utterance possible. The utterance “I swear” seals a legal agreement in court precisely because the speaker assumes the status of “person” by speaking “I” (229), because the utterance arrives in the instance of discourse.

The recurrence of performance, as documented in texts and photographs, in the work of these artists provides proof of their engagements with a mode of collaboration defined by its absence. For Peggy Phelan, disappearance is the particular ontological condition of performance as she describes it in her influential text Unmarked: The Politics of Performance. There, she writes, “Performance occurs over a time which will not be repeated. It can be performed again, but this repetition itself marks it as ‘different.’ The document of a performance then is only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present” (159). Phelan, thus, touches on the performative power of the performance document to act as a spur to memory, or as a spur to a new performance. In so doing, she does not eschew the responsibility of the critic to write about performance, and so to alter it in writing, but affirms the challenge to write toward this disappearance and to make language more performative (148). As Amelia Jones explains of her decision to study performances she did not witness, “[W]hile the experience of viewing a photograph and reading a text is clearly different from that of sitting in a small room watching an artist perform, neither has a privileged relationship to the historical ‘truth’ of the performance” (“‘Presence’” 11). Jones points to the kind of intersubjective exchange that can occur between the reader or viewer and the document that I privilege in this project (12). Indeed, the mode of
collaboration that I pursue herein is performative in its own structure, flickering between the I and the you of Benveniste’s linguistic model. As Kaja Silverman sums up Benveniste’s model of subjectivity, subjectivity falls into “abeyance” in the discursive gaps between I and you. Thus she claims that “Benveniste emphasizes the radical discontinuity which characterizes the condition of subjectivity, its starts and stops” (45). Phelan makes this observation, as well, in relation to the performance. “For,” as she writes, “to acknowledge the Other’s (always partial) presence is to acknowledge one’s own (always partial) absence” (149).

*Our Collaborators*

I offer the French photographer, writer, and performer Claude Cahun (1894-1954) and the American performance artist and poet Hannah Weiner (1928-1997) as two exemplary artists working to such collaborative ends, and I bring them together in my own work of critical collaborative performance. This critical work is one of curation, and from these two artists, a sort of coterie reminiscent of what Katharine Conley calls the “Surrealist conversation” (or the circulation and recycling of ideas and images amongst those artists) emerges,\(^3\) including Meret Oppenheim, Unica Zürn, Bernadette Mayer, and Adrian Piper, as well. Though encompassing these six artists, my interest coalesced first around the connections I made between Cahun and Weiner. I take these two to represent a collaborative pairing that I convene, and so they act as two poles or lodestars for the constellation of works I examine in the pages that follow. My first

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\(^3\) In addition to Conley’s privileging of conversation as a figure for understanding Surrealism, Breton makes a liberated dialogue, free from the constraints of “politesse,” one of the aims of Surrealism in his first manifesto of 1924. See Conley “Women” i and *Robert Desnos* 5, and Breton *Manifestes du Surréalisme* 47.
section places them in dialogue in a series of three chapters that each deals with aspects of both Cahun and Weiner’s works. Part two introduces the four remaining artists to my study. By way of Cahun’s biography, I enter into the world of Surrealist Paris, welcoming the Swiss artist Meret Oppenheim (1913-1985) and the German artist Unica Zürn (1916-1970) to the conversation. In Weiner’s New York City of the 1960s and 1970s, I open this conversation to Weiner’s close friend, the poet Bernadette Mayer (b. 1945), and conceptual and performance artist and philosopher Adrian Piper (b. 1948).

In a photograph from 1920, Claude Cahun sits in profile, cross-legged, her hair shaved, and wearing pants and an oversized sweater, perhaps a robe. The self-portrait presents an androgynous subject, as does the artist’s name, chosen for that gender-bending effect by Lucy Schwob around 1915. Born in Nantes in 1894 to George Schwob and Marie-Antoinette Courbebaisse, Cahun was an inheritor to a literary heritage that included the management of the Nantes newspaper La Phare de la Loire, acquired by her grandfather George Schwob, and the Symbolist writings of her uncle, Marcel Schwob. The 1920 self-portrait evokes the pose of an ascetic, a young scholar, perhaps a monk in training (Fig. i.1). A later series of persona self-portraits from 1927 plays with the idea of training, as well (Fig. i.2). Cahun coyly vamps for the camera in these photographs. She wears dark shorts and tights and a long-sleeve shirt adorned with drawn designs of hearts and lips, echoed by the shape of her rouged lips and two hearts painted on her cheeks. She holds in her lap a set of dumbbells and her shirt reads, “I AM IN TRAINING DON’T KISS ME.” Cahun’s first important works, Les Jeux uraniens (or Amor amicitiae, begun in 1913 and unpublished) and Vues et visions (1914, published 1918), had appeared under the influence of her family’s Symbolist heritage. The hearts and lips that decorate Cahun’s costume in this photograph recall, however, the typographical symbols that
punctuate her later text, *Aveux non avenus* (1930), which marked a break from this Symbolist and familial influence. If the training evoked by the 1920 portrait seems familial, as if Cahun searches for her own place amongst her male forebears, the 1927 portrait presents Cahun in training for a gender pageant more overtly androgynous, in which Cahun plays a part somewhere between a clown, silent film damsel, and muscle man.

The divide in Cahun’s work marked by these two portraits and *Vues et visions* and the *Aveux* corresponds to a shift in Cahun’s personal life during the same period. In 1909, Cahun met a classmate at her lycée, the daughter of a doctor from Nantes and his second wife, named Suzanne Malherbe. The two became close friends, and after Malherbe began publishing under the androgynous pseudonym Marcel Moore in 1913, Cahun followed suit by first choosing the name Claude Courlis. The relationship between the two friends became increasingly intense and romantic throughout the decade, and in 1917 Cahun’s widowed father married Moore’s widowed mother. As lovers, artistic partners, and after 1917 as step-sisters, Cahun and Moore formed a collaborative duo who embarked on a work of what Tirza True Latimer calls “coproduction,” expressed in their photographic output as the work of a performer and a director (“Narcissus” 69). As Latimer brings to light, Cahun designed an ex libris “duogram” around 1919 that combined a melding of the step-sisters’ initials joined by the common S of Schwob and Suzanne (L.S.M) with symbols familiar to Cahun’s work (disembodied foot, eye, lips, and hand) (69-70).

In 1922, the couple moved to Montparnasse, into an apartment at 70bis rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. They first became involved in the Paris theatre world, working with the director Pierre Albert-Birot, and befriended Adrienne Monnier and Sylvia Beach, prominent members of the lesbian literary and artistic community in the capital. In the first decades of the twentieth-century, the legendary figure of Sappho, indicative of a resurgence of Classical tropes and
themes that later merged with the inter-war French rappel à l’ordre, had come to serve as a rallying figure for lesbians in Paris, thanks to the work of Renée Vivien and Natalie Barney (Latimer “Narcissus” 77). For Susan Gubar, the efforts to recover and connect with the figure of Sappho represent the desires of these women writers and artists to reach outside of their marginalization as women and lesbian artists. As Gubar writes, “Precisely because so many of her original Greek texts were destroyed, the modern woman poet could write ‘for’ or ‘as’ Sappho and thereby invent a classical inheritance of her own” (46-7). Gubar calls this link between a Classical inheritance and the creation of a new image for the woman artist a “fantastic collaboration” with Sappho (47).

Such a cultural zeitgeist amongst women and lesbian artists certainly had an effect on Moore and Cahun, who combined this concern for a literary inheritance amongst women generally with her own entanglement in the Schwob family’s literary heritage. In her Héroïnes (1925), a collection of short stories and monologues in the voice of legendary women published in Le Mercure de France and Le Journal littéraire in 1925, Cahun devotes an important chapter to the legend of Sappho, who she calls “l’incomprise.”

In 1930, Cahun published “Frontière humaine,” the only photograph to appear in public during her lifetime (apart from the photographic material used for the photomontages in the Aveux), on the cover of the journal Bifur. The image is a portrait of Cahun, again with shaved head, though in this portrait her head is elongated beyond human proportions. The manipulation of the image displays the interest she shared with other surrealist photographers in subverting the conventions of straight photography. In the 1930s, following the publication of this photograph and the success of the Aveux, Cahun and Moore joined the collective enterprises of André Breton’s Surrealist group. The two became increasingly involved in politics, as well. They

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4 For more on the influence of the cult of Sappho in the first decades of the twentieth century in Paris, see Dean “The Making of Lesbian Subjectivity” 202.
signed anti-fascist and anti-capitalist declarations with the groups Association des Écrivains et des Artistes Révolutionnaires (AEAR) and Contre-Attaque, founded by Breton. Cahun began to construct surrealist assemblages designed to be photographed around 1935 and exhibited in the *Exposition Surréaliste d’objets* in Paris in 1936. At the end of 1937, she traveled to London where her work appeared in the *Exposition internationale du surréalisme* in January and February of 1938.

1937 was also the year Cahun and Moore left Paris to live on the Isle of Jersey, where they had spent vacations in their adolescence. The two bought a medieval farmstead, La Rocquaise, that Cahun dubbed the “Ferme sans nom,” and began life on the island under their birth names, all while continuing to stage Cahun’s portraits in their garden and elsewhere on the island. The occupation of Jersey by the Nazi forces from July 1, 1940 until May 9, 1945 interrupted the quiet lives the two led, and compelled by their political convictions, they began a resistance campaign against the occupying army. The two dressed as country women and dropped leaflets designed by Cahun and written in German by Moore where officers would find them – at funerals, in soldier’s coat pockets, on automobiles. Cahun and Moore’s successes with their tracts convinced the local Kommandantur that a much larger operation was targeting the German forces with a campaign of demoralization. But, on July 25, 1944, the Gestapo arrested the couple at their home. For their four years of resistance work, Cahun and Moore were condemned to death on November 16, 1944 but survived until the Liberation on May 8, 1945. In the years following the war, Cahun worked on two autobiographical texts about her experiences during the Occupation, and imagined moving back to Paris and reconnecting with her old friends. A trip to the French capital in June 1953, however, was her last. Cahun’s poor health
made a return impossible. Weakened by the term of her imprisonment, Cahun died on December 8, 1954. Moore survived her partner until her own death on February 19, 1972.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Hannah Weiner was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1928, and attended Radcliffe College, graduating in 1950. As a young woman in the early 1950s, she moved to New York, married, and divorced soon after. Weiner worked as a lingerie designer while pursuing her work as a poet. She took classes at the New School with Kenneth Koch in 1964 and 1965, composing *The Magritte Poems* (published as a chapbook in 1970), before abandoning poetry for a brief period, exasperated by her perceived inability to write in the style of the New York School. During her hiatus as a poet, Weiner began working at the intersection of conceptual art, performance, and the kinds of poetic experimentation that would eventually bring her back to writing. Weiner’s performance and conceptual art period includes her discovery of the maritime semaphore flag signals that sailors use to communicate with other ships at sea. As Weiner recounts in “Hannah Weiner Silent Teacher,” a concluding autobiographical section to her 1994 *silent teachers remembered sequel*, composing poems from these signals freed her from the injunctive to write her own words (69). The various iterations of the *Code Poems* performances also included ephemera, such as ribbons of fabric tape printed with the flag signals and a round viewfinder-reader to help decipher the codes. Weiner organized a performance of the poems in 1968 in Central Park with the aid of coast guard officers who communicated the poems with flag and flashing light signals.

In the 1960s, Weiner also published in Bernadette Mayer and Vito Acconci’s conceptual art journal *0 to 9* with artists including Sol LeWitt, Dan Graham, and Adrian Piper, and organized street actions and happenings. Her street actions and happenings included a giveaway of hot dog Wieners, in a pun on her name, and an open house series she organized, which invited
the public into her home and the homes of other artists. Weiner hosted another happening, “Hannah Weiner at Her Job,” at her workplace, A.H. Schreiber Co., Inc. Other street actions were published in 0 to 9’s 1969 special section on Street Works edited by John Perreault, and Weiner worked with Perreault to organize other art events, including The Fashion Show Poetry Event (also with Eduardo Costa) and The Saturday Afternoon Show at the bar-restaurant hot spot, Max’s Kansas City. Her work from these events and happenings exhibits the influence of Fluxus on her work from the 1960s, especially in her exploration of the modes of instruction and ownership as conduits for the creation of an artwork. For example, a telegram displayed as part of the 1970 Art in the Mind exhibition at Oberlin College instructed viewers to “overcome a fear” during the period of the show from April 17 to May 12.5 In later writings, she often mentioned artists associated with Fluxus, like Jackson Mac Low and Carolee Schneemann, who were also her close friends. As Kaplan Harris points out, Weiner’s work from this period is collaborative, dialogic, and polyvocal in its content and concerns, before the innovation of the intensely polyvocal “clairvoyant” poetry that follows in Weiner’s next decade (“On Weiner”).

Despite this rich, if poorly documented,6 period of engagement with the New York art world in the 1960s, Weiner’s artistic breakthrough arrived in 1970 with the simultaneous onset of hallucinatory psychic phenomena. In the autobiographical poem that concludes silent teacher remembered sequel, Weiner tracks the successive stages of that innovation and its aftermath. She

5 For a reproduction of the telegram, see Durgin “Witness My Own: Forget Gadget.”

6 Weiner’s archives are sadly depleted preceding 1970. In a recent article on the contemporary poetics website Jacket2, Kaplan Harris reports Weiner may have burned her papers and records from this period. Patrick Durgin, the editor of a selected edition of Weiner’s work, suggests that her brother may have destroyed large parts of her personal archive and library after her death. See Harris “On Weiner, Acconci, Perreault, and Graham” and Durgin personal email correspondence.
writes of its beginning and the period that preceded it, “all this glory ended in 1970 when she
became extremely psychic / and hiding out in a cheap apartment wrote about nothing else in /
almost 100 notebooks see the fast […]” (69). The Fast, Weiner’s account of the onset of
visual and sensory hallucinations while trapped by the phenomena in her apartment, records the
struggle and psychic and physical pain of these first hallucinations. By 1972, Weiner’s visions
had progressed and she had begun to receive what she called “clairvoyant” messages in language
that she perceived visually, out of which she developed her “clairvoyant style,” or “clair-style,”
poetry. From this evolved experience of her professed psychic ability, Weiner composed her
explaining instructions / and the counter voice […]” (69). Weiner’s description of her
compositional practice in this quotation illustrates her debt to conceptual and performance art in
the resistance of the work to be defined by its medium, existing at the nexus of performance,
document (poem considered as performance score) and even recordings of the performances.

Weiner’s “clair-style” poetry represents a variation on the idea of poetry as dictation.
More precisely, as Patrick Durgin notes, the “clair-style” is a transcription of words Weiner saw
projected on the world around her or, through a psychic inversion, on her own forehead (“BIG
SENSIBLE”). Though her experiences are possibly attributable to a psychotic break brought on
by her use of psychedelic drugs, Weiner insisted on her clairvoyance and devised a complex
compositional practice that combined concerns from her earlier conceptual work with the
exigencies of her psychic condition. In her poetics statement, “Mostly about the Sentence,” for
example, Weiner asserts that her idea to use multiple voices in a text pre-dated her hallucinatory
experiences, originating in the dialogic nature of the Code Poems themselves (126). In
Clairvoyant Journal, however, Weiner experimented with medium by manipulating both the
page and the typewriter. She wrote her own words in regular lower and upper case script and received, or “seen,” words from two other “voices” in italics or all in capitals (127). Over the course of her experiences as a clairvoyant poet, Weiner received messages from leaders of the American Indian Movement, of which she was an activist proponent, her relatives (especially her grandparents and mother after her death in 1984), other poets, artists, and friends, and finally a polar bear spirit guide named Paw in *We Speak Silent* (1996), published the year before her death. Weiner imagined a collective function for her clair-style poetry, offering the messages she received as those from “silent teachers,” the same title she takes on in the autobiographical conclusion to *silent teachers remembered sequel*. As she writes in the last line of *We Speak Silent*, “the search for a teacher is always beneficial to both student and teacher” (66). Weiner died on September 11, 1997 in New York City.

In the collaborative circle that the artists in this study represent, each artist might be said to contribute to the conversation by a similar work of “silent” teaching. Oppenheim and Zürn occupied shifting, marginal positions on the edges of the Surrealist movement – Oppenheim for her expressed displeasure with and periods of rejection of the group, Zürn for her late arrival in Paris in the 1950s and her frequent stays in mental hospitals. Their marginality is not unlike Cahun’s who, though a proponent of Surrealist politics and aesthetics, also arrived belatedly to the movement before choosing her own exile from Paris. Mayer and Piper resist group classification in New York City in their own ways, as well. Mayer edited the conceptual art magazine *0 to 9* with her brother-in-law Vito Acconci from 1967 to 1969 before becoming an important poet in the development of Language poetry. Despite her contributions to the nascent Language movement through her influential writing workshops at the Poetry Project in the East Village of Manhattan, later work by Mayer deemed too traditional estranged her for a certain
period of time from those same writers she had taught and worked with at the Project. Piper’s work challenges classification in her opening of conceptualism to the biography and body of the artist, in her case to the specificity of a light-skinned black woman’s body. Her work forged new collaborative and participatory encounters with art through her fusion of conceptual and performance forms, innovation that continues in her work today.

**Collaboration in Surrealism and After**

Collaboration plays an important role in the development of the twentieth century’s avant-garde projects. Writing of collaborative practice amongst poets in the French nineteenth century, Seth Whidden proposes a useful taxonomy for the classification of two models of collaboration, what he terms collaboration *in praesentia* and collaboration *in absentia*. The former model emphasizes the typical arrangement brought to mind by the term collaboration: two artists work together, in the same time and space, their hands perhaps touching as they trade turns with the pen, to create a single work (5-6). The latter model – the one more fascinating to me – challenges this traditional understanding of the practice: in this configuration, one partner is absent from, and perhaps unknown to, the other in the process of creation (7). Whidden carefully distinguishes this model of absence from Julia Kristeva’s notion of intertextuality by emphasizing the *process* of collaboration (the relation between two or more actors working to create a text) versus the product of a multi-voiced text (the relation between two or more *texts*). Though my project does not draw such a sharp distinction between the process and products of collaboration, the clear challenge to the sovereign place of the author or artist that Whidden
sketches from these models of collaboration recalls the aesthetic upheaval of Rimbaud’s “Je est un autre” and sets the stage for the collaborative experimentation of the twentieth century.

The surrealist response to Rimbaud’s challenge to create a poetry that would have the effect of the “dérèglement de tous les sens” begins in collaboration. In Paris in 1919, at the Hôtel des Grands Hommes in the Place du Panthéon, André Breton and Philippe Soupault invented the Surrealist practice of *écriture automatique* by collaborating on *Les Champs magnétiques*. From this first moment of collaborative intensity, Breton and the surrealists created a collaborative endeavor of other aleatory games and procedures, including the *cadavre exquis* and the séance-like automatic writing sessions of the “époque des sommeils” as Breton calls it in *Nadja* (35). Robert Desnos was the star of these sleeps, in which he wrote while in a slumber with the others gathered around to read and help record the words of the poet, as immortalized in Man Ray’s photograph *Séance de rêve éveillé: Groupe Surréaliste* (1924). In the roll call of names attached as signatories to Breton’s first *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (1924), we find a preliminary list of these collaborative partners: Breton, Soupault, Desnos, as well as Louis Aragon, René Crevel, Paul Éluard, and others (though no women, yet) (36-7). Desnos’s early contributions to Surrealism and surrealist collaboration included his participation in the creation of Marcel Duchamp’s alter ego Rrose Sélavy, a persona for whom Duchamp also collaborated with his friend Man Ray on photographic portraits. In the voice of Sélavy, Desnos wrote brief, one-line poems based on Duchampian puns and homophony. In these poems, two surrealist *confrères* became a third persona, the lady of the “Belle Haleine.”

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7 For more on Duchamp’s collaborative friendship with Man Ray, see Ades “Duchamp’s Masquerades.”
The literary and art historical prominence of the names associated with Surrealism speak to contradictions within surrealist collaboration. Though early scholarship focused on the men who comprised the “heroic” period of surrealism, feminist critics of the 1980s and 1990s both critiqued the male-dominated history of surrealism and illuminated the role played by women artists in surrealism. Renée Riese Hubert’s *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, & Partnership* returned this focus to the contributions of female artists by presenting the women at work in romantic duos whose male partners traditionally eclipsed their female counterparts in reputation. Collaboration, though historically allowing for the erasure of a female partner in practice, has served as one critical framework for revising a gender-biased history of surrealism.

Additionally, and at the same time that collaboration serves as one method for achieving a way of thinking freed from the control of reason advocated by the *Manifeste*, the individualism of the participants involved threatens the revolutionary group ethos of Breton’s movement. As Katharine Conley asserts in her study of Desnos, Breton’s status as the “pope” of Surrealism should not go uncontested; in addition to the Bataillean branch of Surrealism, she suggests that Desnos, in his virtuoso sleep-performances, stands out as the exemplary figure for understanding the movement (*Robert Desnos* 3). As Mary Ann Caws points out, the Surrealists hewed to their group habits, frequenting the same cafés, ordering the same drinks, playing the same games. If the aim was a freedom to be attained through the psychic and aesthetic revolution of Surrealism, then the impulse to seek otherness from the self in a regimented collective “would,” as Caws puts it, “seem an odd principle of freedom—and yet” (*Surrealist Look* 20).

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8 Louis Aragon’s report in the 1924 essay “Une Vague de rêves” that in his automatic slumber Desnos “would become the leader of a religion, the founder of a city, the tribune of a people in revolt” supports Katharine Conley’s proposition, at least in the early formative years of the movement. See Aragon 6.
Caws’ “and yet” registers the power of collaboration to create such an unexpected type of freedom. Roland Barthes’ 1968 essay “The Death of the Author” declares the role played by Surrealist collaboration in a devaluing of the position of the author in favor of the position of the reader (144). As he writes, “A text is made of multiple writings […] but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, […] a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination” (148). Freedom lies in the liberation of the text from the personality of the author and in the investment of this freed multiplicity in the reader, compounding the Kristevan notion of intertextuality (those “multiple writings” within the text) in the experience of the reader. Max Ernst had expressed a similar view of the impact of Surrealism on the relationship between author, text, and audience. In “Inspiration to Order” (1932), he writes, “Since the becoming of no work which can be called absolutely surrealist is to be directed consciously by the mind […], the active share of him hitherto described as the work’s ‘author’ is suddenly abolished almost completely. This ‘author’ disclosed as being a mere spectator of the birth of the work […]” (79). Dada artists had already rehearsed this dissolution of the artist audience divide in their quest to negate the autonomy of art, for as Peter Bürger points out, Tristan Tzara and Breton had both issued instructions for writing Dadaist and Surrealist poetry in the form of recipes written for their readers, making the avant-garde work of poetry a DIY endeavor for the reader (53). The collaborative work that Breton and Soupault undertook at the nascent heart of the Surrealist enterprise, thus, opens to the collaboration of their audiences as readers.

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9 Barthes’ essay builds on the kinds of multiplicity within the work that Umberto Eco proposes in his 1962 essay “The Poetics of the Open Work,” an important text in the development of phenomenology-inflected reader-response theory.

10 This essay appeared in the English-language magazine This Quarter in a special Surrealist issue edited by Breton. It appeared the following year in French in Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution 6 (15 May 1933) as “Comment on force l’inspiration.”
In New York City, where the avant-garde influence of Surrealism took hold in the 1940s, the poets who formed the New York School – often shortlisted in its first generation as Frank O’Hara, John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, James Schuyler, and Barbara Guest – embraced collaboration with the same experimental vigor as their predecessors in Paris. O’Hara’s collaboration with Grace Hartigan, *Oranges* (1952), resulted in twelve abstract expressionist canvases in which Hartigan has painted in text from a series of prose poems O’Hara wrote for the project. The *Vermont Notebook* (1975), with text by John Ashbery and illustrations by Joe Brainard (completed *in absentia* with Ashbery sending text by mail to Brainard who then completed the drawings), recalls Éluard and Man Ray’s *Les Mains libres* (1937) in its form and combination of mediums. The writers of the New York School, like Breton and the surrealists before them, cherished their relationships to painting and painters.

In summer 1961, Koch edited a special issue of *Locus Solus*, the journal run by Ashbery, Koch, Schuyler, and Harry Mathews and named for the Surrealist precursor Raymond Roussel’s novel, dedicated solely to collaborative texts. Koch included a selection of work by surrealists, including texts by Breton, Éluard, René Char, and Yves Tanguy, as well as poets of the New York School and one painter from the second generation of that other New York School. Ashbery and Schuyler contributed selections from their collaborative novel, *A Nest of Ninnies*, composed *in praesentia*; Koch and the painter Jane Freilicher provided a short play entitled “The Car” (Freilicher completed a canvas by the same name in 1963); and O’Hara composed a poem.

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11 For a more detailed account of the influence of French Surrealism on American poetry, see Rosenbaum.

12 For a detailed analysis of this collaboration, see Diggory.
“Choses Passagères” (1955), with lines made up of French idioms in collaboration with his French-English dictionary.¹³

O’Hara’s playful take on collaboration, teaming up with a language, informs other poems that reimagine the poem as collaborative. In “Why I Am Not a Painter” (1956), O’Hara recounts, though only obliquely, the process of composing the “Oranges” collaboration with Hartigan. The poem is worth including here in full:

I am not a painter, I am a poet. Why? I think I would rather be a painter, but I am not. Well,

for instance, Mike Goldberg is starting a painting. I drop in. “Sit down and have a drink” he says. I drink; we drink. I look up. “You have SARDINES in it.” “Yes, it needed something there.” “Oh.” I go and the days go by and I drop in again. The painting is going on, and I go, and the days go by. I drop in. The painting is finished. “Where’s SARDINES?” All that’s left is just letters, “It was too much,” Mike says.

But me? One day I am thinking of a color: orange. I write a line about orange. Pretty soon it is a whole page of words, not lines. Then another page. There should be so much more, not of orange, of words, of how terrible orange is and life. Days go by. It is even in prose, I am a real poet. My poem is finished and I haven’t mentioned orange yet. It’s twelve poems, I call it ORANGES. And one day in a gallery I see Mike’s painting, called SARDINES. (*Collected* 261-2)

¹³ Andrew Epstein identifies the dictionary that O’Hara used for his collaboration as the 1951 edition of *Cassell’s French-English English-French Dictionary*. See Epstein 149.
The poem memorializes the collaboration with Hartigan, but her name is absent from the poem. Instead, composed in transient proximity to the painter Mike Goldberg at work on his own painting, “Why I Am Not a Painter” also sketches the space of a hesitant collaboration between these two, O’Hara and Goldberg. Whereas the collaboration with Hartigan falls into the category in praesentia in its creation of a composite visual text (painting and text), the encounter between O’Hara and Goldberg – one that does result, after all, in the creation of two related works – resists classification as a collaborative process and product. O’Hara’s poem and Goldberg’s painting mimic each other, one ending where the other began. O’Hara ends with words having begun with an image of a color; Goldberg’s efforts culminate in a painted image that covers the originary word, “SARDINES.” In the social atmosphere and conversational tone of O’Hara’s poem, the interaction between the two artists, neither neatly collaboration in praesentia nor in absentia, becomes (at least for O’Hara’s poem) crucial to the work’s creation. Though O’Hara’s interaction with Goldberg seems too casual to rise to the level of a collaborative intervention, O’Hara’s poetics, for which he offers the telephone conversation as a model in his “Personism: A Manifesto,” elevates the casual and the social to a critical position in his compositional practice. In O’Hara’s poetry, intertextuality arises from the social, with aspirations to collaboration. The text of the poem becomes, in the chiasmic exchange of poem and painting that O’Hara depicts, a third text of collaboration triangulated between the interactions of O’Hara-Hartigan and O’Hara-Goldberg.

14 Mark Silverberg identifies a concern for “art’s inherent sociality” as crucial to understanding the New York School’s use of collaboration. Lytle Shaw classifies the poetics of O’Hara in relation to his social milieu as one of “coterie.” See Silverberg 3 and Shaw Frank O’Hara: The Poetics of Coterie.
In the visual art world, the legacy of the New York School’s abstract expressionist painting gave way to Allan Kaprow’s happenings. Kaprow first theorized his happenings in relation to abstract expressionist painting in his 1958 essay “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,” though he likely used the name earlier in the decade for performance events at George Segal’s farm, as Judith Rodenbeck notes (8 n 12). Arguing that the scale of Pollock’s canvases made them environments, and not just flat picture planes, for his viewers, Kaprow assesses the importance of Pollock’s legacy as follows:

Pollock […] left us at the point where we must become preoccupied with and even dazzled by the space and objects of our everyday life, either our bodies, clothes, rooms, or, if need be, the vastness of Forty-second Street […] [the present generation of artists] will disclose entirely unheard-of happenings and events, found in garbage cans, police files, hotel lobbies; seen in store windows and on the street; and sensed in dreams and horrible accidents. (7-9)

So, with a nod to both a lingering Surrealist ethos of the aleatory encounter of two realms of experience and to the demise of the painter, Kaprow concludes with the accident (here, the car accident that claimed Pollock’s life). As Rodenbeck qualifies these performance events, “Bypassing the (revolutionary) psychoanalysis of surrealism and the (revolutionary) voluntarism of Dada, happenings instead adopted an experimentalist approach to art materials and art making and, in turn, to (art) experience that revealed a fundamental split between habit and consciousness” (ix). In imaging a future for his generation of artists, Kaprow takes the work of art out of the studio, gallery, or museum and places it squarely in the street while preserving, following Rodenbeck’s description, the power of the happening to critique the social forms it encountered there.

Like Breton pursuing Nadja through the streets of Paris, the unexpected encounter in a hotel lobby or on a street corner or in any other public space will now serve as the model for art and will by necessity involve the collaboration – or at least a more active engagement or
heightened awareness as audience members – of those who had previously been relegated to the comfortable safety or passivity of the audience. Johanna Drucker argues that happenings, thus, continued the avant-garde work of negating the autonomy of art, pioneered by the Dadaists, by critiquing the terms of originality, authorship, and mastery upon which narratives of modern art depended (52). As Drucker notes, an artist, such as Kaprow, may initiate the happening, but to call the collective experience of the event that artist’s work is impossible (54). Rather, the happening is a work that privileges the relation between its collaborators while resisting any claims to mastery or originality.\textsuperscript{15} As I discuss in chapter three, it is this very tension between authorship and artwork that Weiner’s own October 1969 happening, \textit{Hannah Weiner’s Open House}, manipulates, especially in the opening salvo of ownership asserted by its title.\textsuperscript{16}

Though I have stayed with collaboration on the American side of the Atlantic in what I have detailed so far, it seems important to return to Paris to note two performances from the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1958, Yves Klein began painting with women as his brushes. And, in 1964, Carolee Schneemann first staged \textit{Meat Joy}, with its embodied improvisations and mix of performance and ritual, in the French capital. Both performances reoriented the role of participants in the work from a theatrical context of actors to a performance context of participation. There are also resemblances between the happenings and Meret Oppenheim’s

\textsuperscript{15} Judith Rodenbeck cautions that to privilege the relational, collaborative nature of the early happenings is to “glide over the discomfiture, social awkwardness, and even violence of the happenings […] and eliminate consideration of the significant material aspects, from props to documents, of the works” (11). I account for the power of the material document in my discussion of Weiner’s happening in chapter three.

\textsuperscript{16} Weiner’s complication of the form’s structural non-ownership is appropriately decadent for a Happening staged after the initial period of the form’s invention. As Drucker points out, the most potent period for the confrontation that Happenings presented to art practice was from 1958 through the early 1960s. See Drucker 58.
Spring Banquet, a clandestine dinner party that she later restaged for the Surrealist EROS exhibition in Paris in 1959, which I discuss in part two. Though the restaging places the work squarely in the realm of Surrealism with its intermingling of ritual, death, and desire (much like in Peter Greenaway’s 1989 film The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover, set in a theatricalized restaurant), the secretive nature of the original performance, and its unreliable photographic and textual documentation, brings it closer to the happenings, and to Weiner’s Open House. Rodenbeck points out that Jean-Jacques Lebel, the primary director of French happenings, channeled his energy into “violent erotic-political agitation” that dovetailed with the protests of May 1968 (13).

Like Kaprow’s happenings, the engagement of audience members as participants and full collaborators in the work was important to the work of the Fluxus group, as well. Marcel Duchamp insisted on the audience’s role in completing a work of art in his 1957 lecture, “The Creative Act,” in which he champions the spectator’s work of interpretation as complimenting the artist’s work of creation. What he calls the “art coefficient” of the work is derived from the differential space between those two acts (139). As Andreas Huyssen describes the history of the group and its fluid membership, Fluxus first began in New York City in a neo-Dada spirit with events organized by George Maciunas at his AG Gallery before his move to West Germany where Fluxus gained international momentum (142). Though, as Kristine Stiles points out, Fluxus performances often lacked a direct participatory role for the audience (70), the

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17 Stiles makes clear the contextual role Duchamp’s essay played in the critical approach to the “open work” in the period and in the development reader-response criticism’s active reader in the period following. See Stiles 67.

18 Huyssen elucidates the problematics of avant-garde identification in the period. See Huyssen 142-3.
performances that did target a viewer or reader as participant represent an important
development in modes of avant-garde collaboration.

Instead of directly participatory performances like the happenings, many Fluxus artists
explored the power of language to involve both artist and audience in the work. In France, for
example, Ben Vautrier staged Fluxus works that, as was typical, placed language at the center of
visual art practice. His events, like the 1962 Ben écrit sur les murs, in which Vautrier filmed
himself in a street painting those words on a wall, push language toward the condition of
Austin’s performative. Elsewhere, the influence of John Cage’s work in musical composition
inspired a new form in the work of George Brecht, who in 1959 introduced the idea of an “event
score” (Stiles 66). Brecht’s scores consisted of pared down language, sometimes with only a
title and list of words, that he sent on cards through the mail. The instructional mode of many of
these scores recalls Tristan Tzara’s 1920 instructions for a Dada poem, replacing the aleatory
cut-up technique of Tzara’s poem with a series of other actions. One of Yoko Ono’s event
scores, Map Piece (1964) reads simply, “Draw a map to get lost” (Ono n.p.). The poet and artist
Jackson Mac Low, a friend of Weiner’s and student of Cage’s at the New School along with
Kaprow and Brecht, created complex scores for both the performance and composition of texts
based on chance encounters with language and sound. He called these works “doings” that, when
published in a collection of that title, Mac Low intended to act as a sourcebook of scores for the
creation of new texts by future artists (Doings 16). The use of language in Fluxus to score a
performance or to give instructions to an audience made the movement an important arena for
the participation of women artists. As Kathy O’Dell observes, in the use of language to score a
performance, “the activation of the body is implicit, if not totally explicit” (“Fluxus” 45),

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19 For Cage’s approach to composition, see Cage “Composition as Process.”
allowing for the union of the bodily (traditionally relegated to the realm of women) and the
textual (typically relegated to the realm of men) in Fluxus performance.\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{Collaboration and Clairvoyance}

Duchamp’s “The Creative Act” repeats the Bretonian trope of the artist as a medium in
the creation of the work and again makes reference to the “séances de rêves éveillés” in which
the Surrealist collective gathered together, convened to the scene of collaboration. In the early
sessions of surrealist automatic writing, the first of which took place on September 25, 1922,
Desnos’s facility for writing, speaking, and drawing while asleep enthralled the other surrealists.
Often identifying himself as Robespierre in these early automatic \textit{séances}, Desnos became, as
Conley puts it, “what Breton had been looking for, a spokesman for the collectively creative
efforts of surrealism” (\textit{Robert Desnos} 20). The declaration of different personae in the messages
received during the sleeps heightens the collaborative nature of this collective work: not only did
the surrealists collaborate together for these \textit{séances}, but the medium-poet collaborated with
different parts of his own self, as well. Surrealist automatism, thus, expanded upon Rimbaud’s
declaration that “Je est un autre” in proliferating the interior selves of the artist and the physical
collaborators in the act of creation. Writing of Desnos’s hypnotic sleeps later in \textit{Nadja}
Breton qualifies the scene of those sleeps as assuming “la value absolue d’oracle” (36). Simone Breton,
André’s wife, described Desnos in feminine terms due to his talent for automatic writing,
comparing him to the Greek sibyls, female oracles who prophesied at holy shrines (Conley

\textsuperscript{20} Despite this importance of the linguistic register to Fluxus activities, Hannah Higgins cautions
against a focus on the linguistic at the expense of extralinguistic qualities of Fluxus work. See
Higgins 12 and 148.
Robert Desnos 29). The parts of the psyche at work in surrealist automatic writing are irrational and non-Cartesian, Conley reminds, and so gendered as feminine.

Cahun herself deployed a clairvoyant pose in both her photographs and her texts. In portraits, she often posed as blind with her eyes closed or covered, like the seer Tireisias gifted with second sight. In one portrait, Cahun wears goggles whose lenses have been covered. In her writings from and about her imprisonment for resistance on Jersey, Cahun claims the title of Cassandra, the clairvoyant Trojan princess-priestess, as her own. In an undated series, Le Chemin des chats, taken in the years after the release of Cahun and Moore from Nazi imprisonment, Cahun walks along a sea wall built by the occupying German army, blinded by an eye mask and guided by her cat on a leash. The photographs in this series include short, visionary texts that reference Nike, the ancient Greek goddess of victory. However, it is in the Aveux non aveus that Cahun relates this blind second sight directly to the surrealist interest in the hypnagogic image (38). And it is in the shifting dreamscape of this “autobiographical” text that Cahun enacts her photographic masquerades in prose, becoming one persona and then another, implying a cacophonous collaboration of her many selves in the work of autobiography.

In two foundational documents of Surrealism, “Le Message automatique” and “L’Entrée des médiums,” Breton made an explicit link between his movement and a prehistory of nineteenth-century spiritualism.21 In “Entrée des médiums,” a section of Les Pas perdus (1922), Breton refers to the practice of automatic writing as a “magic dictation” (275). Yet, if those nineteenth-century predecessors believed they had made contact with spirits, as Victor Hugo

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believed he had in contacting his daughter, whose death he memorialized in the sonnet “Demain, dès l’aube,” Breton’s automatism makes contact with the unconscious. Conley names this resurrection of the trope of the medium, denuded of its spiritualism in favor of the Freudian vocabulary important to surrealism, the source of “surrealist ghostliness” (*Surrealist 1*).

However, in “Le Message automatique,” and in contradiction to the automatic language that he had attributed to aspects of his own personality in his two manifestoes, Breton assigns another personality, that of a child, to a message he receives from his own mind while drifting off to sleep (15). The emergence of this kind of persona from within the artist’s mind recalls the visionary pose of Cahun in the passage from the *Aveux* cited above.

The attribution of the “automatic message” to the personality of an interior other typifies the logic of the Surrealist encounter with the marvelous in everyday and psychic life. But it also renovates the field of collaborative possibility, opening the path to O’Hara’s playful collaboration with the French language itself in “Choses Passagères.” The collaborative nature of the spiritualist séance was already clear to Hugo, who asked his spirit table for permission to publish its words before preparing his *Livre des tables*. Of this awareness of a language that does not belong to the author, Aragon wrote of Surrealist efforts to reduce sensation and experience to their single-word quintessence: “*Absolute nominalism* was dazzlingly exemplified in surrealism and it gradually dawned on us that the mental substance described above was, in fact, vocabulary itself. *There is no thought outside words […]*” (*Wave 5*). For Aragon, the unconscious forces at work within the artist, which he gathers together in the locution “mental substance,” are the forces of language itself, of a psychic vocabulary rearranging itself into new and unexpected messages. In Jean Cocteau’s film *Orphée* (1950), the eponymous poet played by

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22 See Patrice Boivin’s preface in Hugo *Le Livre des tables*. 
Jean Marais receives lines of poetry dictated to him over the radio waves of his car radio by his young, defunct rival, Cégeste. Though produced after the formative decade of surrealism and outside the surrealist movement itself, Cocteau’s film does reveal the influence of a similar conception of language and poetic inspiration.

In the United States, Cocteau’s influence arrived on the West Coast in the poetry of Jack Spicer (1925-1965), whose work begins in the Berkeley Renaissance in the post-war 1940s. Spicer’s 1957 book, *After Lorca*, is an epistolary collaboration with the title’s deceased Spanish poet, complete with an introduction “by” Spicer’s ghostly correspondent. By the time of his death, Spicer had developed a theory of poetic “dictation,” echoing Breton’s description of automatism, that he outlined in several lectures near the end of his life delivered in Vancouver and Berkeley in June and July 1965. In the first of his Vancouver lectures, “Dictation and ‘A Textbook of Poetry’,” Spicer traces his thinking back to the influence of Yeats’ spiritualist poetry from 1918, when Yeats was visited by what Spicer calls “spooks” through the medium of his wife, Georgie (*House*). From Yeats’ example, Spicer concludes that the acknowledged source of poetic inspiration must shift from a Romantic model of interior expression to one in which “there was something from the Outside coming in” (24). Spicer refuses to define this “Outside” in the lecture and goes on to reference Cocteau’s film directly by using the metaphor of Orphée’s car radio as an example of the poet “being transmitted into” (26).

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23 Spicer claimed 1946, the year in which he met the other members of the Berkeley Renaissance, Robert Duncan and Robin Blaser, as the year of his birth, emphasizing the importance of the collective endeavor to his life and work afterward. See Peter Gizzi’s introduction to Spicer *The House that Jack Built: The Collected Lectures of Jack Spicer* 14.

24 The influence of Cocteau’s film is evident in Spicer’s poetry, as well, in the dedication of the three parts of the 1960 sequence “Homage to Creeley” to three of the characters from the film. See Spicer *My Vocabulary* 249-80.
Spicer delivered the last of his lectures in Berkeley at the 1965 Berkeley Poetry Conference which gathered poets from Donald Allen’s *New American Poetry* anthology (1960), and which drew the attendance of other poets from across the country, including Hannah Weiner. Though it is unknown if Weiner attended Spicer’s lecture, her own poetic clairvoyance, unique as it is, belongs to a common heritage. Both experience the poem as antagonistic to authorial control, or as Spicer describes it, “these poems say just exactly the opposite of what he wants himself, *per se* poet, to say” (26). Jennifer Russo draws the distinction between Spicer’s “dictation” and Weiner’s “clairvoyance” as one defined by concern for the source of the messages. As she explains, Spicer is more concerned with the playful metaphors (e.g. spooks, Martians) that deflate the seriousness of discussions of poetics while Weiner aims to combine the popular and the spiritual in her clair-style texts (81). If Spicer’s dictation requires the poet to “try to keep as much of yourself out of the poem” (*House* 32), Weiner’s favored form, the journal, makes the mix of autobiographical and clairvoyant material necessary to her own procedure.

Despite these differences, if a readerly adherence to belief in Weiner’s powers (spiritual and poetic) convenes a collective of clairvoyant readers (as I discuss further in chapter three), Spicer, too, takes an interest in the power of poetry to forge collective experience. In his third Vancouver lecture in 1965, “Poetry in Process and Book of Magazine Verse,” Spicer examples this collective work by reversing the format of the lecture. Instead of speaking to his audience, he asks that they begin by asking him questions that might make him uncomfortable about a new poem that he is writing (102-03). In Peter Gizzi and Kevin Killian’s introduction to Spicer’s *Collected Poetry*, the two write that the triumph of Spicer’s work is not found in “a declared goal but the gathering of a community for a potentially endless adventure in reading” (xxi). As for the surrealists, the work of writing poetry is the collective work of the revolutionary group, but in
Spicer’s work, as in Weiner’s role as both a student of and as a “silent teacher,” this collectivity extends to the future (and potentially infinite, to take Gizzi and Killian at their critical word) work of readers reading, as well.

Surrealist automatism, the radio-poems in *Orphée*, Hugo’s spiritualist texts, Spicer’s dictation, Weiner’s clairvoyance, Barthes’s model of the reader: each remind us that death is a structural term necessary to the work of collaboration, and not its conditional limit. Cahun, Weiner, and their associates, breach a boundary that the other poets and artists in this brief history of collaboration and clairvoyance leave intact, however intrepid their experimentation. What becomes important throughout the chapters that follow is the incorporation of other selves into the self (and even the body) of the artist before that collaboration can be inscribed into an art work and projected outward to its audience. For the artists in this study, collaboration cannot be reduced to the reception of a message; it is, rather, a negotiation of reception, incorporation, and projection, over a period of time marked by absence. Only this constitutive absence can account for the performative power of the work to convene future collaborators out of its audiences.

*Women Artists, the Avant-Garde, and Collaboration*

In this dissertation, my approach to identifying the work and works of collaboration that I investigate takes on a necessarily feminist posture. Though the questions I pose are not exclusively feminist ones, each of the artists whose works I examine in the following chapters engage with the role of the body of private, interior experience in the artwork. These are decidedly feminist concerns in the history of modernism. As critic Kathleen Fraser writes, modernist women poets reimagine the artistic endeavor in the role of the “the poet as bearer of
uncertainty.” The artists in my study each prove this claim. Situating these women historically, Fraser asks, “What of female experience and interior talk, could be brought into the poem and called legitimate” (98). For Fraser, working in her own critical vocabulary rooted in the bodily experience of poetry, this mistrust for the “overbearing voices of the world” which would devalue such poetic material, is left as an incomplete equation to be “overheard” by the reader. Further, my own situation and experience as critic, with a body and in a specific historical time, registers the resonance of these concerns as my focus in identifying a performative mode of collaboration turns to the act of reading or viewing the work.

Griselda Pollock, in her work on the avant-garde, both alone and in collaboration with Fred Orton, has asserted an historical model for understanding avant-garde groups that resists narratives of progress in the development of modernist art. In an essay on the role of women within the avant-garde, Pollock “challeng[es] the linear temporality associated with the avant-garde as the progressive as well as transgressive agency of modernist culture” to suggest a historical model based on discontinuous avant-garde “moments” (“Moments” 796). These “moments” coalesce, according to Pollock (and Orton), “at the historical point when a specific kind of self-consciousness within a distinctive group emerges to foster identification between members of a self-selecting group or a collection of mutually-referencing groups” (800). Pollock’s alterative model of the avant-garde speaks to similar critiques of Bürger made by Benjamin Buchloh and Hal Foster. For Buchloh, Bürger’s argument is reductive in its privileging of the destruction of the art institution as the avant-garde’s defining aim (19), and for

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25 Bürger reassesses his work in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, as well as its reception by his critics in a 2010 essay. Though I am partial to arguments for the identification of avant-garde activity in its neo-avant-garde iterations, Bürger does offer a strong a critique of Foster’s use of a psychoanalytic framework to explain historical processes. See Bürger “Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde” 710.
both he and Foster, Bürger’s dismissal of the neo-avant-gardes of the later twentieth century fails to account for the influence of the historic Avant-Garde in those later iterations. Pollock’s notion of “moments” serves as a remedy for the dismissal of other forms of avant-garde activity after the historical inter-war period.\(^\text{26}\)

The time of the recurrence of a performative mode of collaboration in the work of these artists, from the Surrealist milieu of Cahun, Oppenheim, and Zürn to the New York milieu of Weiner, Mayer, and Piper, is similar to the cyclical time of repetition (the temporal condition of Pollock’s moments) that Pollock derives from the work of Julia Kristeva. And, though Weiner, Mayer, and Piper remain on the edges of such an avant-garde moment, Pollock identifies a specifically feminist avant-garde moment around 1970 in New York City. Weiner seems to refer cheekily to this moment in \textit{silent teachers remembered sequel} when she writes that her introduction into the art world in the mid- to late-1960s brought her into contact with “the musicians, performers, pop artists, and lesbians and poets of that time” (69), a list of the artists who would have been involved with the avant-garde work of Fluxus, conceptualism, and performance art as well as a group (“lesbians”) defined by their gender and sexual orientation. O’Dell’s reminder in her assessment of the role of women in Fluxus of the historical juxtaposition of the bodily as the domain of women and the textual as the domain of men emphasizes the feminist stakes of a project such as this one that interrogates the nexus of a

\(^{26}\) Mike Sell, similarly to Foster and to Pollock respectively, suggests 1) that the avant-garde returns from the future and moves ahead into it simultaneously and that 2) the avant-garde forms as a response to the conditions of a crisis (and not in an act of progressive unfolding of an identity). Sell thus proposes that scholars ask the question, “What is the avant-garde,” from the perspective of a “situation-oriented methodology” like that used by performance scholars to assess what is already considered part of the avant-garde and what might come to be. See Sell 759-68.
performance’s power to work performatively on readers through a text, putting these two prejudices on the “collision course” that O’Dell sees in Fluxus (“Fluxus” 45).

In the course of her argument, Pollock juxtaposes the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) curator Alfred Barr’s famous flow chart representing the development of modern art with Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a collage-encyclopedia that combines visual forms with the modes of sociality that inform them, a concern that Barr’s chart cannot display. Barr’s erasures in the service of the rationalizing of art history suppress the violent and startling social and political upheavals of the century, from war, fascism, and the Popular Front to worker’s and women’s movements and beyond to the Holocaust and AIDS crisis. A recent work by the artist Andrea Geyer entitled *Revolt, They Said* (2012, ongoing), installed at MoMA in 2015, presents the viewer with a complicated mural line drawing, a nexus of connections between women involved in the twentieth century history of the museum and the New York art world. The curved lines and multi-directional trajectories of Geyer’s map of a female modernism are at odds with the sharp angles and orthogonal lines of Barr’s chart. Geyer’s field is also crowded with names, resisting the reduction and linear temporality of Barr’s logic in favor of Pollock’s moment-oriented temporality and socio-political mindfulness. On Geyer’s map, even Planned Parenthood has its place, and unexpected names find themselves in proximity. Though not concerned with the identification of avant-garde moments per se, the drawing installation reworks Barr’s flow chart into a nodal web of women and the organizations or collaborative groups that they started, including political and social groupings alongside artistic ones.

Most broadly, a feminist slant in my critical perspective is evident in the attention I give to artists who privilege the place of the body, either the artist’s or the reader-viewer’s, in the
work. This subject is well studied by feminist critics, and my project follows on the important feminist work of recovery, like the kind of archival work Geyer performs in Revolt, They Said, that returned several of the six artists in this study to critical attention, in particular Cahun and Weiner, but so, too, Oppenheim and Zürn. Mayer and Piper, both still living and working, prove a happy exception to this trend for the celebration of their work in their own lifetimes, despite what other inequalities may have impacted their work over the course of their careers. Rosalind Krauss, in Bachelors, a look at the criteria by which we judge art by women artists, begins her study with the assertion that “art made by women needs no special pleading” (50). Gayatri Spivak, as well, flatly defends a project that takes all (or nearly all) of its examples from the work of women artists (Death 70). As she concludes, there is no other justification than “because women are not a special case, but can represent the human, with the asymmetries attendant upon any such representation” (70). I conceive of this dissertation as a work of curation, and not one of a history of these artists. The collaboration that I imagine between Cahun and Weiner in a first instance, and the possibility of collaboration with Oppenheim, Zürn, Mayer, and Piper in a second instance, is a work of my own convocation and arrangement. And part of my argument will arrive at a questioning of the place of the curator-critic in the relationship between these artists once such an impossible collaboration has been convened.

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27 For two example texts relevant to this project, see Jennifer Blessing A Rose Is A Rose Is A Rose: Gender Performance in Photography and Amelia Jones Body Art: Performing the Subject.

28 François Leperlier brought Cahun’s work to the attention of art historians and the public in France in the 1980s. Weiner’s growing reputation is largely attributable to the work of a handful of critics, most notably Patrick Durgin.
The three chapters that comprise part one place Cahun and Weiner in dialogic, collaborative contact. Chapter one examines the relationship of the reader to two autobiographic texts, Cahun’s *Aveux non avenus* and Weiner’s *Clairvoyant Journal*. Cahun first proposes Narcissus as a model for her own play of mirroring in her text, as well as for her collaborative relationship with Moore. Adopting psychoanalytic and phenomenological approaches defined by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Simone Weil, and Kathleen Fraser, I offer Narcissus as a model of collaboration in the act of looking at, reading, and constructing these texts. I posit that Cahun and Weiner expand the notion of the autobiographical to include the reader, imagining both the author and reader as partners in the creation of the artwork.

Chapter two takes up Narcissus’ complimentary figure, Echo, as a model for the role of affect in the relationship between the work and its reader or viewer. I detail the ways in which Cahun’s *Héroïnes* and Weiner’s *Code Poems* subvert the impersonal formal devices that structure these works. I argue that, through Echo-like repetition and citation, Cahun and Weiner use visual and literary codes to signal an address to their reader-viewers. Both artists adopt unusual forms of address to create a sense of agitation and anxiety in their audiences, drawing them into the work through an affective response.

The conventions of hospitality and a discursive mode of invitation unite Cahun and Weiner’s works in chapter three. I argue, in the tradition of J.L. Austin’s linguistic performatives, that photographic self-portraits of Cahun and Weiner form a contract of invitation with reader-viewers. Included in literary texts about domestic and political life, these self-images “invite” reading or viewing audience’s into the artist’s home. In so doing, these images offer reader-viewers a role to play in the creation of new iterations of past performances. I conclude that the performative nature of these documents allows Cahun and Weiner to establish political
legacies for future audiences that defy gendered norms of domestic, political, and artistic activity.

In part two, I reciprocate the invitation I received from the performative address of Cahun and Weiner’s works by inviting four more artists into the collaborative space I curate in this dissertation. Whereas in the chapters of the preceding section I imagined a dialogue between the work of Cahun and Weiner, in the chapters that follow I consult the work of these four artists associated with either Cahun, Weiner, or their avant-garde moments, each in turn. Meret Oppenheim and Unica Zürn arrive from Cahun’s Surrealist Paris and, like Cahun, from its geographic and historical fringes; Bernadette Mayer and Adrian Piper, two artists born in the boroughs of New York City, return us to Hannah Weiner’s New York of the 1960s and 1970s. The chapters of part two interrogate in greater detail the readerly role in the collaborative endeavor. The order of the chapters loosely pairs these artists at diagonals across time and space, drawing out similarities in the criticism or reading of Oppenheim and Mayer’s works and resemblances in the incorporation or rejection of the Other in the work of Zürn and Piper.

In a chapter on the paucity of photographic documentation surrounding the multiple iterations of Meret Oppenheim’s *Spring Banquet*, I elaborate on the contemporary viewer or critic’s impairment in encountering this documentation of a past performance. To do so, I offer two critical frames, one in deploying Barthes’ notion of a clandestine pleasure of reading from *The Pleasure of the Text* and another in retrospectively applying Hito Steyerl’s commentary on the “poverty” of the digital image in the contemporary regime of copying and circulating images on the Internet to photographs of Oppenheim’s work. A chapter on Bernadette Mayer’s early installation *Memory* situates the viewer similarly, in a work of reconstitution of Mayer’s memory as documented in photographs and a recorded text. By considering the multiple iterations of
Memory as an installation and later book edition, I reveal the paradoxical place of the reader as a collaborative partner in reconstructing Mayer’s memories, cast between lyric expressivity and conceptual anti-expressivity. Both chapters engage with the spaces opened by the artists’ uses of photography and the limitations of what we can know of the work or the artist through the photograph.

Returning to the Surrealist milieu, I investigate Unica Zürn’s psychic experiences and “madness” through a bifocal lens of friendship and sculptural folds, derived form Cahun’s writing in Amor amicitiae and Deleuze’s theory of the Baroque fold. The fold accounts for the incorporation of an absent other into Zürn’s texts and very self. Incorporation recurs as a subdued but important motif in the work of Adrian Piper. Her own encounters with others become the occasion to interrogate the important place she makes for the indexical present – what she describes as the experience of the “here and now” – in her early work. In drawing on the apparatus of Barthes’ lecture notes on the concept of idiorhythm, I focus on the antagonisms and absences that mark this indexical presence in the collaborative encounter with the other. In concluding, I return to the work of Émile Benveniste to schematize the place of the reader, artist, and artwork in a subjectifying field opened by the work of collaboration. I argue that though the critic may curate such a collaboration as the one between Cahun and Weiner in part one, once such a collaboration has been identified, the critic finds his or her own position destabilized by the performative effects of such an object of study.
Part One
Chapter One.
Narcissus’ Veil: The Phenomenology of Collaboration in
Cahun’s *Aveux non avenus* and Weiner’s *Clairvoyant Journal*

There is a rock pool on the estate, left wild like English gardens or the uncultivated
landscape along the rest of the Jersey coast, where they have gone today to take pictures. It is
the late 1930s on a small island, a British protectorate, off the coast of France in the English
Channel, where Cahun and Moore have just moved from Paris. While Cahun takes her clothes
off and stretches out along the edge of the water, Moore sets up her camera, angling the device
to capture Cahun’s exaggerated pose. As Moore shoots, Cahun pauses briefly, propped on her
elbows – she has just caught a reflection in the pool, an elongated face, a long thin nose, sharply
shaped eyebrows. And what color is her hair today? Blonde, not pink like she dyed it when she
was in her twenties and early thirties, in Paris. It is her own visage in the pool and she stops,
furtively turning to exchange a glance with Moore before returning to her reflection, fascinated
for another moment, as she ever is by her own fugitive image.

She laughs as she steadies her elbow against the mirror, tracing the words across her
forehead, carefully reversing them to account for the reverse image of her reflection. It is the
1970s, early in the decade, in New York City. Weiner turns, smiling, to her photographer and
stares deep into the small black aperture of his camera. The reflection that the lens returns
seems so foreign, she thinks someone else must be looking back at her. Another person. In the
lens, she sees herself, but wonders at the distance between that reflection and her experience
hallucinating words as a conduit for dictated poetic messages. In her reflection, she reads across
her forehead, I SEE WORDS.

In this chapter, I sound the depths – or the shallows, as might better serve here as a figure
of speech – of narcissism, or, in other words, of the deployment by Cahun and Weiner of figures
and forms derived from the myth of Narcissus, in particular the mirror that acts as a screen for Narcissus’ self-image. I argue that this formal and thematic engagement with narcissism in Cahun and Weiner’s texts and images proposes a collaboration of estrangement in which distance from a collaborative other founds the shared work of creation. In doing so, I turn to phenomenological approaches to the text, informed by Merleau-Ponty (and his psychoanalytic influences) and the French mystic and philosopher Simone Weil.

In Ovid’s telling, the still water acts as mirror but also, once “troubled” by the tear that falls from Narcissus’ cheek, as a veil or screen that hides the desired image. Oscar Wilde’s 1894 prose-poem prolongation of the myth seizes on the mutability of the figure of the mirror/veil to recount what happens once Narcissus has died. Cahun’s early unpublished manuscript “Les Jeux uraniens,” or “Amor amicitiae,” includes epigraphs from Wilde’s lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, whose name provided one of her early pseudonyms, Daniel Douglas. Wilde himself, an associate of Cahun’s uncle Marcel Schwob, was undoubtedly an influence on Cahun’s work. Here is Wilde’s poem, entitled “The Disciple”:

When Narcissus died the pool of his pleasure changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, and the Oreads came weeping through the woodland that they might sing to the pool and give it comfort.

And when they saw that the pool had changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, they loosened the green tresses of their hair and cried to the pool and said, “We do not wonder that you should mourn in this manner for Narcissus, so beautiful was he.”

“But was Narcissus beautiful?” said the pool.

“Who should know that better than you?” answered the Oreads. “Us did he ever pass by, but you he sought for, and would lie on your banks and look down at you, and in the mirror of your waters he would mirror his own beauty.”

And the pool answered, “But I loved Narcissus because, as he lay on my banks and looked down at me, in the mirror of his eyes I saw ever my own beauty mirrored.”
I quote the poem in its entirety for it provides this chapter with a set of formal figures that will help me to define a poetic narcissism developed by Cahun and Weiner that paradoxically opens the narcissistic relation to others, and indeed, to collaborative voices. In Wilde’s telling, the pool replaces the absent Narcissus as agent of narcissism. If in Ovid’s telling, the mirror transformed into veil, here mirror mirrors mirror, and caught in the funhouse hallway of these visual echos, a group of others emerges from the trees: the Oreads. I, him, you, us, we — the pronouns proliferate, as in Cahun’s images and texts so often organized around mirrors and mirror images. The very transformation of the pool into the speaking subject of the poem multiplies the subjects of narcissism, giving voice to the fantasized image in the infinity of reflections between the pool and Narcissus’ eyes.

Between the veiling at work in Ovid’s version as Narcissus’ image is obscured by the movement of the water and the exchange of mirror images between the pool and Narcissus in Wilde’s version, the narcissism encountered in work by Cahun and Weiner emphasizes the formal stakes and transformations of the mediating surface that comes between the subject and his or her image. The mutability of the narcissistic surface, in this reading, comes to imply another subject on the other side of the veil or mirror who looks back at Narcissus. Narcissus’ mirror, thus, becomes an interface for an exchange between subjects rather than a site of projection for one subject’s fantasized image.

Cahun’s 1930 book Aveux non avenus engages with the terms of narcissistic self-interest in its combination of photographic portraits from the 1920s, cut up and arranged in complicated photomontages with the help of Moore, and an autobiographical style influenced by Symbolism. Encouraged by Adrienne Monnier, avant-garde publisher and lover of Sylvia Beach, to write an autobiographical journal, Cahun composed the Aveux only to find rejection from her colleague
who had expected a straightforward work in the confessional mode. The complicated word play of the title, translated alternately into English as “Denials,” “Disavowals,” or “Canceled Confessions,” hints at Cahun’s rejection of the transparently autobiographical. As Tirza True Latimer writes, “[…] denial offered a backhanded way of affirming the literary and personal choices that had marginalized women writers generally, and Cahun specifically, with respect to Paris’s literary society” (“Narcissus” 82). In the simultaneous affirmation and subversion of the myth of Narcissus, to which I turn below, this valorization of the very choices that marginalized women finds its illustration within the Aveux itself:

Weiner’s Clairvoyant Journal, composed in her journals throughout 1974 in her “clairvoyant” style of words that she hallucinated or received from outside voices (by her own description), appeared in print in 1978. In her long statement of poetics, “Mostly about the Sentence,” Weiner describes how a new electric typewriter purchased in that year allowed her to develop the method of transcription for her “clair-style:” her words appear in lowercase letters and the words she received as psychic messages appear in italics and underlined (127). Patrick Durgin, in his introduction to a digital edition of Weiner’s journals, points out her interest in Magritte’s use of mirror images in his paintings (attested to by her early chapbook The Magritte Poems, published in 1970) as well as the phenomenological stakes of Weiner’s translation of a mental image to the page (“Avant-Garde” 12-4). To this engagement with phenomenological readings of Weiner’s accomplishment, I add the nuance of the French Jewish philosopher and mystic Simone Weil’s own idiosyncratic phenomenology, as laid out in the posthumously published fragments in Gravity and Grace. Narcissism proves to be a common trope both within

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29 Tirza True Latimer gives these details in a chapter on Cahun and Moore, see Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris 82-3.
Cahun’s text as well as in the critical commentary on it, but does not appear in commentary on Weiner’s *Journal*, to that critical corpus’s detriment – an absence that can be filled by a phenomenological opening onto the formal structures of the myth of Narcissus.

Simone Weil enters the coterie of this study through the intensity of her intellectual, artistic, and spiritual pursuits. Like Cahun and Weiner’s experiments that took them to the extremity of subjectivity, Weil’s sounding of profound moral, philosophical, and mystic depths aligns her project with the intellectual adventure Cahun and Weiner undertake. The intensity of the lives lived by these three women might also be expressed in a shared compulsion toward eating/not-eating. Weil died from a form of self-starvation while in exile from Nazi-occupied France in England. Cahun, as Georgiana Colville notes in her article “Self-Representation as Symptom: The Case of Claude Cahun,” suffered from anorexia. And, in *The Fast* (1970), Weiner fastidiously tracks the food she eats and its effect on her somatic state during an early period of hallucinations.

Born to a French Jewish family in 1909, Weil worked on the political left as an activist and philosopher before her early death in exile from Nazi-Occupied France in 1943. As with Cahun and Weiner, her Jewish milieu was more secular than religious, though mystical experience occupies an important place in her thought. Her ruminations on Christian mysticism appeared posthumously in the volume *Gravity and Grace*, wherein she develops an idiosyncratic phenomenology around the figure of the screen to describe the co-existence of the divine and the profane.

In *Gravity and Grace*, the screen functions variously, as figure of separation between the divine and the material worlds but also as metaphor for the self. At first, Weil writes, “Necessity is the screen set between God and us so that we can be. It is for us to pierce through the screen so
that we cease to be” (33). The work of piercing through this screen, for Weil, is one of renunciation of the ego, and this renunciation leads Weil to the formulation of the concept of decreation. Weil defines decreation as the making of something created to pass into the “uncreated,” unlike the concept of destruction that passes matter from something-ness into “nothingness” (32). For poet and critic Anne Carson, the concept, poorly defined by Weil, relates to similar work by the thirteenth-century French mystic Marguerite Porete on “a profoundly tricky spiritual fact, viz. that I cannot go towards God without bringing myself along” (“Decreation” 169). Porete, according to Carson, discovers that one can therefore never be truly alone with God and frames this notion in terms of Weil’s focus on perception, specifically the idea that the perceiver must “disappear from herself in order to look” (169). All of this occasions such a terms as “decreation” in the need for the destruction of the ego in order to dwell with the divine.\footnote{In a companion poetic sequence to this essay on Weil, Porete, and Sappho, Carson writes a libretto based on the three women’s lives and works. In the “Decreation Aria,” Carson’s Weil, alone and in an empty place, sings, “I am excess. / Flesh. / Brain. / Breath. / […] / Undo this creature! / Excess. / Flesh. / Brain. / Breath. / Creature. / Undo this creature.” See Carson “Decreation (An Opera in Three Parts)” 235.}

Weil establishes a link between human beings and God who, in her words, “[…] gives [creation] to us in order to beg it from us” (32). The physical world of Creation, then, becomes an equation, a negotiation, between God and “us.” Later, writing of the physical realm of perception, Weil asserts, “Everything which is grasped by our natural faculties is hypothetical. It is only supernatural love that establishes anything. Thus we are co-creators” (33). In the relationship of co-creators, Weil establishes a collaborative view of the physical world’s creation, one based on both the distance and reciprocity of the relationship. A distant intimacy is essential to this collaborative mode of creation.
Of Weil and Porete’s work, as well as poems by Sappho, Carson asks, “[H]ow are we to square these dark ideas [of decreation] with the brilliant self-assertiveness of the writerly project shared by all three of them, the project of telling the world the truth about God, love and reality?” (“Decreation” 171). Carson proposes that we cannot square them, that indeed the condition of being a writer demands “important acts of subterfuge or contradiction.” Yet, Weil tells us how to square them: by subterfuge and contradiction, yes, but also by the relationship between co-creators. The collaborative work under discussion in my project founds itself on the same contradictions Carson identifies in the writerly projects of Sappho, Porete, and Weil – namely, the notion that two creators might fuse their artistic spirits, or efforts, to create a work strange to their individual minds, all the while maintaining a distance, an estrangement, from one another. The “strange collaboration” of Weiner’s “clair-style” works, upon which Jennifer Russo elaborates in her article “Hannah Weiner’s Book in Air: Clairvoyant Journal and Clair-style Poems,” becomes in my formulation not only a collaboration of strangers but a collaboration, too, from a spatio-temporal distance and with the other.

In considering the formal performance of narcissism on the page, I assert that the myth of Narcissus as told by Wilde and by Ovid in his Metamorphoses (influential texts for Cahun) presents a rich formal vocabulary for Cahun and Weiner’s staging of collaboration. This formal vocabulary allows these two artists to indulge their fascination with their own selves and experiences in autobiographical texts while simultaneously creating artworks that implicate their readers as essential partners in the work’s completion or activation. Resisting both the closed circuit of narcissistic desire and the total, anti-narcissistic obliteration of the ego as advocated by Weil, Cahun and Weiner’s works open a middle space marked by successive transformations of the narcissistic mirror – specifically through the recurring, mutable image of the mirror, screen,
and veil. Paradoxically, the works of Cahun and Weiner propose a collaborative venture founded in estrangement: first, in the Surrealist sense of making strange through the fusion, or juxtaposition, of unlike elements, and second, in the sense of distancing, of making a text a stranger to the individual voices that created it. Collaboration, then, when viewed through the lens of the formal and phenomenological problematics of Narcissus’ myth and its retellings, does not only unite, but also separates.

II. Narcissus in Weil and Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenologies

In the catalogue for the Guggenheim’s 1997 exhibit *Rrose is a Rrose is a Rrose: Gender Performance and Photography*, Jennifer Blessing writes, “The recognition of oneself in a photograph can serve to define oneself, to create an identifiable and distinct subject. This is the narcissistic pleasure of the mirror, in which we reassure ourselves of our existence” (51-3). Photograph, mirror, Narcissus’ pool: so many pleasing surfaces. But the photograph does not always reassure, nor does it necessarily cohere around a distinct subject as in the smooth reflection of a mirrored surface. Blessing’s description of a photograph that solidifies the boundaries of the subject stops short of how the photograph might otherwise put the subject into play with other subjects. And so, to this first list of surfaces, including mirror, veil, and screen, I add the game board, the stage, and the page.

Jennifer Shaw analyzes Cahun’s use of the figure of Narcissus in expanding on what Cahun terms a “neo-narcissisme.” Crucial to understanding the collaborative relationship between Cahun and Moore as the ground for other modes of collaboration in the encounter with their works, this doubled narcissism produces effects beyond the double authorship of a work.
like the *Aveux* or many of Cahun’s “self”-portraits. Shaw, in addition to the contributors to Louise Downie’s collection *Don’t Kiss Me: The Art of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore*, questions the status of Cahun’s portraits as self-portraits, as well, given Moore’s collaborative role in the creation of the images (101). As Shaw writes, “I wonder, that is, whether the ‘neo-narcissism’ Cahun sought might not have been closest to being found when the ‘two narcissisms’ were replaced by an ‘exchange’ representing the ‘fusion of desires,’ whose final product could be both reciprocal love and a work of art” (101).

Latimer’s work on Cahun and Moore’s collaboration in her chapter “Narcissus and Narcissus” from *Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris* casts the “self”-portraits as the work of Cahun (performer) and Moore (photographer/director), thus invoking Barthes’ rapprochement of photography and theater (68-9). Latimer argues for the necessity of a critical frame of “coproduction” in receiving Cahun and Moore’s work, which she relates to Cahun’s subversion of narcissism in the *Aveux*. In the lesbian couple formed by Cahun and Moore, Latimer argues, the gaze escapes the codes of power normally associated with its gendering (empowerment of the male gaze, objectification of the woman). Latimer concludes, “Here the desiring gaze is conceived as mobile and therefore in principle reciprocally empowering” (95). Latimer approaches what Shaw describes as a “fusion of desires” in the context of the two artists’ material practices around shared authorship. She analyzes a monogram, or “duogram,” the two used to unite their names (69). The 1919 emblem foreshadows the visual preoccupations of the photomontages in the *Aveux*, composed as it is of a well-heeled foot, a pair of lips, an eye, and a gloved hand, each stacked atop the other. Both

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31 In “Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein,” Barthes writes, “The scene, the picture, the shot, the cut-out rectangle, here we have the very condition that allows us to conceive theatre, painting, cinema, literature […]” See Barthes “Diderot” 70.
Shaw and Latimer privilege the doubling, or reciprocity of the gaze, at the heart of the partnership between Cahun and Moore. Though the notion of the work as representing a “reciprocal love” in Shaw’s description brings to mind Freud’s suggestion that narcissism serve as a model for homosexual love, like the love between Cahun and Moore, the exchange that puts these two narcissisms into relation challenges a reductive reading of the text as simply a mirror of Cahun and Moore’s relationship. By engaging with the visual tropes of narcissism, Cahun and Moore’s work in the Aveux opens, necessarily for its status as a text, to exchange with others beyond the couple. The collaborative ground built on which Cahun and Moore build this narcissism opens beyond the couple, adding at least a third active participant (the reader-viewer) to the theatrical couple of performer and director.

By emphasizing the stakes of any textual exchange, which exceed the stakes of the author’s investment in the text, I draw attention to the experience of the reader who encounters the phototext of the Aveux, and others like it. Weil’s models of “decreation” and “co-creation” allow a reorientation of Russo, Shaw, and Latimer’s observations toward the phenomenological stakes of Cahun and Weiner’s choices in form, metaphor, imagery and visual tropes. In Gravity and Grace, the screen between the effable and ineffable separates two parties (God and the physical world) without fixing the two in an unequal equation: the screen mediates both God’s experience of the physical world and our experience of the divine. Like the two sides of this equation, Weil’s name doubles the V in “veil” in English, recalling the doubling in her notion of “co-creation,” and grants us entrance to a semantic field of covering (voile) and watching over and listening out for (veiller) in French – a phenomenology of touch, sight, and sound.

Weil’s spiritual phenomenology of touching through screens evokes the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty who developed his own phenomenology in the decades following Weil’s work.
and death. If Weil asserts in *Gravity and Grace* that there can be only one Narcissus, Merleau-Ponty complicates the matter by asserting the opposite. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty casts narcissism as a fundamental trope for understanding the experience of vision. But, he explains, narcissism works through a second meaning, beyond the common interpretation of the condition as an absorption in one’s own image (183). He writes that in narcissism “mon activité est identiquement passivité—ce qui est le sens second et plus profond du narcissisme: non pas voir dans le dehors […] le contour d’un corps qu’on habite, mais surtout être vu par lui […] de sorte que voyant et visible se réciproquent et qu’on ne sait plus qui voit et qui est vu” (183). As in Weil’s notion of “co-creation,” the subject is both active and passive, working on an object but also being worked upon. The reciprocal nature of this “narcissistic” relationship leads Merleau-Ponty to propose that the phenomenological field, thus, opens to “d’autres Narcisses” in the plural, reminiscent of Cahun’s neo-narcissism of two, and an “intercoporéité” of phenomenal experience (185).

The veil, or “voile,” recurs throughout the last chapter of Merleau-Ponty’s work, in which he outlines the above chiasmic structures of reciprocity, or reversibility, in the experience of vision. For Merleau-Ponty, sight envelops objects in a veil of vision, and so in veiling (“voiler”) them, unveils (“dévoiler”) them (173). In the chiasmic activity of seeing, the seer becomes enveloped in the visible, just as does the object of his or her vision. The experience of the “visible” becomes especially strong in the presence of another “seer,” as Merleau-Ponty writes, “Dès que nous voyons d’autres voyants, nous n’avons plus seulement devant nous le regard sans prunelle […] par d’autres yeux nous sommes à nous-mêmes pleinement visibles; cette lacune où se trouvent nos yeux, notre dos, elle est […] comblée par du visible encore, mais dont nous ne sommes pas titulaires” (188). Imagining the figure of the veil, or Weil’s screen, in this
configuration of phenomenal experience gives a veil that, like Weil’s screen or Narcissus’ mirror, separates and unites. Merleau-Ponty refers to the partial union of bodies made possible by the “visible” as an “intercorporéité,” in which one enters into the “visible” through contact with another’s body. In other words, the subject of phenomenal experience, like Weil’s divine partner in co-creation or the collaborators who will come to participate in Cahun and Weiner’s works in my analysis, enters into the awareness of “seeing” (as a passivity, as well as an activity) through a process of bodily collaboration.

This experience of inhabiting the visible grows out of a psychoanalytic influence in Merleau-Ponty’s work – an influence that can be understood by the place of the mirror in the development of narcissism’s psychoanalytic accounts. Havelock Ellis, the sexologist whose work Cahun translated in part, wrote of narcissism as an expression of auto-erotism in 1898. Freud first grappled with the investment of the subject’s libido in his or her own self in the 1914 essay “On Narcissism: An Introduction.” There, he explains the ways in which a “primary” narcissism accounts for the investment of the libido in the self in ways similar to the investment of the ego in the preservation of the self (550-53). For Freud, this shared narcissism can become disorder in a secondary phase but in its primary phase is integral to the formation of the subject. This primary narcissism, according to Freud, can guide object choice in love relationships in which one loves another for a reflection of the self found in the other – for what he or she finds of him or herself in the other (as resemblance or as projection of what he or she could become) as well as in which parental affection is based on love for an object which was once part of the self (555-56).

Lacan develops further the trope of the mirror, integral to Ovid’s legendary account, in order to locate the phase of primary narcissism in the child’s development. In the essay “The
Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function” (1949), Lacan proposes that the infant assumes an “I” when he or she identifies with his or her mirror image. Notably, the stage precedes the mastery of other kinds of tools, as well as that of language, by the infant (95). What is also important for Lacan, and for the relation of this mirror stage to the primary narcissism theorized by Freud, is that the infant only comes to know his or her body as a “gestalt” that is more an ideal image of the body than the body itself. In this image, the infant invests libidinal energy and the image, Lacan argues, will direct libidinal energy toward other objects in the future (95).

The mirror recurs in the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, influenced by Freud’s account of the subject and aspects of Lacan’s mirror stage. In his essay “Eye and Mind” (1961), Merleau-Ponty situates the seer in the field of what is seen, or the visible. Merleau-Ponty insists on the equivalence of the body of the seeing self and the phenomena that make up the visible; both are joined together by a shared flesh. The consequence of this imbrication of seer in the seen for the embodied self is the recognition that “[i]t sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself” (124). The experience of this self, according to Merleau-Ponty, is not transparency but “confusion, narcissism […] a self, then, that is caught up in things.” This recognition depends on a “system of exchanges” between what senses and what is sensed (125).

The mirror acts as a “technical object” for Merleau-Ponty; as a tool or sign, he writes, “the mirror has sprung up along the open circuit between the seeing and the visible body” (129). The mirror allegorizes the work of vision by theatricalizing the reflexivity of the narcissistic experience of the seeing body caught in the field of visible things. Merleau-Ponty concludes, in a passage reminiscent of Lacan’s descriptions of the infant who encounters his own mirror image, “The mirror’s phantom draws my flesh into the outer world, and at the same time the invisible of
my body can invest its psychic energy in the other bodies I see” (129-30). Merleau-Ponty’s “phantom” remains closely tethered to the material world. Elsewhere, Merleau-Ponty refers to this inherence of the imagination in the body as “corporéité.” As Merleau-Ponty reminds earlier in the essay, his conception of the imagination is one of embodiment, of the imagination in the body “with all its pulp and carnal obverse exposed to view for the first time” (126). Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is more invested in the presence of the body as flesh, to the point of nearly rendering the phantom of the mirror image as flesh itself.

In adapting the mirror as a trope of narcissism to a formal concern for surfaces that unite and separate in their texts Aveux non avenus and the Clairvoyant Journal, Cahun and Weiner refashion traditional interpretations of narcissism to shape a collaborative, phenomenological field of reading and writing in their texts. The narcissistic surface becomes the stage of a performance open to its audience members as participant collaborators, similar to Merleau-Ponty’s mirror in which the reflection of one subject-collaborator is met on the other side of the mirror not by an image of the self but by another subject-collaborator. As Russo writes of the clair-style, “It is a strange collaboration between the writer and the words, which, according to [Weiner], she is not writing but that are otherwise willed into being by unknown forces. This confederation of voices is clair-style” (86). The “confederation” that Russo identifies in Weiner’s clair-style, and which implies a reciprocal collectivity of actors, is not only a collaboration between “the writer and the words.” As Weiner points out, her clair-style poems, including those that make up the Clairvoyant Journal, are performance documents, a choreography of voices that implicate multiple readers in this “strange collaboration” whether as traditional reader or performance reader.
The equation of screen with mirror in both Cahun’s *Aveux* and Wilde’s prose poem obscures the boundary between subject and object of desire. In the *Aveux*, the strange perspectives of the mirror photomontage even involves the reader-viewer in the construction of vision’s lines of sight. In Wilde’s prose poem, the mirror (or pool-as-mirror) is not simply a technology of narcissistic desire, reflecting Narcissus’ beautiful image and gaze back upon himself. Instead, the pool is also a desiring, narcissistic subject. A relational desire joins pool and Narcissus in a model not unlike Merleau-Ponty’s chiasm. The pool-as-mirror represents not a closed-circuit of desire, but a circuit interrupted by a sort of screen, here, the mirror that reflects back upon both Narcissus and the pool in Wilde’s text.

III. Narcissus’ Hand Mirror in the *Aveux non avenus*

The photomontage that precedes the second section of the *Aveux*, entitled “Moi-Même” (1930), juxtaposes fragmented body parts printed and cut from Cahun’s many self-portraits (hands, shoulders, knees, legs) with a drawn hand mirror, hand, and eye that occupy the center column of the image. Within this central column, collaged fragments of photographs establish a play of reflections of Cahun’s face in the fictive space of the mirror and the large glassy eye (Fig. 1.1). In Shaw’s reading of the image, she notes that though Cahun at first seems to be the “I” of the photomontage – that is, that Cahun examines her own image in the hand mirror while holding it up to her own eye at the bottom of the composition – further scrutiny undoes such a reading of the image. As Shaw notices, if Cahun’s image appears as a reflection in the eye, it cannot be her own eye that gazes on the reflection in the mirror. Cahun, then, in Shaw’s logic, must stand somewhere outside the frame of the image. Thus, Shaw proposes two figures represented in the
photomontage. In her work on Cahun, Mary Ann Caws attributes this second presence to Moore and her collaboration in the making of the photomontages (“Doubling” 105). For her part, Shaw, not naming Moore, writes, “This play between subject and object, this unresolvable shuttling between self and other, is the substance of the photomontage” (87-8).

This shuttling is undoubtedly the substance of the photomontage. Though Shaw focuses her reading of the image primarily on the play between the reflections in the central column of the photomontage, I cannot help but be directed in my reading by the four hands of the composition. Converging on the hand mirror in the top, central space of the photomontage, three of the hands are responsible for the positioning of the frame of the mirror. The sketched hand that seems to belong to the same body as the sketched eye holds the mirror up, though in a moment of confusion in the image, the hand reflected in the mirror is depicted in a similar pose, as if it held the mirror in which its own reflection appears. The inclusion of legs and arms and shoulders in each corner of the dark space above the giant eye evokes a plotting of the physical body outside the imaginary space of the photomontage, as if these montaged body parts gravitated toward their proper coordinates (shoulders on top to support the upper limits of the image, legs on bottom to offer support from below) in order to coalesce a unified, discrete form (as in Lacan’s mirror stage or Merleau-Ponty’s visible realm).

The form that does coalesce in the mirror image of the photomontage does so only in obscurity, without making any claim to unity. Recalling Weil and Merleau-Ponty’s use of the veil, the hand reflected in the mirror image seems to draw a dark, shadowy veil over Cahun’s face. As if to steady the mirror, another larger hand enters the frame of the photomontage from the right, one finger lightly resting on the round edge of the mirror. A fourth hand, which enters the frame from the top right, interests me most. Caws interprets this hand as gloved, with text
printed on the glove, and emphasizes the importance of the fragmented condition of the included text as it resists any absolute or coherent representation of the self (105). As Shaw observes, the hand is cut out from the pages of the Aveux and points to the center of the mirror.

The introduction of text into the photomontage by way of the pointing hand complicates the image beyond the slippage between subject and object described by Shaw and inserts a third player into the space inhabited by Cahun and Moore, as in Caws’ reading, or by subject and object, as in Shaw’s description. Of this hand made of text, Shaw writes, “This hand and the other sections of cut-out paper inserted into the photomontage thus invite the reader to refer back and forth between image and text” (74). However, rather than simply bridging the space between image and text, this hand points something out to the reader, and perhaps points to the reader, as well. Thus, the textual hand – a hand that must be read, unlike the other hands that are only to be looked at – reaches out to him or to her and even becomes an emblem of the reader within the photomontage. In S/Z, Barthes calls the text that operates in this way “scriptible,” or “writerly,” explaining that such a text challenges the position of the reader by making him or her a “producer” of the text (4). Barthes term “scriptible,” though, does not account for a reader’s phenomenological encounter with a text, but rather for the interpretation of layers of semiotic codes at work in a text.32 A prosthetic reading of this cut paper hand, however, draws the reader into the space of the photomontage, set into relation with Cahun and Moore or subject and object, and prepares other prosthetic slippages in looking: is the hand that rises over the

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32 My reading of Barthes’ notion of the writerly text borrows from the phenomenological bent in his criticism. For example in “The Grain of the Voice,” Barthes liberates “significance” in music criticism by locating the body (the “grain”) “in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs.” His list omits the act of reading but begs the question (from me), what of the body in the eye as it reads? The somatic effects of music are, of course, also crucial to his reading of the story of the castrato Sarrasine in S/Z. See Barthes “The Grain of the Voice” 188 and S/Z 109-11.
curvature of the large eye to hold the hand mirror another prosthetic hand for the reader? The sketched hand is properly positioned to allow such a reading and work of fantasy on the part of the reader, so does the reader hold the mirror up to Cahun’s face? Shaw notes correctly that the hand covered in text operates in a special manner, but this hand does more than invite the reader to flip back and forth between image and text. This hand invites the reader into the space of the photomontage, and thus, into the space of the text, as well.

What does the pointing hand indicate to the reader? A mirror, which is to say a flat, reflective surface and central figure in the myth of Narcissus. Cahun’s text in the “Moi-Même” section makes the connection between mirror and narcissism for the reader. Cahun writes,

Self-love. Une main crispée sur un miroir – une bouche, des narines palpitantes – entre des paupières pâmées, la fixité folle de prunelles élargies… Dans l’horizon brutal d’une lampe électrique, en blond, mauve et vert sous les étoiles, voilà tout par pudeur! ce que je voudrais éclairer du mystère: le néo-narcissisme d’une humanité pratique. (43-4)

The passage nearly describes the photomontage, dramatizing the poet’s self-regard in a mirror and playing on the horizon of the large eye in the “horizon brutal” of an electric lamp that sheds light on the “mystère: le néo-narcissisme d’une humanité pratique.” Cahun concludes the passage cited above by writing, “En somme, ce qui gêne le plus Narcisse le voyeur, c’est l’insuffisance, la discontinuité de son propre regard” (44). In Ovid’s telling of the myth of Narcissus, no such “insuffisance” troubles the young voyeur. But, like Merleau-Ponty, Cahun identifies a lacuna in the experience of vision, mediated here only by a mirror or another participant in “néo-narcissisme.” In Cahun’s reworking of narcissism, the subject is not alone to gaze upon herself. Rather, she requires another participant in this “néo-narcissisme” that is structured around the photograph.
Of the self-knowledge that comes from narcissistic looking, Cahun acknowledges both the cultural framing and work of fantasy that shapes such knowing. She writes, “Je ferme les yeux et j’attends la berceuse visuelle. Image hypnagogique. L’interprétation que j’en fais me trahit. Tant mieux: on n’a prise sur soi, on n’apprend à se voir que par quelque judas” (38). To see the self, Cahun implies, one must close his or her eyes and wait for the hypnagogic image that appears between waking and sleeping. But, even in this image, the true image of the self escapes the subject; interpretation betrays us, Cahun says. Our only hold over ourselves, our only way to focus on our own image, is through a “judas,” or peephole like those on an apartment door.

Terminating the passage, Cahun’s description of “la berceuse visuelle” and the process of seeing the self funnels into the word “judas.” Cahun’s Surrealism, in the passage linked to the dream-like “image hypnagogique,” finds a technical analogue in the mechanism of photography. The “judas” is a type of lens, like that of the camera, that presents an anamorphic image of what is seen through its glass. The “judas,” too, recalls the shape of the mirror in the photomontage, as well as the large, reflective eye. Like these other surfaces, the “judas” is part of an apparatus that captures an image while, as the homophony between judas/Judas suggests, betraying the objective veracity of the image seen through the glass. Each of these can potentially transform the image it presents to the viewer, either stretching it at the edges (in the case of the “judas”), presenting a range of possible distortions (in the case of a photographic lens), or flipping it (in the case of the optic lens).

33 Here, I point to Rosalind Krauss’ “The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism” to note that Cahun specifically chooses the form of the photomontage, which Krauss shows to be the most Surrealist of those photographic forms privileged by Breton and company in serving a Surrealist theory of visual art and literature. See Krauss 18-28.
The mirror of the photomontage, what Shaw calls Cahun’s “magic mirror,” becomes, then, emblematic of this intermixing of the fantasized and the mechanical. Shaw, in her analysis, asks, “[W]hat is photography if it is not the mirroring of the exterior world with intention?” (89). Of course, as the “judas” reveals, this intention is only ever revealed as distorted in the image, re-routing self-recognition away from its successful realization. Or, as Cahun reminds us, “[O]n n’a prise sur soi.” The hand of recognition in the image – the hand covered in text that points out and to the reflection in the mirror – is neither the hand of Cahun nor that of Moore. Rather, it belongs to the reader as prosthesis for reading this photo-text. If the “judas” of the above passage undergoes several displacements that turn it into the camera lens and then into the surface of the photograph itself (thus creating a mirror out of the photograph), then does the viewer of the photomontage not look into a sort of mirror – that is, not the fictive mirror of the photomontage but the photographic image itself that is beheld by the reader-viewer just as the hand mirror is (be)held by someone?

Weil mentions Narcissus once in Gravity and Grace. She writes, “Desire is impossible: it destroys its object. Lovers cannot be one, nor can Narcissus be two […] Because to desire something is impossible, we have to desire what is nothing” (94-5). Is this true? Can Narcissus only be one, for Cahun insists otherwise, as does Merleau-Ponty in ascribing narcissism to the general experience of vision? Or does Weil’s pronouncement represent an unwillingness to permit one more contradiction to a collection of fragments that otherwise accept the importance of contradiction? Weil’s chiasmic setting of God and human beings on either side of the screen resembles the encounter of Pool and Narcissus in Wilde’s “The Disciple” or of Cahun and Moore on either side of the camera. In fact, the play of mirrors in the photomontage from the Aveux allows a formal analogy between the relationship between God and human beings in
Weil’s account of the screen and the relationship between Cahun, Moore, and their reader. In one interpretation of the photomontage, Cahun and Moore face each other, engaged in a narcissism of two, from either side of the mirror-screen. In another reading, both Cahun and Moore confront the reader, who reaches out to touch, or to enter into, the screen of the text through the “prosthetic” hands in the composition. As Merleau-Ponty describes it, this kind of intercorporeal touching envelops the subject in the visible; here, this prosthetic touching envelops the reader in the space of the text.34

In Cahun’s reformulation, Weil’s decreation (as diagnosed by Carson) comes to contribute to a mode of collaboration founded in “neo-narcissism.” Desiring renunciation as a strategy for holiness, Weil writes, “We should renounce being something […] We are like barrels with no bottom to them so long as we have not understood that we have a base” (33). The proposition echoes Cahun’s own from the Aveux: “Sous ce masque un autre. Je n’en finirai jamais d’enlever tous ces visages.” Barrels or “visages,” the quest for some kind of attainment (of God, for Weil, of the adventure itself, perhaps, for Cahun) continues ad infinitum. Between the collaborative co-creators opens an infinite space of creative possibility. Weil believes that the screen must be “pierced” to participate in decreation. Cahun expresses the necessity of a piercing-through in the Aveux: “Je ne voudrais coudre, piquer, tuer qu’avec l’extrême point…ne voyager qu’à la proue de moi-même” (14). Cahun travels, truly avant-garde, at the extreme front of her self, the ship’s prow piercing the air, through to the future and future selves and collaborators.

34 In a recent theory of photography, Kaja Silverman asserts the figure of analogy, or “the authorless and untranscendable similarities that structure Being,” instead of the index as that which characterizes the photograph. She argues that the analogy entails a “constellation,” or relational mode of being, and concludes on a note influenced by Merleau-Ponty and reminiscent of Cahun’s neo-narcissism. She writes, “It is only through this interlocking that we ourselves exist. Two is the smallest unit of Being.” See Silverman The Miracle of Analogy 11.
Tom Ahern’s photographic portrait of Weiner for the cover of the *Clairvoyant Journal* also engages with the formal challenges posed by the surfaces of screen, stage, and page as derived from Narcissus’ myth (Fig. 1.2). In the image, Weiner meets the viewer’s gaze, smiling, with her own statement of poetics emblazoned across her forehead: “I SEE WORDS.” The message is undeniable; the succinct statement makes clear the readerly terms and conditions for entering into her text. The text of the *Journal* leaves no doubt that these are words Weiner has seen. As she reiterates on the first page of the text, “I SEE words on my forehead IN THE AIR on other people on the typewriter on the page These appear in the text in CAPITALS or italics” (1). As Judith Goldman writes, the belief in Weiner’s experience as clairvoyant, or the beneficiary of a specific case of extra-sensory perception, is crucial to an engagement with her work (“Hannah=hannaH” 122). Part of this belief includes the belief in the transformation of the world around Weiner into a series of surfaces to reflect her clairvoyance back to her as words received from outside sources. In the image of the *Journal*’s cover, her own forehead acts as screen-surface for her experience, but as she tells us, so too can the air, the page in the typewriter, or even other people act as a staging surface for these words.

If reflection in the photomontage allegorizes the structure of the photograph, as well as a certain desirous way of seeing, in Cahun’s work, reflection in Weiner’s *Clairvoyant Journal* poses a differently complex question for her reader-viewer. Though a photograph dominates the cover of the *Journal*, Weiner’s most innovative work in this text (as in her clair-style generally)
occurs at the level of the poetic line. As Kathleen Fraser writes in “Line. On the Line. Lining up.
Lined with. Between the Lines. Bottom Line,” “The poetic line is a primary defining place, the
site of watchfulness where we discover how we hear ourselves take in the outside world and tell
it back to ourselves” (153). Fraser’s description as the line as requiring sight in “watchfulness,”
as well as hearing (again, the resonance of Weil and “veiller”), maps the complicated play of
voice and vision in Weiner’s poetics. Weiner’s lines fill the page through a strategy of all-over
composition that recalls the visual and spatial experimentation of mid-century field poetics in its
various guises (in Robert Duncan, Frank O’Hara, or Charles Olson’s work, for example).

Like the distorted lines of perspective in Cahun’s photomontage, Weiner’s cover portrait
establishes a relationship between herself as subject of the portrait and the statement that her
portrait makes (“I SEE WORDS”) that cannot be literally true, at least in part. Weiner’s poetry
demands that its reader accept as truth her claims to “clairvoyance” through her special
hallucinations of words, as Goldman emphasizes. But, in this portrait, Weiner, as posing subject,
cannot fulfill the truth claim that the words emblazoned across her forehead make; she cannot
see the words, at least not without a reflection. This reflection could arrive via the mirror or the
photograph, as in Cahun’s composition, or here more explicitly than in the Aveux, that reflection
could be supplied by a work of readerly involvement in the text. Weiner’s portrait replicates for
the reader, before opening Weiner’s Journal, the experience of seeing words; we as readers see
words written across Weiner’s forehead as she might see them written across ours. If Weiner
sees words on other people, as her brief preface to the Journal states, then might we imagine her
clairvoyance as, in part, a projective mirror?

In other words, Weiner perceives herself and her own experience not only by reading
words across her own body but by the projection of her experience onto the bodies of others.
Other bodies, and spaces, become legible as they serve as a screen to the language that mediatises all bodies. Charles Bernstein writes in “Making Words Visible/Hannah Weiner,” “We all see words. But it is our usual practice to see through them. Weiner has focused her gaze, not through, not beyond, but onto” (270). In Bernstein’s description, words become a screen in the sense propagated by many practitioners of Language poetry, a screen of linguistic mediation, or a screen that reveals the mediation of experience in socially contextualized language. This play of transparency and opacity in Weiner’s poetry and photographic portrait intervenes in claims to the counterfactual dependency of a photograph. According to Kendall Walton, photographs are transparent images in that they exhibit counterfactual dependence on the scene they record. As viewers, we see objects in photographs and know this because the photograph would depict different objects if the scene in front of the camera had changed while the image was being taken. Thus, we see through the photograph to the physical objects included in them (“Transparent” 252-53). Though Bernstein’s description of Weiner’s language contradicts a similar transparency of language, he does suggest that Weiner’s way of seeing materializes language in the way that Walton’s description of transparency in the photographic image materializes the object in the photograph as that object.

However, Weiner here uses the photograph against itself as a technology of transparency. Weiner’s self-portrait photograph is like a mirror, but not in the sense that Walton understands a mirror to be a tool for seeing objects. Rather, Weiner’s is a magic mirror more akin to Cahun’s mirror from the photomontage. Weiner’s performance, or pose, as a clairvoyant in this photograph, with the words applied to her forehead, brings the counterfactual dependence of the portrait closer to that of painting (or the intentional dependence informed by the artist’s beliefs) than to that of everyday seeing. In Walton’s example, a photographer who offers photographs of
a dinosaur in a distant rainforest does not convince us of the dinosaur’s existence in the same way that an artist who might sketch a dinosaur would be left with the burden of convincing the viewer of the animal’s improbable existence. In the case of the artist’s sketches, what the artist thought he saw is translated to the artwork; the image records his belief in the scene before him. In the case of the photograph, though the photographer may select a particular scene to photograph, the mechanical image records the scene as it was, in front of the camera; the photograph convinces the viewer that the photographer believes in the dinosaur because it was there (“Transparent” 263).  

In Weiner’s self-portrait, we do not see the object itself (in this instance, a moment of her own visionary hallucination). Instead, we see the words that Weiner has written on her forehead. We see the belief of the artist, or what Walton calls elsewhere the fiction of the photograph, only we cannot consider it a fiction, for as Bernstein points out, Weiner’s poetic clairvoyance, on display in this photograph, obliges us to see what she sees through psychic experience. While Walton argues for the compatibility of the photograph’s transparency and its ability to induce “imagining seeing” as a representation (Marvelous 126-27), the counterfactual dependency in the case of Weiner’s portrait makes this compatibility more difficult to reconcile. For, had the scene in the photograph been different, the photograph would certainly have been different, as well. But this difference would have hinged solely on Weiner’s belief in her own clairvoyance, for it is only as a testament to her psychic experience that this scene exists. Weiner’s photograph, then,

36 Walton reiterates this argument in Marvelous Images 127-28.

37 On this count, Weiner’s portrait perhaps reveals something more like the “pointing to” that John Roberts describes in his discussion of photography and violation. Though he places photography in its social context, Roberts notes that “photography is the very act of making visible, and therefore, is conceptually entangled with what is unconscious, half-hidden, implicit.” This last series of descriptive terms reverses Walton’s description of transparency by privileging
is not so much a prosthetic tool for seeing objects as Walton describes the photograph as it is another prosthetic device for reading, as conceived as collaborating in the narcissism of the image in my description of Cahun and Moore’s mirror in the photomontage.

The notion of the body as a screen for materialization recurs in Weil’s work, as well. In a chapter entitled “Self-effacement,” the body itself – Weil’s body – becomes a screen. Weil writes, “All the things that I see, hear, breathe, touch, eat; all the beings I meet—I deprive the sum total of all that of contact with God, and I deprive God of contact with all that in so far as something in me says ‘I’” (41). For Weil, the body, equal to the “I,” no longer pushes on the opposite side of the screen from God as co-creator of the perceived world but, rather, now serves as screen for the cast image of the physical world (screening God from base materiality and imaging the world whose figure is cast upon it). Weil’s account of the screen indulges paradox, and though Cahun and Weiner do not seek the same union with the divine, their screens offer a similar one.

Not only does Weiner focus her gaze onto words but she focuses our gaze, as well, onto words. She does this by making her body a screen for language. In “Mostly about the Sentence,” Weiner writes, “The (my) natural desire for closure was defeated by the more important mind – or poetic—form” (123). Weiner admits the defeat of her ego, of her “natural desire” for the completed, closed sentence and text, and the triumph of extra-authorial authority over her compositional practice. Her body, like Weil’s, is the screen of this practice, the site where she registers language as a controlling force experienced on the screen of the body.

what is opaque in social or subjective experience rather than what is transparent in the image. In the social context, Roberts gives greater weight to the role of the photographer and selection in what is visible in the image than does Walton. See Roberts 2.
Weiner predicates her “clairvoyance” on a phenomenological experience that returns to narcissism in its formal stakes if not in its thematic ones. Though, as with the doubling in Wilde’s version of Narcissus or in Cahun and Moore’s narcissism for two, Weiner’s look in the mirror – that is, in the figurative mirror of her psychic experience – reveals another doubling: mirror reflects screen. And in the estranging space between the screen of Weiner’s body and the mirror that reflects its image, a collaborative text takes shape.

V. Self-Performance and Autobiography on Screen and Surface

Narcissus’ desire for the reflection he sees in the pool is a performance against a reflective surface. A balancing act, this performance only completes itself as long as Narcissus remains suspended above the pool, between knowing and not knowing his own reflection. As soon as Narcissus’ lips touch the water, the image of his beloved disappears in the ripples created by his own kiss. As Ovid recounts the scene, “How often in vain he kissed the cheating pool / And in the water sank his arms to clasp / The neck he saw, but could not clasp himself! / Not knowing what he sees, he adores the sight” (63-4). Narcissus’ performance turns on the moment of interruption, that moment when his physical or psychic balance gives way to desire and self-recognition. For Cahun and Weiner, interruption of the self-image on a screen marks a break in performance, or a moment of recognition of performance, during which the drama of knowing and not knowing oneself opens the work to its collaborators. As the voice in Weiner’s text switches from a clairvoyantly received voice to Weiner’s own, for example, the reader becomes aware of his or her own experience of seeing words and receiving poetic messages. The
stoppage, or interruption, in the balancing act of self-reflection opens the subjective experience of performing the work to the reader-viewer.

Weiner’s Journal is not only a text to be read but is also a performance score. Durgin succinctly describes the wedding of poem, performance, and experience in describing Weiner’s poetics as “[…] both the formal and the performative (phenomenological) that would be reunited under the rubric ‘clairvoyance’” (2). In other words, the clair-style poetry represents both a formal innovation in the arrangement of the poem on the page (not only in the strategic uses of capitals, underlining, and italics but also in the size of the page or notebook as a determining limit on the shape of the poem) as well as an innovation in the use of a score to direct a performance, which speaks to the influence of Fluxus on Weiner’s work before and after the psychic break that inaugurates the clair-style around 1970. As in Cahun’s performance portraits, Weiner takes up masks, figured as words and images received through psychic experience from which she then composes her texts. If Cahun’s texts and self-portraits enact masquerade, Weiner’s enact ventriloquism. In considering the structural role of interruption in this kind of performance, a return to Fraser’s description of the poetic line’s function as a “site of watchfulness” emphasizes the space in which this interruption occurs. Often operating as a reflection (in Cahun’s mirror, of Weiner’s psychic experience upon the world), Fraser gives interruption a set of coordinates, however approximate they must remain in the fluid terrain of the poetic line or text. Cahun’s play of mirrors and lines of sight destabilizes the terrain of “watchfulness” in the Aveux. In Weiner’s work, the reception and projection of language, emblematized by the “I SEE WORDS” of the Journal’s cover portrait, are coterminous with the line itself but nevertheless destabilize the reader through syntactic interruptions and blockages.
In a hallucinatory passage typical of her clair-style, Weiner writes, “sit/ on steps of Sunday School Union see John Giorno’s face appear on mine, no/ feelings or words with it, then smile DARK RED INDIAN FACE and the words/ THAT’S THE CONTACT” (23). Not only is Weiner’s experience of perception interrupted by the vision of John Giorno’s face atop her own, but so, too, is her line interrupted by the hallucination. The outside voices, indicated by italics and capital letters, further estrange the poetic lines from the rules of syntax, grammar, and smooth readability. Cahun’s short, sometimes aphoristic, passages have this effect, too: the text of the Aveux unfolds in fragments that are equally hallucinatory in the jumps between passages. “Watchfulness,” then, as valorized by Fraser’s poetics of the line, registers these fragmentary jumps in the spaces in which they occur, whether psychic, textual, or physical. Weiner gives the coordinates for the image of Giorno’s face as best she can: his face “appear [sic] on mine” in physical and psychic space, in the uninterrupted flow of her original, lowercase words in the poetic line, and with “no/ feelings or words with it” in a registering of affective and linguistic space.

In the passage above, Giorno’s face is also a mask for Weiner, and the poetic line is a transcription then to be performed by performers speaking through the mask of Weiner’s voices. In a December 29, 1977 performance of parts of the Journal broadcast on Public Access Poetry, Sharon Mattlin and Margaret (Peggy) de Coursey join Weiner in reading excerpts from her text. This specific performance of the Journal reinforces the interplay of voices in the work of watchfulness and hearing in the formal conditions of its recording and editing for television (and today, for its archiving on YouTube). The recording layers close-up shots of Weiner reading with ones of Mattlin and de Coursey as the frame fades from one performer to the next. The fading effect blurs the distinction between separate frames and creates the image of a mask as Mattlin’s
face appears superimposed on Weiner’s, like the apparition of Giorno’s face in the text. Further mimicking the experience of Weiner’s clairvoyance, laughter and vocal reactions from outside the frame intervene in the performance.

As Russo writes, “[Weiner’s] self-abasement is the invalidating of the unitary self as a literary source, but it’s also premised on the self as a vessel or scribe-self that rather than being abased is elevated” (92). Indeed, the performance of this excerpt of the Journal not only downplays Weiner’s role as a unitary author-subject but it also re-elevates her role as director in the play of voices. When Weiner demands that Charles Bernstein read his own poem, the frame shifts from the three performers of Weiner’s Journal to Bernstein who sits off stage. Bernstein begins to read his poem, and as he progresses, Weiner makes humorous and derisive comments, eventually instructing him to stop reading. Weiner, then, is not the unitary voice of the text or performance, but does direct through the privileged mode of instruction.

The live performance mediated by the television screen (and now by its archiving behind the computer screen on the Internet) allows the viewer to participate in the unfolding of the poetic line by carrying out Fraser’s watchfulness and hearing. In the excerpt performed, Weiner reads a fragment of text that comments on the structure of the Journal and its performance, “This book is mind control.” As a score for a performance such as this one, the book is an example of “mind control” in that it provides its performers with words to say – it is a script or performance score. Situated between the text as performance score and the text as words to be seen and read, the reader-viewer joins in the same acts being performed on the screen going beyond Barthes’ model of the “texte scriptible.” The reader-viewer not only participates in writing the text but also is surrounded by the space of the text in its performance.
Weiner’s *Journal*, and the performances derived from its text, recall de Man’s claim in “Autobiography as De-facement” that autobiography, more than a genre, is “a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts” (921). Not only, following Fraser’s theory of the line, does the *Journal* dramatize the watchfulness for and hearing of experience, but it also assumes a second or third (ad infinitum) party to create its autobiographical effect. De Man’s theory of autobiography recognizes two parties in the process of reading and a process of exchange that casts these two between differentiation and similarity. Reading Weiner’s *Journal*, as I have argued above, one participates in this creation of the autobiographical. In Ovid’s telling of the myth of Narcissus, the youth perishes in a closed system of reading in which self-knowledge, or self-knowing through self-desire, leeches Narcissus of his life force. De Man, rejecting a generic reading of autobiography that would root the genre in a specific history, argues for a reading of autobiography as linguistic trope. He writes, “The specular moment that is part of all understanding reveals the tropological structure that underlies all cognitions, including knowledge of self. The interest of autobiography, then, is […] that it demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization […] of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions” (922). Self-knowledge in a closed system, as Narcissus knows, is impossible. Here, by taking up the formal demands of narcissism, Cahun and Weiner’s “autobiographical” works depend not only on these linguistic structures but also on the collaborative work of the performance of these multimedia works, revealing the ways in which the substitutions open the “autobiographical” to the Other.

Indeed, the publication history of Cahun’s *Aveux* raises similar questions of genre and autobiography. Monnier rebuffed Cahun’s text when it did not conform to her expectations for a set of confessions in the vein of Rousseau. As Latimer observes, the title of the *Aveux non*
avenus contains the slippage between avowal and its negation, a negating or destabilizing of confession that explains Monnier’s eventual refusal to publish the manuscript (81-2). Latimer also points to the pseudonymous signatures of Cahun and Moore attached to the Aveux as an authorial strategy for further destabilizing the realism of autobiographical writing (81). I would also point to the figure of the clairvoyant across Cahun’s oeuvre, as it appears in the visionary passages in Vues et Visions (1919, also a collaboration with Moore) and recurs in the Aveux and late writings on her wartime experiences. In the guise of Cassandra in those late Resistance memoirs, and claiming her own clairvoyance in a move not unrelated to Weiner’s own claiming of the position, Cahun presents herself as a speaker of future truth ignored by her peers, her predictions annulled like her “autobiographical” avowals in the Aveux.

The visions of the clairvoyant open a system of exchange between the seer and the one she addresses. In analyzing two portraits, one of Cahun and one of Moore, and each taken by the other, in which they both pose with a mirror (Figs. 1.3 and 1.4), Latimer writes, “The mirror is not, in either case, a closed system (self vis-à-vis self-same), nor a space of Lacanian alienation (real self vs. ideal self). Triangulated by the external regard of the collaborator and her camera, the mirror opens the field of representation to possibilities of transformation and exchange” (95-6). Indeed, the lines of sight established by Cahun and Moore’s gazes in these portraits short circuit any closure. Moore gazes into the mirror, but only in order to meet the gaze of the camera positioned over her right shoulder. Cahun turns away from the mirror, her eyes and their reflection diverting symmetrically so that her real gaze confronts the camera and her mirrored one flees it. Cahun’s gaze breaks the geometrical model posited by Lacan in his theory of the gaze in which a screen covers a blind spot in the field of vision: camera meets her eyes in an act of reciprocal looking but her eyes in the reflection break away, staring off into a fictive space
that leaves one side of the triangle open. And, yet, the mirrors of the photomontage, and even of these two pendant portraits, still evoke the circuit of Narcissus’ gaze, of his own refusal to accept any alienation from his own reflection and thus his willingness to remain within a closed loop of looking.

The screen, then, remains useful as a formal element for Cahun and Moore as well as a heuristic tool for interpreting their work. In another photomontage from the *Aveux*, this one introducing section VI (subtitled “X.Y.Z.” with an epigraph by Cahun “Ne jamais lâcher l’ombre pour la proie.”), a chessboard rises up at an awkward angle, as if acting as a screen itself (Fig. 1.5). The photomontage includes elements familiar from the mirror photomontage: hands are lain across the top of the board; two playing cards at the bottom left depict men in suits exchanging gazes; a shadow figures prominently.38 The two hands, one gloved and one not, might be said to emblematize Cahun and Moore’s co-presence in the image, but also to evoke the moment of slippage between subjection and objecthood privileged by Merleau-Ponty when one’s right hand grasps one’s left hand.39 Shaw argues for a homology between the shadow and Narcissus’ reflection in that both suggest rather than show and that “Cahun privileges the shadow or reflection over the real in the epigraph […] [a]nd she and Moore keep shadow and prey, unreal and real, in balance in the photomontage […]” (177). Rosalind Krauss draws a parallel between

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38 The image contains tropes familiar to followers of Surrealism. One might think of *L’Échiquier surreéaliste* (1928) in which Man Ray set portraits of (male) Surrealists in a checkerboard grid, or of Magritte’s arrangement of portraits of Surrealist men around a drawing of a nude woman in *Je ne vois pas la [femme] cachée dans la forêt* (1929), whose format strongly suggests a game board, as well.

39 Hands are a common motif in Cahun’s photography. In several images from 1929, Cahun made studies of doll, mannequin, and human hands in light and shadow. In another series from 1932, *Je tends les bras*, outstretched arms emerge from a hollow pillar, hands straining as if to find each other in mid-air. For Merleau-Ponty’s description of “intercorporéité,” see Merleau-Ponty *Le Visible et l’invisible* 183.
the work of Cahun and Marcel Duchamp by mapping their uses of self-portraiture along “a fold around which not only identities revolve and reflect like a pair of double helixes but also the positions of viewer and viewed become reversible” (Bachelors 42). Like the surface of Narcissus’ pool, a desiring screen, the chessboard in this photomontage demands a balancing act: Cahun and Moore’s refiguring of Narcissus and his mirror/screen is a performance that demands agility and that suspends desire (the search for that which is unreal and Other) above a space of legibility (the screen of the chessboard, or in Fraser’s formulation and Weiner’s work, the poetic line).

The shadow of a man’s profile looming over the board, as in Shaw’s analysis, represents the unreal, or an index of an otherwise absent, real presence. But, to whom does the shadow belong? The shadow playfully doubles the notion of photographic indexicality. \(^{40}\) It points to someone outside the frame of the image, as well as to itself as shadow captured by a camera. The man’s profile at first seems to indicate a player looming over the chessboard, his cigarette smoking. However, the shadowy body beneath the profile is too angular to be that of a human man. In fact, the shadow draws attention to another body; a human-chess piece hybrid figure lies overturned on the table in the profile’s shadow. This chess piece is composed of a photographic element (a man from torso up) and a sketched element (the base of a chess piece). The photomontage seems to imply that the shadow and the figure that casts the shadow have been disassociated from one another, with the shadow superseding the figure that cast it.

\(^{40}\) In her influential essay, “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America,” Krauss foregrounds Duchamp’s use of shadows in the painting Tu m’ (1918) as indexes of his Readymades. She also notes that a realistically painted hand points at the center of the work and that the title implicates the deictic, or shifter, pronouns in this play of indexicality. Each of these strategies is also on display in Cahun’s Aveux. See Krauss “Notes on the Index” 70-71.
Cahun and Moore once again organize the montage to ambiguously establish the number of players in the image, but this time, they implicate a possible player (the shadowy figure looming over the board) not only in the programming of the action on the board but in the movement of the pieces playing out on the board itself (as the hybrid chess piece itself). In a Lacanian register, the piece might be thought of as engaging the casual logic of the automaton, which Lacan describes as a reversal of causality in which the falling of the shadow on the chessboard results in the falling over of the very chess piece that should itself cast the shadow.\textsuperscript{41} The doubling, and possible squaring, of players represented by the hands, playing cards, and hybrid chess piece and shadow in the photomontage – what Krauss identifies with the figure of the fold in Cahun and Duchamp’s work, and which works out as a fold in causality in a Lacanian reading of the image – finds its literary expression in the use of the plural pronoun at the start of the chapter.

In a passage entitled “Singulier pluriel,” Cahun uses the first-person plural pronoun “nous” to describe a relationship of the narrator to his or her Other. Cahun writes, “Nous. ‘Rien ne peut nous séparer’” (115). The less formal or universal third-person singular “on” might better conform to a grammatical concept of the singular plural, but Cahun’s use of “nous” makes clear her intention to imagine a singularity derived from a plurality. The citation that follows the pronoun hints heavily that the context for such a relation is the amorous relationship. The typesetting of the section, which includes heart symbols to delimit breaks between passages, supports this reading. Following Shaw’s interest in her analysis, this section elaborates Cahun’s theory of a “narcissisme à deux,” whose elaboration runs throughout the Aveux. Though Cahun certainly pursues such a revision of the Narcissus myth, obviously with herself and Moore as the

\textsuperscript{41} For more on the automaton, see Lacan \textit{Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis} 53-64 and Hyldgaard 233-34.
two parties to this new narcissism, I find a less restricted collaborative plurality in operation in the *Aveux*. In fact, Cahun concludes the above passage with the sentence, “En fin de compte on est bien forcé de s’en remettre à l’inconnu, avec un grand X algébrique” (115). The “X algébrique” indicates multiplication to the nth degree, rather than a simple addition of single digits (i.e. 1+1). And the shift from “nous” to “on” intimates a scene of collaborators undefined, and unrestricted, in number.

As with the hand that fluctuates between assignation to Cahun and to the reader as prosthesis in the mirror photomontage, the looming shadow might also draw the reader-viewer into the chessboard image. The shadow would, then, be the index of the one who literally watches over the work. And, as Fraser describes the function of watchfulness, this would then implicate the reader-viewer once again in the construction not only of the image but of the text, as well, as he or she watches over the board. The chessboard serves alternately as a screen and as a surface for the staging of the singular plural pronoun “on,” in which the reader now participates along with the collaborative authors of the *Aveux*, Cahun and Moore. And, in fact, the next division in section VI, “Velléités,” begins with a direct address to the reader: “Avant de lire cette page, prononcez avec moi ce voeu: des mots à double détente” (134). Cahun involves her reader directly. In keeping with the title of the work, words have the double effects attributable to chance that may come to annul each other. The figure of speech (“à double détente”) conjures, too, a violent movement of these words in space as it refers to the technical apparatus of a delayed triggering system on a firearm. Words, spoken together in the aleatory space between Cahun, Moore, and the reader-collaborator, inaugurate the collaborative encounter. The correct
pronunciation of words does not ensure their message once they return to these collaborators who wait, watching, to do the work of “hearing.””

VI. Conclusion

In a book-length collaboration entitled *Voiles* (1998), Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida contribute essays that reflect upon the collaborative encounter staged in the book itself. However, a division runs through the text, separating the two writers’ voices from each other for, as the title suggests, a veil hangs between the essays by the two writers and friends. In the text, a nearly-abstract pencil drawing of a veil marks the end of Cixous’ essay and the beginning of Derrida’s. As a “prière d’insérer” indicates as preface, the essays are autonomous but grouped together under one “genre,” that of memoir, or confession – as if, finally, draped in the folds of one veil. Cixous sets out her experience with an eye surgery that cured her myopia and its ramifications for her sense of seeing and being in the world in an essay entitled “Savoir” and Derrida responds to the notion of “savoir,” or (self-)knowing, in his essay, “Un Ver à soie.” Yet, there is no dialogue, no final response from Cixous to return Derrida’s essay to the collaborative encounter. Indeed, Cixous and Derrida’s work raises the very question of reflexivity – of returning, or bending back – in its *mise-en-oeuvre* of the collaborative encounter. As in the work and thought of Cahun, Weiner, and Weil discussed above, the stakes that *Voiles* then sets for collaboration put into play the movement of the veil between reader and writer.

42 This is the predicament of Echo, of whom I will say more in the chapter that follows.

43 The “prière d’insérer” also informs the reader that these two essays originally opened issue number 2/3 (1997) of *Contretemps* on the theme of “voiles.”
Cixous’ essay mixes the tropes found above in Cahun and Weiner’s works (vision, avowal, clairvoyance) with the tropes of both Weil’s philosophical and mystical thought and Narcissus’ story (the veil, or screen). Of her obscured vision, Cixous writes, recalling Cahun’s self-portrait in which she wears blacked-out goggles, “Elle avait des yeux et elle était aveugle” (3). Cixous characterizes the condition of myopia as one in which the shortsighted person dwells in another country marked by the magic (“magies”) of seeing and not-seeing (14). Caught between clear sight and its obscuring, Cixous recounts in the third person, “Jamais elle ne vit en sûreté. Voir était un croire chancelant. Tout était peut-être. Vivre était en état d’alerte” (14). This state of alert lead to misprision, as when in childhood Cixous ran to a strange woman mistaking her for her mother (14).

The essay is Cixous’ own avowal, but like Cahun’s, it is an avowal that can only be disavowed. Cixous asks, “Les voyants savent-ils qu’ils voient? Les non-voyants savent-ils qu’ils voient autrement? Que voyons-nous? Les yeux voient-ils qu’ils voient?” (19). The instability between seeing and not-seeing remains after her operation; she is forever marked by the experience of her myopia, if only by nostalgia for it after a corrective medical procedure. But, by the end of her account, she has chosen, in choosing her operation, to live in the world of the living, as she writes, “Car il n’est pas permis aux mortels d’être des deux côtés” (19). Cixous’ concerns, then, are the same as Cahun and Weiner’s in their works: what can be seen and what cannot (and by whom), they each ask; what can and cannot be avowed?

In his essay, written in the context of his well-known long-term friendship with Cixous, Derrida confronts the limits of his knowledge about his friend’s life and admits surprise that he had never known her to be myopic. Subtitled “Points de vues piqués sur l’autre voile,” Derrida’s essay positions itself on a shore opposite Cixous’ essay, to borrow her metaphor for the separate
worlds of the seeing and not-seeing. “Un Ver à soie,” thus, represents Derrida’s own point of view on Cixous’ autobiographical avowals but also announces a different view of the veil that separates the two essays and to which Derrida’s subtitle points. The veil that Derrida “sees,” in other words, is marked by traces, the “points” or “stitches,” of Cixous’ own lines of inquiry and avowal. In English translation, the subtitle recalls both the piercing of Weil’s veil and the pointing in Cahun’s photomontages (as well as Cahun’s own play on the stitching of a “voile,” or “sail” in the feminine, in her promise to only travel at the extreme point of her being).

If Cixous approaches the question, do I see myself seeing, Derrida continues a reflexive line of inquiry in wondering if a truth can ever be unveiled. Such an unveiling, he argues, would represent a belonging to oneself (a “s’avoir” in the reflexive French construction) to such a degree that such a self-knowing (“savoir/s’avoir”) is not possible (30). Though, he does propose that “Savoir” (both Cixous’s essay of that title and “(self-)knowledge”), while exceeded by the reality of the singular event of Cixous’ eye operation, does “operate” on the reader (78). Poetic writing, according to Derrida, “[…] se destine [...] au-delà de toute vérité comme révélation onto-logique. Il se destine à ceux et à celles qui sauront lire, bien sûr” (79). This destined readership turns the text back upon itself, in a reflexive gesture that makes of the reader a writer, a player in the space of the text. Cixous and Derrida’s Voiles, then, offers a textual example of collaborators caught in these very mechanics of poetic collaboration. In Cahun and Weiner’s works, as in Cixous and Derrida’s collaborative text, the event of the reading is not simply layered atop the event of the writing, but moves with the folds and undulations of the veil that turn the experiences of reading and writing back upon one another.

44 Derrida’s verb is “opérer,” to “operate” or “to have an effect on,” as well as “to perform an operation.”
Chapter Two.
The Echo Effect/Affect. Collaboration’s Improper Respondents

The television set flickers as Hannah Weiner turns it on. The local news broadcast begins, and she transcribes as she listens. She includes her own thoughts at first – details of a dinner remembered at her friend Bernadette’s – though the language from the broadcast quickly overtakes these thoughts as she writes in the blank book her friend and collaborator, Barbara Rosenthal, gave her. She imagines Rosenthal’s photographs of the broadcasts that will accompany her text, stills of news anchors, witnesses and bystanders, notable public figures, and quotidian crimes and disasters (Fig. 2.1). The antagonism between her thoughts and the language she receives as televisual message, an antagonism familiar to her from her days as a “clairvoyant” poet, drives her to keep writing, to finish the transcription—or, as she puts it in her earlier “clair-style” texts, to “finish the sentence.” As Charles Bernstein writes in his introduction to the text, “[In Weeks], parataxis (the serial juxtapositions of sentences) takes on an ominous tone in its refusal to draw connections.”

Thus, Weiner writes, reacting to the agitation of once again receiving voices, translating this agitation into the “ominous tone” of parataxis. Weiner’s poetics of recording and transcription work against a lyric expression of subjectivity, but affect remains in the text through tone – agitated, perhaps ominous – like the witnesses and bystanders who speak into so many hovering microphones in the photographs.

This, too, is not Weiner’s only “blank book” collaboration with Rosenthal. Her friend later gives her a notebook with pages cut in a complicated pattern entitled “Homo Futurus,” which Weiner will transform into her late text, The Book of Revelations (1989). The title “Homo Futurus” must have appealed to Weiner’s sense of clairvoyance, aligning her particular practice

45 This introduction later appears as “Weak Links: Introduction to Hannah Weiner’s WEEKS” in Bernstein’s expanded commentary on Weiner’s text in Jacket2. See Bernstein.
of receiving messages through hallucinations, or schizophrenic episodes, with the more
traditional clairvoyant tradition of Cassandra or Tiresias—or, if you would prefer in poetry, of
Robert Desnos and Jack Spicer, of Emily Dickinson and Alice Notley. Yet, Weiner turns to
another figure from Greek myth as a model for the composition of *WEEKS*. This text effects a
visual and linguistic echo across the pages of text and image: Weiner’s language, not properly
Weiner’s at all, repeats what she hears from the television. Rosenthal’s still photographs of
television screens suggest a source for these “voices” but do not allow us to locate the voices in
the bodies depicted. Beginning the text with a reference to her friend Bernadette Mayer,
Weiner’s own voice is caught, too, in this echo chamber of text and image. Her voice sounds
strange to her, estranged from her, like the voices she recorded in the early 1970s in her
*Clairvoyant Journal*. And, indeed, her own repetitions in this text – with a difference – will
affect her readers in the singularity of each instance. Even in this text premised on the
impossibility of the lyric, emotion, or affect, the “ominous tone” felt by Bernstein, or the
agitation necessarily felt by Weiner and so many other “seers” as a condition of their abilities,
moves us as readers.

Echo, as she comes to us from Ovid’s account in the *Metamorphoses*, has just been
punished by Juno for distracting her while other nymphs slept with her husband, Jove. Of Echo’s
punishment, Ovid writes, “The event confirmed the threat: when speaking ends, / All she can do
is double each last word, / And echo back again the voice she’s heard” (62). Out of shame and
grief for her inability to respond properly to her beloved Narcissus, Echo wastes away until she

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46 In an essay on the possibilities for video art opened by a feminist reading of the medium and
its television support, Siona Wilson argues that Echo allows a reorientation away from the
“primacy of the visual” and opens the closed parenthesis of Narcissus to considerations of sound
and repetition. For Wilson’s argument and the work of Rosalind Krauss to which she responds,
see Wilson “Abstract Transmissions” and Krauss “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism.”
only lives as sound without body. For Gayatri Spivak, the doomed nymph opens textual space to the work of deconstruction in her inability to properly respond to Narcissus or any interlocutor. Echoing Narcissus’ last words, Echo repeats his “Fly from me” not as an interrogative utterance, as Narcissus means it, but as an imperative command, thus driving her lover away and opening a space of deconstructive différance in the text (“Echo” 24).

In the recent discourse around the contested field of “conceptual writing” in American poetics, Craig Dworkin and Kenneth Goldsmith have proposed Echo as standing in for the anti-expressive writer in their anthology of conceptual writing, Against Expression. As Dworkin writes in his introduction of the ill-fated nymph as emblematic of the concerns of conceptual writing, Echo is “loquacious, patient, rule bound, recontextualizing language in a mode of strict citation. Ostensibly a passive victim of the wrath of Juno, Echo in fact becomes a model of Oulipian ingenuity” (xlvii). The connection that Dworkin makes between Echo and a literary movement, such as Oulipo is useful, as is his emphasis on the role of citation in Echo’s story.47 Though it is not my claim that either Weiner or Cahun should be thought of as conceptual writers, Cahun, in her role as forerunner to Cindy Sherman, whose own work emerged in the generation after conceptualism in the visual art world, investigates codes of gender and

47 In the field of contemporary American poetry, the category of conceptual writing is an embattled one. For the first major theoretical treatise in favor of the category, see Place and Fitterman Notes on Conceptualism. Hannah Weiner’s work is included in an anthology of conceptual writing by women, see Bergvall et. al. I’ll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women. For a critique of conceptual writing’s terms, see Calvin Bedient “Against Conceptualism.” For another critique, that implicates non-expressive conceptual writing and lyric expressivity in one another’s structures, see Sina Queyras “Lyric Conceptualism, A Manifesto in Progress.”
autobiography in ways that place her in the constellation of influences of some contemporary practitioners of the kind of writing Dworkin and Goldsmith advocate.\textsuperscript{48}

Cahun and Weiner both turn to the figure of Echo, if in ways specific to their different styles, in creating texts from systems of code and citation. In the vignettes and monologues that comprise \textit{Héroïnes}, published partially and serially in 1925 and only collected together posthumously, Cahun presents retellings of the stories of legendary women. In citing several of Ovid’s heroines from his \textit{Heroides}, Cahun reclaims the women’s voices, giving perspectives subversive to the sexual politics of the myths that inspired her. The figure of Echo emerges through Cahun’s concurrent staging of the mime, as actor or ventriloquist, of these characters in texts influenced by her own work on stage in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Weiner’s text, the \textit{Code Poems}, departs from the dramatic genre that Cahun explores; these poems are in dialogue, instead, with the world of 1960s performance art in New York City. While still interested in the performance of “citational” voices, Weiner composes poems that are both scripts for and records of actual performances. Dispensing with the illusionistic character effects of the dramatic monologue form, Weiner reduces her texts to an anti-expressive mode of maritime signals, a system of codes transmitted by colored flags and flashing lights by ships at sea. The poems were performed in 1968 in Central Park with semaphore and light codes operated by participating National Guardsmen.

The anti-expressivity that Dworkin and Goldsmith diagnose in the figure of Echo evokes

\textsuperscript{48} The curators and editors of \textit{Inverted Odysseys} are, perhaps, the first to articulate most exhaustively the striking similarities amongst Cahun, Sherman, and Maya Deren’s oeuvres. Goldsmith includes Sherman in his own brief history of conceptual writing in his preface to \textit{Against Expression}. See Rice and Goldsmith, respectively.
the notion of the “death” of the subject after post-structuralist theory.\(^{49}\) Hal Foster, in one of the strongest expressions of this figuration of the subject’s demise as pertains to emotion and the expression of subjective experience by the artist, writes of the “expressive fallacy,” or the false belief in an expressivity that corresponds to the self-presence of an artistic subject (i.e. an artist) as opposed to the rhetorical devices (social, conventional) that give the effect of such expressivity.\(^{50}\) Foster’s analysis of “expression” as a rhetorical strategy might give credence to the argument that Rei Terada counters in her crucial study, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the “Death” of the Subject*, namely, that an attack on expression in poststructuralism is an attack on emotion in poststructuralist thought. However, as Terada shows in her crucial study, poststructuralist theory does not exclude emotion but simply reveals the ways in which traditional conceptions of expressivity naturalize emotion in what she calls the “expressive hypothesis,” echoing Foucault’s repressive hypothesis of sexuality.\(^{51}\) As she writes, “The claim that emotion requires a subject—thus we can see we’re subjects, since we have emotions—creates the illusion of subjectivity rather than showing evidence of it […] To object to the expressive hypothesis or any other mechanism of the ideology of emotion is not to discredit

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\(^{49}\) Registering in this “death” is, too, the “death” of the Author, noted by both Barthes and Foucault in their well-known essays, respectively, “La Mort de l’Auteur” and “Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?”

\(^{50}\) See Foster “The Expressive Fallacy.” For more on the relationship between the subject and the photograph in the context of Cindy Sherman, often considered Cahun’s inheritor, see Douglas Crimp “The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism.”

\(^{51}\) If Terada is also thinking of Foster’s “expressive fallacy” in formulating her turn of phrase she does not make the connection explicit. See Terada 11.
emotion, but to extricate it from expedient mythologies” (11). Opening Foster’s line of questioning beyond “expression” to emotion itself, Terada seeks to account for how emotion, or affect, can survive the subject’s “death.” In the textual spaces of Cahun’s *Héroïnes* and Weiner’s *Code Poems*, I ask the same question and point to the particular challenges it poses, as well as the opportunities it offers, to Cahun and Weiner’s poetics of collaboration.

In this chapter, I follow this line of questioning opened by Terada and taken up by Sianne Ngai in her work on affect in *Ugly Feelings*, as well as by Brian Massumi in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. To repeat one possible definition of emotion given by Terada and subsequently cited by Ngai, emotion is “an interpretation of a predicament” (57). This definition opposes the work of interpretation to that of expression, and I gravitate toward this attempt to define the shifting bounds of “emotion” or “affect” for its use of both the terms “interpretation” and “predicament.” We register affect, then, through a work of interpretation, a textual activity that will rely on Echo’s difference, or deconstructive *différance*, for its effects. And, this interpretation happens in the context of a “predicament.” This last term does not have to imply the collision of human persons in social space, and indeed often will not imply such a context, but I can sum up the mode of collaboration I pursue across these chapters as just that – a predicament, in which the affective work of collaboration unites and separates participants. Whereas Ngai seeks to expand the available aesthetic categories to previously unstudied “ugly” affects, I seek here the affective predicament of collaboration, bound up as I find it to be with some of those “ugly feelings.” Like Echo, in love but unable to respond properly to her beloved,

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52 Terada’s reference to “expedient mythologies” points the reader to Derrida’s “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy” in which he argues that metaphor represents a rhetorical instance of metaphysical presence. See Derrida “White Mythology.”
the collaborators that I propose for Cahun and Weiner – in fact, the collaboration I propose between their works – leaves one dissatisfied with response, or with the tone of response.

I begin, thus, with Ngai’s discussion of tone not as “‘a known way of speaking’ or a dramatic style of address,” though this focused notion of tone in the context of literary criticism does usefully draw out the ironies of Cahun and Weiner’s texts, but rather as what allows a critic to describe a work as somber, or joyous, or agitated (Ngai 28). When Bernstein states that he reads an “ominous tone” in WEEKS, he does not attribute that tone to an expressive, lyric quality or trait in the text. Rather, he assigns this affect to the effects of parataxis, a rhetorical device that in Weiner’s text highlights the incongruity of, or difference between, sentences or phrasal units in their grammatical spacing. Ngai, Massumi, Terada, and Spivak all point to the importance of difference – and, for Terada and Spivak, explicitly deconstructive difference, or différance – to the creation and circulation of affect. For Massumi, the gestures of a mime’s performance open a virtual space of possibility for new citational gestures that might follow each movement. For Ngai, a temporal difference, or belatedness, animates an affective state of anxiety that she links to feminist theory and politics. In Cahun and Weiner’s works discussed below, différance and belatedness will both come to bear on the work of responding to their messages.

One of Weiner’s Code Poems restages the originary moment of Echo’s grammar that Spivak draws out in her reading of the “Fly from me” scene. In the poem, “LWC FOLLOW ME,” Weiner sets into code a conversation between two voices that repeats in cycles once the semantic possibilities for the verb “to follow” in the interrogatives of the maritime code system

53 Rosalind Krauss invokes Derrida’s notion of “spacing” to discuss the primacy of photomontage in Surrealist uses of the photograph. Cahun’s emphasis on photomontage in the Aveux non avenus opens the possibility of a photographic intertext between that text and Héroïnes which I discuss in this chapter. See Krauss “Photographic Conditions” 18-28.
have been exhausted. The poem repeats this cycle six full times, with a “couplet” left hanging at
the end. One cycle reads:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LWC</th>
<th>Follow me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LWF</td>
<td>Will you lead?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWG</td>
<td>Will you follow?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWJ</td>
<td>Shall I follow?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWK</td>
<td>I will follow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the cycle continues, the next instance of the “LWC” for “Follow me” arrives from the
participant indicated by the rejoinders flush right on the page. Like Echo, who repeats the
question “Fly from me?” in the imperative mode, the poem volleys between imperative and
interrogative. Though the verbs used by Ovid (fly) and Weiner (follow) differ (and even seem to
cancel each other out), the repetition of the verb “to follow” through various grammatical
positions and moods in the sequence gives some of the uncertainty in Echo’s subject position
that Spivak points out to both of these interlocutors.

As Spivak describes her, “Echo in Ovid is staged as the instrument of the possibility of a
truth not dependent upon intention, a reward uncoupled from, indeed set free from, the recipient”
(“Echo” 24). Earlier in the essay, Spivak refers to this truth as “an occasional truth of a kind”
(“Echo” 20, emphasis mine). What the adjective “occasional” gives to Spivak’s description of
Echo is a nuance captured by the situational context of an utterance, a context that includes the
relational ties confirmed and denied between speaker and recipient of this truth. For, in Spivak’s
reading, Echo represents the possibility for self-difference: in repeating Narcissus’ phrase, “Fly
from me,” with a grammatical difference, Echo both maintains the difference between question
and response – and questioner (Narcissus) and respondent (Echo) – and defers the question as
she is unable to truly answer as a proper respondent (in echoing Narcissus, she cannot respond to

54 Elsewhere in this article, Spivak, miming the speech of vengeful Juno, calls Echo a “talkative
girl” and the “respondent as such.” See Spivak “Echo” 23.
the intention of his question) (“Echo” 26). Spivak concludes, “A difference and a deferment
together are, strictly speaking – but can one be strict about this? – différance” (“Echo” 26).
Weiner’s *Code Poems* open themselves to this deconstructive reading, as well. The variation in
meaning based on a change in one letter of the signal codes, or on a reordering of the letters,
makes transparent the structure of the codes as differential. The “Follow me” poem reverses the
Ovidian “Fly from me” but maintains the structure of grammatical ambivalence, alternating
between a confused series of imperative and interrogative utterances, scrambling conventions of
questioner and respondent as Echo’s position always does.

The visual layout of the “Follow Me” poem on the page reinforces the notion of
instability in a speaking subject as the lines bounce from right to left, an innovation that also
imitates how these poems would have been performed, spectators looking from one performer to
the next for each response. This “call and response” or event score format also gives the text a
musical feeling, further troubling the relationship between the lyric and the anti-expressive.

Composed from set combinations of visual codes, these poems indeed resist expressivity.
The “Follow Me” poem remains empty of semantic content beyond the manipulation of the code
itself. In other poems, Weiner pushes experimentation with repetition and the grammar of the
codes further. In “EDQ  ANY CHANCE OF WAR?” the poem cycles through an inevitability
of response to a series of questions. As in the story of Echo, in which call and response
reproduce one another in a loop, each answer in this poem only leads to another question. The
poem ends with the exchange:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KOM</th>
<th>How many dead?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KON</td>
<td>Who is dead?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOU</td>
<td>Dearer, dearest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOV</td>
<td>Too Dear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though the responses of “Dearer, dearest” and “Too dear” seem to signify an end that registers the affective state of whoever survives these dead, Weiner’s transcription of the code “KOU” and its variable meaning (“dearer” or “dearest”) reinforces the tone of removed objectivity inherent to the code system. Yet, at the same time, the repetition of “dear” insinuates a movement of feeling through the disembodied voice of the poem. Feeling in these poems is at once radically excised from the text in favor of the objective language of the semaphore codes and still included in it.

In other poems, Weiner layers narrative into the text of the poem, usually in the service of foregrounding an ironic distance in the use of codes to write poems. These poems include exchanges about pirates and light. In one of these two poems, “CHW Pirates,” the crews of two ships seem to speak back and forth, one reporting its attack by a pirate vessel. In turning the poem toward the humorous, however, Weiner has one voice describe the pirate with the pronoun “she,” conventional for the appellation of sailing vessels, completing the synecdoche in which the sailor speaks for, or in the voice of, the entire ship. When the rescuing ship asks how the pirate is armed, the foundering party responds, “She has long guns.” The tension between the feminine pronoun of the ship and the masculine, phallic imagery of long guns seems out of place in the non-maritime context of Weiner’s performances. The exchange turns almost cartoonish as the spectator or reader of this conversation appreciates the ironic posturing inherent in the gendered double-speak of these codes. To its rescuer, the foundering ship admits to having been stripped of its munitions and exclaims, as a Mallarméan ship might, “I am a complete wreck.” If the codes, by design, admit no emotion into the act of communication, here, Weiner’s punch line introduces emotion back into the code system. “I am a complete wreck,” reads, thus, as a
description of the plundered ship but also as a description of the psychological state of the injured sailor after the pirate’s attack.

The second poem, “QRD Light,” creates a lulling sonic texture out of the semaphore codes by selecting codes resulting in a monosyllabic rhyme scheme based on the title (i.e. light, tonight, sight). The lines recall Barbara Guest’s later use of rhyme in the more painterly poem, “Wild Gardens Overlooked by Night Lights” (from the 1989 collection Fair Realism), or the maritime atmospherics of Mallarmé’s “Salut” and “Un Coup de dés” (1897). While Guest’s poem represents the very poetic influences Weiner was fleeing in writing the Code Poems, having failed, she felt, at writing New York School-style poems, Mallarmé’s use of chance and typography in “Un Coup de dés” seems a suitable ancestor to Weiner’s experiments. Weiner’s rejection, in frustration, of a New York School poetics after her short book The Matisse Poems finds its expression in her turn to Fluxus and performance art-influenced modes of writing. Thus, Weiner’s “Light” poem recalls the work of her friend Jackson Mac Low and his use of chance and procedure to compose his own Light Poems between 1964 and 1988.

Weiner’s strategy for a procedural poetics in this poem brings the reader who encounters it on the page back to the fact of its performance. In “Mostly about the Sentence,” Weiner writes, “Before the Code poems please I was just short page an ordinary writer no instructions and one book was published. The Code Poems were performance pieces using two figures and flags and were found material […]” (122). In the composition and staging of the Code Poems, Weiner privileges the facts of performance and found materials, implying that these practices made her more than just an “ordinary” writer, leading, in fact, to the Fluxus-inspired instructional mode that informs her subsequent poetic and art practice. The “Light” poem seems to refer, then, to the performance of its script with light work contributed by participating members of the Coast
Guard, as explained by Weiner in *Code Poems*. In the poem, light registers as signifier for its poetic, sonic texture but more importantly for Weiner’s experimentation; it implies a kind of writing, a literal photo-graphy, but also – by the metonymic conditions of Weiner’s performances – the movements of the semaphore flag system, a gestural writing with the body.

The fact of the performance of these poems further intensifies the juxtaposition of expression and an inexpression. In the text of the *Code Poems*, Weiner includes two illustrations: a chart depicting the stances the body should take for each letter of the alphabet and a compilation of the flag patterns (Figs. 2.2 and 2.3). These illustrations remind the reader, as does Weiner in “Mostly about the Sentence,” that these poems are performance scripts. The semaphore flag system requires pronounced gestural movement by the body to pass along a message. Arms must move widely to change the position of the patterned flags that form the maritime code system. And yet, the message remains within the bounds of the code – like all language, Weiner might argue, but particularly constrained in the case of the semaphore alphabet. Rather than corresponding to either the cold language of a code or the more expressive modes of narrative and lyric, the *Code Poems* work affectively on their readers and spectators through the physical gesture.

As Massumi argues, punctuated movement, or “jerks,” marks affective power, and makes it transmissible and legible.55 Massumi derives his theory of the “jerk” from what he observes in the technique of the mime. In Massumi’s example, Ronald Reagan is a political mime who perfected the politicization of the mime’s power, and as I discuss later in this chapter, the figure

55 Massumi’s terminology, here, relies on the pun of “jerk,” as one of his examples comes from Ronald Reagan’s rhetorical style. Though fascinated by Reagan’s affective presence, Massumi clearly and cleverly takes issue with his politics, evident in his choice of “jerk.” See Massumi 39-44.
of the mime as actor resonates especially with Cahun. Massumi bases this theory not on the smooth performance that a mime might present to an audience, but on the work of citation and imitation that goes into that performance, or how the mime “decomposes” movement into a series of constituent “jerks.” Massumi writes, “At each jerk, at each cut into the movement, the potential is there for the movement to veer off in another direction, to become a different movement” (40). As in the *Code Poems*, the message of each line, or each riposte, depends upon the movement and flag work that comes next to form a combination of three “letters.” Massumi, like Bernstein in his *WEEKS* introduction, privileges the affective potentiality of parataxis for readers and spectators. Poems such as “ANY CHANCE OF WAR” foreground this recombinatory potential as call and response and form a list of codes distinct only for the difference of one letter (i.e. KOM, KON, KOU, and KOV, in the passage cited above). The recombinatory possibilities open what Massumi calls a “flash of virtuality” within the performance of the poems (41). As Carrie Noland has also argued of physical gesture, “[…] by retrieving gestures from the past, or by borrowing gestures from another culture, subjects can actually produce new innervations, discover new sensations to feel” (*Migrations* x). In Massumi’s description, Reagan appealed to the United States public through these affective means. Weiner’s poems and their performances appeal to the reader and her audiences in the same way.

Weiner’s longest poem in *Code Poems* retells Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, profiting from the coincidence of those two characters’ names and the names of their respective first letters in NATO’s military phonetic alphabet. The familiar tragedy unfolds in Weiner’s performance poem in a vocabulary at once awkwardly formal and dependent on argot, to

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56 Mercutio in Weiner’s semaphore retelling becomes “Mike,” per the military alphabet, as well.
comedic effect, as in the pirate poem. As with the poems described above, Weiner includes the entire text of each code’s possible meanings, so that Romeo expresses his pleasure upon learning of the party to be thrown by Juliet’s parents with the stilted reply, “Happy to hear it or that.” Later in the poem, ready to consummate their relationship, Romeo and Juliet, or R and J as they might appear in a performance of these poems, trade a series of double entendres composed of the sexual double speak made available by the maritime codes: “to come,” “cock,” “double bottom,” “enter stern first,” “screw well.” Weiner’s poem is, then, a bawdy adaptation worthy of Shakespeare’s own penchant for these types of puns but is also representative of her particular interest in the semiotics of the maritime code system when submitted to her own poetics of chance and procedure.

In the poem, Weiner takes advantage of the felicitous coincidence of the phonetic alphabet’s names for R and J to explore the theme of the proper name in Shakespeare’s play. If the protagonists of that play suffer from the responsibilities pushed onto them by the familial signifiers Capulet and Montague, the Romeo and Juliet of Weiner’s poem have a responsibility only to their place in the sign-system of the semaphore codes. As the characters introduce themselves, the codes employed by Weiner differ slightly. The flag combinations for “What is her name,” “My name is,” and “What is your name?” read as follows: SDQ, SDL, SDT. Each differs by degree, with a change in one position marking the transformation (Q, L, and T). Interestingly, this exchange concludes with Romeo telling his name to Juliet. Whereas Juliet’s introduction reads SDL J, Romeo’s reads SLD R in the text. Whether or not this difference is attributable to the gender difference between the two speakers, the order of the signals in these two codes with the same meaning exhibits not just a difference but a displacement of the code’s
grammar, recalling the deconstructive difference and displacement invoked by Spivak in describing Echo’s position in the myth.

The ironic distance established in these poems by the conditions of their performance as well as by the sign system upon which depends their translation on the page might seem to foreclose the possibility of emotional effect on the reader-viewer. But, as in Massumi’s commentary on Reagan’s political style, an affective work remains to move and draw in the reader-viewer. If meaning in these poems depends upon the physical gestures of a body intended to perform them with signal flags, the virtual body opened by recombinatory possibility exists without a physical body, like Echo repeating a series of overheard enunciations. The repetition, or citation, of rhetorical and poetical modes of lyric and narrative contributes to this virtuality, as a surface layer legible to the reader-viewer but also subverted by Weiner’s exploration of the structure of these codes as resistant to those same modes. As with Reagan’s seductive political voice and gestures, the patina of traditional poetic modes draws the reader in only to present him or her with the informatics of the code. In Weiner’s texts, the affective response is comedic but also one of being distanced from the text as its reader—a comedic tone that distances by its irony. As Ngai argues, the inspiration of an affect in a reader or viewer can draw the reader-viewer into aesthetic contemplation by marking the inspiring object as an object for concern, for feeling (85). The act of contemplation for Weiner’s audiences (readers and viewers) implies a self-conscious mode of reading, as reader-viewers receive the coded messages and (at least in the performances) react to the signals without captions or scripts. Affect works in the Code Poems,

57 The gestural fragmenting of the body into a virtual form recalls Linda Nochlin’s thesis in *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*. For Nochlin’s discussion of several artists relevant to this study, see her concluding remarks in Nochlin 53-56.
then, not only as tone but as a structural feature of the “text” that moves the audience member to attempt to read the signals from the paratactic spaces opened between the syntactic units.

Cahun seems to presage – or, in a temporal inversion, even respond to – the geometrical gestures of Weiner’s body with a series of portraits circa 1928 in which she poses her body with attention to its geometrical arrangement (Fig. 2.4). In the portraits, taken from above, Cahun wears a light colored swim cap and tank top and a pair of high-waisted shorts, one half of them black, the other half matching the light color of her shirt and cap. Cahun poses on her back on top of a white backdrop spread across the ground; she angles her arms, elbows, legs, and knees at different degrees away from her body in each of the images. In two of the portraits, she lies flat against the white ground. In a third, she lifts herself up with her arms spread out behind her back, her face upturned to the camera. As with Weiner’s flag signals, Cahun seems to project a message to her viewer, coded in her bodily signals.

Though I know Cahun cannot answer Weiner, nor can Weiner look over her shoulder to respond to Cahun, for me, they seem to send their geometric signals to each other – contorting their bodies into a new language of gesture to reach each other across time and space. Derrida calls this kind of communication teleiopoesis in *Politiques de l’amitié*. Or, rather, such a “poetics at or from a distance” makes possible my strange reception and triangulation of these signals from Cahun and Weiner, seemingly aleatory and based on my own idiosyncratic habits as a reader but also buttressed by the certainty of the teleiopoetic call once it finds its recipient. For Derrida, this call is a citation attributed to Montaigne that reaches him in the voice of Nietzsche, “O mes amis, il n’y a nul ami.” Imagine Derrida’s wonder when he realized Montaigne never

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wrote those words, how much more precious they became for the force of their poetry, for their status as citation, or copy, without an original. Now, to return to Cahun’s portraits.

As Emily Apter argues, geometric patterning in Cahun’s work serves a unisex style that reimagines femininity in covering the body in abstract, gender-neutral patterns (142). Apter relates this use of geometry to camouflage and mimicry, placing it in the context of World War I practices of disorientating camouflage. Apter details the “weaponized visual effects” of dazzle-painting that made use of innovations in modern art (Cubism, Futurism) to paint the surfaces of ships in a pattern of broken lines and contours that would confuse enemy vessels as to the size, speed, and location of an oncoming, dazzle-painted ship (141). What dazzle-painting accomplishes in military camouflage, Echo achieves in the disruptions of grammar communicated by her repetitions. Echo’s “Follow me” wavers between interrogative and imperative and so fractures grammar to reveal nothing of herself as speaking subject. Does Echo recede away from her interlocutor or draw him or her closer? In these portraits, Cahun draws the viewer in through a message directed at the viewer through her pose but also maintains a distance between her viewer and her posing self by offering no gloss of the encoded meaning.

While Weiner draws out to comedic effect the subtle gendering of the semaphore alphabet in a poem such as “Romeo and Juliet,” Cahun manipulates visual and literary codes associated with the feminine and female characters in Héroïnes, as well as in an earlier work of

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59 However, Cahun also appreciated the art of mimicry and camouflage in her style choices. Cahun puts this interest in a camouflage of simple, practical style to work in her artistic and political engagements during the Nazi Occupation of Jersey, as I discuss in chapter 3. See Apter 142 and Cahun Écrits 443-44.

60 This effect is similar to that of Weiner’s “clairvoyant” portrait on the cover of the Clairvoyant Journal. Weiner invites the viewer to look at her with the attention-seeking slogan “I see words” written across her forehead but also refuses the gaze with the same gesture, as if hiding behind the slogan or deflecting attention away from her body to the immaterial words. See Fig. 1.2.
fashion journalism. In “L’étymologie des modes,” a 1914 article published in *Le Phare de la Loire*, Cahun expresses a preference for a no-frills style inspired by British dress. (Notably, the article appeared in *Le Phare de la Loire* accompanied by fashion sketches by Moore.) Cahun concludes the article with a tongue in cheek criticism of some foreign and French attitudes toward fashion: “Prenez garde […] Avant de vous laquer les dents et de vous tondre les sourcils, songez qu’il est des idiotismes intraduisibles en français” (444). Cahun does not, in this passage, assert foreign style of dress as untranslatable to a French *style* but instead leaves her metaphor of untranslatability squarely in the realm of language: foreign styles of dress represent sartorial idiomatic expressions that do not translate into the *French language*.

Cahun’s metaphor of translation and a national style-language recalls Barthes’ later theorizing of the semiotics of fashion in his 1967 *Système de la mode*. In these “signal” portraits, Cahun offers her body, specifically captured in the photograph, as what Barthes terms a “shifter” in his text. For Barthes, a structural analysis of the system of fashion reveals three types of clothing: the iconic garment of the fashion image; the written garment in the caption or textual description in a fashion publication; and the real garment itself as a product of the material conditions of its making, or what Barthes calls the technologic garment (13-14). A shifter allows the movement from one type of garment to another, or as Barthes puts it, “d’un code à un autre code” (16). In his description, these “shifters” include the designer’s sketch, the instructions for the couturier, and syntactic devices that relate an image to its written description (as in the relationship between Moore’s illustration and Cahun’s text).

In Cahun’s signal portraits, the codes of the iconic and written garment both seem to operate in the poses captured in the photograph. Cahun emphasizes her sartorial choices in the poses of the photograph as the garments she wears physically shift with her movements. In one
image, the colors of the shorts she wears are bisected down the front, in another, the shorts have twisted to appear monochromatic, the light colored fabric now hidden and covering Cahun’s backside. Divested of the kind of textual support (the caption) so important to Barthes’ theory of the garment (and the photograph), Cahun’s poses in these images recall Weiner’s use of the flags in her performances, for which there would have been no “caption” in the form of the poem scripts later published in *Code Poems* at the time of their performance. Cahun’s posed body in her portraits, when considered in this context, becomes its own form of writing based in a system of signals and codes. Barthes’ notion of the “shifter” can be found at work in the relationship between Weiner’s performances and poems, as well. In the performance of the poems, the gestures of the performers with flags and flashing lights shifts the abstract codes of the signals into a language of physical gesture. Weiner’s description and the letter combinations of the poem-scripts in the book edition then shift these gestures into conventional writing in the poems. Like Weiner’s performed signals, Cahun’s “written” photographic messages address a viewer, emphasized in the photographs by her upturned face in one of the images directed toward the photographer and the viewer of the image.

Cahun’s collection *Héroïnes* can be considered a paratactic grouping of short narratives. Conspicuously, Cahun leaves Echo out of this collection of legendary women, perhaps a consequence of Cahun’s idiosyncratic selection of women but a choice notable, too, for her

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61 The *Code Poems* were not published in a book edition until 1982, after the success of Weiner’s later writing in the *Clairvoyant Journal* and other “clair-style” works. No documentation exists to attest to performance scripts circulating during the performances of Weiner’s *Code Poems* in the 1960s, though she did produce scripts in various formats – postcards with morse code and other signal systems, longs strips of paper printed with colorful signal flags – that would have circulated to promote gallery exhibits or as part of street interventions. This ephemera is available in the archive of her papers in the Mandeville Special Collections at UC-San Diego.
knowledge of classical mythology.\textsuperscript{62} The literary ventriloquism of the \textit{Héroïnes} engages with themes of speaking, listening, acting, repeating, and creating. In “La Sadique Judith,” Cahun writes in Judith’s voice during her speech to her people after decapitating Holofernes. Cahun dedicates “Hélène la Rebelle” to “l’Acteur,” and “Sapho l’Incomprise,” aligns the poet of Lesbos’ power with that of the Sirens, asking where one might draw the line between creation and destruction. Thus, despite Echo’s absence from the collection, she is necessarily diffused throughout the texts that comprise the collection. Indeed, Echo’s absence from the scene of \textit{Héroïnes} suggests her power as Cahun’s muse for these short texts. However, if Echo is the unspoken and unspeaking muse, she gives nuance to the figure of the muse as Jennifer Shaw describes the role in her study of Cahun’s \textit{Aveux non avenus}. Whereas in a traditional creative partnership the muse must remain silent to allow the artist to master his or her own desire, Shaw asserts that Cahun’s reversal of such patriarchal and heterosexist paradigms in the \textit{Aveux} proposes a muse who speaks for herself and her own desires (31).\textsuperscript{63} While that reading holds for the \textit{Aveux}, the figure of Echo, as I argue exemplified by the texts collected in \textit{Héroïnes}, problematizes Shaw’s reading by suggesting that even in her inability to speak for herself Echo still offers a new model for the muse as artist. In addition to an inability, then, Echo comes to represent, too, a refusal or non-vouloir to speak in \textit{Héroïnes}, as will be most evident in the chapter devoted to Sappho. This model of the muse as Echo relies on the very notion of the textuality of the subject and its affects put forth by Ngai and Terada.

\textsuperscript{62} Leperlier attests to Cahun’s knowledge of mythology in discussing the divergence of Cahun’s aesthetic in these texts from her Symbolist precedents, especially the \textit{Moralités légendaires} by Jules Laforgue, see Leperlier 49.

\textsuperscript{63} Gayle Zachmann argues that “Woman as muse figures for and as Claude Cahun; she is vehicle, object, and subject of an exploration of the sites and limits of symbolic construction – visual, verbal and social.” See Zachmann “Surreal and Canny Selves” 394.
The first text in the series, “Ève la Trop Crédule,” actually sets the scene for two voices, that of Eve as well as that of the serpent. Eve speaks, comically, as a contemporary wife, concerned with what to buy in order to please her husband and mildly contemptuous of God, whom she calls “père” and describes as grumpy (“grognon”). The serpent’s voice comes out in the text through the use of language appropriated from English-language advertisements, and, though his voice is not set in quotation marks and so could be read simply as found material, Eve does debate with him over how many apples to buy. If not quite engaging with the kind of “non-expressive” codes Weiner deploys in her poems, this appropriative collage aesthetic does establish Cahun’s interest in constructing a palimpsest of contemporary scripts of domestic commerce and ancient legend, negotiating a thin line between retelling (repetition) and reinterpretation.

The motif of debate and discussion becomes more important in two of the monologues that follow, those of Sappho and Judith. In these two installments in the series Cahun draws out a tension between speaking and being heard, similar to Echo’s distress upon discovering she can only repeat and so must always be misunderstood in the utterance of “Fly from me.” In “La Sadique Judith,” sadism drives Judith to kill Holofernes, but not out of a sense of loyalty to her own people. Judith charges Holophernes’s ears with special erotic meaning, and later, in the act of killing the man she desires, Judith reminds herself, “Prends bien garde à cette bouche, à cette nuque, à ces oreilles […]” (132). In this passage that recalls Georges Bataille’s writing on mouths and ears, the mouth is dangerous for its ability to bite and to suck, aggressive,

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64 In the short text “Mouth” (originally published in Documents 5 [1930]), Bataille describes that orifice as the animal’s “prow,” or proye, just as Cahun’s narrator in the Aveux strives to live always at the “proue de moi-même.” In civilized men, Bataille writes, “the violent meaning of the mouth is preserved in a latent state.” See Bataille 59.
defensive actions but also erotic ones. Ears, we are left to imagine, are dangerous for their erotic beauty for Judith, but when she finishes her speech, lamenting the murder by her own hand of the man she desired, her people do not hear her complaint. Ears are dangerous, too, as in the expression “deaf ears.” Judith’s “frères” only praise her, even as she damns her affiliation with them in her curse, “Patrie, prison de l’âme” (132).

In “Sapho l’Incomprise,” Cahun juxtaposes creative and destructive acts. Assuming the position of the artist at the beginning of the monologue, Sappho reveals the irony that despite the pleasure she finds in creating, she is sterile and cannot have children. Instead, she adopts her daughter Cléïs, preparing an eventual scene of jealous desire when she falls in love with Phaon, who does not understand the affection shared between adoptive mother and daughter and so deserts Sappho. As with Judith, Cahun situates Sappho in the context of her “peuple,” a beloved poet who enjoys the acclaim of her countrymen and women. Humiliated after Phaon’s desertion, Sappho considers suicide, but in Cahun’s version of the story instead engages in a complicated subterfuge, placing a “poupée de son” at the top of a high cliff in her place. At the correct moment, Sappho safely hidden on a boat at the bottom of the cliff, Cléïs pushes the mannequin to the rocks and sea below. Witnesses, including Atthis, who Sappho reports has “de bonnes oreilles,” believe they have heard Sappho’s cry and so that she has truly jumped to her death.

Here, the motif of a failure to be heard or understood, which I associate with Echo above, takes on elements of another legendary woman missing from the Héroïnes but important to Cahun’s pose as tragically clairvoyant in later post-WWII writing: Cassandra, whose warnings also fell on the deaf ears of her countrymen and women. In Cahun’s memoir Confidences au miroir, written in the wake of her imprisonment by the Nazis and in which she compares herself to Cassandra, Cahun evokes again the image of the ear and even Echo herself. In a passage in which she seems to address both Moore and herself, Cahun concludes, “Absurde: celle que j’interroge muée en nymphe Echo.” Does she interrogate herself or Moore? Who is her desired respondent? See Cahun “Confidences” 591.
At the heart of these retellings, Cahun establishes a split between body and voice. In “Sapho,” the voice is disembodied and assigned to a double, not dissimilar to Helen’s eidolon that supposedly gave cover to her refuge in Egypt while the Trojan War raged. As in the myth of Narcissus and Echo, ears deceive, or refuse to hear the nuances of speech. Atthis believes that the sound of Sappho’s voice can be localized in the “body” she saw fall from the cliff, and so she can attest, albeit mistakenly, to Sappho’s presence in the suicide scene. If Weiner’s performed gestures open a virtual space in relationship to the performing body and the performed meaning, following Massumi’s theory of the mime, the mannequin, here, represents that same virtuality, connected but not wed to the real body of Sappho in the ventriloquism of her voice performed by the mannequin, or “poupée de son.” Judith finds that her people do not hear her lament, preferring to celebrate the death of Holofernes, and Cahun’s version of the legend even suggests the split in Judith’s own experience of events in her inability to reconcile her desire for Holofernes with her desire to kill him, a conflict symbolized by her attraction to and repulsion for his ear.

Leperlier calls these monologues an “autoportrait polymorphe” of Cahun and privileges Cahun’s technique of “détournement” of the autobiographical that these texts reveal (L’écart 54-5). And, while Cahun does experiment with the possibilities of self-portraiture in these texts, she also investigates the position of the mime, or actor, repeating lines like Echo who repeats the

66 Euripides’ play Helen is one of the sources for this version of Helen’s story. This branch of the Trojan legend serves as the basis, too, for H.D’s Helen in Egypt (1952-54, published 1961).

67 Meret Oppenheim, whose work I discuss in chapter four, turned a fascination for Giacometti’s ear into the 1959 sculpture, Ear of Giacometti.
speech she overhears. Leperlier reads the _Héroïnes_ as ultimately valorizing the figure of Narcissus, crucial to Cahun’s next major work, the _Aveux non avenus_ and as examined in my previous chapter. In an analysis of Cahun’s notion of the Androgyne, a figure developed throughout several of the monologues in _Héroïnes_, Leperlier concludes, “Hors norme, hors la loi, expérience des limites, l’androgynie n’est pas seulement la résolution d’une différence, elle est aussitôt génératrice d’un nouvel écart, d’un nouvel abîme où s’élève la cruelle dissonance du corps et de l’esprit” ( _L’écart_ 60). At first, in this summation, Leperlier seems to evoke the figure of Echo, dissociated from her own voice and ultimately from her own body once her physical form dissipates in Ovid’s telling. But, valorizing instead the figure of Narcissus, Leperlier concludes, “Impuissant à s’assortir un autre être que lui-même, le sujet est condamné à l’amour de soi, c’est-à-dire à la réappropriation de son atypie, de sa monstruosité” ( _L’écart_ 60). Though Leperlier rightly notes that Cahun dedicates the monologue “Salmacis la suffragette” to herself (“Pour Claude”) implying a self-portrait, he does not draw attention to the dedication of “Hélène la Rebelle” to the Actor (“Pour l’Acteur”). Cahun, then, includes both Narcissus and Echo in the text of the _Héroïnes_. Yet, as a group of dramatic monologues, the form of this series of texts emphasizes both the literary genre of the “mime” and the work of the actor who repeats lines and gestures on stage.

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68 Here, Cahun switches from the epistolary mode of Ovid’s example to the dramatic mode according to her own interest in the figure of the Actor, as well as to the influence of Schwob’s _Mimes_ that were also composed as dramatic monologues rather than letters.

69 Indeed, Leperlier’s critical biography of Cahun includes in his chapter on the _Héroïnes_ the contemporaneous portraits of Cahun as an actor, posing with masks on and off and in character from production by Albert-Birot, taken around 1928. Conley makes the connection between these photographic portraits and the _Héroïnes_, as well. See Leperlier 64 and 76-84, and Conley 2.
The visual element of the “dessins typographiques,” created on a typewriter and which conclude most of the vignettes, further complicates the generic classification of *Héroïnes*. While the categorization of the “mime” implies both a literary and performance classification for this collection of texts, these typographic drawings operate as concrete poems while also implying a “photographic intertext,” to borrow Gayle Zachmann’s useful phrase, with Cahun’s portraits in this text. Zachmann has interpreted the *mise en page* of the *Aveux*’s cover page as no less than a concrete poem, mimicking the crosshairs of a camera’s viewfinder (Fig. 2.5) (“Photographic Intertext” 305). In “Ève la Trop Crédule,” the typographical drawing resembles the Tree of Life (Fig. 2.6). In “Sapho,” the drawing is partially obscured, with typographic symbols not fully legible, as if a fragment from the poet herself (Fig. 2.7). In the drawing included at the conclusion of “Marguerite, Soeur Incestueuse,” a more elaborate design depicts a military parade, including figures gesturing with flags and their bodies (Fig. 2.8).

The “photographic intertext” at work in *Héroïnes* differs from that at work in the *Aveux non avenus*. In Zachmann’s analysis of the photographic intertext of the *Aveux*, she compares the verbal montage of the text to the photomontages included therein, finding that the verbal montage figures the hybridization that the dissolution of the verbal/visual boundary implies in the text (409).\(^7\) Johanna Drucker, in her essay “Visual Performance of the Poetic Text,” describes the kind of performative work that a poem can achieve through typographic means. She writes, “[A] visual performance of a poetic work on a page or canvas, as a projection or

\(^7\) Zachmann mentions both Narcissus and Echo in this essay. She writes, “Neither Narcissus nor Echo, visual nor verbal, mirror nor text, can completely snare that self in a fixed mirror or static image.” In my argument, I do not disagree, but do separate the two figures to examine the phenomenal intentionality of the relationship between reader-viewer and text in the previous chapter (associated with Narcissus) and a non-intentional relationship between text, or work, and reader-viewer in this chapter (associated with Echo). See Zachmann “Photographic Intertext” 407.
sculpture, installation or score, also has the qualities of an enactment […] These visual means perform the work as a poem that can’t be translated into any other form” (131). In _Héroïnes_, Cahun privileges the performance mode, likely due to her concurrent participation in Albert-Birot’s theatre, introducing a photographic intertext premised on the actor’s pose. The intertext for _Héroïnes_ comprises, then, the texts of the monologues, the “dessins typographiques,” and the self-portraits in character, as Actor (or mime), and in geometric poses and costume. Indeed, like Sapho who arranges for her double, a poupée de son, or mechanically-voiced mannequin, to take the plunge to “her” death, Cahun posed beside her own mannequin double in a portrait from 1938 (Fig. 2.9).\(^71\) Sapho’s mechanically enabled ventriloquism enacts an echo-effect, distracting attention from her body to her disembodied voice and removing the poet from the activity of creation. Yet, though Sapho becomes a destroyer at the end of her monologue, Echo neither creates nor destroys. Like Cahun’s texts and images, all depending on their individual citationality, Echo echoes the speech of others.

Weiner’s _Code Poems_ and Cahun’s _Héroïnes_ both represent texts imbued with the visual, combining the textual and the visual in works marked by their “visuality.”\(^72\) In Cahun and Weiner’s texts, this visuality finds its equivalent expression in performance. Thus, Massumi’s notion of the “jerk” expresses not only a physical gesture, a spasm or reconfiguration of the body, but a visual arrangement of the body as image, as well, and one that inscribes itself in the

\(^71\) The “poupée de son” also evokes Hans Bellmer and Unica Zürn’s works and collaborations, especially his mutilated dolls. For more on Zürn, see chapter 6.

\(^72\) Here, I build off of Hal Foster’s notion of “visuality” in his introduction to _Vision and Visuality_ as well as Krauss’s contention that Surrealist photomontage “pictures” (or, figures) writing within the work. See Foster, ed. _Vision and Visuality_ ix-xiv and Krauss “Photographic Conditions” 19.
textual object. In Barthes’ analysis of the discourse of fashion and its codes, shifters indicate a kind of movement or gesture, as well, away from one code and toward another one. Unlike Barthes’ shifters, Massumi’s jerks carry an affective charge in their recombinatory potentiality, or virtuality. Weiner takes advantage of the shifting quality, or recombinatory potential, of the maritime semaphore to shift codes literally from one message to the next but also to shift the poems between textual and visual registers of reception. In doing so, Weiner transmits an affective experience to her audience as the poems alternate between the near-lyricism of a self-reflexive meditation on light and the distancing ironies of her Romeo and Juliet poem. As in Cahun’s literary ventriloquism or miming of her legendary Héroïnes, Weiner mimes her poems, as her body, like Cahun’s, becomes caught in the self-difference of her gestural work as “actor.”

In Weiner’s Code Poems, the work of acting is subsumed to the position of Echo that the poems illustrate. In Cahun’s portraits and texts, the absence of Echo or an explicitly non-expressive mode of writing illustrates Spivak’s claims less immediately. However, in the texts of the Héroïnes Cahun returns several times to the split between body and voice crucial to an understanding of Ovid’s telling of the myth as well as to Spivak’s reading of it. While removing the voice as immediately present to the speaking body as in “Sapho l’Incomprise,” or even in the retelling of Judith’s story, Cahun emphasizes the importance of the bodies in her texts as female bodies. As Spivak maintains, Echo must be female to be punished with the loss of her own voice and to fit the asymmetric equation with Tiresias’ reward of clairvoyance in Ovid’s telling (‘Echo” 26). Weiner and Cahun both draw out the gendering of Echo’s position – Cahun by miming the voices of legendary women and Weiner in such playful manipulations of the ostensibly “neutral” or “neuter” maritime signals in “Romeo and Juliet.”
This gendering, though, does not abandon Echo to her voicelessness. Rather, Spivak restores Echo’s power precisely by arguing for her deconstructive power. Spivak writes, “Guarding this difference is Echo’s punishment turned into reward, a deconstructive lever for future users” (“Echo” 26, emphasis mine). Spivak, thus, suggests that Echo’s different and deferred position within the myth of Narcissus gives her the power to speak to future users, in a description of the figure of Echo that comes close to affirming Echo’s own rapprochement with forward-looking clairvoyance. Tiresias’ clairvoyance is also linked to his time spent as a woman, thus aligning him and his clairvoyance with a female power, such as the one I extrapolate from Spivak’s reading of Echo as a “lever for future users,” as well as the masculine subject position she here imputes to him as a sign of asymmetric reward in Ovid’s text. Unlike the clairvoyance of Tiresias, however, Echo’s position as a proxy for deconstruction in the myth suggests that her clairvoyance is not just one that predicts in the present tense but that can act in the future tense, through the participation of future readers, or respondents.

The establishment of Echo as a deconstructive agent bears consequences for the expression of affect in these texts, as well. Spivak points out that it is precisely the “value-coding or gendering of affect” that casts into relief the stakes for transgression and reward in the story of Narcissus and Echo; she also makes clear that Echo’s “dubious reward” is found “quite outside the borders of the self” (“Echo” 23). Terada argues specifically for an understanding of emotion or feeling in their subjectless origins as affect, an argument informed by the critique of the subject carried out by Derrida and deconstruction. Terada reads Derrida’s critique of the Cartesian tradition in “Cogito and the History of Madness” as proposing self-difference as “experience itself.” For Terada, non-subjective experience is the necessary condition for affect and mental life, of which she conceives as an incomplete experience marked by the “death” of
the subject. As she writes, “Dismissing self-difference therefore forecloses emotion even as it posits subjectivity” (24). Echo, of course, has no recourse to subjectivity, condemned as she is to self-difference at all moments.

Both Cahun and Weiner foreground the figure of Echo in the structure of their works while revealing the importance of visuality as well as listening to the paradigm of mental experience that Echo offers. As Terada notes, Derrida critiques Husserl’s notion of “phenomenological voice,” challenging the idea that the voice is a medium that can represent self-presence (27). In Cahun’s “Sapho,” the voice is displaced from the living, human body into the mechanics of a “poupée de son.” In Weiner’s poems, messages go un-voiced; lines of dramatic poetry as in “Romeo and Juliet” only serve as supplement to the performance of the visual codes. Weiner and Cahun establish the primacy of vision in their texts but even so, the figure of Echo implies a mode of address that escapes the textual or visual in these works.

In a collection of essays on the act of listening, Jean-Luc Nancy connects this activity to self-difference, writing that to listen is to always strain forward toward the self. Self-difference, for Nancy, figures as “referral” (9). He writes that to listen is to be on the lookout, but carefully draws the distinction between visual surveillance and the “referral” of listening: to be on the watch visually establishes a rift in the gaze between subject and object; in listening, the subject refers back to itself as sonic vibrations move through the listening body, resulting in a reflexive self-consciousness of sonic experience. Nancy writes, “In still other words, the visual is tendentially mimetic, and the sonorous tendentially methexic (that is, having to do with participation, sharing, or contagion), which does not mean that these tendencies do not intersect” (10). If Cahun and Weiner’s texts coalesce around a primary visuality by virtue of being texts and images to be read, the incorporation of the figure of Echo into these texts represents just such
an intersection of the visual and the auditory.

Cahun and Weiner both address messages through their texts, specifically messages that have no defined destination. But, the reader-viewer who receives these messages interprets them as citation, as mimed performance, somewhere between visuality (text and image) and sonic perception (echo). Reader-viewers share in the operation of the text or performance, though this methexis does not point to metaphysical self-presence. Instead, Nancy argues for a resonant subject, who experiences listening (and listening to his or her own voice), as resonance, as the vibration that marks an interval of spacing between utterance, echo, and rebound. Countering the intentionality of Husserl’s phenomenological subject, the resonant subject is constantly referred, or deferred, to a future subject yet to come (21). In other words, listening moves the body, or makes the body vibrate, in anticipation of the return of the echo and the possibility for perceptual experience not founded on presence. As with Massumi’s “jerks,” interior self-movement signals a shift in the self, its displacement or self-difference and deferral in view of possible future selves.

The citationality inherent to the figure of Echo achieves the effect – or, affect – of resonance in Cahun and Weiner’s reading and viewing audiences. This is the citationality of the actor, or mime, and the signal bearer, both relaying an unintentional message to unknown destinations. Thus, does Terada argue for the theatricality of mental life. Through her reading of Derrida’s critique of subjective experience, Terada argues for the citational structures, figured in my analysis in the person of Echo, that bring “the unexpected bonus of emotion” (40). In taking

73 In the same passage, Nancy points to the “intensive spacing of a rebound” that characterizes the resonant subject. For my discussion of Weiner and especially Cahun, I again point to Rosalind Krauss’ theorizing of “spacing” in Surrealist photomontage for its echo here in Nancy’s intersection of the visual and the sonic in the notion of resonance. See above note 9.
her conclusion further, Terada contends, “Textuality, in other words – and *différance*, its
dynamic force – models Derridean emotion. Throughout his work, Derrida locates emotion in
relations rather than in subjects” (45). The textual relations that Terada here offers as constitutive
of an emotional experience in mental life that does not operate under the white mythology or
alibi of *subjective* experience find their correlate in Spivak’s reading of Echo as *différance*.

As a “lever for future users,” to recall Spivak’s description, Echo incarnates the
“relations” that Terada identifies in Derrida’s textual notion of affect. In the “Envois” section of
*La Carte Postale*, Derrida addresses love notes to an unknown recipient, who is ultimately not
the recipient as readers intercept them in their free circulation. As Derrida writes there, “À toi
d’abord: je n’attends qu’une réponse et elle te revient” (8). Terada takes up the example to reveal
how emotion can emerge from differences internal to the text (Derrida’s play of “I” and “you”)
and not just from a “source,” or subject (45). In the various addresses from Cahun and
Weiner’s texts, performances, and images, difference – and *différance* – shows how, following
Terada, emotion and experience exist after the death of the subject in post-structuralist thought.
For Cahun and Weiner’s audiences, the relation between reader and text (or spectator and
performance, etc.) shifts with the terms of address in the code poems (between imperative and
interrogative modes) and in *Héroïnes* (between dramatic monologue and photographic intertext
of Cahun’s self-portraits).

Though Nancy persists in defining a “subject,” his deferral of that “resonant subject”
from self-presentation and intentionality makes the intersection of sonic and visual perception (as

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74 Elsewhere in his oeuvre, Derrida connects this free circulation of the letter to the power of
poetic language and to a possibility for a politico-poetic revision of the terms of democracy
through his notion of the teleiopoetic utterance. See Derrida “Un Ver à soie” 79 as well as my
commentary on that text in the conclusion to chapter one, and *Politiques de l’amitié* 50-64,
respectively. For more on teleiopoesis, see Spivak *Death of a Discipline* 27-34.
textual visuality) possible, and brings his use of the term itself (“subject”) under question and closer to Terada’s understanding of the subject after its “death” in post-structuralist thought. As in Nancy’s rumination on listening, the performance modes of Weiner and Cahun’s texts resist, too, mimesis (even as Cahun explicitly occupies an authorial position as “mime,” or “acteur”) in favor of participation-oriented mathesis, to borrow Nancy’s term. The power of these texts and images lies not in what they represent, but in the relational ties they form with the reader-viewer – ties which are affective in the context of Cahun and Weiner’s engagement with structures of collaboration.

As described so far in these first two chapters, my reading of Cahun and Weiner’s collaborative mode draws on both the figures Narcissus and Echo: in the end Narcissus is nothing but material, his body (and perceiving mind) reduced to a flower; Echo is all but material, her body turned to dust and carried away by the same winds that carry her rebounding voice. Caught in the lapse between these two figures, Cahun and Weiner’s collaborators – including myself – experience a specific affective transformation, drawn in as improper respondents to a tone that pulls them together while pushing them apart.

This “Echo effect,” and its accompanying affect, what Spivak calls a deconstructive “lever for future users” (i.e. readers), shifts us between text, image, and performance. The intertext, thus, provides a graphic inscription of the body – of Cahun’s performing body – in these texts. Through a poetics of signaling (as maritime code or as manipulation of familiar literary tropes and figures), Cahun and Weiner hail their readers, making them the destination of their messages, and so more receivers and participants than traditional readers.

Chapter Three.
Portrait Performances:
Cahun Résistante and Hannah Weiner’s Open House
In May 1945, Claude Cahun posed after-the-fact for her camera (a performance like her other self-portrait photographs, as I will show) in the costume she wore while carrying out acts of resistance against the Nazi Occupation on Jersey with her partner Marcel Moore. In October 1969, Hannah Weiner included a portrait of herself on a flyer for an upcoming happening she had organized entitled *Hannah Weiner's Open House*. Unlike Cahun’s after-the-fact document, Weiner’s performance document comes *before* the performance. What, then, is to be made of performance documents that stage the performance before and after the fact? How does re-staging, or pre-staging, the performance transform the performance document?

Peggy Phelan, in her influential conclusion to *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, writes, “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance” (159). Phelan’s insistence on the present tense of the performance in this passage juxtaposes the performance itself with its document. The experience of looking at a photograph of a performance cannot reproduce the experience of the performance. For Phelan, “Performance’s being […] becomes itself through disappearance.” In Cahun and Weiner’s works analyzed in this chapter, the bodily presence that can only be known in the present tense will indeed find its prolongation in the photograph, however impoverished a replacement for the present tense presence of the performance. Indeed, I argue that these specific photographs enact their own performances.

Phelan’s theory of performance attempts to reconcile performance’s unique ontology of disappearance with the desire to represent and to document. In this chapter, I turn to two undocumented performances by Cahun and Weiner. Specifically, I examine two performances for which the documentation of the performance arises from a moment out of chronological
order with respect to the performance itself: a self-portrait of Cahun (1945) taken after WW II that attests to the resistance activities she and Moore carried out against the occupying Nazi forces on Jersey and an invitational flyer for Weiner’s happening *Hannah Weiner’s Open House* (1969). Though the performance document, according to Phelan, cannot reproduce the performance, it can have a strong effect on its reader or viewer. Phelan continues, “Performance occurs over a time which will not be repeated. It can be performed again, but this repetition itself marks it as ‘different.’ The document of a performance then is only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present.” The photograph or written description does not represent the performance, but can only recall the memory of the performance. Repetition – reproduction – of the performance is always repetition with a difference.

I argue that these photographs not only attempt to represent or document a historically situated performance but also carry out performances on their own. The repetition of the performance of these photographs does result in instances of repetition with a difference. But, unlike the performances described by Phelan that result in a second order document, a supplement that can never truly reproduce the performance, these documents produce performances. In this sense, I understand these documents to represent instances of the linguistic structure that J.L. Austin calls performatives. Philip Auslander argues that performance documents are performative in that the photograph itself defines the documented event as a performance. In one of his examples, the manipulated photograph of Yves Klein’s *Leap into the Void* (1960) constitutes Klein’s action as a performance, even though the image relies on a degree of fiction (7-8). It is in the performative power of the photograph to define an event as a performance, just as it is in the performative power of language to seal the marital contract of a wedding ceremony. In the examples of Cahun and Weiner’s work given above, the chronological
ordering of the event and its documentation has little importance, following Auslander’s argument. The documentation *performs* the performance whether manipulated or straight, or recorded before, during, or after the event.

The photographs and documentation that I analyze in this chapter, I contend, work performatively, as well. Though, unlike in Auslander’s analysis of the performance photograph, I contend that this performativity does not only transform the status of the event into a performance but that photographs and performance documentation extend an address to the viewer that is also performative. This address to the viewer works performatively on the experience of viewing the image, or reading the text, allowing for the repetition, or what Derrida in his engagement with Austin calls the citationality, of the performance through its document. Thus, the viewer becomes a collaborator in a work of performative collaboration.

If, as Phelan suggests, performance challenges writing to find ways to become performative, and exist in the present tense of performance, I show that the portraits by Cahun and Weiner do just this as they pass from the presence of performance into the materiality of documentation. Important to this performative endeavor are, in fact, Cahun and Weiner’s written texts, especially the resistance tracts composed and distributed by Cahun and Moore during the Nazi Occupation and Weiner’s deployment of instructions in pre- and post-clair-style works. Invitation as a performative mode – “I invite you in” – opens my argument not only onto the construction of a performative collaboration that invites multiple participants into the work as collaborators but onto a space doubly marked as domestic/private and political/public. For Cahun, her estate La Rocquaise represents at once the domestic and the political, as the site of her and Moore’s arrest for their shared Resistance work. For Weiner, summers spent in her mother’s home, as well as in other rented houses, set the domestic scene, while her engagements
in the 1970s and 1980s with the American Indian Movement, often expressed through the
delocalized experience of her clairvoyance, provide political context.

The invitational mode of this performative address to the reader opens the critical frame
of this chapter so far defined by Austin and theories of performance to Derrida’s specific notion
of hospitality, which challenges the political and ethical stakes of the custom. Ultimately, the
spaces into which Cahun and Weiner’s works invite us as viewers, inflected by the gendered
conditions of invitation and hospitality, engage with similar questions of absence and presence
raised by a rereading of Phelan’s ontology of performance and Derrida’s theory of iterability and
performativity. The indeterminacy of absence and presence in these considerations offers a
model of collaboration specific to the photographic invitations I examine herein. As Phelan
writes, “For to acknowledge the Other’s (always partial) presence is to acknowledge one’s own
(always partial) absence” (162). This indeterminacy is not only applicable to the disappearance
of the performance, as Phelan would have it, but to its performative reiterations, its
reappearances, as well.

*Mime, Mimicry, and the Performative*

According to Phelan, the performative utterance theorized by J.L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* and taken up again by Derrida in “Signature Event Context” provides a
horizon of possibility for any document of performance. She asks, how can writing aspire to the
present tense of performance, and in so doing affirm a shared subjectivity founded in partial
presences and absences (disappearance) (162). Austin’s performative, by which speech enacts
the activity names (and as opposed to the constative, which merely uses language to describe),
functions independently of a referent. As Derrida writes in “Signature Event Context,” “As opposed to the classical assertion, to the constative utterance, the performative does not have its referent [...] outside of itself or, in any event, before and in front of itself. It does not describe something that exists outside language and prior to it. It produces or transforms a situation, it effects” (13). The internal structure of the performative, for Derrida, is such that the ability to effect a situation is essential to the success of such an utterance, that is, to any meaning that might adhere to the utterance.

For Derrida, a quarrel arises with Austin on the subject of citation. Can the performative be cited, he asks, placed into quotation marks? Austin says no; Derrida replies, yes. Derrida writes, “For, ultimately, isn’t it true that what Austin excludes as anomaly, exception, ‘non-serious,’ citation (on stage, in a poem, or a soliloquy) is the determined modification of a general citationality—or rather, a general iterability—without which there would not even be a ‘successful’ performative?” (17). In what follows, I will add the photograph to Derrida’s list of literary citation (stage, poem, soliloquy), but here, Derrida refers to the “felicities,” or rules, that Austin establishes as crucial to the success of a performative utterance (one cannot be married simply by the utterance “I do” but that “I do” must be spoken in front of one vested with the power of the civil authorities, for example). Derrida claims that citationality, or iterability, should not be opposed to the contexts of successful performatives, as Austin maintains, but that the absence of authorial intention in his concept of “différance” allows a juxtaposition of citation and more motivated contexts for performatives that resists a metaphysics of presence (18-19). As Derrida writes, “It is simply that those effects [of performative language] do not exclude what is generally opposed to them [citation], term by term; on the contrary, they presuppose it, in an asymmetrical way, as the general space of their possibility” (19).
Cahun makes reference often to the citationality of her performances by self-consciously posing as an actor. Several self-portraits taken in the 1920s explore this position and pose in ways that evoke what Derrida writes of the mime in *La Dissémination*. This portrait shares some similarity with the portraits from the series “Don’t Kiss Me, I’m in Training.” In those portraits, Cahun sits in costume against a dark curtain, her head turned at a defiant angle, reclined with uneven shoulders. Her pose as that of an actress or mime is made explicit by pale make-up, dark lipstick, and dark heart shapes applied to her cheeks that echo dark round dots evocative of nipples that are sewn to her shirt. Across this shirt reads the eponymous phrase: “I am in training. Don’t Kiss me.” In another portrait from the period, Cahun poses again against a dark curtain in the guise of her character Elle from a Pierre Albert-Birot production of *Barbe Bleue* (1929). In the 1929 self-portrait that captures my interest, however, Cahun sits out of costume, unusual not only in the theatrical context of her work from this period but in the context of her complete photographic oeuvre (Fig. 3.1). In this portrait, Cahun rests once more against a curtained background, slightly reclined, gazing provocatively if calmly at the camera. An actor’s mask hangs beside her, the costume abandoned. And, then, another difference: the curtain in this portrait does not cover the entire background; it angles slightly downward, revealing at the top of the photograph the depth of the space behind the curtain.

Not only does the portrait simultaneously indulge and deny Cahun’s interest in persona portraiture, connecting it thus to the Surrealist images of the *Aveux*, as well as to the unstable conditions of the *Aveux*’s “canceled confessions,” but it also recalls the Symbolist influence that precedes her involvement with surrealist aesthetics. The portrait represents the mime, a
Symbolist figure explored by Mallarmé as well as Cahun’s uncle Marcel Schwob. Schwob’s Mimes, published between 1891 and 1893 in L’Echo de Paris, the author reworked figures from the then newly rediscovered mimes by third century BCE Greek poet Herodas. Schwob’s influence on his niece is on display in Cahun’s early text Vues et visions (1914, published under the nom de plume Claude Courlis), which Moore illustrated. In this text, Cahun juxtaposes contemporary scenes from Le Croisic on the left hand pages with scenes from ancient Rome on the right, locating the temporal shift in the divide between the facing pages. But each section’s visual layout dissolves the temporal divide marked by the book’s binding. Tirza True Latimer points out the importance of Moore’s illustrations in the text, which imitate a theater’s proscenium arch in their layout and design, and make more explicit the relationship between literary palimpsest and theatrical performance by placing both vignettes on the same “stage” (“Acting Out” 59). Just as the palimpsest’s top layers both hide and reveal the layers they cover underneath, the mime’s mask both hides and reveals the performer’s face. According to the Littré, the mime is at once a dramatic genre and the actors in that genre, or most importantly for my analysis of Cahun’s portrait, “un imitateur.” Leperlier notes in his chronology of Cahun’s career that the composition of Vues et visions coincided with her first self-portraits. Cahun’s focus is double in this early moment of her career split between both the literary genre and performance acts of the “mime.”

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75 Schwob explores the figure of the mime in his Mimes, discussed above. Mallarmé investigates the grounds of representation in “Mimique,” a short prose text taken up by Derrida in the “Double Séance” section of La Dissémination, discussed below. The mime also appears in its more pathetic form of the “pitre,” or clown, in Mallarmé’s sonnet “Le Pitre châtié.” This sonnet invokes the figure of Hamlet, tying the clown to theatrical performance and the long poem “Igitur,” inspired by Shakespeare’s play. The performer as jester appears, as well, in Rimbaud’s “Parade” in Les Illuminations.

76 See Cahun Ecrits 11.
Derrida turns to the question of mimesis in the “Double Séance” section of *La Dissémination*. There, he does not draw on Schwob’s work but rather on that of one of his Symbolist contemporaries, Stéphane Mallarmé, in order to offer a revision of Plato’s conception of mimesis. Derrida’s elaboration of mimesis focuses on Mallarmé’s short prose piece “Mimique.” A brief commentary on the mime Paul Margueritte’s production of “Pierrot Assassin de sa Femme,” Mallarmé’s text offers Derrida a rich example of a “simulacre,” of a copy of a copy, or a citation with no original. Derrida writes of “Mimique”’s reference to the performance Mallarmé has witnessed (Margueritte’s one-man show) as well as to the text’s own performance: “Le mime produit, c’est-à-dire fait paraître dans la présence, manifeste le sens même de ce que présentement il écrit: de ce qu’il *performe*” (233-4). Not only does the mime *perform*, but he *writes*. Derrida thus confounds the role of Margueritte and of Mallarmé. Derrida continues, “Nous sommes devant, si l’on peut dire, un double qui ne redouble aucun simple, que rien ne prévient, rien qui ne soit en tous cas déjà un double” (234). For Derrida, Mallarmé devises a form of imitation without recourse to the Platonic definition of mimesis, rooted in an opposition of truth and untruth.

Cahun’s portrait, in the same way, resists the Platonic binary of truth/untruth in its staging of Cahun as mime. The portrait presents one mask but suggests a series of unseen masks; Cahun’s pose as un-masked suggests the register of truth, but is founded, instead, upon a series of masks. In the staging of the photograph, Cahun has removed her mask, placed it to the side. Though Cahun has removed the mime’s mask, the space revealed behind the curtain in the portrait’s corner recalls the viewer’s attention to the performance of this portrait: one mask taken off, the artist poses nonetheless. Recalling a passage of the *Aveux* written on the photomontage accompanying part nine, the portrait also suggests, “Sous ce masque un autre masque. Je n’en
finirai pas de soulever tous ces visages” (Aveux 202). The indefinite space partially depicted behind the curtain suggests just an infinite possibility – of space and of masks.

In a psychoanalytic reading of the image, like the one Margaret Iversen proposes of the frontispiece to Barthes’ La Chambre claire (a window covered by sheer curtains, light streaming in through the fabric), the partially lowered curtain might also suggest that which the image hides in plain sight (“What Is” 113-29). Yet, the curtain does not suggest a hidden truth, or the possibility of a space of psychoanalytic revelation, but rather a performance space. Cahun’s photograph, as well as her performance as mime within the portrait (simultaneously refused and affirmed by her unmasked pose), circulates independently of claims to truth-value. It circulates, like Mallarmé’s text, as a copy of a copy that does not break the mirror.

Before moving forward, a brief discussion of Roland Barthes’ work on photography, as well as Margaret Olin’s recent commentary on that critical oeuvre, will further enliven the critical space between performance, photography, and text. Culminating in the publication of La Chambre claire, an essay on photography that simultaneously deals with the loss and recuperation of the loved one, Barthes’ investigation into the indexicality of the photographic image begins in the earlier essay “The Rhetoric of the Image.” Barthes writes, in that essay, that “[t]he type of consciousness the photograph involves is indeed truly unprecedented, since it establishes not a consciousness of the being-there of the thing […] but an awareness of its having-been-there” (44). As Olin points out, the state of “being-there” is Barthes’ term for the index, or the trace of an object’s physical presence left in the image.

In La Chambre claire, Barthes privileges what he terms the punctum in his rumination on the detail of a photograph that “pierces” the viewer. Though the process of identification with the image that the punctum describes seems to shift Barthes’ interest away from the indexicality of
the image, Olin observes that the theory of the punctum, in fact, expands the concept of the index in Barthes’ theory of photography. In each of the images that illustrated La Chambre claire, Barthes attempts to locate this punctum. However, a careful reading, such as the one carried out by Olin, reveals that in one crucial image the punctum Barthes claims to have found does not actually exist. In a 1926 portrait of an African-American family by James Van Der Zee, Barthes claims to be pierced by the gold necklace one of the women wears. Yet, as Olin notices, the woman wears pearls, not gold. Olin notes that the separation of the image from its description several pages later in Barthes’ text makes it easy for the reader not to notice Barthes’ mistake, but she also argues that he has not made a mistake, but rather has described a punctum that exists for him in a photograph of his family from another text, Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes. His Aunt Alice, in that family portrait, wears the braided gold necklace. The punctum, then, as Olin states it, is a spur to memory and to memory’s displacements.

The ramifications for Barthes’ theory of photography of this complicated play of presence and absence of the punctum are serious, and brilliantly elucidated by Olin. She writes, “If the punctum is displaced, like an alibi, then the detail that is not there, the ‘That-has-been,’ never was. And neither was the indexical power of the photograph. The fact that something was before the camera when the photograph was taken is no longer unproblematically the source of the photograph’s power” (112). No longer deriving its power from the indexical certification of the subject’s once presence, the photograph operates on the viewer, driving the viewer to his or her own displacements of memory. Olin calls this power that of a “performative index” (115). 

Ariella Azoulay understands this kind of performative power as an address to the viewer that accounts for the “civil contract” of photography. According to Azoulay, “[…] the photograph – every photograph – belongs to no one, that [the spectator] can become not only its addressee but also its addressee, one who can produce a meaning for it and disseminate this meaning further.” Azoulay advocates for a practice of “watching,” as opposed to “looking,” that would
Here, Olin’s reading of the punctum even seems to recall Barthes’ theory of the “scriptible” as a text written by the reader, thus making of the punctum a visual technology of the writerly text.\footnote{Barthes’ description of the scriptible, or writerly, as a logic outside of genre or medium, as “structuration without structure,” is especially important to my argument here. See Barthes S/Z 5.} Olin’s use of “performative” corresponds more to the performance work of memory than to the power of the photograph to work as a citation or Austinian performative. But, in the context of my own argument, Olin’s rereading of Barthes’ work on photography sets the ground work for a challenge to Phelan’s conception of the ontology of performance. Olin’s reorienting of the privileged photographic relationship from that between photo and subject to that shared by photo and viewer challenges notions of absence and presence in the performance image. If a performance, according to Phelan, becomes itself through its disappearance, what can it mean if there was never a presence to do the work of disappearing?

Olin’s precise locating of the punctum of one photograph in another introduces the figure of displacement as a challenge to that of disappearance favored by Phelan. As Rebecca Schneider cautions, displacement should not emphasize presence as a unique, singular certifier of a metaphysics of performance. Rather, Schneider writes, “As theories of trauma and repetition might instruct us, it is not presence that appears in the syncopated time of citational performance but precisely (again) the missed encounter – the reverberation of the overlooked, the missed, the seemingly forgotten” (101-2). In another context, Schneider could be describing the performative index that Olin locates in Barthes’ work, revealed by the punctum that Barthes explicitly overlooks in one photograph and fantasizes in another. Returning to Phelan’s turn of phrase – that performance “becomes itself through” disappearance – Schneider further suggests that what accommodate the dimension of time and movement in the still photograph and account for such displacements as described by Olin. See Azoulay 14.
Phelan describes as the ontology of performance is not without other interpretations. Indeed, focusing on Phelan’s use of the preposition “through,” Schneider develops further the importance of displacement to the structure of the performance. As she explains, “This phrasing rather invites us to think of performance as a medium in which disappearance negotiates, perhaps becomes, materiality. That is, disappearance is passed through. As is materiality” (105). A movement through one state to another, Schneider’s description of performance does not privilege a unique presence, nor its absence, but proposes a resistance to this metaphysical binary that is simultaneously a resistance to the binary between the performance and the archive. To answer my earlier question about documentation that pre- or post-dates a performance, then, Schneider and Olin’s analyses of the performance and the Barthesien photograph, respectively, allow me to point toward a performance that moves from its performing to the performative citational work continued though its displacement into materiality.

Specific to my performative reading of Cahun and Weiner’s portraits, though not to the entire performative endeavor, is the discursive mode of invitation that connects the particular histories of these photographs. Taken in May 1945 after the release of Cahun and Moore from Nazi imprisonment in Gloucester Street Prison in St. Hélier, Jersey, Cahun’s portrait presents its subject as reinstated in her home, standing defiantly before her open door. As Claire Follain recounts in her essay on Cahun and Moore’s resistance activities, the Nazi insignia that she playfully – but seriously – grips between her teeth was given to her by a German guard before his reassignment soon before the Liberation (93). Weiner’s portrait figures more explicitly in the mode of invitation, as the flyer for her happening “Hannah Weiner’s Open House” in October 1969 literally invites its beholder into a series of artists’ homes, each address given beneath a portrait of Weiner at the top of the document. The consequences of this invitational mode in
Cahun and Weiner’s written texts reveals the importance of the invitational not only to these two photographs but to the collaborative poetics at work throughout their œuvres.

*Performative Portraits and Open Invitation*

Cahun’s portrait of May 1945 circulates as a sort of impossible document and simultaneously exemplifies and challenges Phelan’s contention that the performance is an undocumentable event. Taken after the Liberation by the Allies, Cahun’s portrait as résistante depicts her in the guise of that persona (Fig. 3.2). Her costume is consistent with one described in a post-war text to which Cahun does not attach the photograph as illustration. Cahun’s 1948 unfinished manuscript “Le Muet dans la mêlée” begins,

À Jersey on ne peut moins remarquable: pas de chapeau; […] un imperméable par le dessus, un *Burberry* (donc un grand nombre de poches pour les tracts); un foulard noué sur la tête (aux couleurs voyantes, variables); des gants de laine en hiver – et le sac à marché (pour alibi). Des paysannes – et aussi des filles et des femmes de la bourgeoisie à caractère gentleman farmer – portaient des vêtements analogues et semblables; mon aspect et celui de Suzanne ne différaient guère de l’aspect de la majorité des habitants de l’île. (427)

Gen Doy writes of the importance of clothing and costume to Cahun’s work, recognizing that while a specific style is not identifiable for Cahun, diverse styles that serve as “political and strategic disguise” do stand out. Doy asserts, rightly, that even her “style” as Lucy Schwob contributes to a constructed persona (83-5). With her hair uncovered but by a scarf and her raincoat open above a vest, the image captures Cahun in her “aspect” as a résistante. Absent any other photographic documentation of Cahun and Moore’s resistance activities, and absent any documentation from the acts themselves other than the surviving tracts, the portrait serves as proof of Cahun’s status as résistante. But, the image does not correspond directly to a caption. It
represents, rather, its own performance of resistance as a performative document, in Auslander’s sense.

In the description of a typical Jersey costume, Cahun concludes her description by deploying a vocabulary that emphasizes imitation and outward appearance: “vêtements analogues et semblables,” “mon aspect” (emphasis mine). Cahun implies that like the many other costumes she dons as actress or photographer, this outfit represents a costume, and thus, her resistance work with Moore a kind of performance. As Gayle Zachmann notes in her article “Claude Cahun and the Politics of Culture: Resistance, Journalism, and Performative Engagement,” fictional strategies of creating characters and persona function as an “overriding epistemological mode” in Cahun’s works (25). Zachmann thus positions Cahun and Moore’s resistance against the later Sartrian definition of engagement as one poorly served by poetic indeterminacy. Cahun’s post-Occupation writings are “performative,” according to Zachmann, because they document the resistance activities of Cahun and Moore as the “Soldat ohne Namen” in the indeterminate intersection of fiction, memoir, and journalism. While she rightly establishes the importance of poetic indeterminacy and performance to Cahun’s political engagements, especially of the Occupation period, Zachmann does not show how Cahun’s post-Occupation writings and portraits enact a performance. And notably, Zachmann’s use of “performative” in this article does not take into account the relationship between text and photographic image.

Cahun’s portrait does this same enacting that Zachmann’s account of the performative fails to specify. Paradoxically documenting an invisible performance of resistance, the portrait replaces the more ephemeral resistance tract as primary proof of Cahun’s legacy. In the photo-textual relationship that structures Cahun’s resistance legacy, the conventional relationship between indexical photograph and supplemental textual caption that describes the image in its
specificity is reversed. The description of feminine, country dress on Jersey set in Cahun’s text offers a general description of sartorial trends on the island. Though the description does include reference to the felicities of clothing design for the distribution of anti-Nazi tracts (the deep, multiple pockets of the raincoat where Cahun and Moore could hide the pamphlets), the photographic portrait most forcefully grounds both the passage of text and photographic portrait in the performance of resistance. The strangeness of Cahun’s gesture attests, too, to the ambiguity of resistance work. Cahun and Moore survive the Occupation, but only by historical coincidence in that the Liberation arrives before they can be executed. In her gesture with the insignia, Cahun treats her resistance with irreverence, toying with the badge in her mouth, simultaneously proffering a warning to those who are not like-minded and an invitation to those who are into Cahun and Moore’s anonymous circle of résistants at La Rocquaise. The photograph, thus, exceeds the specificity of the text, tying the quotidian costume of the women of Jersey to the historical triumph of Resistance – or, at least, to the survival of these résistantes.

The performative power of Cahun’s portrait relies, as well, on the importance place of touch – of haptic relationships – in her resistance activity. As Cahun makes clear in “Feuilles détachées du scrapbook,” another post-Occupation text, photographs attest to the resistance of other inmates in the Nazi prison on Jersey. Cahun’s relationship to these photographs (ID photos) is specifically precious and haptic. These photos are to be handled in order to inspire the work of memory. Cahun focuses the composition of the May 1945 portrait on a haptic relationship (between herself and the insignia clutched intimately in her mouth) just as her text makes explicit reference to the most haptic of documents, the Resistance tract, shoved into the pockets of her Burberry. As will also become evident in the portrait of Weiner from the “Open House,” the appeal of these photographs to the sense of touch as well as to their invitational
modes are central to these photographic performances, and to an understanding of the portraits as *performative* photographs of invitation.

Weiner’s flyer for the “Open House” invited the public into the homes of several artists, including Vito Acconci and Bernadette Mayer (Fig. 3.3). Weiner presented the happening in the context of a series of performance works entitled *Street Works* and inspired by a special 1969 issue of Acconci and Mayer’s magazine *0 to 9*. In her summary of the *Street Works* series, Weiner presents the “Open House” as part of *Street Works IV*. Another event had preceded the “Open House” in this fourth iteration of Weiner’s *Street Works*: earlier in the month of October, Weiner had given away hot dog wieners bought from a New York City street vendor. Weiner writes of this action, “For the opening Oct. 2, I hired a frankfurter wagon to give away free ‘wieners’. This was a pun on my name. Anything or anybody can have anything or anybody’s name” (“Street Works”). In her study of Weiner’s performance and poetry, Judith Goldman situates the use of the proper name within Weiner’s interest in linguistic codes and the multiple layers of mediation presented by the poem, and thus, by language (124). In *Street Works IV*, and more specifically in the “Open House” happening, Weiner fruitfully explores this code of the proper name in the confluence of performance, photograph, and invitation.

Weiner composed the flyer-invitation in three registers: the title, the photograph, and the schedule of events (what might count as “caption”) (Fig. 3). Considered alongside the invitation’s photograph, the textual registers are at odds: the title seems to dominate the reception of the invitation, aligned as Weiner’s name is with Weiner’s portrait. The “caption,” or schedule

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79 The others, a selected catalogue of Weiner’s coterie, include: Marjorie Strider, Abraham Lubelski, Arakawa, and John Perreault. See Fig. 3.3.

80 The homophony of Weiner’s name with her contemporary, John Wieners, associated in his poetry with Boston and New York, seems fitting for her stated intentions.
of events, troubles this dominance. Reading the list of names below the photograph, the reader/viewer confronts the variety of artists involved in the project. Only one of these seven artists answers to the name Hannah Weiner or could be associated with the physical appearance depicted in the photograph. And yet, the other artists do exist textually on the invitation, as well as in the memory of the performances indexed by the invitation as documentary ephemera. A set of names challenges the textual, photographic, and performative dominance of “Hannah Weiner.” The insertion of *Hannah Weiner’s Open House* into *Street Works IV* further destabilizes what seems a foregone conclusion. Hannah Weiner’s authority over the performance – her position as inviting host – is not hers as such but rather belongs to the code of her proper name, “Hannah Weiner.” The dissemination of Weiner’s name, to use Derrida’s terminology, thus acts performatively to bring the audience into the happening as collaborators, equally able to assume the role of artist-host as that of invited participant. Like Cahun’s portrait as résistante, Weiner’s flyer invites and warns away – in a sense dares the beholder to join the fraught collaborative endeavor.

The conditions of invitation at play in Cahun and Weiner’s portraits establish a propitious context for a reversal and displacement of binary pairs suggested by Derrida. At the end of his reading of Austin’s performative, Derrida writes that if deconstruction is to address the oppositions of classical philosophy and metaphysics – speech and writing, presence and absence – it cannot hope to simply neutralize the pairs but must proceed by a “double gesture […] a double writing—put into practice a reversal of the classical opposition and a general displacement of the system” (21). With the door to her home open behind her in the portrait,
does Cahun, then, invite the viewer into her domestic space, or warn the viewer away, proffering the insignia as warning to those who might trespass?  

The ambiguity of invitation in the résistante portrait echoes pre-Occupation portraits of Cahun. In these other images, Cahun poses in the windows or at the door of La Rocquaise, similarly beckoning and warning away (Figs. 3.4 and 3.5). In the first image, her door stands open to the viewer, though the interior space is hidden from view by shadow. Cahun, in housework clothing, is framed three times – by the picture frame she holds to her face, by the doorframe, and by the frame of the photograph itself. These framings capture her as an ambivalent host, mistress of the house but also closed in by it. Her gestures contribute to this ambivalence: does her flat palm, turned out to the viewer while supporting the frame around her face, welcome as in a wave or warn away as in a signal to halt? In the images in which she poses in the windowsill, the cross hatching of the window grilles even presage her arrest, which took place inside her home, and subsequent imprisonment. Like Cahun and Moore’s resistance tracts, these images invite the viewer in (into the home, into the anti-collaboration collaborative work of active resistance) while warning the viewer away (this is my home, the images seem to declare to the intruder; ignore the Resistance at your own peril, they seem to bully the Kommandantur that requisitioned the stables at La Rocquaise). As with Weiner’s flyer-invitation, the beholder becomes guest and intruder; the artist, losing control over her authorial authority, becomes host and guest in turn.

Derrida addresses the specific question of invitation and hospitality in his essay “Hostipitalité,” whose playful title indicates the imbrication of welcoming gesture (hospitality)

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81 In fact, the Nazi Kommandantur of Jersey had requisitioned four stables at Cahun and Moore’s home, La Rocquaise, a request against which the two would have had no appeal. The requisition order of 27 October 1941 names Suzanne Malherbe as proprietor of the estate and reads tersely: “4 stables at La Rocquaise are required by the German forces and hereby requisitioned.”
and subordinating command (hostility). His analysis of the structure of hospitality turns on the polysemous French term “hôte,” which can refer to the inviting host as well as to the invited guest. The host (hôte), then, becomes the guest (hôte) of his guest (hôte). As it follows, Weiner’s authorial agency confronts each of the individual artist-hosts within their own homes; upon calmly allowing a group of Nazi soldiers into their home at dinner time, Cahun and Moore become subject to the authority of their “guests.” If the relation between host and guest troubles the listener for its reduction of two distinct meanings to a single morphology, Derrida explains the trouble within the term “hospitality” itself. He writes, citing the German term from a text by Kant, “Hospitalität, mot d’origine latine, d’une origine troublante et trouble, mot qui porte comme sa propre contradiction incorporée en lui-même, mot latin qui se laisse parasiter par son contraire, l’hostilité, hôte indésirable qu’il héberge comme la contradiction de soi dans son corps propre […]” (18). Cahun writes in “Le Muet” of her lack of violent outrage upon her arrest in 1944: “[Q]ue lors de notre arrestation – devant témoins jersiais – nous n’avions fait aucune résistance; que vis-à-vis d’eux-mêmes [the Nazi officials], ce soir-là et au cours des interrogations, nous n’avions qu’une hostilité froide, exempte de toute violence emotive” (629). What does surprise Cahun and Moore, however, is that the arrest takes place in their home, rather than on the street during one of their pamphleteering expeditions.

Weiner establishes an important poetic ambiguity at the center of her performance work,

82 One of Marcel Duchamp’s calembours from 1953 offers a take on these conditions: “A Guest + A Host = A Ghost.”

83 Vercor’s resistance text, the 1942 novella Le Silence de la mer, dramatizes this same relationship between occupiers and occupied. In his story, an old Frenchman and his niece react to a Nazi officer whom they are forced to quarter. The niece meets the officer’s kindness, cultural refinement, and politesse as he accepts the role of guest with complete silence. The story also draws out the complexities of European national identity in the period, identities of which Cahun was a strong critic: the German officer exhibits a strong appreciation for and education in French culture, and his ancestors were, in fact, French. See Vercors.
structured as it is by the photographic image and by a discursive mode of invitation. In the course of his essay, Derrida opens a parenthesis in his notes to expand upon the invited guest and the (uninvited) visitor, establishing a difference between the *invitation* of conditional hospitality and the *visitation* of unconditional hospitality. The happening “Hannah Weiner’s Open House” resides still in the realm of conditional hospitality, structured by the formal invitation to participants and by the presence of an artist-host. But, as I have shown above, the invitation also reveals a subversion of the host’s position. The historical conditions of Cahun and Moore’s arrest in their own home already reveal the implications of forced visitation. Weiner’s hegemonic authority outdoes itself; disabled by its excess, the reproducible proliferation of the name and image “Hannah Weiner” destabilizes the position of the welcoming host, opening the possibility of the transferability of this position to the list of other participating artists.

In her description of the “Open House,” Weiner writes, “I invited the public into the homes of participating artists. From 3 to 26 people showed up at different places. We sat around the kitchen tables, or on the floor and talked and smoked or had a party. I met new friends” (“Street Works”). Though still predicated on a conditional hospitality of invitation, the hospitality of *Open House* begins to betray an underlying hostility. Weiner’s “I” is prominent in the description of the invitation; she does not hesitate to take on the responsibility of invitation. The representation of her physical body marks the invitation, just as her body is marked by words in the 1978 cover photograph of the *Clairvoyant Journal*.  

 Though we have seen how the host represents a shifting positionality in the context of the invitation’s phototextual design, here the positions shift once more. Weiner adds the list of other artists to the list of invited guests. The hosts (the other artists) are now guests in their own

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84 I analyze the structure of the portrait by Ahern in chapter one.
homes. Derrida suggests that “the master in his own home, the host, can only accomplish his task as host, that is, hospitality, in becoming invited by the other into his home, in being welcomed by him whom he welcomes, in receiving the hospitality he gives” (9). Of course, this reversal of positions implies the hostility on the other side of the door of hospitality; the hosts are now hostages in their own homes. This hostility exists, in the event of the performance, in tandem with a warmer, more welcoming hospitality. According to Weiner, the atmosphere is light and festive, and new friendships form. The invitation into the home of another has, however, inaugurated a contractual agreement – one sealed, significantly, by the circulation of a photographic portrait.

Kathy O’Dell describes the contractual nature of performance photographs and the sense of touch that seals this relationship in the handling of a photograph by a viewer. O’Dell argues that the performance photograph of 1970s body art performances (or performances that foreground the spectator’s relationship to the artist’s physical body) represents a contract between viewer and performer. Once “signed” by the spectator – that is, once the spectator agrees to become spectator to these often masochistic performances – this contract, in O’Dell’s words, “reroutes the viewer’s attention back in time to the domestic site, the homes, where identities are first formulated” (Contract 14). While Cahun and Weiner’s portraits do not approach the figuration of the artist’s body with the same thematic or structural violence as the “masochistic” performances analyzed by O’Dell, they do both draw attention to the presence of the artist’s body in a specific time and place (Cahun post-Occupation/post-imprisonment in the door of her own home, Weiner situated in the rotating time slots of each successive visit of her happening). Pushed into the realm of the domestic by the contractual relationship organized by photographic invitation and hospitality, the reader discovers queer, politicized domestic spaces
characterized by the confusion of subject positions described by Derrida in his reading of hospitality.

*Cahun, Domestic Space, and (Step-)Sisters in the Avunculate*

On the threshold of the domestic space of Cahun’s home, the darkened interior of the *résistante* portrait forms a visual analogue to the dark curtain that serves as backdrop in the mime portrait. In addition to the resistance portrait, Cahun poses in this location in several distinct portraits, each taken at different moments during her residence on Jersey at La Rocquaise, the name of her estate that she rebaptized “La Ferme sans nom.” In the first image, Cahun poses in an outfit similar to the one that serves as her resistance costume: practical slacks, wool sweater. Another portrait from 1939 shows Cahun posing more bombastically, wearing a long, elegant evening gown that contrasts with the roughhewn stone of La Rocquaise and the natural growth around the house’s entryway (Fig. 3.6). If the darkened interior behind the doorframe does serve as a visual analogue to the dark curtain of the mime portrait, then these portraits are performances, too – even in the quotidian costume of slacks and wool sweater. Like Cahun’s Burberry trench and headscarf in the resistance portrait, her clothing conforms to social, class-based codes of dress. Specifically, these portraits evoke gendered codes of domestic performance through the personae of a gentlewoman farmer (as in the resistance portrait) and of a society woman out of place in the less urban context of Jersey.
Cahun’s use of her house in these portraits recalls Gaston Bachelard’s theorizing of domestic spaces in *The Poetics of Space.* Bachelard writes, “[A]ll really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home [la maison] […] we shall see the imagination build ‘walls’ of impalpable shadows, comfort itself with the illusion of protection – or, just the contrary tremble behind thick walls […]” (5). The importance of opacity in this brief passage – “impalpable shadows,” “thick walls” – recalls the darkened threshold behind Cahun in her doorframe portraits. Bachelard’s formulation of the “illusion of protection” lurks, as well, in Cahun’s images. In a passage from *Confidences au miroir,* an unfinished autobiographical text written after Cahun’s return from Nazi imprisonment, Cahun describes her motivation in renaming La Rocquaise upon her acquisition of the property:

[…] sa coque ancienne et rustre, à la fois contraire à mes goûts, à mes besoins asservis, à ma fragilité organique, j’avais dû l’accepter, en le débaptisant (dès 1937, « La Rocquaise » devint pour moi « La ferme sans nom »). Nous n’avions que le choix et tout juste le temps, déplumant l’ancien nid, d’édifier en plein roc l’abri précaire… (588)

Cahun’s description reiterates the importance of the house’s walls, here imagined as “sa coque ancienne et rustre,” an image at once naturalizing (“coque” as a bean or nut shell) but as also relating to the maritime culture of the island (“coque” as ship’s hull). Cahun sets her own “fragilité organique” in opposition to the rough-hewn stone of the estate, whose edifice dates back to the medieval period and which Leperlier describes as “une magnifique demeure en granit jersiais” (*Claude Cahun* 264). This latter use of “coque” builds upon another image used by Bachelard’s chapter on the house begins with an epigraph from Cahun’s theatre director and collaborator, Pierre Albert-Birot. The epigraph from the play *Les Amusements naturels* reads: “À la porte de la maison qui viendra frapper? / Une porte ouverte on entre / Une porte fermée un antre / Le monde bat de l’autre côté de ma porte.” The first two lines capture my attention, especially in relation to Cahun’s doorframe poses and invitation. See Bachelard *Poetics* 3. For an account of Cahun and Moore’s involvement with Albert-Birot, see Latimer “Acting Out” 63-5.
Cahun to express her shape-shifting personae in the Aveux. There, she writes, “Je ne voudrais coudre, piquer, tuer, qu’avec l’extrême pointe […] Ne voyager qu’à la proue de moi-même” (14). The proximity of these metaphors (hull for house, ship’s bow for the self) emphasizes the contiguousness of house (or enclosing architectural form) and body throughout Cahun’s work.

Though the home might offer protection for this fragility, Cahun must rename the estate in order to enter her body into its protection. This name, or the absence of a name, “La Ferme sans nom,” thus permits Cahun psychic entry into the space. Nathanaël, poet, essayist, and translator, explicitly links language and family to architectural tropes in her rumination on Leperlier’s volume of Cahun’s Ecrits, Absence Where As (Claude Cahun and the Unopened Book); in her words,

> Between la famille and la fa ille [sic], a letter comes to be absent, exposing the decline in question […] The architectural quality of language is such that despite the reinforcement of its internal structures, of its inflexibly governed syntax, of the peremptory boundaries erected to fend off any resistance or interrogation infringing on its enclosure, it is nonetheless susceptible to the external rigors that fall upon it, would reshape it. (22)

Like the house that must be renamed, and thus transformed of its hard shell and rough exterior by language, so too does language undergo architectural processes of dilapidation and renovation. Specifically, the reshaping of “famille” reveals its internal “fa ille,” marked by Nathanaël’s gap within the word itself where the letter “m” has been erased. By extension, I argue that the body inhabiting the house undergoes these effects, as well. As Cahun’s un-naming, naming, and re-naming shows the body of the artist – her body – is shaped by different named personae, just as is the estate on Jersey.

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86 Nathanaël, whose name takes its inspiration from Gide’s interlocutor in Les Nourritures terrestres, creates here a lineage of affiliation with Gide and Cahun, herself influenced by Gide. In Les Nourritures terrestres, Gide’s narrator famously exclaims, “Famille je vous hais! foyers clos; portes refermées; possessions jalouses du bonheur.” See Gide 69-70.
Others of Cahun’s photographic portraits resonate with Bachelard’s descriptions of domestic space, as well. Bachelard privileges the armoire as a secretive space within the house later in his work, and I would like to show how Cahun confounds the images of house and armoire in her portraits. Of chests and drawers, into which category he places the armoire, Bachelard notes not only the importance of secrecy but also the important role of the key in marking the threshold of a private, secret space. He writes, “It is not merely a matter of keeping a possession well guarded. The lock doesn’t exist that could resist absolute violence, and all locks are an invitation to thieves. A lock is a psychological threshold” (81). As I noted above, the opacity of the threshold in the doorframe portraits marks a performance space, as well as a domestic, psychic space related to Bachelard’s theory of the house. And, like an armoire or chest, a house’s door requires a key. If Cahun stands in an empty doorframe – that is, in the place of an opened door – does she offer the viewer a key for entry? I have described above the ways in which her resistance portrait invites the viewer into the image and performance. Here, I would ask in addition, does the Nazi insignia that Cahun clasps in her teeth stand in for a key? The insignia certainly offers an interpretive key to the image’s performance of resistance, but does it offer, as well, a key to the domestic space behind Cahun’s back? Does it part the curtained background of Cahun’s performance portraits?

This “key” to the performance as well as to the domestic space of Cahun’s portraits opens the door to a domestic, familial space reorganized by Cahun’s portraits.

In a portrait from 1932, preceding Cahun and Moore’s move to Jersey, Cahun’s body spills out of an armoire, its other shelves stocked with domestic goods (Fig. 3.7). The way in which Cahun’s body inhabits the armoire recalls Bachelard’s observation of the “passionate liaison of our bodies […] with an unforgettable house” (15). Her body is part of the armoire, but also
exceeds the space of the armoire, recalling the mismatched encounter of her body with La Rocquaise. Reading the armoire in a metonymical relation to the house, Cahun is not a perfect fit for the domestic space. In another passage from *Confidences au miroir*, Cahun writes, “Qui peut vivre, créer, sans se détacher des familles, de la meilleure meme?” (605). If an armoire hides a domestic secret, Cahun’s body breaches the threshold of that secrecy, announcing, despite its depicted lassitude, a desire to transgress a domestic limit, namely the limit of the family structure.

In the collaborations of Cahun’s life and works, Cahun transgresses and reorganizes the patriarchal family structure. Leperlier recounts that Cahun, Moore, and their neighbors euphemized the unusual domestic arrangement at La Rocquaise as that shared between “two sisters” (*Claude Cahun* 266). The need for euphemism, of course, arose from Cahun and Moore’s amorous relationship, but speaks, as well, to the importance of names at the “Ferme sans nom.” Once inside the domestic space that Cahun simultaneously displays and hides from view in her doorway portraits, a series of dis/identifications with the name of the Father (and of Cahun’s father, Maurice) structure the familial space of domesticity. On the island, Cahun and Moore chose to live under their family names, Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe, and the two purchased La Rocquaise with money from Maurice Schwob’s estate, inherited by Cahun upon his death. However, just as Cahun devised an androgynous pseudonym for herself, shedding her father’s name, she must rename La Rocquaise before inhabiting the house. Yet, despite this erasing of the name Schwob from her androgynous persona as Cahun, Maurice’s image enters into Cahun’s repertoire, in a portrait of 1920 that bears deliberate resemblance to an earlier
portrait of Maurice (Fig. c.1). Not a total rejection of the image or the name of the Father (the name Cahun comes from Cahun’s *paternal* grandmother’s name), the play of names in Cahun’s life destabilizes patriarchal geometry, without totally obliterating the (Schwob) family bond.

Eve Sedgwick offers a useful terminology for analyzing such kinship structures in the context of literary works. In an essay on Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Sedgwick reveals the challenge to patriarchal authority that Wilde’s play stages in its use of a nascent queer idiom, specifically in the verbal play around aunt/tante as both a familial marker and a late-nineteenth-century code word for a homosexual male. Sedgwick’s reading of the play reveals the ways in which the relationship of aunt or uncle to niece and nephew trumps the patriarchal insistence on the name of the Father. In Sedgwick’s words, echoing Cahun’s artistic imperative to distance oneself from the family, “Forget the Name of the Father!” (58). Not only do these relations disguise a taxonomy of homosexual life in Wilde’s play but they imagine, as well, the possibility of alternate family identifications that cross generational, as well as genealogical, lines and which open an analysis of kinship and its tensions to the lateral relations that also inform and, in the possibility opened by Wilde and Sedgwick, queer it.

Cahun and Moore’s relationship as sister-lovers, in addition to Cahun’s dis/identification with the persona of her father and his name Schwob (shared by that other prominent literary Schwob, her uncle Marcel) responds to the familial possibilities opened up by Sedgwick’s avunculate. As Sedgwick writes, “Part of the interest of the avunculate is, as we have seen, that its thinkability also renders more thinkable (across and perhaps therefore within generations) the

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87 For more on these two portraits, see Colvile “Self-representation as symptom” 274. Though the observation that Cahun likely based the composition of her portrait on that of her father offers rich material for interpretation, I urge caution in approaching the rest of Colvile’s argument that interprets Cahun’s portraits as a case of overidentification with the figure of the father and, thus, as a symptom of her anorexia.
sibling relation” (64). Abigail Solomon-Godeau refers to the step-sisters’ relationship as one of “double intimacy,” as step-sisters and lovers, though I assert that what “doubles” their intimacy is not the entwining of sisterly and erotic love but rather the coincidence of this unique life partnership with artistic collaboration. As Solomon-Godeau points out, the doubling of Cahun and Moore’s intimacy corresponds to the interest in doubles and mirror images in Cahun’s work. So, too, does this doubling testify to other multiplying affiliations between the two; they are sister-lovers as well as domestic, artistic, and political partners. This doubling, described by Cahun as two becoming one in the Aveux non avenus, represents the impingement of other social relations on kinship. Just as Sedgwick points to the usefulness of the diagonal avuncular relationship to understanding siblinghood, the feminist psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell emphasizes the importance of tending to these lateral relations in understanding friendship as well as kinship and the traditional philosophical division that equates sameness with the masculine and difference with the feminine (2-4). In simultaneously shedding their patronyms (Schwob and Malherbe) in favor of their androgynous assumed personae (Cahun and Moore), the two reveal a unique form of kinship that draws no distinction between spaces of collaborative domestic, artistic, and political work and, as discussed in chapter one, collapses the divide between difference and sameness.

Cahun and Moore’s years on Jersey, from their move from Paris in 1937 to Cahun’s death in 1955, offer a rich case study for their collaborations, especially due to the interruption of those years by the Nazi occupation. In her detailed historical account of their Resistance work, Claire Follain emphasizes the collaborative exigencies not only of distributing anti-Nazi tracts

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88 The formulation of a “double intimacy,” not easily legible in the context of traditional family structures, echoes Susan Suleiman’s description of the marginalization of avant-garde women through the image of a “double margin.” See Suleiman.
but of composing them, as well (84). If in previous collaborative works, such as the *Aveux non avenus*, Moore’s role was that of collagist or designer, concerned principally with the composition of photomontages, in the Resistance tracts that the two wrote and illustrated she participates in the writing of the text. Moore knew German and so took on a more active role in writing and translating. The Nazis arrested Cahun and Moore for this resistance on 25 July 1944. In the first line of “Feuilles détachées du scrapbook,” Cahun writes, “Ce qui n’était qu’un est double” (651). The homophonic pun contained in the line (“qu’un” evoking its own double “Cahun”) draws attention to Cahun’s regular interlocutor, Moore, as well as to Cahun’s heightened sensitivity to names. Cahun sheds her name as that of a singular persona while reaffirming her name as that shared by another. Cahun is not “qu’un” (but one); Cahun is rather “double” in her collaborative partnership with Moore.

Cahun has already deployed the trope in her images of mirrors, and in the *Aveux non avenus*, but the insistence on such figures of speech in this document about domestic and political life evokes Mitchell’s examination of siblinghood, especially in its explanation of sibling narcissism. One sibling, according to Mitchell, inspires both a recognition of sameness and of a desire to kill her for having taken one’s place in the family (35-36). There is, however, a prohibition against murdering the sibling (what Mitchell calls the law of the mother) and so another prohibition, that against sibling incest, reveals how the sibling relationship is one cast between love for someone similar to the self and a hate for the one who represents difference (39). Here doubling, or even a serial multiplicity, entails at the heart of this queer kinship the violent tensions that mark both siblinghood and the work of political resistance.

*Cahun and Moore’s Political Performances*
In the history of Cahun’s artistic and political engagements, the Nazi Occupation of Jersey transforms the domestic domain into a site of political impetus and action. In resisting the Nazi Occupation, Cahun and Moore not only responded to a moral conviction against fascist oppression, but reacted, as well, to the local realities of such oppression, specifically the requisition of part of their estate in 1941. As Follain and Leperlier note, Cahun and Moore took advantage of the cemetery that abutted La Rocquaise, watching the funerals of German soldiers and leaving tracts in the officer’s cars parked outside their property during the ceremonies (Follain 85; Leperlier Claude Cahun 275). La Rocquaise, the “Ferme sans nom,” then, became the locus of their secret resistance, which they carried out under the collaborative pen name – the nom de guerre – the “Soldat ohne Namen,” or the “Soldier without a Name.” In (as)signing their texts to a German soldier, Cahun and Moore hoped to more convincingly argue for – or more seductively invite other soldiers to – open sedition against the higher ranks of the Nazi administration of Jersey.

Cahun and Moore’s artistic practices owe much to their involvement in Parisian theatre troupes in the 1920s and 1930s, especially that of Albert-Birot’s Le Plateau. As Tirza True Latimer describes, “With Apollinaire, Albert-Birot envisioned a theatre in the round where the audience, activated as participants, occupied the center of the dramatic arena” (65). As audience members become participants centrally located within the dramatic space, the once passive spectator transforms into an active collaborator in the unfolding of the play. Cahun and Moore adopt this precept of Albert-Birot’s theatrical practice to their own photographic collaborations. The viewer of Cahun’s resistance portrait does not remain a passive spectator, but becomes an
active collaborator (here, in the anti-Nazi, anti-Collaborative endeavor) when invited to replicate the performance depicted in the portrait or to pass on the resistance tract to others.

Gayle Zachmann also identifies a unique performative agency in Cahun and Moore’s Resistance methods. Zachmann writes, “[T]he diversionary psychological games in the resistance practices assume an agency that functions performatively. Cahun conceived the role of the resister in the image of a nameless soldier (*der Soldat ohne Namen*) who would be her voice, a voice, and potentially the voice of a collective conscience” (32). Though Zachmann, here, fails to recognize that with Moore’s participation, the voice of the Soldat is always already a collaborative voice, she does identify the importance of a performative agency in creating a “collective conscience.” Zachmann writes of the performative agency of Cahun and Moore’s written resistance texts but does not consider the photographic logic that I argue structures the agency of their Occupation writings (“Claude Cahun” 30-2). Cahun and Moore do not only imagine a collective conscience as a result of their resistance, but a more specific performative collaboration in their methods of resistance.

If Cahun and Moore’s resistance does build toward a “collective conscience,” they cleverly choose the errancy, in Leperlier’s description, of the “Soldat ohne Namen” that characterizes their fictional co-conspirator and shared resistance mask. As Leperlier writes, “Antithèse exacte du Soldat inconnu – dont on sait ce que Claude Cahun en fait […] –, le Soldat sans Nom, le ‘Muet dans la Mêlée’ est par excellence l’Individu errant, jamais à sa place, nulle part et partout à la fois, l’inlassable déserteur, plus libre que l’air et contagieux” (279). Leperlier refers in this passage to a 1936 photomontage by Cahun in which a soldier squats unceremoniously over the flame of the tomb of the unknown soldier in Paris. Anti-nationalist, Cahun resists the vocabulary of nationalism in the same way she resists the nomenclature of the
patriarchal family. The name of the “Soldat ohne Namen” is not unknown; he does not have a name.89 Cahun un-names the soldier in resistance to nationalist narratives, just as, in a Gidean gesture, she un-names La Rocquaise in distancing herself from the Family, and just as she un-names and re-names herself. Through all this work of (un-)naming, Cahun remains the mime, the actor of the 1929 portrait, exchanging masks and, more importantly, creating new masks to exchange with others.

Like Cahun’s mime portrait, the performance of resistance captured after the fact in the portrait of May 1945 is an iterable performance, able to be repeated as proof of its performativity, as Austin and Derrida insist. In a move similar to Weiner’s rendering of her subject position as transferable to others in the “Open House,” Cahun emphasizes the transferability of her wartime experiences to other collaborators in the work of resistance. In Confidences au miroir, she writes, “N’est-ce là qu’une confidence personelle? […] Non, ce n’est pas seulement un témoignage personnel. C’est un leitmotiv dont les miroirs sont las. Il sert d’indicatif à tous les survivants” (573). Cahun opens the definition of “survivants” to a universalizing vision of those who have survived various conditions of human experience, but the primary reference is to those, like her, who have survived Nazism. Her autobiographical text is universal, then, in so far as it is transferable to others (other résistants, other people of conscience encompassed by Zachmann’s “collective conscience”), and is made transferable by Cahun and Moore’s engagement in practices of collaborative performativity. Like the black curtain behind Cahun in the mime portrait, or the dark entryway of La Rocquaise in the resistance portrait, the named absence of a name, the “Soldat ohne Namen,” is a screen not for the nationalist imaginary, but for a performance that is, in Leperlier’s description, “plus libre que l’air et contagieux” – that is, a

89 Cahun and Moore also referred to the “Soldat ohne Namen” as “Namenlos,” or “Nameless.” See Cahun “Confidences” 607.
performance of resistance that is contagious, easily spread to and by others, that functions performatively through citational transfer.

In the scheme of photographic invitation, Cahun and Moore’s resistance, though undocumented by photographs during the Occupation, is still one of a performed invitation. The German texts of their anti-Nazi tracts often included the exhortation “Bitte verbreiten,” which I read as the invitation to join in the effort and “Please distribute.” A (secret) contract, communicated by clandestine counter-propaganda, structures the performance of resistance. In an essay contributed to the catalogue for an exhibition of performance photography, Live Art on Camera, O’Dell explores the ways in which a viewer beholds a photograph as well as the ways in which a viewer becomes beholden to a photograph. O’Dell proceeds to interrogate the power relations that derive from the connotations of “behold”; she asks, “Who is in charge when we look at these photographs? Where does the obligation of interpretation lie? To whom are we, as viewers, bound by our interpretations?” (30). Like the invitation that initiates host and guest into a contractual space of unstable, circulating subject positions, O’Dell observes that photographs of performances similarly inaugurate a set of unstable subject positions. The viewer is, thus, beholden to the same object that she beholds.

In both O’Dell’s formulation and in Cahun and Moore’s practice, the imperative to interpret, to respond to the demands of beholdenness set out by the image, passes from one contractual party to another by hand. Like the photographic prints in the exhibition space analyzed by O’Dell, the anti-Nazi tract also circulated by hand, from Cahun and Moore’s touch to the touch of a German soldier. The dependence on touch of this contract of invitation allows an analogy between performance documents of otherwise different orders: the “first-hand” photographs of live performances analyzed by O’Dell, the written tracts by Cahun and Moore,
and the portrait of Cahun that restages her resistance performance after the fact. O’Dell introduces the importance of the haptic relationship of viewer to photograph in a brief exposition of Martin Heidegger’s terms “present-at-hand” (*vorhanden*) and “ready-to-hand” (*zuhanden*). In O’Dell’s explanation, “[Heidegger] uses the term ‘present-at-hand’ to describe those things right in front of us that we consciously pay attention to, while ‘ready-to-hand might encompass those very same things but, given our active involvement with or use of them, those things seemingly fade away into the activities in which we engage them” (35-6). O’Dell asserts that the performance photographs that implicate the viewer by their imperative to behold are not just visual works depicting or documenting performance, but are performance works “ready-to-hand” themselves. These images demand *handling* to be *seen*. The result of this coincidence of the visual and the haptic in Cahun’s work is the transference of a performative agency to interpret—the agency to enter into the contractual space of the photograph and take up its performance.

In sections of “Feuilles détachées du scrap-book,” a preparatory manuscript for the later, unfinished *Le Muet dans la Mêlée*, Cahun writes of her experiences with Moore in the Nazi prison on Jersey. Like the relationships between host and guest and between familial generations in the domestic space, the relationship between prisoner and prison guard do not remain stable in Cahun’s recounting of her imprisonment with Moore. Moore orders the guard to open her cell and allow her to pass into the cells of other prisoners, to share news or other encouragements, and Cahun befriends even other German soldiers, imprisoned for insubordination. Addressing Moore, Cahun writes, “Tu avais ordonné à Otto (le geôlier) d’ouvrir la porte de ‘Willy,’ le marin norvégien […] Otto ouvrit la porte; il nous laissa parler à Willy” (652). The prisoner (Moore) becomes, if momentarily, master of the prison, giving instruction to her jailer. From Moore’s audacity, a young German prisoner, a soldier named Kurt Gunther, takes inspiration. Cahun
recounts that on the day of his transfer from the prison, Kurt acts as Moore had acted, ordering the guard Otto to open the door to Cahun and Moore’s cell so that he might say goodbye. Cahun writes of the jailer’s actions, “Otto, par prudence, avait fermé la porte. Il nous garait en se garant lui-même” (653). Prisoner and guard find some equality in this moment, each protected from his or her transgression of the prison’s regulations by complicit, illicit behavior.

Cahun memorializes the resistance friendships that she and Moore made in prison through a metaphoric slippage between photographic image and handwritten text. The image of Kurt remains only in Cahun’s memory once he leaves the prison. But, Cahun describes this memory-image as if it were a photograph: “Je le vis face au nord, face au jour tombant de la fente poussiéreuse et barrée: notre fenêtre […] Le plafond, les murs blancs diffusaient une lumière par hasard excellente […] Elles fixèrent l’image avec une précision chimique” (653). Not only does her memory function like photographic paper, sensitive to the chemical processes of photographic development, but the photographic quality of the memory-image makes Kurt’s likeness even more precise, almost as if he were more present for this photographic precision. In remembering Kurt’s image, Cahun not only focuses attention on what she does not have (a real photograph of Kurt) but also on what she does possess (notes written in pencil by Kurt and slipped under her cell door). However, the note passed by hand, written in the hand of Kurt, will never coincide with the fantasized photograph.

In “Feuilles détachées du scrap-book,” Cahun gestures subtly toward the slippage between written counter-propaganda tract and photograph in her post-Occupation writings. In an associated passage in this text, the lack of a photograph of Kurt calls attention to the photograph Cahun does possess of another wartime friend, the Russian Michael Ionrablo. Of the mental image Cahun holds of Kurt, she writes, “Je le vois encore aujourd’hui aussi nettement que je vois
Michael Ionrablo que j’ai vu bien des fois […] et dont j’ai la photo d’identité près de moi […] Il l’a signée au crayon […]” (653). Cahun continues in this passage to remark upon the specifically Russian writing on the back of the photo, a short text in Ionrablo’s native language. And yet, the equation between Ionrablo’s photograph and the imagined photograph of Kurt in this passage formalizes the metaphoric use of the photographic image, while tying the photograph (as real object as well as metaphoric image) to the metonymical relationship of the friend’s hand(writing) to the friend’s writing hand, and thus to his now absent body. In Hervé Guibert’s poetic theorizing of photography, L’Image fantôme, the ideal photograph, like the photographic image of Kurt, is equally a fantasy – a photograph that fails to develop, while remaining no less present in the beholder’s mind.

Cahun grants the personal ID photo of Ionrablo a preciosity that speaks to the present-ness it signifies for her, unique in the haptic connection it permits to the lost companion in resistance. But, she grants it, as well, a transferability that allows her to make connections to other fantasized images and other forms of portraiture (such as the unique portraiture of one’s handwriting). The photographs circulate, attesting to the noble, anti-Nazi performances of these résistants and saboteurs. Cahun’s portrait as résistante wavers, too, between the absence and presence of its subject. At once a testament to the present-ness of Cahun in her performance of resistance and a memorial to a performance that can never truly be represented, the portrait in the doorframe of La Rocquaise instead invites the beholder into the performative work of the image. Neither an index of a past performance, nor a total fiction, the image operates between the realms of fantasy and materiality, encouraging the slippages between haptic and imagined seizings of the document – encouraging, as well, the perpetual circulation of the invitation to resistance,
inviting the viewer into the “Ferme sans nom” to participate in the persona of the “Soldat ohne Namen.”


Summering with “SIS KIND:” Weiner’s Summer Houses

Unlike Cahun’s writings about the purchase of La Rocquaise, Weiner’s short book *Nijole’s House* establishes a domestic space as *not* owned by its occupant. The title alerts readers to Weiner’s contingent relationship to the space in which she composes her book; the illustration of a door on the book’s front cover depicts the entrance to Nijole’s house, and not to Weiner’s apartment in New York City. Published in 1981, *Nijole’s House* is one of three books by Weiner from the 1980s that primarily deal with Weiner’s relationship to and care for her aging mother and aunt. The other books in this series include *Spoke* (1984) and *Page*, published posthumously in 2002. In *Spoke* and *Page*, Weiner again writes from a perspective of dislocation, recounting events that passed while spending summers at her mother’s house in Providence, Rhode Island. Weiner often spent summers at her mother’s home, as well as other vacations in rented houses in upstate New York.⁹⁰

As Weiner recounts her experience of composition in *Nijole’s House*, the state of dispossession – of not owning the home – in which she finds herself as a guest in Nijole’s house facilitates the composition of her text. She writes:

JUST BEHAVE YOURSELF
Leave September out of this

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⁹⁰ Weiner’s correspondence in the Archive for New Poetry at the Mandeville Special Collections (University of California-San Diego) attests to the significance of these stints away from her own apartment in New York City. Aside from writing in the journals that she would later edit to publish as *Little Books/Indians*, *Nijole’s House*, *Spoke*, and elsewhere, Weiner also engaged in written correspondence by letter or postcard with friends in the city.
Nijole’s is wonderful her house it is that lets us write IT IN period please

Whereas composition in the later works Spoke and Page begins to diverge from that of Weiner’s clair-style period, Weiner’s compositional strategy in Nijole’s House still documents Weiner’s experience of “clairvoyance,” her term for her ability to receive messages through visual hallucinations. As such, the capital words that begin the cited passage arrive as visual messages on Weiner’s forehead or page. “JUST BEHAVE YOURSELF,” then, reads as an instruction given to Weiner, perhaps to behave herself as guest in another’s home. Thus behaving herself, and “leav[ing] September out of this” as the time she will leave her summer rental to return to city life, Weiner is permitted by her environment to compose her text. The sense of permission granted by the house that “lets us write” seems to arise from Weiner’s subordinate status as houseguest, and not as owner. Weiner’s use of “clairvoyance,” thus, departs from the word’s etymological relationship to “clear” and notions of clarity. Rather, as Weiner’s texts and performances reveal, she uses the term to relate intense psychic experience that often resists clarity. Here, too, Weiner’s simultaneous position within the confines of house and language recall Cahun’s portrait in the armoire in which the body of the artist conforms to and exceeds the domestic space containing it. Just as naming in Cahun’s work represents the architectural scaffolding of language that Nathanaël describes, instruction, here in Weiner’s work, encloses Weiner’s body in language, and not only because Weiner emphasizes the appearance of language on her own body in her clair-style writings. In entering into Nijole’s house, Weiner enters into the conditions of (rental) instruction and of her received words.

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91 As she reminds the reader in her introduction to Nijole’s House, “All the words in this book were seen by Hannah Weiner first on her forehead […] in several word lines, as indicated by the line breaks. […] The words printed in the text as capitals were seen on her forehead as larger script VERY BIG WORDS or were seen on the page in big print interrupting the line that she was then writing down” (n.p.).
Weiner’s interest in instruction as a discursive mode precedes the development of the clair-style. For two examples of this thematic preoccupation in Weiner’s earlier performance works, her intervention at the 1970 “Saturday Afternoon Show” and a telegram sent as contribution to an exhibit at Oberlin College in the same year attest to the importance of instructional language to structure or comprise the artwork. Weiner hosted a series of performance interventions by various artists, including Vito Acconci and Adrian Piper, under the title the “Saturday Afternoon Show” at Max’s Kansas City. Though little documentation of the event remains, John Perreault, one of Weiner’s collaborators, wrote in a review contemporaneous with the performances that Weiner read aloud instructions to the waitresses at the bar for her contribution (Perreault). The work is the inverse of the clair-style, or “clairvoyantly”-received, instructions that would soon follow in Weiner’s poetic innovations: Weiner gives instructions rather than receive them. Invited to participate in the Oberlin College exhibit, “Art in the Mind,” Weiner was obliged to send a telegram to the exhibit’s curator due to the U.S. Postal Service strike of March 1970. Mimicking the technological conventions of an earlier period in the history of the telegram, the missive began, “Mail Strike STOP Please Reproduce This Telegram STOP.”92 The rest of the message included one instruction for the viewer: “I ask the students faculty and staff of Oberlin College and Allen Memorial Art Museum for the period of the show April 17 to May 12 1970 to overcome a fear.” Not only does Weiner’s telegram recall other instruction-based Fluxus works as Yoko Ono’s 1964 book of instructional

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92 Indeed, the use of “STOP” seems to have been a formal device chosen by Weiner, and not one required for the transcription of the message, as the rest of the telegram is printed in a variable typeset that does not require “STOP” to indicate the end of a line. Indeed, in the first line of the telegram, “STOP” does not offer a normative punctuation to the reader; the line keeps running after the first use of “STOP.” For a reproduction of the telegram, see http://jacket2.org/commentary/hannah-weiner-poem-lewitt-1970-telegram-work-letter-acconci.
event scores *Grapefruit* or the variety of Jackson Mac Low’s event scores, but it also
foreshadows the syntactical patterns of Weiner’s later clair-style. The imperative mode (“stop”)
punctuates the telegram in a disruption of the message’s information-rich syntax similar to the
interruption “IT IN” or the verbal reference to a period in the passage from *Nijole’s House*
above.

In the writings that both precede and follow *Nijole’s House*, of course, Weiner is not the
pronouncer of instruction, but rather the receiver of instruction. As seen in the text most
exemplary of her clair-style, the *Clairvoyant Journal*, these instructions arrive as “seen” words
received from outside voices and often comment on the process of composition itself. In *Nijole’s
House*, instructions intervene at the level of day-to-day reality. Weiner writes,

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    it is much clearer here than DON’T PRETEND
    in the city   Nijole’s house is ours
    until Thursday when we must leave
    with instructions   NO WEEKEND IT SAYS
    Just keep the kitchen clean
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These are not the instructions of which words to write, but rather the quotidian concerns of
respecting a rental agreement (not to extend past Thursday) and of cleaning up after oneself. Like
in Derrida’s dissolving of the distinction between host and guest, Weiner plays a variety of roles
as narrator of *Nijole’s House*. She is guest of Nijole but host to Nijole’s clairvoyantly received
words. Weiner writes, “Hannah we write a very long book in one week / Nijole projects on us
[…].” Though Nijole may be host to Weiner as landlord of the house, Weiner’s text becomes host
to Nijole’s messages. The relationship remains a troubled one. Weiner acknowledges the rental
instructions, and faithfully (if fitfully) records the received messages, but at the end of her stay
she violates the codes of a polite houseguest:

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93 Weiner’s major clair-style work, the *Clairvoyant Journal*, makes reference to Ono’s
*Grapefruit* and to Weiner’s friendship with Mac Low. See *Clairvoyant Journal* 8 and 4.
Hannah Nijole is quite surprised at us
because we sit silently on orders
sit silently for when
when it is time
hungry and no beans
it is our own house next we
live in

In this passage, silence no longer marks the received instructions but rather Weiner’s
intransigence in violating the instructions. She indicates that she resists the instruction to record
received words, and when she moves out of Nijole’s house, she does not replenish the pantry but
leaves a bare kitchen for her host’s return.

In *Nijole’s House*, gender inflects Weiner’s relationship to both inhabiting and writing in
domestic space. In the second part of the book, which finds Weiner turning attention to her
political allegiance to the American Indian Movement, Weiner alludes to her position writing in
solidarity with the male leaders of the Movement, while also writing in a literary context
dominated by white men (namely, Language poetry). Weiner refers to these others, often those
who send her messages, as “the boys.” In *Spoke*, the “boys” return: “I’m like the language boys
by also by name included should be changed” (8). In this brief passage, Weiner draws out the
paradox of her own relationship to the kind of writing found in *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, a
magazine to which she contributed poetry and essays. Edited by Charles Bernstein and Bruce
Andrews from 1978 to 1982, the journal coalesced a movement in experimental writing that took
the journal’s name as its own. In 1982 Bernstein edited a *Paris Review* sampler of work by
writers associated with the movement, including excerpts from Weiner’s *Spoke*. Bernstein, in his
introduction to the section, describes precepts for this kind of writing that concern the ideologies
and material supports that make all writing legible as communication. Bernstein writes, “It’s as if
a new scanning of consciousness were possible by introduction of the music of its constituting.
And by this means to make audible the thinking field: to get access to the lens (the mixed metaphor is again ideology) through which the world’s meanings are formed into audibilities” (“Language Sampler: Introduction” 75).

While Weiner’s work does engage with the ideologies and material supports that allow communication in language, Weiner maintains a distance from the group. In the passage from Spoke cited above, Weiner is like these boys (Weiner’s friends, Bernstein, Bruce Andrews, Ron Silliman), but only like them. She intimates that a name “should be changed,” perhaps the name of Language poetry if she is to consider herself properly amongst its practitioners. The repeated use of the playfully gendered, but still exclusionary, “boys” for her “silent” collaborators and friends points to gender as one complicating factor for Weiner’s complete self-identification with the Language group. The moniker, “the language boys,” also implies a distinction drawn on the basis of Weiner’s age, as she was twenty-two years Bernstein’ senior. The following passage in Spoke makes the gendered tension more explicit: “I’m like the language boys should be girls obey orders of course” (9). Of course, Weiner “obeys orders” as a defining feature of her poetics, but this passage does not resist the double reference to a gendered socializing of “girls” (an ironic, pointed usage given Weiner’s age at the time of writing Spoke) in a patriarchal world.

Before turning my attention to the imbrication of the domestic and the political in both Weiner and Cahun’s work, I would like to follow Weiner’s relationship to gender, especially in terms of family relations, into the domestic spaces of Spoke and Page.

Like Cahun’s family geometry, reorganized by shifting parental, avuncular, and sibling relations, Weiner’s family dramas, as recorded in Spoke and Page, shift their focus to that of the relationship between herself, her mother, and her aunt. In an afterword to the posthumously published Page, Charles Bernstein clarifies the biographical context of these works of the same
period as Nijole’s House. He confirms the summers Weiner regularly spent in her mother’s home in Providence, and informs the reader that Weiner’s mother and aunt Reka died within months of each other, her mother passing in September 1984 and Reka in January 1985. But, like the conflicting positions of hospitality revealed in Derrida’s uncovering of the particular hostilities of hospitality, the maternal and sisterly bonds in Spoke are not always gentle ones.

As caregiver to her aging mother, Weiner is subject to certain codes of instruction. Her mother acts as one of her “silent teachers.” Weiner writes in the capitals denoting clairvoyantly received language: “HELP REKA IN THE KITCHEN SIS KIND / AND DON’T HOLD ONTO YOUR MOTHER FIRST” (32). Unlike the time spent by Weiner in Nijole’s house, the months spent at Weiner’s mother’s home require work outside of the composition of Weiner’s poetry notebooks. In the collaborative space of domestic caregiving, Weiner’s written work opens further to the collaborative voices of clairvoyant writing. She must obey her mother in daily life (helping in the kitchen) just as she must obey in composing her poetry (recording the mother’s message in capital letters). The relationship between Weiner and the sisters is not an altogether easy one: “it’s the old age Reka insane I get caught asylum drinking I am / suffragette Peggy has nurse an talk to the hurts Reka idea / mother resents my being here just a little bit stupid because of […]” (38). In this short but complicated passage, Weiner hints at conflict with her aunt, her own problem with drinking, the intervention of her friend Peggy (de Coursey, a performance collaborator), and the complicated emotions of mother for adult daughter.

In the above passage, the syntactical fluidity that situates both Weiner’s “I” and Reka in the same line hints, as well, at an equivalence drawn between these two personages. Weiner’s family nicknames, in Spoke, supplement Weiner’s habitual use of self-address in her work, either
as received voices addressing her as “you” or as her use of her name and plural pronouns to refer to herself. “Toots,” used sparingly in *Spoke* and *Page*, was a nickname bestowed on Weiner by her father; in these two books, her other nickname “Sis” takes precedence. Additionally, the use of “sis” places Weiner in relationship to her brother, who also appears periodically throughout *Spoke*, but also within the other sisterly relationship of the book, that one shared between Weiner’s mother and Reka. In a similar passage, Weiner writes of a diet plan, recalling her interest in appetite and eating in the pre-clair-style work *The Fast*:

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kicking is our special friend we lose 3 lbs in the waist because Aunt Reka philosophy
becomes thin in the diet plan on the planeboard we shall sit
  UNDERWEIGHT
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(80)

Weiner’s *mise-en-page* contributes to the similar positioning of Weiner and Reka as sisters. Using the “we” that often replaces “I” in her texts, Weiner goes on to reference Reka in the same syntactical phrase. Does Weiner attribute her weight loss to Reka’s philosophy, the dropped “philosophy” thus indicating the diet as possessed by “Aunt Reka,” whose name sits atop it on the page? Or do both Weiner and Reka lose three pounds to “becomes [sic] thin”? As Sedgwick notes, “Part of the interest of the avunculate is […] that its thinkability also renders more thinkable (across and perhaps therefore within generations) the sibling relation” (64). Does Weiner’s tension with her aunt, as rendered in *Spoke*, signal a simultaneous initiation into an intergenerational sibling relationship (one of rivalry, perhaps) with the mother and the aunt?

The text of both *Spoke* and *Page* indicates exactly that intergenerational family structure, dominated by the avuncular organization under the name of the aunt or the sister. In the autobiographical passages of *Page*, as well, Weiner repeats the phrase “switch sisters,” as if the
sibling position were transferrable, like the positions of host and guest on the *Open House* invitation. In a following long passage of *Page*, Weiner again collapses the role of sister and daughter into the moniker “sis.” She begins the description of shared sibling grief for the mother’s death: “power simple another page say mother died / simple starpiece one page biglittle holds / the language together […]” (13). The portmanteau “biglittle” refers back to “sis,” as Weiner was her little brother’s big sister. The passage concludes: “[…] big listen sometime / sis your I think I am rich constantly / so always together stupid only brothers.”

In *Nijole’s House*, in a passage following Weiner’s discussion of Reka’s diet plan, Weiner worries about her status as an unmarried, middle-aged woman:

*regarding the self as a clean on the impossible page*  
I was a toast  
second choice breakfast after the first was failed  
who is it my Bernadette was failed in the children’s origin  
she left us behind and married so her children would succeed* (81)  

Weiner’s close friend Bernadette (Mayer) leaves “us” behind for marriage. Again, the plural pronoun refers to Weiner’s clairvoyant speaking subject but operates ambiguously enough in the passage to refer to those other unmarried women, as well: Weiner’s mother and Aunt Reka. The domestic space of sisterly relations demands a sacrifice. The sisters (at least Weiner and Reka who most prominently occupy that sibling position in *Spoke*) remain childless and unmarried. The passage, characteristically for Weiner’s texts, then transforms into a mix of observations about Weiner’s relationship with her mother and comparisons of Weiner and Mayer to masculinized political figures (wartime leaders and hunger strikers). As in Cahun’s portraits and late autobiographical writings, a political space dominated by men, thus, overlays the domestic
space, organized though it is by an avuncular, anti-patriarchal transformation of the terms of familial positions inaugurated by invitation and its instructions for host and guest.

*Signing the Event: Weiner and Domestic, Political Protest*

The shifting positions of names, voices, and authority also punctuates Weiner’s inscription of her political engagements into her literary works. In *Spoke*, references to and appropriation of language from the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, which established the Sioux reservations in what was then the Dakota Territories, recur throughout the text and expand the play of host and guest from Derrida’s reading of the terms of hospitality to those the colonized and colonizer in this political context. Weiner briefly discusses her relationship to this history and the American Indian Movement (AIM) in an interview with Charles Bernstein; in her last comment in the interview, she reports, “I’ve been with Indians for twenty years. And not only with the people who are the medicine people, some of whom’ve become healers, but also with some of whom’re in the American Indian Movement. There’s now, well I guess they work too in some way or another, and I keep in touch with them fairly frequently by phone” (164). For Weiner, Native American healers serve as “silent teachers,” and Native American activists serve as compatriots and friends.94 Like Weiner’s relationship to clairvoyant language that arrives free of a present speaking subject/body, she defines her relationship to these activists as primarily mediated by the telephone, which also separates language from the speaking body. Weiner’s engagement with AIM had become a major thematic concern in 1980’s *Little Books/Indians*, but

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94 “Silent teachers” is a corollary term to the “seen” voices. Coined later in Weiner’s career, the “silent teachers” take up the work of clairvoyance after the voices of the clair-style period cease. For Weiner’s own sketch of the main periods of her career, see Weiner “HANNAH WEINER SILENT TEACHER” in *Silent teachers/remembered sequel* 69.
she stages her political sympathies in *Spoke*, as well, in which an interest in the circulation of the author’s signature coincides with her textual appropriation of the Fort Laramie treaty – a legal document validated by its signatures.

In *Spoke*, however, the treaty (another kind of contract, like invitation or O’Dell’s performance photograph) does not include the name of the author, “Hannah,” in its list of signatories. In a passage in which she records the names of those who signed the Laramie treaty, Weiner’s name appears displaced from the text of the treaty in the fragment, “Hannah they don’t laugh at it the above” (53). Mimicking the language of legalistic designation – “the above” to refer to those who “signed” the treaty included above in her own text – Weiner also gestures toward the distance between her signature and the authorial power of these other, historical names. Displacing her own presence further from the collaged text of the treaty, in an entry labeled “June 23 Tues,” Weiner instead signs her first name in cursive script beneath a passage admonishing herself for her smoking habits and reminding her to call Jimmie Durham, an artist and AIM activist. The name signed “Hannah” disrupts the already fractured typesetting of *Spoke*, challenging Weiner’s estrangement of the authorial voice by including a handwritten trace of the author’s presence, but only insofar as it attests to the presence of the author in the events of her diaristic entry and not in the signing of the Fort Laramie treaty where it might otherwise belong.

The name, then, acquires an indexical status in Weiner’s texts, especially *Spoke*, though not one that goes unchallenged. In a statement of her poetics, “Mostly about the Sentence,” Weiner describes her use of names as a method for destroying or depersonalizing the ego of the person named. She writes, “*Little Books / Indians* is about people, and names names. I often refer to myself in the third person, calling myself Sis or Hannah, often misspelled (destroy the ego attachment to the name)” (133). The same uses of the names “Sis” and “Hannah” occur in *Spoke*,
as well as in earlier works preceding *Little Books / Indians*. Though the signature does not attach itself properly to the legal document of the treaty in *Spoke*, Weiner’s signature does appear on a reproduction of a letter from the Hopi Nation to the United Nations in 1982. This letter makes requests for the recognition of the Hopi people at the United Nations. Below the list of signers, Weiner adds her own name, written in multiple colors of colored pencil, as “Hannah theselfsame Weiner.” Weiner’s earliest hallucinations were pre-linguistic and included physical sensations and visions of color fields, as is especially evident in 1970’s *The Fast*. This signature recalls those color visions while also retaining the later style of “seen” words with the imposition of the reflexive phrase “theselfsame” between first and last name. But, Weiner’s texts, performances, and images challenge any stable self, or “theselfsame.” The signature affixed to the end of the Hopi letter attempts a brief stability by offering a trace of the artist’s presence, only to escape it by returning to the unstable absence of a speaking subject that the clair-style represents.

As evidenced in Nathanael’s reading of Cahun’s portraits and texts, language can scaffold the body, enclosing it as does an architectural form. Though this scaffold is contingent and unable to offer true stability in Weiner’s texts, Weiner stages this scaffolding of her body in language on the cover of her *Clairvoyant Journal* with her portrait taken by Tom Ahern. In the photograph, across her forehead, read the words “I SEE WORDS.” As Weiner reiterates of her clairvoyant practice in the introduction to *Spoke*, “All these on my forehead words are seen” (6). Here, language literally inscribes itself on the surface of her body. As I have shown in both *Nijole’s House* and *Spoke*, the inhabiting of specific houses facilitates Weiner’s writing process, allowing her a physical space and social context in which to receive the clairvoyant messages that contribute to the composition of her texts. Weiner finds herself enclosed both in language

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95 This letter can be found in Charles Bernstein’s papers in the Mandeville Special Collections at UC-San Diego. See Weiner “To the General Assembly of the United Nations.”
and in the house, and these two enclosures undergo a metonymical slippage in the structure of Weiner’s work as domestic and linguistic space overlap. To recall the example of *Nijole’s House*, Weiner receives two types of instruction: messages from outside sources that determine the composition of her text as well as written guidelines from Nijole on how to properly inhabit the house as a renter. The political language of the Fort Laramie treaty offers another example of this “scaffolding,” one that reveals the domestic space as also already a political one.

In Weiner’s texts, the enclosing forms of language and architecture manifest in the political/poetic pun she constructs around the “sentence.” The pun on the word “sentence” as poetic unit and/or prison sentence becomes most evident in juxtaposing readings of *Spoke* and *Little Books / Indians*. Weiner’s compulsion to finish the poetic sentence is contested by the interruption of her visions throughout her clair-style work. In *Little Books / Indians*, as in previous works like the *Clairvoyant Journal*, Weiner instructs herself to stop short, “don’t continue with this sentence” (8). In another passage, the “seen” words of the clair-style barrage her with instructions to do the opposite and to complete the sentence, as if taunting her: “A CONTINUE / SENTENCE / little / completed sentence” (22). In *Little Books / Indians*, composed in a series of small composition books, Weiner announces her allegiance to the American Indian Movement, shifting the meaning of “sentence” from its poetic to penal context. The book follows the fate of one of the movement’s leaders, Leonard Pelletier, who in 1977 was sentenced to two life terms in prison without definitive evidence for the 1975 killing of two FBI agents.

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96 The description of language as interacting with a room recalls Jack Spicer’s description of his own poetics, with which Weiner would have been familiar. In Spicer’s statement of poetics, aliens send him messages that interact with the “furniture,” or memories and poetic structures already in the poet’s mind, of his mind to create the poem. See Spicer.

97 In this clairvoyant passage, the words “completed sentence” are typeset on a diagonal to mimic the spatial arrangement in which they appeared to Weiner.
agents at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The sentence, thus, operates in the text as a unit of destabilized poetic composition as well as reference to Pellietier’s prison sentence.

The attribution of clairvoyant voices in *Little Books / Indians* draws out the stakes of this pun. In “Little Book 124,” Weiner channels the voice of AIM leader Russell Means along with her own voice: “Cut This Hannah Short / who stands with / writing / a / PENALTY / pencil in her hand / dont indent there is a penalty / for writing” (37). Means’ voice intervenes in the passage to remind Weiner that writing in the voice of AIM members has political consequences, or “a / PENALTY.” Later, in “Little Book 137,” Weiner channels the voice of Pelletier who projects his words to Weiner from prison: “We learn / Hannah its obvious / isn’t it / DONST SPEAK / its our knowledge” (70). The Leonard voice in capital letters seems to mimic the Hannah voice from the “124” passage above; typos or spelling errors mark both commands to “dont indent” and “DONST SPEAK.” But, while Weiner struggles with writing her sentence, it is Pelletier who must live out a contested sentence in prison. The penalty for producing political speech, in writing or speaking, as Means’s and Pelletier’s voices point out in this passage, can be more severe than a prison of language.

Notably, in another passage from “137,” the Hannah and Leonard voices overlap at a point of somatic experience. Weiner writes, “Leonard is speaking / to us in our / silence dear / stupid / ands we listen / Hannahs youre / VERY HUNGRY” (69). With the intrusion of the capitalized Leonard voice at the end of the passage, in a syntactic phrasing that maintains the integrity of the Hannah voice, the two voices form a collaborative voice. As the voices in the text converge on “VERY HUNGRY,” the plural pronoun “we” destabilizes the separation between

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98 For these details, see Goldman 144.
Leonard, “Hannahs” (sic), and other possible interlocutors (including the reader). Leonard might be hungry in prison but his voice transfers this bodily experience to Hannah. The mechanism of collaboration, here, is somatic and intertextual one: the passage refers to Weiner’s early text, *The Fast*, in which she tracked her experience of not eating during one of her first, prolonged periods of hallucination. Clairvoyant language in Weiner’s work reveals the mediation of subjectivity in language, proposing a collective or collaborative language that undoes the authority of subjectivity, while also showing the body to be mediated by language. Like Cahun’s body, which can inhabit La Rocquaise only after she renames the estate, Weiner’s body also needs language so that her body can appear, or become legible, in the space of composition. In *Nijole’s House* and *Spoke*, as discussed above, this language operates through instruction, recalling the portrait of Cahun in her windowsill, a portrait in which Cahun simultaneously luxuriates within the domestic space (a sun-washed window seat) and foreshadows her imprisonment (the iron cross-hatching of the window frame).

From the merging of voices in Weiner’s later texts, as in *Little Books/Indians*, Judith Goldman draws out a principle of “indeterminacy” crucial to a reading of Weiner’s work. In her article “Hannah=hannaH: Politics, Ethics, and Clairvoyance in the Work of Hannah Weiner,” Goldman remarks on the shift in clairvoyant strategies between the foundational *Clairvoyant Journal* and subsequent works as *Spoke* and *Little Books/Indians*. Goldman thus cites Weiner in her statement of poetics, “Mostly about the Sentence”: “Since [Clairvoyant Journal] all of my books are written for one voice, though dis-continued and interrupted” (Weiner “Mostly” 127, qtd in Goldman 146-7). For Goldman, this shift in poetic process marks a departure from the imbrication of Weiner’s conscious agency in the text for a process more grounded in a principle of automatism, or Weiner’s “clairvoyance.” The performance of these texts illustrates Goldman’s
observation, as the *Journal* was staged with three actors contributing to the reading whereas Weiner’s readings of such later works as *Little Books/Indians* relied more on the traditional univocal format of a poetry reading.

In the merging of voices, then, Weiner asserts what Goldman terms an “indifference to difference.” If the formatting of clairvoyant texts no longer works as a performance script for multiple voices as it did in the *Journal*, then, as Goldman writes, “this clairvoyant writing produces a third position that declares a certain indifference between opposites” (150). This “indifference of difference” can only lead to an indeterminacy of self, and one that, in the political context of *Little Books/Indians*, provides an ethical underpinning to guard against appropriation of another’s political position (here, the appropriation of the Native American position by a white poet). Goldman’s analysis continues to describe this third “clairvoyant” position in terms reminiscent of descriptions of the photograph: “Having established the indifference of difference, Weiner links it to clairvoyance, the indeterminate phenomenon of seeing words both there and not there” (150). In order to speak, then, as a white woman on behalf of members of AIM, such as the imprisoned Pelletier, Weiner depended upon the indeterminacy of her text to combat any charge of political appropriation of Pelletier’s language. In Weiner’s texts, Pelletier is both “there and not there” just as she – Weiner, the author – is both “there and not there.”

Goldman, thus, assigns clairvoyance the status of primary strategy for conveying indeterminacy, but in the pun on “sentence” and the analogy established between the confines of language and the house, or domestic space, a previous strategy comes to the fore. The photographic invitation, as a performative photograph, in fact, subtends clairvoyance’s reliance on the unsettled ontological positions of “there” and “not there.” In the deconstructed terms of
hospitality, Weiner is both host to Pelletier’s language and hostage to it; Pelletier is both speaking subject, in the text, but equally subject to it. The body of the performer in the photograph is indexical trace, evidence of a unique past presence, but also a performative pose to be appropriated and reiterated in the space of future performances. In “Mostly about the Sentence,” Weiner writes of the role of the reader, or audience, in such a performance, “The sentence is unfinished because the mind of the reader or listener supplies the answer (the end) either through telepathically reading the other’s mind, or through common knowledge. Or perhaps the reader involves himself with his own ending, which is equally valid” (129). Curiously in this passage, Weiner does not concede the force of the imperative mode she so often employs in her texts. The reader does not simply supply the ending, but is compelled to do so by the commands, or instructions, of the text itself. The reader does not operate self-reflexively, choosing to involve him or herself, but is compelled by the text to become involved in its completion. Like the performative invitation to the “Open House,” clairvoyant texts like *Little Books / Indians* and *Spoke* are performative texts that invite the reader into a domestic/political space of language in order to compel his or her participation in the performance of “seeing words.”

**Conclusion**

Like Weiner’s performances and texts, which require a participant to complete the work once the invitation to read or look is accepted, Cahun’s texts and portraits from the post-Occupation period invite the same textual and performative collaboration. In *Confidences au miroir*, Cahun recounts her return to La Rocquaise after her imprisonment with Moore. She
writes, “Le rideau tombé sur vos misérables victoires… en vain j’en voudrais soupirer d’aise… le rideau se lève sur une liberté de décombres…” (588). Cahun describes her liberty not only as marred by the ruins of wartime suffering – a liberty of ruins (“décombres”) forces her to revise melancholically her proud resistance victories as “misérables” – but also as beginning a new “act.” The curtain falls on the stage of the Occupation, Resistance, and her imprisonment with Moore. She addresses herself with an estranging “vous” (“vos misérables victoires”) as Weiner addresses herself in the third person. Though, with this “vous,” the plurality of Cahun’s collaborations comes to the fore, as well. She memorializes a group of collaborators in her text, addressing herself in addition to other résistant(e)s. Like Weiner’s sentence that remains unfinished, left for the reader to complete, Cahun’s “Confidences” also remain unfinished. She concludes the text with this passage: “Née-conditionnée Cassandre pouvais-je donc penser autrement qu’au futur? Fille du fils au conditionnel antérieur. Née-conditionnée Cassandre on ne saurait avoir. Elle a toutes ses griffes” (623). Her last sentence remains unpunctuated, open to the future – to future readers, future experiences, future performances. For Cahun and Weiner, clairvoyance – here, the clairvoyance of war-doomed Cassandra whose warnings went unheeded by the Trojans – is the expression of this openness to collaboration.

The photographs with which I introduced the contractual structures of invitation into this chapter’s analyses do not simply represent constative utterances – that is, they do not simply describe a scene or event. Instead, they transform the surface objectivity and indexicality of the photograph into a performative utterance, albeit a visual utterance (implying a synesthesia appropriate to Weiner's own description of her "seen voices"). In documenting performances with photographs that cannot possibly represent the performances they point to indexically, Cahun and Weiner emphasize the iterability of their performances. Like linguistic performatives
for Derrida, the photographs circulate as citations. And like Cahun's masks or the performances of the mime that Derrida analyzes in *La Dissemination*, these performative photographs can be cited by anyone who puts on the mask, or in other words, by anyone who enters into the contractual obligations of invitation in order to complete the sentence.\(^99\)

Cahun and Weiner’s stagings of their own images – their own bodies – in their invitational portraits further emphasizes these portraits’ status as performances. As Phelan writes, "In employing the body metonymically, performance is capable of resisting the reproduction of metaphor, and the metaphor I'm most keenly interested in resisting is the metaphor of gender, a metaphor which upholds the vertical hierarchy of value through systematic marking of the positive and negative" (151). For Cahun and Weiner, the invitation destabilizes hierarchies of gender in both the domestic and political realms, revealing those spaces as always already overlapping. The performative photograph functions as a contract, but as a contract to a domestic space, as a contract of invitation that necessarily implicates the ethical demands of hospitality and the woman's role therein as agent and stake of hospitality. The contractual invitation, however, and however paradoxically, destabilizes hierarchical power. The positions of host and guest circulate from participant to participant.

If my argument takes on a utopian tone in imagining the possibility for future readers and

\(^{99}\) Though I intend my argument to resonate, here, with the position of those who enter into a space of readerly responsibility to the reception of Cahun and Weiner’s open-ended works, examples of others who put on the “masks” offered by Cahun and Weiner abound. Artist Sarah Pucill has recently restaged many of Cahun’s portraits in her 2013 film *Magic Mirror*. I discuss this work briefly in my conclusion. Kate Zambreno’s cover for her 2012 work of feminist scholarship and memoir entitled *Heroines*, which takes its title from Cahun’s own *Héroïnes*, mimics some of the photomontages of Cahun’s *Aveux*. As for Weiner, multiple readings of the *Clairvoyant Journal* by other poets have underscored the performative power of Weiner’s text. A reading by Charles Bernsetin, Susan Bee Bernstein, and their daughter Emma Bernstein during a celebration of Weiner’s work at the St. Mark’s Poetry Project on 28 Nov 2007 exemplifies these readings. For video of that reading, see http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Weiner-PP.html
viewers to truly collaborate with Cahun and Weiner, it is because the conditions in which Cahun
and Weiner’s audiences might replicate these performances stretch the limits of Austin’s original
description of the contextual “felicities” that validate the performative utterance. As participant
collaborators to the works, we can activate the performative power of the invitational mode, but
can we truly participate in Cahun’s anti-Nazi resistance, for example? In *Cruising Utopia: The
Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Esteban Munoz describes the way in which Austin’s
theory challenges epistemological certainty by comparing the performative utterance to the
structure of utopia. He writes that both the performative and the utopic represent “a highly
ephemeral ontological field that can be characterized as doing in futurity” (26). Munoz links this
phenomenon of a “doing in futurity” to a “horizontal temporality,” that which challenges
epistemological and ontological certainty and, for Munoz, the straight time of the present (25). In
other words, the performative, in a utopic gesture, reaches into the past in order to project
performative action into a future yet to be imagined.100

In Cahun and Weiner’s performative photographic portraits and related texts, the
performative utterance of “I invite you in” collapses a series of hierarchical relations into a
horizontality that presages what Munoz calls “horizontal temporality.” Within their images,
texts, and performances, Cahun and Weiner first express this horizontality through the spatial
arrangement of certain social relations. Through my reading of Derrida’s “hostipitalité,” the

100 Lee Edelman’s offers a counterpoint to Munoz’s theory of a queer utopia rooted in a queer
negativity. Edelman’s work also rejects a linear conception of history as linked to reproductive
futurism, but unlike Munoz, Edelman suggests that the role of queer theory is to remain outside
politics and even attempts, such as Munoz’s, to reimagine social forms that only shore up the
social forms that marginalize the queer. See Edelman 4-7. For more on the debates around the
antisocial thesis in queer theory, associated with Edelman, see the conference proceedings from
Caserio.
destabilizing equivalence of host and guest in Cahun and Weiner’s work emerges as a prime example of this collapse into horizontal social hierarchies. Subsequently, the social categories and roles attendant to family structures collapse, as well, turning away from the Father and toward the avuncular ties of sister-lovers and sister-aunts. With these horizontal realignments, Cahun and Weiner stage, too, the horizontal realignment of artist and audience into collaborators, though not without the tensions of host/guest and sibling sameness/difference. The collapse of social space into horizontal arrangements prepares a collaborative space for the participation of readers and viewers in the reiterative, future work of artistic invitation.

This turn to the utopic possibilities of the performative is not to suggest, of course, that the political conditions that shape and inform Cahun and Weiner’s works (Nazi occupation, the suppression of Native American rights, as just two examples) sketch a desirable future condition. Cahun and Weiner are, thus, simultaneously rooted in their present moments and forward-looking, as true clairvoyants. The force of the performative, harnessed to create new collaborative arrangements between work and audience, projects the possibility of this new artistic and social space of collaboration into a future where, like Cassandra’s desperate predictions, it may not be heeded. But, the force of the performative opens a space in which those forecasts for the future may be received, in Weiner’s words, by future “silent teachers.”
Part Two
Chapter Four.
Hers to Make, Ours to Make:
On Clandestine Dining with Meret Oppenheim

And perhaps whatever speech and writing that comes after or over a photograph or a performance should deal with this epistemological and methodological problem: how to listen to (and touch, taste, and smell) a photograph or a performance, how to attune oneself to a moan or a shout that animates the photograph with an intentionality of the outside.

— Fred Moten, In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition

This chapter opens on a photograph of Meret Oppenheim’s *Das Frühlingsfest (Spring Banquet)*, a mysterious scene in Bern in March 1959, later restaged at André Breton’s invitation in Paris in December of that year (Fig. 4.1).101 As its name suggests, Oppenheim’s Bern *Spring Banquet* included a dinner party to which she invited four friends, as well as a woman who lay naked on the dinner table, her face painted gold, and on whom the food was served without dishes or silverware.102 Only one photograph documents this event, though more images proliferated from its restaging in Paris for Breton’s 1959-1960 exhibition, *EROS: Exhibition Internationale du Surréalisme*, at the Galerie Cordier.103

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101 In Paris, Oppenheim restages the event as *Le Festin*. I use the German and French names to differentiate between the two iterations throughout this chapter.

102 The best description of this event in Bern comes from Oppenheim herself in a text only recently published in German (2002) under the title “*Das Frühlingsfest*” in Meret Oppenheim *Husch, husch der schönste Vokal entleert sich*: Gedichte, Prosa 127-33. As this text is not readily available in English nor commonly cited in scholarship on Oppenheim, I maintain my focus on the photographs of the dinner party as the main vehicle for reception and interpretation of the event(s) in this chapter.

103 Daniel Cordier’s gallery operated under a reciprocal agreement with Arne Ekstrom’s gallery at 980 Madison Ave. in Manhattan, starting in 1959. Cordier & Ekstrom exhibited the work of artists including Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst. See http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/19/nyregion/arne-ekstrom-87-director-of-a-prominent-art-gallery.html?_r=0.
As with Cahun’s Resistance portrait, Oppenheim’s *Banquet* stages a specifically clandestine performance. Unlike in the previous chapters, however, the existing documentation of Oppenheim’s performance – one photograph – does not seem to offer a performative utterance, or invitation, in the way Cahun and Weiner’s portraits do. Instead, Oppenheim’s image emphasizes borders – of medium, of time, of experience – that may remain in place for the viewer and the critic. In the epigraph to this chapter, Fred Moten asks his readers and fellow spectators to pay careful attention to the “moan” or “shout” that emanates from such photographs in such a way that the operation of the photograph or performance seems to correspond to an intentionality outside its frame. Such exclamations, however, circulate without the addressing their audiences as does the performative, and Moten carefully includes the often-neglected senses of touch, taste, and smell in his hermeneutic program for encountering these images that resist visual interpretation.

Moten’s interrogation of a new hermeneutic system for these images and performances emphasizes the sense of hearing, while careful not to neglect the senses important to gustatory pleasure: touch, smell, taste. As Mélanie Boucher asks in her study of the use of food in twentieth-century performance art, “Nous avons appris à nous exprimer sur ce qui est vu et entendu, mais comment décrire les sensations du toucher, du goût et des odeurs?” (258). Moten’s challenge to his fellow spectators and readers, as well as his advice for deciphering the indecipherable “moan or shout,” returns us as his readers to the affective possibilities of these texts, of the affective states such texts and images can effect in place of our epistemologically sound interpretations of these texts. And, in considering the various dinner parties that result from stagings of Oppenheim’s *Banquet*, the sense of taste will come to stand in for a particular operation of pleasure, which I connect to Roland Barthes’ pleasure and bliss (*jouissance*) in *The
Pleasure of the Text, in the reading of these performances and their photographic documents. In the network of other artworks and cultural phenomena that Spring Banquet evokes, pleasure operates on a spectrum, from the nefarious (as with the woman placed on the altar of the Black Mass) to the retributive (as with the cannibalism to which an abused wife submits her husband during the concluding dinner in Peter Greenaway’s 1989 film The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover) to the revelatory (Judy Chicago’s 1974-79 feminist installation The Dinner Party) and the ecstatic (as with the passionate writhing of the dancers in Carolee Schneemann’s 1964 Meat Joy).

As for Barthes, he aligns pleasure (plaisir, but also jouissance, or bliss) with the realm and register of the clandestine in The Pleasure of the Text. In doing so, Barthes questions the possibilities for criticism through the lens of such a search for pleasure; he writes, “How can we take pleasure in a reported pleasure (boredom of all narratives of dreams, of parties)?” Excessive explication of, and a denuded relationship to, what is reported, or read, Barthes seems to suggest, dulls the pleasure of contact. Barthes offers only “one way” to recover this pleasure: “I must shift my position: instead of agreeing to be the confidant of this critical pleasure—a sure way to miss

104 More recent dinner parties staged as artworks under the sign of participatory art, social engagement, or Nicolas Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics, such as Rirkrit Tiravanija’s installations in which he cooks for his audiences, eschew the clandestine effects that the other works listed above negotiate, whether through their embrace (e.g. the ultimate deception carried out by the wife against her husband in Greenaway’s film) or their remedy (e.g. the work of historical recovery, of bringing forgotten historical figures to light, performed by Chicago’s installation). For more on Tiravanija’s work in the framework of relational aesthetics, see Bishop Installation Art 116-19.

105 Daniel Cordier, the Parisian gallerist who hosted the EROS exhibit, knew well the ruins (décombres) of war. During the Nazi Occupation, he had served clandestinely, as the personal secretary to the Resistance leader/martyr Jean Moulin. They knew each other by their code names alone: Alias Rex (Moulin); Alias Max (another for Moulin); Alias Caracalla (Cordier). Only after the war did Cordier learn of the identity and fate of his patron. See Cordier Alias Caracalla.
— I can make myself its voyeur: I observe clandestinely the pleasure of others” (17). His casting of the critic as “voyeur” implies only a partial knowledge available to, or desired by, this critic in search of textual pleasure.

If Cahun’s portrait as résistante projects her clandestine wartime activities into the world through the force of performative invitation, Oppenheim’s photo remains in the shadows of the clandestine performance. Oppenheim’s biographers regularly refer to the period between 1937 and the 1950s as years of artistic crisis for Oppenheim, during which she returned to Switzerland from Paris. As Stephan Kunz writes of the years ending this crisis and surrounding Oppenheim’s dinner party, “[…] between 1958 and 1960, a curious mutation took place in her work […].] Of central significance is the shift from renditions of the outside world to an inner focus: ‘I want to paint something I’ve never seen before.’” (Kunz et. al. 11). Additionally, Renée Riese Hubert notes the ways in which Oppenheim’s temperament accounts for her avoidance of many artistic partnerships (63). Considered with Oppenheim’s preference for solitary work in mind, the assertion of her desire to “paint something I’ve never seen before” might be read differently in relation to the photograph of the Bern dinner party. Instead of painting something

106 Amongst these sources, see Beat Wismer and Annette Schindler’s introduction to Kunz et. al. 5. Oppenheim herself refers elliptically to a “crisis period” in an interview with Renee Riese Hubert in Caws et. al. Surrealism and Women 68-9.

107 Hubert reads this “refusal” in terms of the heterosexual couple, a paradigm she locates in such Surrealist objects by Oppenheim as Le Couple (1956), in which Oppenheim fused two matching women’s boots together at the toes. While Hubert points to the possible androgynous reading of this couple, I question her reading of a matching pair of boots (which might rather represent the same) as necessarily implying either a male/female split or its resolution in androgyny. Derrida similarly interrogates the assumptions of Heidegger and Meyer Schapiro vis-à-vis Van Gogh’s painted boots in The Truth in Painting. See Hubert Magnifying Mirrors 67 and Derrida The Truth 255-382.
never seen before, Oppenheim hosts a party never seen before, and never able to be seen again under the same clandestine conditions.

Boucher connects the importance of such ephemeral conditions, with no easy system of critical or textual transcription, to the common experience or memory of performance art pieces as out of focus (“flou”) (258). And, as she points out, the photograph of Oppenheim’s *Banquet* is out of focus, indeed. The photograph, thus, acts as a limit barrier between the knowledge available to the viewer of the photograph and the knowledge afforded to those few friends who participated in the dinner party. Moten evokes this barrier, too, in asking how the “moan or shout” of a photo might be assigned the intentionality of the “outside.” In the reception of Oppenheim’s work, this barrier marks a terrain of rumor on which interpretation of the Bern staging of the *Banquet* must depend.

Here, I focus on what forms of collaboration can be salvaged from such an affirmation of the clandestine and a refusal of partnership through a reading of the work as closer to the “collective” effort identified by Mary Ann Caws in an earlier, related work by Oppenheim. In a culinary appreciation of Oppenheim’s famed Surrealist object, *Object (Le Déjeuner en fourrure)* (1936), Caws recounts how a conversation between Oppenheim, Picasso, and Dora Maar inspired the object’s creation. Though Hubert emphasizes Oppenheim’s rejection of artistic partners, Caws recasts Oppenheim’s fur-lined teacup, spoon, and saucer as a “collective piece […] from Meret Oppenheim’s presence, along with that of Picasso and Dora Maar, and her subsequent construction, and – most interesting still – the interpretation placed on it by all the aftercomers to Dora Maar’s photograph” (26). Oppenheim’s fur-covered teacup serves as an *amuse-bouche* for the dinner party that follows two decades later, a photographed sculpture whose reputation resides largely in that photograph. In this chapter, I play the role of the
“aftercomer” in relation to Oppenheim’s *Spring Banquet/Das Frühlingsfest/Le Festin*, a position which allows me to reveal the ways in which the photograph presents me with “something never seen before” and so refuses to extend a photographic invitation into the work.\footnote{My interest in the participant whom Caws names the “aftercomer” also follows on Andrea Oberhuber’s observation that, in contradistinction to the work of her contemporaries like Cahun or Leonora Carrington, mirrors and reflective surfaces do not demarcate a performance space of self-representation in Oppenheim’s work. See Oberhuber “Figuration de soi et de l’autre chez Meret Oppenheim” 13.}

*The Event and Its Restaging(s)*

Oppenheim’s *Banquet*, or its blurry ephemera and the rumors of it, pose the same challenge to the viewer of the artwork that Barthes faces before a page of criticism. How can we take pleasure before this absent artwork, with nothing but a blurry image without caption to guide us? The fuzziness of the Bern photo, the lack of light in its exposure, results in an excrescence-effect in the subject of the portrait: the food seems to sprout, like lumps of moss, from the body of the woman (*une femme printanière*). Thus, this fuzziness signifies doubly: first, the regenerative power of the woman’s fecund body as correlate to the vernal regeneration of the earth, and second, the very clandestinity of the performance and image taken in secret with little available light.

The multiple iterations of *Spring Banquet* make difficult a reading of the photograph’s status in the case of each restaging. Hubert refers to the work as an “often-photographed installation” (“From Déjeuner” 40). However, this assertion reduces the work to its restagings and further occludes from view the Bern photograph and the conditions of that first staging. To be “often-photographed” might suggest to be clearly-photographed, or well-documented,
whereas none of these qualifications are the case for Das Frühlingsfest. To assert as much reduces the artwork to its restaging in Paris as Le Festin and ignores the mystery surrounding the work’s genesis in Bern – a mystery that Oppenheim establishes as structural to the work’s restaging and reception. Like Boucher, who describes the Bern Frühlingsfest as “méconnue” (210), I have difficulty in locating and knowing the work.

Oppenheim’s installation for the 1959 opening at Galerie Cordier ushers its guests from the private space of her Bern Das Frühlingsfest to the public, glamorous space of Breton’s Paris and Le Festin. Unlike the private feast shared by the couples at Das Frühlingsfest, multiple photographs document the Paris installation and its guests and participants. These images appeared in such international publications as Vogue and included, as well, the work of Denise Bellon, another female artist also associated with Breton’s surrealists.

One photograph, by Roger Van Hecke, depicts the mob scene in the street outside the gallery during the vernissage. Unknown to these guests, prominent artists amongst them: this is the end of Surrealism, the last time its artists will show their work together under the banner Breton had unfurled in his Manifeste of 1924. Another photograph depicts the attendees inside the gallery, gathered around the table (Fig. 4.2). Women are en fourrure, like Oppenheim’s teacup and saucer. The men sport tuxes and ties. This photo, by William Klein for Vogue, anchors its composition in the correct posture of three famous fashion models within the frame. Unlike at Oppenheim’s Bern dinner party, we know more of the sartorial compositions at the Paris event than just the naked woman’s outfit. The formal attire of the guests renders the woman more naked and exposed in this image, even seemingly dead: the chance encounter of food and a beautiful woman on a dissecting-table, to rewrite Lautréamont’s formula for the beauty of the aleatory. In the image, Breton, looking dour, appears to reign over the work. To the right of
Breton sits a masked male mannequin, part of the installation, and looking closely behind Breton and this mannequin (who at first resembles Dali), a woman peeks over the shoulder of one of the models. Oppenheim? I wonder for a moment, but it is the poet Joyce Mansour, I think. Looking more closely: there, on the table, it is not a woman after all. She is a mannequin!

In a third image, another by Van Hecke, a man in suit and tie takes his pick from the offerings on the table, his hand raised above the woman’s breast (Fig. 4.3).109 His style of dress resembles one of the Paris guests chez Cordier, but as I look, I ask myself if this image captures instead one of the friends of the Bern feast? In that moment of questioning, I think the woman on the table is a real woman, the gold-faced woman in Bern. If so, the image deceives, at first, and closer looking corrects that deceit. And yet—

Looking more closely still: what hangs on the wall behind the man in this photograph? The same circular artwork from Klein’s photograph. And in the top right of Van Hecke’s photograph? A corner of the same mirror that serves as backdrop to the fashionable subjects of Klein’s photo. This is, then, another image of the Paris Festin, complicating the documentation of the installation by revealing a bait and switch in the gallery space: a woman’s real breathing body during the opening for a mannequin’s sculpted papier-mâché form during the run of the exhibit, as documented in Bellon’s photograph of the installation (Fig. 4.4). Comparing Bellon’s photograph of the mannequin to Van Hecke’s photograph of the tuxedoed man, a clue reveals itself. The mannequin’s hair is straight, straw-like, and unadorned. The woman off whom the man serves himself wears a crown of flowers on her head.

109 An image from this series appeared with a review by Adam Saulnier in Démocratie 59 (31 Dec 1959). Archived by the Association Atelier André Breton, the caption reads in part: “Se mettre à table chez les Surréalistes réserve des surprises qui ne sont pas nécessairement désagréables […]” The caption makes no mention of Oppenheim. See http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/56600100349640.
The installation of *Le Festin* in Cordier’s gallery undergoes its own transformations during the run of the exhibition, from December 1959 to January 1960, some of which resist visual interpretation in the kind of hermeneutic challenge that Moten encounters before a performance photograph. In a letter from Oppenheim to José Pierre dated 11 October 1959, the artist specifies details for the table top, noting what flowers and foods covered the table and woman during the Bern dinner and suggesting substitutions to account for the change in season from spring to winter. Oppenheim also asks that the gallery not tell viewers that the dinner party actually took place, but that it rather represents an idea she had for the exhibit.\(^{110}\) The letter emphasizes her subterfuge in the details of the spring dinner in Bern, including “petites fleurs du bois (de printemps, évidemment),” and their desired translation to a winter setting, “des petits brins de sapin, de fleurs sèches, etc.” These transformations continued at the opening, as attested by Van Hecke and Bellon’s photographs, where another living woman took her place on the table-top for a special installation of the *Banquet*, before being replaced by a mannequin for the rest of vernissage.\(^{111}\)

The difference in flowers and food elements reveals itself poorly in the images, especially given the lack of resolution or contrast in their composition. The difference between a spring forest flower and a winter branch of evergreen better suits an olfactory encounter with the installation. As Moten suggests, we might learn more from straining to hear

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\(^{110}\) In Oppenheim’s words: “Dis aux autres de ne pas dire que ce dîner a été eu vraiment lieu, mais, si on prononce mon nom, à quoi je ne tiens pas, de dire que c’est une idée que j’ai eu [sic] pour l’exposition!” For the letter in the Atelier André Breton archives, see [http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/5660100481600](http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/5660100481600).

\(^{111}\) A series of color photographs by an unknown photographer, archived by the Association Atelier André Breton, documents the installation with mannequins. See [http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/5660100692700](http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/5660100692700).
the moan of the woman on the table, exposed now to a more public crowd than the guest of honor in the Bern Fruhlingsfest, in Van Hecke’s photograph.

Oppenheim confuses the status of the installation, no longer exactly a performance as we might classify the Bern dinner, for the exhibition goers in her instructions to Pierre.¹¹² Her letter reduces the Bern dinner to the status of a rumor – and one insinuated by the exhibition’s own restaging and installation. One final photograph for (re)consideration attests to the propagation of this rumor through a destabilizing of the ontological grounds of the Bern photograph and Paris installation. The gallery booklet for the EROS exhibit included the image from Bern on its back cover, as if the blurry document from that clandestine performance could stand in for, and in advance of, the Paris restaging with mannequin.

The “Houses” of Surrealism

Amongst the other transformations of the Banquet between Bern and Paris is the space the work occupies. The more celebrated iteration in Paris takes on the air of a glamourous ball, truly a banquet, but Oppenheim held the first dinner in her home. There, the artist more easily controlled the event and its documentation. Having arrived in Paris in the same period as Oppenheim and studied at the Sorbonne, École du Louvre, and ateliers, such as the Grande Chaumière (where Oppenheim also studied), Louise Bourgeois’ own approaches to the question of the clandestine directly interrogate the bounds of domestic life. Bourgeois’ 1974 sculptural

¹¹² Oberhuber remarks upon the Banquet, noting that most often art historians, not critics of literature, have thought to comment on its status. She refers to the Banquet as installation rather than performance (more on this to come), making reference to that second iteration of the Banquet, aka Le Festin. See Oberhuber “Figuration de soi et de l’autre chez Meret Oppenheim” 13.
installation, *The Destruction of the Father* (Fig. 4.5), follows some of the formal cues of Oppenheim’s Bern photograph. Set in a recessed space, its walls covered in black fabric and open on one of its six sides, *Destruction* depicts a mythic dinner party, populated by the round protuberances common to Bourgeois’ sculptural vocabulary. Larger protuberances both extend from the ceiling and sit around a rectangular surface in the middle of the space. From this plaster surface emerge smaller cylindrical, almost phallic forms. In remarks from an interview with Donald Kuspit, Bourgeois reveals that the scene developed as an “exorcism” of a fantasy of murdering her father on a dinner table with the help of her siblings (Bourgeois 158).113 Viewers can peer into the installation but have the sense of spying on a scene whose narrative they cannot fully distinguish. Like the photographic documentation of Oppenheim’s Bern dinner party, Bourgeois’ *Destruction* presents the viewer with a shadowy, horizontal scene whose narrative remains obscured by the viewer’s partial knowledge of the correspondence between that narrative and the work’s sculptural forms.

Two other series of works by Bourgeois cast into further relief the domestic bounds of clandestine space. In paintings from 1946-47, each entitled *Femme-maison*, Bourgeois depicts hybrid female forms with torsos and bodies made of houses (Fig. 4.6). The “house women” in these images simultaneously hide from and reveal themselves to the viewer, both retreat into and break open the put on display private domestic space. Responding to a question about gender identity in a 1979 profile by Eleanor Munro, Bourgeois replies, “The woman I was drawing in those days – the femme maison – did not yet have enough poise or objectivity simply to say, ‘Do not ask me such a question!’ No. She fled, and hid herself away” (Bourgeois 114). Hiding,  

113 These remarks, and those by Bourgeois that follow, have been culled from their original sources and collected in Bernadac and Obrist *Louise Bourgeois: Destruction of the Father, Reconstruction of the Father.*
however, only preserves the head of the woman from view, and the term “femme maison” implies not a woman partially covered by a house, but rather a woman partially become a house. As in Cahun’s portrait in which she languidly spills out of an armoire, Bourgeois’ paintings literalize Bachelard’s formulation of the “passionate liaison” that an inhabitant embarks upon with his or her house. The play between concealment and revelation heightens the sense of implied narrative, and thus the impulse to give narrative to the scene through rumor and imagined half-truth. This is the effect for the viewer of Bourgeois’ later series of Cellules from the 1990s, comprised of installations often delimited by fences or architectural elements, such as provisional walls with half open windows or doors, that prevent access to the installation while leaving visible the psychologically-charged tableaux of domestic life and memory inside the space of each “cell.” Cellule (Choisy) (1990-93) incorporates the figure of the house as a sort of head through a marble sculpture of Bourgeois’ childhood home set beneath a guillotine blade (Fig. 4.7). As a stand-in for a head beneath the guillotine, the house is both threatening (as metonym of the head of the patriarchal household) and threatened with its own destruction. The installation reverses the gendered inflection of the house in its depiction as the house of Bourgeois’ childhood memories (associated now with the Father of the 1974 installation). But, Cellule (Choisy) also suggests that freedom for the “house women” of the paintings could arrive with the separation of the house-head from the body, with the separation of body and the structure that encloses it and its head.

In a poem from 1934, composed while an art student at the Grande Chaumière in Montparnasse, Oppenheim writes:

114 For more on Bachelard and Cahun’s portrait, see my discussion in chapter three.
Für dich – wider dich
Wirf alle Steine hinter dich
Und laß die Wände los.

An dich – auf dich
Für hundert Sänger über sich
Die Hufe reißen los.

ICH weide meine Pilze aus
ICH bin der erste Gast im Haus
Und laß die Wände los.¹¹⁵

No title holds the tercets together. They rather stack one upon the other like a pile of stones. Like the position of the host usurped by the guest, the structure of these walls will not hold for long.

The walls of the house provide a measure of privacy, but they are also imprisoning, as they are in Cahun and Bourgeois’s work. In a painting of 1938, entitled Steinfrau, Oppenheim depicts a woman made of stones lying on a beach, her legs submerged in the water (Fig. 4.8). Like Bourgeois’ femme maison figures, this stone woman is made of the materials associated with the house. Collapse of the house and its materials in this poem leads not to revelation but to a sort of clandestine liberation that tests the bounds of gendered subjectivity.¹¹⁶

This gendered subjectivity, keyed to private or clandestine sites, finds its expression in the very orientation of the table-top woman along the horizontal axis. Rosalind Krauss argues that in the work of Cindy Sherman, a reorientation of the picture plan to the horizontal axis

¹¹⁵ The English translation in Burckhardt and Curiger’s Beyond the Teacup reads: “For you – against you / Throw all the stones behind you / And let the walls loose. // To you – on you / For one hundred singers above you / The hoofs run loose. // I delight in my mushrooms / I am the first guest in the house / And let the walls loose” (n.p.). For the German text, see Oppenheim Husch, husch 31.

¹¹⁶ In fact, the poem shares some details with the Frühlingsfest. Mushrooms figured amongst the foods served on the naked woman’s body. In the poem, the ecstasy of an erotically charged dinner party ritual finds its parallel experience in the implied ecstasy of psychedelic mushrooms. See Oppenheim’s description “Das Frühlingsfest” in Meret Oppenheim Husch, husch der schönste Vokal entleert sich: Gedichte, Prosa 127-33.
challenges the phallic verticality of so many philosophical and aesthetic metaphors (e.g. the vertical of the mirror, the vertical plane as the painting) (*Bachelors* 129-33). Such a challenge undoes the certainty of what we know in confronting an image, and in Krauss’ description is a “desublimatory” move (of the beautiful as a category, of the fetish) on the part of the artist (131). As Amelia Jones describes, the work of an artist such as Chris Burden, celebrated for his macho wager that his friend would not shoot him dead in *Shoot* (1971), panders to “normative codes of masculine artistic subjectivity,” which she summarizes with the term “martyrdom” (*Body Art* 130-1). Closer in time and space to Oppenheim’s milieu, Yves Klein’s *Leap into the Void* (1960) (Fig. 4.9), a doctored photograph in which the artist seems to leap from a second story roof with nothing below to catch him, at least implies a masculine heroism or hoped-for apotheosis (aligned formally with the vertical axis of the image), as well as a masochistic martyrdom as in Burden’s performance should Klein fall into the street.

Oppenheim’s Bern photograph partakes of none of these masculine codes. It eschews authorship and reportage, refusing to signify heroic, artistic martyrdom, ordered instead along a horizontal axis, with the woman who stretches out in space as in the arrangement of the bulbous, phallic forms in Bourgeois’ *Destruction* and a later *femme maison* sculpture (1994) that depicts the woman lying on her back (Fig. 4.10). Photographs of Schneemann’s performance, *Meat Joy*, which debuted in Paris in 1964, depict writhing bodies, clad in underwear (some of it designed by Weiner), entangled with paper and rope, covered in red, wet paint and raw chicken and fish (Fig. 4.11). Instead of the verticality of Klein’s image for his leap, or of Burden’s crucifixion imagery in *Trans-fixed* (1974) (Fig. 4.12), bodies splay out on the floor, on the horizontal, in photographs of Schneemann’s work. Any martyrdom, here, makes its sacrifices for the flesh, for the bliss, or trauma, found in being *in* a body, and not for a rising above the flesh through
martyrdom or apotheosis. Schneemann’s performance is about being with other bodies, like Oppenheim’s despite the clandestine nature of the dinner party, and the concealed identity of these other bodies.

A similar division separates Oppenheim’s vision of the house from that of André Breton. In his 1928 novel *Nadja*, Breton declares, “I myself shall continue living in my glass house where you can always see who comes to call; where everything hanging from the ceilings and walls stays where it is as if by magic, where I sleep at night in a glass bed, under glass sheets, where who I am will sooner or later appear etched by a diamond” (18). The liberation in which Oppenheim’s poem revels does not correspond to the kind of freedom espoused by Breton in his description of a transparent house of glass. As metaphor for the goal of his Surrealism, to merge the conscious and unconscious selves into a sur-real state, Breton’s fantasy of a self “etched by a diamond” ironically refuses the mutability that otherwise marks the surrealist imagination – as if a total, fixed transparency would lead to the revolution before any shadowy clandestine work could strike a tangible blow for that new reality.

Oppenheim’s fantasy of a house blown apart by her own “letting” includes remnants of her taste for secrecy and singularity (solitariness). Oppenheim’s liberation leaves behind a house reduced to a pile of stones, new features on the psychological landscape that we might interpret as cairns, markers and protectors of the unfettered self’s dark past, sentinels against forgetting as well as the dangers of total revealing. In these stone piles, we find exemplary spaces for hiding artifacts or parts of one’s self. In contrast, Breton’s glass house threatens to shatter, and must be inhabited with deference and subservience to the tyranny of its transparency.
The positions of Breton and Oppenheim in the texts cited above fall on either side of the pleasure/bliss (plaisir/jouissance) divide drawn out and destabilized by Barthes. For his reader, Barthes never settles the question of what punctuation might best intervene between his terms pleasure and bliss. A slash divides too neatly; a hyphen homogenizes too thoroughly. Advising readers to make of pleasure a material practice, derived from a material text, Barthes instructs to “either relate the text to the ‘pleasures’ of life (a dish, a garden, an encounter, a voice, a moment, etc.) and to it join the personal catalogue of our sensualities, or force the text to breach bliss, that immense subjective loss, thereby identifying this text with the purest moments of perversion, with its clandestine sites” (58-9).

Oppenheim’s work, in both the poem cited above and above all in her clandestine dinner party, exemplifies Barthes’ critical practice in art making. Barthes recommends we “breach bliss,” an imperative we might figure as to punch a hole into, or to reduce to a local site of rubble, the wall that separates us from bliss (jouissance). Barthes’ “clandestine sites” evoke the crepuscular half-light of Oppenheim’s Bern photograph, as well as the domestic scene that simultaneously presents itself for and resists figuration. Breton’s text suggests we inhabit the glass house with the careful particularity of our personal sensualities, refining them through a supreme transparency of the unconscious and contact with the materials of daily life (a bed and its sheets). Oppenheim’s poem aligns pleasure with an energetic, Dionysian liberation that loosens the self, an immense experience in which the walls of the house can no longer contain

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117 The opposition of Breton and Oppenheim’s notion of the house in these two texts may correspond, as well, to the opposition that Hal Foster draws out in the structure of Surrealism between that strain represented by Breton and another one represented by Bataille’s base materialism. See Foster Bad New Days 19-20.
the individual, but which tethers itself still to clandestine sites of perversion, to those stone-piles Oppenheim leaves in her wake.

*The Poverty of Images*

The critic, scholar, or viewer today, attempting to write about Oppenheim’s image from the Bern dinner party, faces a confused and confusing record of the event if he or she consults first the hits for a Google image search. As Kaja Silverman writes of Joan Fontcuberta’s *Googlegram: Nièpce* (2005), a composite image assembled from Google image search results and resembling Nièpce’s early photograph *View from a Window*, “When we conduct a Google image search, the search engine looks for the images that have been most frequently linked to our search word. These links, however, have been forged by other Internet users, and reflect their predilections, antipathies, rivalries, and desires, instead of our own” (*Miracle* 64). However, to Silverman’s nuanced examination of intentionality in the world of digital image searches, I would add that by virtue of acting as one of those Internet users, the scholar adds his or her own predilections to the network of search words. The Google search comes to resemble the work of rumor that already animates the space between the Bern and Paris iterations of the dinner party. Intentionality, as attested to by Oppenheim’s letter to José Pierre, certainly comes to bear on the information viewers received about the work at the gallery exhibition and afterward.

For an image whose reception already depends so much on intentionality and the discourse of rumor, the gap between an analog photograph, such as the image from Bern, and a digital photograph begins to narrow. The competing intentionalities that shape the reception, and irretrievability, of an image on Google, have also shaped the reception of the obscure photograph
from Bern. Artist and theorist Hito Steyerl, in theorizing what she calls the “poor image,” or the image in the age of digital duplication, writes, “Poor images are thus popular images—images that can be made and seen by the many. They express all the contradictions of the contemporary crowd; its opportunism, narcissism, desire for autonomy and creation, its inability to focus or make up its mind, its constant readiness for transgression and simultaneous submission” (41). If Oppenheim’s Bern photograph might be classified as “popular,” the argument would hinge on its presentation on the back of the *EROS* catalogue without attribution to Oppenheim (in deference to her request in the letter to Pierre), and so to its creation of a temporal rift in performance/installation and documentation that inspires rumor and fascination about the event.

Steyerl intends her description to stick to images made for the computer screen, jpegs and pngs and pdfs, all images that can be resized and cropped and corrupted, but the relationship of popular images to the contemporary crowd evokes the images of *Spring Banquet*, as well. In the William Klein photograph, fashion models rub shoulders with Surrealists, each eager for his or her appearance in *Vogue* (by this point, Dali has already designed covers for the magazine). Surrealist transgression meets consumerist appropriation. Remember how stiffly so many of the artists and models pose in that photograph; what opportunism is theirs?

The unstable corpus of images shared by the Bern and Paris banquets has certainly entered the realm of the poor image today, circulated without caption through Google searches that place all of these photos on the same image results page. Even the power of Google’s algorithms do not return the range of images taken in the *EROS* gallery: the series of color photographs by an unknown photographer do not appear when I search on Google, archived only (at least for me, and the constraints of my own search terms) on the website of the Association Atelier Breton.
Steyerl notes that “the economy of poor images is about more than just downloads: you can keep the files, watch them again, even reedit or improve them if you think it necessary. And the results circulate” (36). Of course, reediting or improving an image or video means changing it. The creation of a reedited or improved file means that what circulates does not simply duplicate or repeat, but does so with a difference. Like the museumgoer who leaves the building with a clandestine cellphone video in Steyerl’s example of a poor image as video file, those who reedit and recirculate do so in secret, their identities obscured by the mediating screen that delivers the increasingly impoverished image to new viewers. This increasing “poverty” of the image, its degradation in quality and resolution as it passes through successive rounds of download, reediting, and recirculation, relates inversely to the power of the spectator (now a participant technician) over the image.

The photograph from the Bern Frühlingsfest also suffers from poor resolution, or at least poor focus and lighting, and holds little commercial value for a Vogue editor in 1959 when placed beside the glamorous images taken later at the Paris staging of Le Festin. Have, then, photographic images been impoverished for decades before the advent of digital and Internet technologies? The Bern image fades in value on the back cover of the EROS gallery pamphlet when set against the photographs of the Paris staging. The Bern image has already been reedited and recirculated, first as real-life experience for the attendees of the gallery opening and once again in the eclipse of its value once Klein and Bellon’s photos take its place as indexical documentation of the performance/installation.

The performance, once coaxed out of the clandestine private space of personal invitation (the Bern setting), can neither control its spectators nor contain its representation. Unmoored from epistemological or ontological certainty, the images (even these non-digital photographic
images) of the later Paris staging become poor images, with a currency value appropriate to the clandestine space in which they traffic their representations. The value of the performance photograph rests with this poverty, in its status as copy, fraud, ersatz testimony, but also as citation. These photographs evade the present tense, hiding in the rock piles that do the horizons of past and future. In the confusion of the evidence they present, these photographs expand upon Barthes’ theory of photography. Not only do they attest to Barthes’ “that-has-been” (ça-a-été) of the image that proves the existence of the object by its representation in the photograph but so, too, to a possible that-will-be, a calling forth of the object in the future out of the confused chronologies of the image.\footnote{118}

Oppenheim may lament the absence of a friend who would have advised her not to acquiesce to Breton’s request.\footnote{119} We, as viewers and circulators of these images, can only reply with our own counsel: the clandestine does not mix well with the (or any) camera. Hers to make: a generic choice between ritual (clandestine) and performance (public). As Rebecca Schneider puts it in her essay “Solo solo solo,” echoing Moten’s attention to the moan or shout of the photograph, “Missing [the performance], you are available to hear it otherwise, through the retelling, the recitation of the document, and thus are ‘present’ to it otherwise, in a mode of transmission – a re-enactment” (42). Ours to make, then, but from the photographs and not from the performance events themselves: a disjointed, clandestine economy of reportage (of images, of visual utterances clairvoyant and utopic) and reported pleasure. Research into the Frühlingsfest becomes its own re-enactment of the confused epistemological lines of its rumors

\footnote{118} For Barthes’ discussion of the ça-a-été of the photograph, see La Chambre claire 121.

\footnote{119} Peter Gorsen gives an account, based on his interview with Oppenheim, of her dissatisfaction with the restaging of the dinner party for Breton’s exhibit. He notes that the EROS exhibit marked Oppenheim’s final rupture with Breton and his group. See Gorsen 35.
and reportages.

Conclusion

Though Oppenheim’s work displays a resistance to and critique of artistic partnership as detailed by Hubert, the stakes for participation (and, thus, for collaboration) are high in the various iterations of Oppenheim’s dinner party. In his efforts to pin down the qualities of bliss, Barthes writes, “The asocial character of bliss: it is the abrupt loss of sociality, and yet there follows no recurrence to the subject (subjectivity), the person, solitude: everything is lost, integrally. Extremity of the clandestine, darkness of the motion-picture theater” (39). The clandestine space that Barthes evokes does not negate the presence of multiple participants. The clandestine space of bliss exists beyond sociality, refusing a subjective experience of either solitude or partnership.

In Boucher’s interpretation of the Frühlingsfest, Oppenheim prepares a menu of foods that threaten to take the one who eats to a similar “beyond,” as in the narrator’s destruction of the house’s walls after consuming mushrooms in the 1934 poem. Boucher writes, “Ces aliments, certains très luxueux […] sont également tous rattachés au danger (réel ou figuré) de l’empoisonnement, étant en cela des aliments toxiques […] Ils mettent logiquement l’accent sur l’idée de cycle; celui de la naissance, de la mort et du renouvellement […]” (213). Boucher describes a ritualistic use of food in the performance, creating a (metaphoric) space of ecstatic experience that dissolves binaries like life and death. Boucher concludes, “À la manière d’un antidote, ses aliments toxiques donnent symboliquement de la force. Relever l’épreuve de l’impureté alimentaire’ servirait donc, dans cette oeuvre, l’élévation personelle et sociale,
l’accueil du féminin et la célébration du corps de la femme” (216). Yet, for Barthes, bliss represents so extreme a form of pleasure that even the reader or critic accedes to a space of asociality, beyond the personal and the social. Such a form of pleasure and critical response opposes participation and collaboration. To dispute Hubert’s assertion of Oppenheim’s rejection of collaboration, I find that Oppenheim’s artistic intervention does not lie in the rejection of collaboration but in its manipulation beyond sociality – or, in other words, in the manipulation of codes of the “collective” that question the roles of author, artist, participant, spectator, and reader in relation to the image and artwork.

The gold-faced woman’s figure emanates from the time of its capturing in a photograph in Bern (the time of the clandestine performance) as if always already an image. The information provided by the image does not suffice in overcoming the gravitational pull of the clandestine. Alone, the image would sink back into darkness, without caption into the extremity Barthes senses in the dark movie theater, foreclosed to hermeneutic seizure. The restaging of the Banquet – that which marks it as a performance and so not as clandestine ritual (or not only so) – pulls the image over the event horizon of that black hole. The force of the extraction sends the image into its own future iterations, at a delay from the time of past and future iterations of the performance but travelling parallel to them.

In her concluding, Boucher surmises that Spring Banquet provides “un antidote” that resolves the division between “l’élévation personelle et sociale, l’accueil du féminin et du corps de la femme” (216). While I agree that Oppenheim’s dinner party, in its first instance in Bern

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120 Barthes imagines a socio-cultural version of this asociality in his late lecture at the Collège de France, his notes for which are published under the title Comment vivre ensemble. In those notes, Barthes hypothesizes a living arrangement in which participants can maintain their individual life rhythms (avoiding the social influence and pressures of others in a style similar to monastic life) while still living with a defined set of others. For more on Barthes’ notion of idiorrhythm, see my discussion of Adrian Piper’s work in chapter seven.
and the subsequent documentation, moves toward a resolution of opposites, I do not agree that it does so through an “élévation.” The photographic documentation, confused in Boucher’s own account and in mine, does not permit it. The condition of performance as a medium marked by its future disappearance but also by the mysterious, revivifying powers of the photograph casts us into the clandestine – a space organized along the horizontal axis in which this art compels us to move through a pitch dark theater, made subjects just as we begin to suspect our own fumbling movements to be those of animated objects, automatons.

Yet, Barthes remains clear on the question of the subject moving through a clandestine space: asociality, “everything is lost.” Even in an automatic fumbling, like the one I’ve just described, something remains. The Bern photograph draws me in closer by its dark gravity (so little light escaping) than the Klein photo in Paris with its luminous points of celebrity (art stars and minor fashion stars). The performance photograph can revivify; it is possible. But, does the Bern image revivify? It fascinates, certainly, and transforms into a sort of devotional object, a cipher of mysteries, as would befit the indexical relic of a harvest feast and ritual dinner party.

What I can see of the performance – the obscured image of a woman on a dinner table, what I am able to interpret as viewer and critic – fades the more I learn of the conditions and context of the event, as if to enter into the photograph and into the time of the performance would lead to black-out, the sound of my surroundings becoming more and more faint as my vision dimmed. The restaging of the Banquet gives it new life. Considered together, the Paris and Bern versions birth another critical life for the performance in criticism. But the single image from Bern, regarded alone, compounds the methodological challenge Fred Moten issues in this essay’s epigraph. I approach a limit experience in beholding the Bern photograph, the sounds and
textures and tastes made briefly sensible, palpable, before the allure of the secret, unknowable performance pulls me back through the image into the “extremity of the clandestine.”
Chapter Five.
Bernadette Mayer’s Collaborative Memory, in Kodachrome

My first day in the Archive for New Poetry at the University of Southern California San Diego, the archivist on duty gave me a brief tutorial in how to read loose-leaf documents, notebooks, and books as I explored Hannah Weiner’s papers, as well as those of her close friend, the poet and artist Bernadette Mayer. I had worked in a university library as an undergraduate, so had seen similar procedures before in the workshop where I repaired book spines, but watched anyway as she pulled out different size wedges of foam blocks to support the books and dossiers as I leafed through them. By the end of the week, alone in the reading room as the roster of other researchers working had dwindled from four on Monday to none on Thursday, I had pushed the foam blocks and wedges aside in order to make room for a light box, assiduously going through binders containing 1,116 photographic slides, swept up in the breadth of the images Mayer had taken in July 1971 for her project Memory. In the empty reading room, the images on the light box made their own space between the documents I had read that week and the recordings of Mayer reading the text of Memory that the archive also houses.

First displayed as a photographic and sound installation at the 98 Greene Street Loft in Soho in February 1972, Memory traces Mayer’s daily life as she recorded it in 35-mm Kodachrome film and in an audio taped narration composed from notebooks Mayer kept during the same period. Mayer installed the 1,116 photographs in a grid on the wall of the gallery in the order in which they were taken, with handwritten notes on cards the size of the photographs giving an introduction to the project and marking the transition from one day to the next (Fig. 5.1).

In Mayer’s own words, taken from the introductory text:

121 Few quality images of the original installation exist. The image included here is from a recent (rare) reinstallation of Memory at the Poetry Foundation’s headquarters in Chicago from March 3
Memory: This is a series of snapshots in lines or rows reading left to right: one month: July 1st – 31st: 36 pictures per day: morning to night of each day. The tape in 31 parts uses the pictures as points of focus, one by one, + as taking-off points for digression, filling in the spaces between. Tape follows pictures from the 1st to the 1,116th. It is 6 hours long. (Mayer qtd in Kotz “Why Memory”)

The project later appeared in a 1975 book edition, with the text reedited and revised by Mayer and accompanied by only seven of the original photographs retained for the cover design (Fig. 5.2). As poet-critic Maggie Nelson describes it, Mayer’s Memory marks her entrance into art making “not as a fledgling wordsmith, but rather as a performance artist dedicated from the get-go to the art of interminable catalogue” (104).

In the period directly preceding the multimedia project Memory, Bernadette Mayer had edited the Conceptual/Post-minimalist art magazine 0 to 9, with the artist and her then brother-in-law Vito Acconci, publishing such artists and writers as Weiner, Sol LeWitt, Adrian Piper, Dan Graham, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Smithson, and others. As a teacher at the Poetry Project in New York City, Mayer also published the anonymous, collaborative journal Unnatural Acts from 1972 to 1973. Other important collaborative works by Mayer include The Cave with Clark Coolidge composed between 1972 and 1978 and Utopia, a 1984 science-fiction, time-travel epic in the tradition of utopian literature including texts by Weiner, Charles Bernstein, her sister, the artist Rosemary Mayer, and others.122 Utopia built on the strategy of inviting other author’s to contribute texts that Mayer first experimented with in Moving (1971). Memory represents the pivot in her career from the work of 0 to 9 to her later position in the New York poetry scene, a

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122 For Mayer’s account of the Utopia’s structure, see Mayer “From: A Lecture at the Naropa Institute, 1989.”
turn to procedures common in the art world of the time that would then be abandoned for a career carried out on the page as a poet. Celebrated by the nascent Language poetry movement for her poetic experimentation, a still later turn to lyric poetry characterized what critic Ann Vickery calls a “fall from grace” in the eyes of the New York avant-garde. However, Mayer’s continued presence in the New York poetry world and the recent critical reevaluation of the totality of her work has challenged the reductive equation of her lyric work with less rigorous experimentation.

Memory, however, holds an ambiguous position in the history of art to which Nelson assigns it, caught between the worlds of 1960s-70s conceptualism and experimental writing in the same decades. In the essay “Why Memory Matters,” Liz Kotz presents evidence of both the process-based methods of Conceptual art for producing a “neutral” document (one roll of film a day, without variation) as well as the subjective details inherent to such an autobiographical endeavor that resists the detached formality of other examples of Conceptual photography. Mayer reproduces the tension between detachment and subjectivity in the large

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123 Mayer’s “fall from grace” has become part of her own legend, or as Vickery puts it “hagiography.” See Vickery 150-1 and Kane 193. Maggie Nelson puts Mayer’s change in status in the context of Joan Mitchell, Barbara Guest, and Gertrude Stein’s practices of abstraction as well as the more romantic tendencies of the New York School. See Nelson 103-4.

124 For an example of such scholarship, see Gillian White’s chapter on Mayer’s work in Lyric Shame: The “Lyric” Subject of Contemporary American Poetry, on which I comment below.

125 In the visual art world, Robert Morris’ Memory Drawings (1963) and Hollis Frampton’s photography series Word Pictures (1962-63) and film Zorns Lemma (1970) are important forerunners of Memory. For more on Morris’ work, which engages directly with writing and recounted narrative, see Tsouri-Schillinger “Between Word and Image.”

126 Mayer’s work also fits within the history of Conceptual photography, influenced by the phenomenological encounters with minimalist sculpture, represented by Victor Burgin and Douglas Huebler’s work in Kotz’s Words to Be Looked at: Language in 1960s Art. See Kotz Words 231.
grid formation of her installation, which foregrounded the volume and formal repetition of the images while also revealing the rich detail of each individual photograph. Paul Stephens identifies an aesthetics of information overload in avant-garde writing of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in which writers and artists “partake of, as well as parody, the information glut that characterizes modernity” (1). The voluminous number of Mayer’s photographs for Memory, as well as the tendency of her prose to fill entire pages of the book edition without leaving any blank space, testifies directly to the information “glut” that Stephens describes. Adrian Piper, writing around the time of Memory’s creation in her essay “Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object,” points to the difficulty artists faced in synthesizing media and content in conceptual art (36-7). For Piper, Mayer’s “space-filling poetry” represents a rare resolution of that tension (37). As Kotz notes of what seems a productive tension, then, in following Piper’s description of the work, “Just as its images are suspended in an irresolvable tension between personal affect and neutral system, its presentation straddles monumental scale and minute detail.”

Gillian White identifies a critique of lyric practice even after Mayer’s “fall from grace” in her turn to expressive verse in the period after Memory and Studying Hunger, exemplified by Midwinter Day (1978) and The Golden Book of Words (1978). Midwinter Day, written during one day on 22 December 1978, finds Mayer again experimenting with duration, if in a more lyric and legibly autobiographic mode. The Golden Book of Words represents a more definitive turn

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127 Liz Kotz’s essay is an important intervention in the contextualization of Mayer’s work in an art history context that often overlooks its importance. The recent anthology, It Is Almost That: A Collection of Image & Text Work by Women Artists & Writers (2011), edited by Lisa Pearson, makes a similar intervention, placing excerpts from Memory alongside work by Weiner, Adrian Piper, Louise Bourgeois, and others.
toward a traditional collection of discrete lyric poems. Yet, White writes, “[I]n Mayer’s attempts
to imagine and address an audience outside the dictates of anti-lyric practice, her work explores
processes of readerly identification and self-projection […]” (158). The experimental tension of
Mayer’s work – that which Kotz puts in the art historical context as a tension between “personal
affect and neutral system” – runs through Memory and Mayer’s later work alike. But, unlike the
quotidian, autobiographic epic of Midwinter Day or the free-standing lyric poems of The Golden
Book of Words, Memory does not simply imagine or address an audience member. Instead,
Mayer’s Memory makes the reader an active participant in, and indeed a component part of, this
multimedia and collaborative performance work.  

In the Special Collections reading room, the tapes of Memory were bewitching. At the
beginning of the recording labeled 29 July, Mayer whispered a series of clauses I did not
remember from the published text: “It's windy out, it's windy out, not then, now, I'm a scientist."
In its stuttering over temporal indications (“not then, now”), the passage exemplifies Lytle
Shaw’s description of the imbrication of deixis and temporality in the book edition in his essay
on the rhetoric of scientific authority in the work of Mayer and her friend and collaborator Clark
Coolidge. Describing the effect of the absence of images from the published text, Shaw writes,
“This deictic gesturing purged of description works not merely to distance us from the
photographs, but to emphasize the complex temporality that Mayer’s project establishes” (158).
Mayer’s work of composition self-consciously engaged with this “complex temporality.” As

128 This structural engagement with collaboration between artist and audience in the work marks
a difference with other contemporaneous poetic projects associated with memory and
photography. Mayer’s friend and collaborator Clark Coolidge published his Polaroid in 1975,
making an analogy between the development of the instant photograph and the development of
syntax in a poem. Lyn Hejinian’s Writing Is an Aid to Memory appeared in 1978, a precursor to
Hejinian’s celebrated My Life (1980) and also exploring the relationship between memory and
text.
Mayer recounts in her “Lecture at the Naropa Institute, 1989,” she composed the book edition of *Memory* using her 1971 notebooks while looking at projected slides of the photographs (98). References to the projector recur throughout the text of *Memory* so that the present tense of the text serves more than one present tense of experience: of the photograph, of the memory, and of the writing. This series of temporal displacements and relays characterize this multimedia project in its current state, dismantled in parts in an archive that, by archive rules, can only be viewed piece by piece, photo slides or audio recording, but never both at the same time as in the Greene Street installation.

The lines quoted above do not appear in the book edition of *Memory*, but their echo resounds in *Studying Hunger*, a volume examining the somatic/affective states of writing, that Mayer published in 1975 following the book edition of *Memory*. There, concurrently to the production of *Memory*, though in a retrospective tone, she writes that the motivation for exploring states of consciousness in *Memory* was “to do this as an emotional science […] to use this to find a structure for MEMORY […] to do this without remembering” (7). Mayer’s “emotional science,” however, confuses the goal of the project to record memory as in a diary and to find those structures of memory that she hints may be both rhetorical and phenomenological. In the recording for 29 July from the *Memory* installation, Mayer admits, "When you write there's nothing to feel nothing to feel nothing but the smoke in front of the slide projector" (175). The experience of writing reduces to the material experience of sitting in another sort of photographic installation, that of a slide projector. Mayer characterizes the

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129 Like the overlap of present tenses in *Memory* that Shaw describes, the overlap of Mayer’s editing of material for *Studying Hunger* and *Memory* further complicates the “present tense” of Mayer’s work.
experience by sensory phenomena (the visual data of smoke in the projector light) but inherent in her style of writing in *Memory* will be the fantasized work of recollection, as well.

In what follows, I explore the ways in which the book edition of *Memory* is both a product and a displacement of the structure of the installation, and ultimately, of Mayer’s durational performance. Not only is Mayer’s poetry “space-filling” as in Piper’s phrase but it is also *productive* of a space and subject of collaboration. In *Memory*, Mayer heightens the collaborative stakes of her artwork by manipulating the physical space of her installation, a public site for the display of private memory, in its displacement to the later published text. The temporal overlays that Shaw associates with the textual work belong to a series of other, interconnected displacements: in time, between image and text, between memory and language, and between bodies. Through the use of color in her text and in the photographs that inspire it, as well as her transformation of her multimedia installation into what I describe, after philosopher Vilém Flusser, as a photographic "apparatus" of a second order, Mayer involves her reader-viewer in the phenomenological and psychological space of *Memory* as well as in the artistic work of its production. An artwork that is at once an “emotional” science project but whose writing leaves “nothing to feel,” *Memory* acts upon both the artist and her audience, making both into writers of a shared, collaborative work of memory/*Memory*.

In an installation entitled *Todo vale. Colores primarios y secundarios llevados al blanco* (Everything goes. Primary and secondary colors brought up to white) (1968-70) and shown as part of the Museum of Modern Art’s landmark 1970 exhibit of Conceptual art, *Information,*
Alejandro Puente explores what he terms the “language” of color (Fig. 5.3). Mayer would surely have been, at least, aware of this exhibit as it included work by Acconci, her sister’s friend Adrian Piper, and her own friend Dan Graham, amongst other 0 to 9 contributors Robert Smithson, Yvonne Rainer, and Sol Lewitt, a friend of Weiner’s. Puente’s work includes small canvases that recall industrial paint samples, plastic canisters that contain liquid paints of the same colors as the canvases, and a grouping of explanatory documents with text, color wheels, and other graphic means of systematizing the use of color. The work appeared during a crucial period in both Mayer and Weiner’s art practice, in which they, too, turned to the use of color in writing: Mayer in Memory and Studying Hunger, and Weiner in The Fast (1970), where she tracks a range of sense phenomena during her earliest hallucinations. In his explanatory documents, Puente equates color and language as systems of information in three balanced sentences that mimic the logic of a syllogism (“color is language”; “language is system”; “language is information”). Elsewhere in the work, he writes, “Color is the only element that has a grammar and syntactic properties of its own.”

In the text that comprises the book edition of Memory, Mayer deploys color in a way similar to her use of time as a durational challenge to herself and her reader-viewer. In a relatively short but exemplary passage (some of Mayer’s color passages extend for half the page), Mayer writes,

[…] photograph: monday—a window of a factory, tuesday—a small white handkerchief with ‘a merry christmas’ embroidered in red across one corner, wednesday—a man’s black striped pants, thursday—a light brown earthenware jar, friday—an earthenware jar like thursday but darker in color, saturday—a saucer with a pattern of brown & gold squares round the edge, sunday—a metal cream pitcher” (19, emphasis mine)

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130 For a related overview of color in the context of French-language poetry, see Susan Harrow “Colorsteps in Modern and Contemporary French Poetry.”
Mayer’s use of color adjectives gives rhythm to her prose text, but at times this rhythm impedes reading, slows the progression through the text, and compounds the durational challenge of the already dense prose. Color, then, has a direct relationship to the embodied experience of reading *Memory*. And, if Mayer’s work exemplifies the concern for informatics amongst writers and artists of the 1960s as Paul Stephens argues, color becomes integral to how the artist and the reader-viewer process, or read, this information culled from daily life. The passage cited above, which provides an ekphrastic description of a series of photographs (likely corresponding to photographs in the installation), also relates Mayer’s use of color in her text to the saturated colors of her Kodachrome film.

Color plays an important role in the rest of Mayer’s poetry, as well. The poem “Very Strong February” is the best example of Mayer’s prompt, included amongst her *Experiments*, to write a poem that includes a color in every line. That poem begins, “A man and a woman pretend to be white ice / Three men at the lavender door are closed in by the storm / With strong prejudice and money to buy the green pines.” While the “lavender door” represents a more nuanced use of color in the specification of a hue of purple, the other colors (“white ice” and “green pines”) give expected descriptions of their objects. The color adjectives in the poem share in a normative use of color in *Memory*. It is this attempt to record colors with fidelity to their objects that allows to the colors to work as syntactic elements in the grammar of Mayer’s language system, to borrow Puente’s vocabulary for talking about color and language.

Mayer’s attention to color adjectives in *Memory* speaks to her avowed interest in Gertrude Stein’s poetics, as well. In the essay “Poetry and Grammar,” Stein elaborates on the parts of speech and their roles in her poetic composition. Stein declares verbs and adverbs as more “interesting” than nouns and adjectives, but the latter two grammatical categories connect
Stein’s poetics to Mayer’s, despite their status as “not truly interesting.” Stein, in fact, allows a special power to nouns in her essay. She writes, “Poetry is doing nothing but using losing refusing and pleasing and betraying and caressing nouns. When I said. A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose. And then later made that into a ring what did I do I caressed completely caressed and addressed a noun” (327). In the mimed “scientificity” of Memory (especially in its book edition), prefaced by Mayer’s psychiatrist David Rubinfine with reference to the “data” Mayer includes about her past, sensory elements rise to the thing-ness of nouns themselves. Mayer’s use of color may modify nouns, but in the objectivity of these colors, Mayer attempts to “caress” them in the way Stein caressed her nouns by giving them the attention of her repetitions. The grammatical address to nouns in Stein’s poetics merges with Mayer’s interest in sensory perception, tied to the material world in its first experiencing and its later archiving as abstract memory, here colorized as Kodachrome photograph and as modified noun. In a 1989 lecture at Naropa University, Mayer describes Memory as revisiting Stein’s assertion that, in Mayer’s words, “you can’t write remembering.” In challenging Stein, Mayer describes herself as having worked “with Stein,” suggesting the collaborative ethos at work in Mayer’s process (“From: A Lecture at Naropa Institute, 1989” 98-9).

The influence of the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, particularly in his late work on color, appears, too, in Mayer’s emphasis on the exhaustive cataloguing of sensory and memory data. Wittgenstein’s writings offer a bridge between a focus on the grammatical and the phenomenological in Mayer’s writing.131 As Liz Kotz notes, an ambivalence toward language marked the postwar period in visual art (Words 223). In her well-attended workshops at the

131 Vickery notes the shared ground that Stein and Wittgenstein’s influence set for Mayer’s writing and for the writing of those who would become the Language poets. See Vickery 156.
Poetry Project in New York City, Mayer often included Wittgenstein on her reading lists, and a similar ambivalence to the one Kotz describes appears in writing of the period, as the work published in Mayer and Acconci’s 0 to 9 reveals. In Memory, Mayer undercuts a procedural constraint designed to capture experience (the documenting of one month in a flow of photographs) with a textual apparatus that diverges from the visual “data” of the snapshots, organized in a rational grid display. As Stephen Melville writes of Wittgenstein’s importance to artists in the period, “[W]hat Wittgenstein seemed to license was a certain practice of self-reference that could nonetheless count as rigorous, as measuring up to a more certain (albeit obscure) standard of objectivity […] more or less on a par with […] modern science” (Melville qtd in Kotz Words 303-4 n 17).

In the Studying Hunger Journals, a collection of the notebooks that Mayer edited to produce another durational project, Studying Hunger (1975), Mayer attributes her interest in color and the perception of color in different somatic states to Weiner’s influence (3). For Studying Hunger, Mayer composed a prose text similar to that in Memory, recording the effects of hunger on her experience of the world, experimenting with different color pens in her preparatory journals to record color hallucinations and other somatic variations in her perception of the world around her. In Remarks on Colour, a work unfinished at the time of his death, Wittgenstein explores the phenomenon of color and its relationship both to human perception and to language. Memory does the same in proposing the memory function as analogous to color, caught between perception and language.

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132 See Kane All Poets Welcome 188.

133 Weiner’s “clair-style” hallucinations of words were preceded by an early period of color hallucinations, detailed in The Fast, which I discuss in my chapter on Adrian Piper.
The first fragment of Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on Colour* sets the stakes for the way in which we express sensory phenomena in language. He begins, “A language-game: Report whether a certain body is lighter or darker than another. – But now there’s a related one: State the relationship between the lightness of certain shades of colour […] The form of the propositions in both language-games is the same: ‘X is lighter than Y’” (2e). In other words, the two language-games produce a similar syntax. But, as Wittgenstein observes, the first game produces a contingent, “temporal” relationship between external objects while the second produces a “timeless” internal relationship fundamental to the colors themselves. In a passage in the book edition of *Memory*, in which Mayer recounts sharing some of her photo slides with friends, Mayer writes, “[…] & pinned it to a sample of hunger eating the colors of a line-up of words” (22). The seeming non sequitur breaks the syntax and semantic meaning of what precedes the ampersand in the text. Color in the images inspires an irruption of desire – “hunger” – in the text: both the line-up of the images in the slide projector and the line-up, or syntax, of words in the text stall for a moment as Mayer interjects a hallucinatory, synesthetic clause into the flow of conversation she recounts. The technological conditions that create the images – the projector in front of which Mayer writes – allegorize this temporal/timeless split, as well. The projector’s carousel orders the photographs in a temporal chain but the volume of images and their unrelenting flow also make Mayer’s memories seem atemporal, or timeless.

Despite the ordered syntax of his two language-games, Wittgenstein later confesses, “For here (when I consider colours, for example) there is merely an inability to bring the concepts into some kind of order. We stand there like the ox in front of the newly-painted stall door” (16e). The translation of the sensory experience of color into a system fails for Wittgenstein, and leaves him feeling like a proverbial dumb beast. Mayer’s reaction to this difficulty is, if not more
optimistic, more playful: if she cannot express an ordered relationship of colors to one another in language, then she will eat them, substituting the dumb stare of Wittgenstein’s ox for the embodied, instinctual impulses related to hunger. When poet Dorothea Lasky writes about color in her essay “What Is Color in Poetry,” she proposes, “Perhaps when we connect color to language, to sound, in the space of a poem we reconnect and resist what [André] Breton has named the tragic bifurcation of the so-called real and dream worlds that happens to all adults” (360). For Lasky, this reconnection that happens by way of the colorized poem creates a shared formal space for the experience of reading a poem. Lasky’s description of the color function in poetry recalls Mayer’s own expression of hunger in the phrase “eating the colors of a line-up of words,” as well as the temporal distortions of both Mayer’s text and Wittgenstein’s two language-games. Lasky writes, “Perhaps to name a letter is to name a color, too; is to set a finite progression of colors and letters and things that fold upon each other in the voraciously eating vortex of time” (360). In Memory, Mayer’s text offers an example of Lasky’s argument that the use of color in poetry creates a shared field of reference for readers of a text, but Memory makes Lasky’s argument less ecumenical than it reads at first. The shared field is one of desire and conflict, internal and external, as reader and writer attempt to reconcile the experience of color with the use of language.

Mayer’s use of color, while creating a space of desire and conflict shared by reader and writer, serves neither scientific data nor a romantic notion of poetic expression to the exclusion of the other. As Stephens argues, “Mayer refuses to privilege one kind of memory (personal/expressive) over another (public/restrained) […] Mayer’s memory projects refuse strict chronology, just as they refuse to assign hierarchical importance to individual memories” (126). The durational nature of Mayer’s performance opens her text to both kinds of memory,
just as it opens it to expressive and non-expressive modes of writing. The most repetitive color passages in the book edition of Memory reproduce what Sianne Ngai has described as “stuplimity,” or an affect attributable to texts that challenge the reader with a mixture of boredom and the sublime, which might be understood in the vocabulary of Wittgenstein’s two color language-games as a mixture of the temporal and the timeless.134 Stephens’ further observation that Mayer resists “accumulating data” in a stance that subverts both the chronology and hierarchy of memory finds a chromatic analogue in her treatment of color and syntax.

A passage in the July 11 entry in Memory exemplifies both Mayer’s subversion of “accumulating data” as well as her investment in the “stuplime” effects of the use of color. She begins the concluding passage of that entry, “there are so many ways of predicting the time there are ways of remembering it are there more ways of remembering it: yellow cover, red cigarette pack, white ashtray, grey green film, silver cans, yellow bag, blue chairs, golden reels […]” (50). The passage continues with this list of objects modified by color adjectives for six more lines of prose, including approximately thirty-six more objects in the list and emphasizing the durational challenge to both the writer as she who records and remembers the experience of a specific day but also to the reader who reads such a dense passage. Ngai, in her argument about the “stuplime” as an affective category, points to Stein’s writing as an example of its effects, and this passage from Mayer recalls Stein’s description of her poetics as one in which she “caresses” nouns, especially in its concluding phrases: “orange light, white light green plant, red & white milk: some things are worn or faded” (50).

134 Daniel Kane notes the similar affective response to audiences listening to Mayer’s friend Clark Coolidge read his book Polaroid (1976) for two hours at the Paula Cooper Gallery. Maggie Nelson draws a parallel between the boredom of reading Memory and that found in a work, such as Warhol’s Sleep (1963). See Kane All Poets 189 and Nelson Women 104.
The passage cited above highlights the multimedia nature of Memory. Though to this point I have largely discussed the textual use of color in the 1975 book edition of the project, the list of objects modified by colors cited above makes reference to the earlier iteration of the project as a photographic and sound installation. The concatenation of objects and their colors are one way of remembering the day, just as the photographs or text offer two other “ways of remembering it.” Indeed, Mayer makes explicit reference to the color of her photographs produced from Kodachrome film, known for its vivid colors. In a passage from her July 9 entry, Mayer again recounts a friend’s reaction to her photographs: “[…] this is what I said & she said, they’re really clear they’re really bright it’s pretty film & I said, kodachrome […]” (58). Color, a phenomenon that Mayer has tied to the composition of her text, and even to her desire to write it, now becomes emblematic of the materiality of the photographs from Memory.

If Mayer ties color to a photographic spur to memory, not dissimilar to Barthes’ punctum, in the slide show passage and formulation of “ways of remembering” cited above, she acknowledges the same relationship between her text and the photographs included in the installation of Memory. Recall that her wall text, cited above, referred to the photographs as “taking-off points for digression,” that is, as jumping off points for the work of her or her audience members’ fantasy. In another passage from the book edition that discusses a film Mayer was working on with Bowes and other friends, Mayer writes, “[…] three filters in a case on floor: red, yellow, blue, & a candle […] red with a yellow ball in the middle it looks just like the sun & next, pretty accurate color with a tint of green to it like a fluorescent, that blue & yellow […]” (80). Mayer’s use of color at this point in the text is complex, especially in relation to the emphasis on the vivid colors rendered in Kodachrome. The focused image of cinematic gel filters, designed to modulate the color of light during the filming of a movie, evokes a level of
detail attributable to a photograph, as if Mayer were referring to a photographic image in creating this poetic image from her memory and her *Memory* notebooks. In evoking the experience of looking at a photograph, then, Mayer elides the “pretty accurate” colors of a Kodachrome slide with those of the light filters. The photograph becomes a “taking-off point” for her work of memory recorded in the text, but the text also becomes more photographic for the reader through Mayer’s use of color. Both photograph and text are “ways of remembering,” and both writer and reader have a role to play in this act of memory.

For Vilem Flusser, a color photograph represents a higher level of abstraction than a black and white image. In *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (1983), Flusser asserts the claim that black and white images readily reveal their own status as conceptual images since objects do not actually exist in the world as black and/or white. As he explains of color photographs, then, “Colour photographs are on a higher level of abstraction than black-and-white ones […] The ‘more genuine’ the colours of the photograph become, the more untruthful they are, the more they conceal their theoretical origin” (44). Flusser’s argument rests on his observation that green grass in a photograph develops out of an idealized concept of green that is reproduced, in turn, by a chemical process, setting it at a further remove from the real than the gray of a black and white image, which does not attempt to mask the technical conditions of the image’s making. In a similar argument in “Rhetoric of the Image,” Roland Barthes argues that color naturalizes the ideologies that encode a photograph. In an advertisement for pasta, in his example, the colors yellow, green, and red evoke “italianicity,” a quality of Italianness that seems natural but that requires a specific reading of the signs of this quality in the image and of the image as indexical proof (34).
When Mayer calls the green produced by blue and yellow light filters “pretty accurate” in the 1975 text of Memory, she not only partially elides the gap between text and photographic image in the mind of the reader, but she also naturalizes the abstraction described by Flusser as “accurate” rather than “highly abstract” or “artificial,” or as “theoretical” in origin. However, as Kotz notes in her essay on Memory, the colors of Mayer’s photographs are often “shifted,” either too blue or too red as Kotz explains, and so subversive to notions of realism in these images at the same time (“Why Memory”). Indeed, Mayer’s project “straddles and disrupts,” in Kotz’s words, received notions of Conceptual art history, and as I argue, theories of photography roughly contemporary to Memory’s creation.

Flusser’s theory of the photograph parallels claims that Barthes puts forth in the essay “The Photographic Message.” Like Barthes, Flusser refuses the notion of a photograph as purely denotative in favor of the connotative richness and instability of these images. In “The Photographic Message,” Bathes describes the “photographic paradox” as “the co-existence of two messages, the one without a code (the photographic analogue), the other with a code (the ‘art,’ or the treatment, or the ‘writing,’ or the rhetoric of the photograph” (19). For Flusser, the abstraction that “genuine” colors introduce into the photograph reveals the same. In his words, “[The other elements of photographs] all represent transcoded concepts that claim to have been reflected automatically from the world onto the surface” (44). Like Barthes’ systems of denotation and connotation in the image, the photograph as described by Flusser also demands that the viewer “decode” it.

Flusser argues that photographs, as a subset of what he terms “technical images,” are the products of apparatuses, of which cameras are a prototype. Recalling Michel Foucault’s theory of the apparatuses (dispositifs) that subject individuals to disciplinary power, Flusser’s camera-
as-apparatus manipulates and reorders information through the cameras program. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault tracks the development of the disciplines as a way of organizing power to produce knowledge. From amongst various institutions, including mental health institutions, prisons, and the academic disciplines, he explores the example of the eighteenth century French military and its grooming of a docile body as subject to this disciplinary power. The history of the disciplines that Foucault traces applies as well to his later *History of Sexuality*, in which he discusses an “apparatus of sexuality.” According to Foucault, in an interview about the *History*, the apparatus is “a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid” (194). “Discipline” resonates with the scientific and academic disciplines that produce specialized fields of knowledge through their specific apparatuses as well as with the corporal discipline that produced the ideal French soldier.

Similarly, Flusser argues that the camera apparatus is programmed to produce certain kinds of images. He writes that photographers “are pursuing new possibilities of producing information and evaluating the photographic program” (26). Here, Flusser makes the distinction between informative and redundant images clear: a camera’s program produces a finite number of possible photographs. Those that present a new possibility are informative; those that present a known possibility are redundant, and often the result of “taking snapshots” (26). Whereas Barthes’ early writings on photography emphasize the levels of cultural codes that can be found to decode the photograph, Flusser here emphasizes the information produced by the photographic program. Concomitant with the information society described by Stephens,

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135 See in particular the chapter, “Docile Bodies” in Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 135-69.
Flusser’s theory turns the technical image into information. And, according to Flusser, in a move similar to Foucault’s notion of how one becomes “subjected” to a discipline, photographers belong on the inside of the photographic apparatus as a functionary, rather than a master, of that apparatus (27).

Flusser’s apparatus represents a special kind of tool, one that makes the human being function, rather than vice versa, and one that simulates a bodily organ, as a camera does the human eye. Thus, Flusser can state, “[L]anguage is not an apparatus […] Nevertheless, language can nowadays be ‘apparatusized’: ‘Word processors’ can replace writers” (28). Though Mayer’s Memory does not go as far as Flusser’s word processor in its exploration of an automatic (or automated) text, Mayer does situate the reader-viewer, herself as writer, and language in the space of an apparatus. The flow of language in Memory, however, is more in keeping with the kind of image flow Mayer offers in the photographic installation of the project. Both language and image hew closer to the information-impoverished redundancy of the snapshot, as Flusser describes it.

If the box of the camera provides a space for the activation of a program designed to produce information (informative images) in Flusser’s theory, then Mayer’s installation makes an analogy between the box of the camera and the box of the gallery. As in Foucault’s definition, the apparatus includes architecture and laws, the said and the unsaid, the material and the discursive. In Mayer’s project, which creates memory images from photographic ones, the architectural space of the Greene Street loft, with the speakers installed for the installation, is part of this apparatus, as is the viewer who enters into the space. Information entered into the camera’s black box results in a photographic image; information entered into the installation
results in a memory.\textsuperscript{136} Between the images and audio recording of the installation, the viewer processes Mayer’s \textit{Memory} through the mechanisms of his or her own memory.

As in the text of \textit{Memory}, the installation stages the spur to memory as the linchpin of the project. As Kotz observes of \textit{Memory}, “Everything is specific, and yet also, in its way, generic, selections from a world of experiences and appearances that somehow feel familiar” (“Why Memory”). The familiar feeling that Kotz identifies in looking at images from the project recalls the affectively charged “ways of remembering” that Mayer associates with colors in the text. But, in this case, it is not only Mayer as artist who is induced into a process of memory but the viewer, too, who finds something familiar for herself in the images. What’s more, the photographs in the installation, as well as one from the cover of the book edition, included images of Mayer, implicating other photographers and a collaborative work exceeding the authorial control of Mayer’s signature or the gestural control of Mayer’s photographing body (Fig. 5.4). In chapter three, I discussed Margaret Olin’s theory of the “performative index,” which accounts for the displacement of the photographic spur to memory (Barthes’ punctum) from one image to another. In \textit{Memory}, the work of displacement overlays the photographic image and the textual image of the audio recording onto the memory-image that develops in the mind of the viewer.\textsuperscript{137} The \textit{Memory} installation displaces the work of memory from artist to

\textsuperscript{136} Referring to the use of dialogue and repetition in a later work by Mayer, \textit{The Desires of Mothers to Please Others in Letters}, Vickery offers another possible image for this space: an echo chamber. In \textit{Memory}, the echo chamber takes shape through the rebound of image, text, and the work of reading and viewing. See Vickery 161.

\textsuperscript{137} In a 2016 Poetry Foundation talk, Mayer recounts how as a young artist without money to develop film, she and other friends would take imaginary photographs by selecting with a camera a frame for the shot and notating the technical conditions they would have chosen to actually take the image. See Mayer “Bernadette Mayer in Conversation with Jennifer Karmin and Stephanie Anderson.”
viewer, making the viewer a producer of a mental image and so subject to the input he or she receives from the apparatus of the installation.

Mayer’s project sets her own body, and the bodies of her readers and viewers, at the center of an apparatus designed to write memory. The Brazilian Modernist writer Clarice Lispector sets the body at the center of a similar endeavor in her visionary, philosophical-poetical treatise Água Viva, written over several years in the early 1970s at the same time that Mayer was working on Memory. In this text, Lispector situates her body and own experience of the world in the “instant-now” of time and in relation to the “it” that seems to bind together the phenomenal world and the world of language and poetry. Though organized in fragmented sections of prose, unlike Mayer’s text that reads in long uninterrupted sections, Lispector composed the manuscript for the work according to a stream-of-consciousness ethos not unlike Mayer’s in Memory. As Benjamin Moser writes in his introduction to the English translation of the work, “Clarice often claimed that she was a simple housewife, and in this formless, plotless conversation […] in which she types anything and everything that pops into her mind, that is often exactly how she sounds” (viii). Like the autobiography that Mayer offers in Memory, Lispector’s is also “plotless” and given to digression.

The title of the book can refer either to a fountain (literally, living water) or to a jellyfish in Brazilian Portuguese, and like the gelatinous image of a jellyfish, the self in Água Viva wavers between its maintenance and dissolution in the encounter with the other. The hallucinatory power of this identification with the other recalls Weiner and Cahun’s vatic poses. As Lispector writes, “You are a form of being I, and I a form of being you: those are the limits of my possibility”
As in Mayer’s photographic installation, writer and addressee, artist and audience, become confused; each can stand in for the other. Yet, this elasticity of the “I” marks a limit, as well, in Lispector’s passage, able to stretch only to the “you,” and not beyond.

In relation to the I and the you, Lispector sets another pronoun in play in her work: the “it.” Lispector’s “it” remains undefined and fluid throughout the text, set in italics each time it appears. Often paired with references to embodiment, both to giving birth and to being born, as well as to animal life, Lispector assigns the “it” an impersonal status in a key passage. She writes:

I’m myself.

But there’s also the mystery of the impersonal that is the “it”: I have the impersonal inside me and isn’t something the personal that sometimes floods me can corrupt or rot by the personal that sometimes floods me: but I dry myself in the sun and am an impersonal of the dry and germinative pit of a fruit. (23)

The syntax of these sentences, uninterrupted by punctuation where such punctuation would help make the meaning clearer for the reader recalls Mayer’s own sentences, simultaneously dense and dizzying. The merging of the self with the impersonal makes Lispector a harbinger of both life and death, of the “dry” dead fruit pit that is also still “germinative.”

Água Viva’s fragments culminate in Lispector’s envisioning of a monument known both in its materiality and in the memory of it. She writes, “What do I want to write now? I want something calm and without fashions. Something like the memory of a tall monument that seems taller because it is a memory. But I want to have really touched the monument along the way”

138 Hélène Cixous comments at length on the relationship between I and You in her important work on Lispector, L’Heure de Clarice Lispector.

139 Vickery locates this confusion of “I” and “you,” already at work in Memory, in the later Studying Hunger. See Vickery 163.
Like Lispector’s “it,” and like Mayer’s book edition of Memory, this monument exists between language and the physical, phenomenal world. Most importantly, this is a monument that Lispector wants to make in writing. As Kotz notes of the generation of the text for the book edition of Memory, Mayer employed a cut-up technique, cutting transcripts of her installation recordings into strips to revise and reorder the text, literally making the language of Memory a plastic material (“Why Memory”).

Lispector’s troubling of the divide between the I and the you in Água Viva plays out in Memory as the divide between writer and reader dissolves. The performative index that Olin locates in Barthes’ punctum has already revealed the first instance of a kind of writerly reading in Mayer’s work: “reading” the photographs that comprise the installation, Mayer composes her memory as a textual artifact. Two additional projects attest to the performative power of Memory, one contemporary with the installation and book edition and another from later in Mayer’s own body of work. A section of Clark Coolidge’s durational (unfinished) prose experiment A Book Beginning What and Ending Away (1973-1981) dedicated through its title to “Bernadette” takes up the work of memory. His prose record of his own quotidian memory begins with a sentence evocative of both Mayer and Lispector’s texts: “Memory is a voice, a voice of nobody” (415).

As for Mayer’s later work, the poet attempts to rewrite a section of Memory in “Bring It Here” (1989), further displays the power of her work from the 1970s to spur not only the work of remembering but the work of writing memory even if her new text ultimately fails to

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Lytle Shaw notes the inverse relationship in the period of the 1960s and 1970s between the “dematerialization of art” as coined by Lucy Lippard and the turn in poetry to a “materialization of language.” Both tendencies, in Shaw’s estimation, work toward a similar desired goal against the easy consumption of the artwork, despite their inverse relationship. See Shaw 156.
successfully rewrite the memories.\textsuperscript{141} “Bring it Here” enacts its own displacement. Set at one remove from the photographs, now mediated by the record of the book edition, this rewriting posits the text of \textit{Memory} as the spur to memory. Without the photographs to recall the events of that July, Mayer relies on the text alone to do the same work her installation originally allowed to happen. She writes, “[…] i think now without pictures that what there is to do seems perfunctory […]” (105). Yet, despite this perfunctory state of affairs, she continues and eventually writes a photograph back into the text:

\begin{quote}
as i said then and can still say now July 25th though it’s already begun begins again with Ed without his shirt on what a handsome man is he comma i never said that then not only that he is without his shirt sitting in the car and i took a picture of him with flowers arranged on the dashboard comma i can’t remember if this was before or after one of us smashed the side view mirror […] (105)
\end{quote}

An arresting moment, set apart from Mayer’s recollection by the “commas” in her text, sends Mayer’s memory work to a detail not captured by the text she is re-reading but locatable finally in the now-absent photograph she remembers from the installation. This showing of the performative index’s power, even absent the material photograph, is then undercut by a failure to remember when the photo was taken (before or after breaking a side view mirror on her car) or who broke the mirror.

This last failure to remember who performed an action, who broke the mirror, indicates a moment of displacement, of slippage between the I and the You that Lispector’s own text sets into play.\textsuperscript{142} A first displacement by the performative index proliferates as other “displacements” in Mayer’s memory and in the text. In Lispector’s text, memory would be able to be transposed

\textsuperscript{141} The performance of “Bring It Here” recalls the performance of Morris in the multiple versions of his \textit{Memory Drawings}. See note 5.

\textsuperscript{142} In another felicitous “displacement,” Mayer’s return to the 25 July entry marks an important coincidence with Lispector’s text, in which she writes, “Because at five in the morning, today July 25\textsuperscript{th}, I fell into a state of grace.” See Lispector 79.
into material, language displaced into a monument. Such a monument, like all monuments, makes memory public. Caught as it is between the I and the You, the monument marks that limit Lispector writes of as the limit of her possibility: an I that can become You, and vice versa, but that can go no further. Mayer builds and rebuilds her Memory, in its multiple iterations, on a similar shifting ground: between the I and the you, between materiality and language, between the image and the word, between phenomenal experience and the fantasy work of desire. Vickery concludes that “Memory was […] presented not only as a staging of the past but as a collective reenactment” (152). Mayer claims that in Memory she aimed “to create a space in which a person could be […] so that you could actually be in memory (“Bernadette Mayer in Conversation”). Mayer’s Memory, however, did not stage a reenactment but rather allowed new writings of memory, the only reenactment being the performative work of displacement encouraged by the encounter of photograph, sound recording, and viewer’s body.

To return one last time to the place of color in Mayer’s work, poet Lisa Robertson, describing pigments of color as “juice” in her essay “How to Colour,” writes, “Such juice is always psychotropic. We might say that pigment is that motion spontaneously produced by substance in conjunction with light […] This juice has a property, this juice appears to be connected to phenomena” (143). Color is a substance both phenomenal and of fantasy, both abstract and material, and as Robertson goes on to write, moves us across “affective” surfaces, like those of a photograph (143). Color marks our own connection as readers and viewers to the general specificity that Kotz highlights in Mayer’s Memory. In the book edition’s July 9 entry, Mayer wonders, “What’s the difference who’s in charge: when our experience is increased by the addition of observations that were future, down the road & reflections to infinity, but are now past […]” (55). Caught ourselves by the memory-making apparatus of Memory, as Mayer is
between past and future views of experience, we find ourselves spurred to the work of writing
and rewriting Mayer’s monument to memory as our own.
Chapter Six.
Incorporating Friendship: Collaboration and the Fold in Unica Zürn, Cahun, and Henri Michaux

In “Les jeux à deux,” a short 1967 text appended to the posthumous edition of her prose narrative *L’Homme-jasmin*, Unica Zürn lays out the rules for a series of games based on a nearly fabular interpretation of Vincenzo Bellini’s 1831 opera *Norma*.\(^\text{143}\) Zürn assigns herself (referred to as “elle-même” in the third person narration characteristic of Zürn’s most autobiographical texts) and the Homme Blanc (the “White Man,” a hallucinated being who inspires and torments Zürn) the roles available to the two partners in this game, those of the title heroine and Flavio. The Homme Blanc is one of two significant beings that, by her own account, appear to her through psychic means and exert a kind of mind control over her. The Homme Blanc corresponds to the influence of Zürn’s partner Hans Bellmer, and the second important figure, the Homme Jasmin, or “Jasmine Man,” to her friend Henri Michaux.

The rules for the “jeux à deux” require that the two participants respect the need for distance, concentration, and meditation, three conditions that mark Zürn’s experiences of the Homme Blanc and Homme Jasmin, as well. The first of the games, “Le jeu de l’incorporation,” delineates the process by which Flavio summons Norma’s bodily presence through psychic means. However, unsatisfied by her simple presence, and threatened by the disruption of his desire for her, Flavio must “incorporate” Norma by assuming, and consuming, the material substances of her being. Of the experience of being incorporated, Zürn writes that Norma “sent comme la moelle s’échapper de ses os, son sang s’écouler de ses veines, ses sens l’abandonner”

\(^\text{143}\) An explanatory note to the text recounts how Zürn received a book of the score to *Norma* from Bellmer. She used the book to create an artist’s book with her own drawings and the text of “Les jeux à deux” written on sheets of colored paper glued into the scorebook. Zürn often created such collaborative artist’s books from gifts of notebooks from friends, especially from Michaux during her time in psychiatric hospitals.
Though sapped of much of her power, and even of her physical form, Norma fights back, appearing in multiple apparitions before Flavio so that he has to drain his own physical and psychic reserves to be rid of each. The game is a dangerous one for both participants, and though it ends with the incorporation of Norma into Flavio (with her “occupation” of his body), both partners are now “blancs et légers comme deux nuages” (217). The conclusion of the game brings Zürn back to a familiar experience of being inhabited by other bodies who control her actions, thoughts, and faculty of artistic creation. And though the atmosphere of these games points to the romantic and erotic charge of Zürn and Bellmer’s partnership, incorporation occurs in the longer text of _L’Homme-jasmin_ under the sign of friendship, as well, in particular in Zürn’s life-changing encounter with her friend, Michaux.

Zürn’s text brings to mind Cahun’s emphasis of the duo she formed with Moore as well as the extreme duality, unto multiplicity, of the self that Cahun’s work exemplifies. Zürn’s concept of incorporation, however, makes explicit a form of psychological distress less evident in Cahun’s work. Born in the Berlin suburb of Berlin-Grunewald in 1916, Zürn had worked for the German national film company, been married and divorced, had two daughters, and published short stories before she met the German surrealist Hans Bellmer in 1953. That meeting initiated her into the great personal and artistic engagements of her life, living and

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144 Zürn’s “incorporation” perhaps owes its inspiration in part to Zürn’s experience of pregnancy. The narrator of her novel about pregnancy, _The Trumpets of Jericho_, describes her relationship to her unborn child in similar terms. Of this child Zürn’s narrator writes, “He who has sucked all the strength from my flesh and bones […]” See Zürn _Trumpets_ 3.

145 Mary Ann Caws gives a concise overview of Zürn’s biography in her essay from the exhibition catalogue _Unica Zürn: Dark Spring_. Renée Riese Hubert’s study of artistic partnerships, _Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, and Partnership_, gives an overview of Zürn and Bellmer’s collaboration. See Caws 41-6 and Hubert “Self-Recognition and Anatomical Junctures: Unica Zürn and Hans Bellmer.”
collaborating with Bellmer, most notoriously in the context of his 1930s series *La Poupée* (Fig. 6.1). A series of psychological crises confined Zürn to repeated periods of internment in psychiatric hospitals in France and Germany throughout the 1960s until her death by suicide (by leaping from Bellmer’s sixth-story apartment window) in 1970.

Zürn’s friend and French translator, Ruth Henry, recalls her first meeting with Zürn at the opening of the 1959 *EROS* exhibit at Galerie Cordier in Paris where Meret Oppenheim staged the second version of her *Spring Banquet*.\(^{146}\) Arriving in Paris in 1953 with Bellmer, Zürn met the Surrealists shortly after Cahun’s last visit to Paris before her death in 1954. As Cahun left the Paris scene for the last time, Zürn arrived to occupy a position similarly marginal to that of Cahun. While both Cahun and Zürn held great allegiance to surrealism and made important friendships amongst the Surrealists, the two remained somehow outside the official group – Cahun in her self-imposed exile on Jersey, Zürn in her struggles with mental illness and psychiatric confinement.

This historical *pas de deux, or jeu à deux*, between Cahun and Zürn also joins the Belgian Surrealist affiliate Henri Michaux to their games. A close friend of both women, Michaux served as inspiration to both, as well. Cahun’s portraits of Michaux, both alone and with her, attest to this friendship. Zürn’s use of Michaux’s texts as sources for some of her anagrams, composed by automatic means, only begins to explain the importance of Michaux to her life and work. In 1957, Zürn met Michaux in an encounter that became both the occasion for her mental distress and for the narrative, *L’Homme-jasmin*. Michaux, Zürn believed, was the physical instantiation of a being she had first met in a dream vision as a child, a man whom she named the Jasmine Man for the flowers that bloomed in the dream garden where they met. The doubling of Michaux

\(^{146}\) See Ruth Henry “My Encounter with Unica” in Hubert “Introducing Unica Zürn.”
and the Jasmine Man, a sort of husband-muse in Zürn’s description, echoes visual and textual tropes of doubling explored by both Michaux and Cahun in related works during the years of their friendship, from roughly 1922 until Cahun’s death in 1954.

Zürn’s innovative automatic anagrams continue the clairvoyant pose from Cahun’s writings and photographs and act as a bridge between Cahun and that similar pose taken up by Weiner in her “clair-style.” In fact, making clear the assumption of a clairvoyant pose, Zürn titled a notebook of drawings from 1963-4, “Oracles and Spectacles.” In these poems, Zürn turned language itself into a collaborator, allowing her poems to unfold through the recombination of letters in an original phrase or sentence that she used as her titles. Joao Ribas, in an essay on Zürn’s drawings, links the facts of Zürn’s mental illness to the performance of surrealist, automatist madness. For Ribas, this “performed madness” is crucial to an appreciation of Zürn’s works. Her writings and drawings recall Weiner’s poetic innovation of the “clair-style” in that they are “not a result of the process of mental deterioration itself but in dialectical tension with it” (12). Weiner’s “clair-style” went further in the resolution of this dialectical tension, refusing pathology for the unconditional belief in her “clairvoyance” that she demanded from her audiences. Yet, the example of Zürn’s “schizophrenia,” what Ribas also calls “the metaphoric modernist illness par excellence,” makes her work, with its telepathic structures and merging of consciousnesses, an important forerunner to Weiner’s poetics of received, hallucinatory messages.

In the novel Dark Spring, Zürn’s twelve-year-old girl protagonist swallows a portrait she had drawn of a photograph of a man who fascinated her. After consuming the portrait and becoming one with her vision of this fascinating stranger, the girl jumps from her window, committing suicide in a scene that eerily foreshadows its author’s own death. As Mary Ann
Caws describes the scene, “Ingestion, then, precedes the final costuming” (64). Crucial to this chapter is the act of ingestion, or of incorporation of the other’s image into the body of the artist, in a self-reflexive gesture that folds the other and the art object into the artist’s self. As Caws’ use of “costuming” in her summation makes clear, this act of incorporation leads to a performance that the artist inscribes into her texts.

In this chapter, I follow a parallel model to those that emphasize the fragmentation of Zürn’s work, especially in the anagrams and prose narratives collected in L’Homme-jasmin. In my discussion of narcissism in part one, I evoked the parallel that Rosalind Krauss identifies between the work of Cahun and Marcel Duchamp and that she illustrates as a concern for the fold in their works. In Krauss’s description, the fold brings together performed and reflected identities as well as the positions of viewer and viewed in their works (42). Yet, too, the fold occurs in Duchamp’s work where he turns his attention to language, to calembours and spoonerisms like the confusion of “aux mots exquis” and “esquimaux” in one of his moving discs (47). It is this rapprochement between language and sculpture through the figure of the fold that I pursue in Zürn’s use of anagrams in her poetics. Though incorporation implies its own violence and trauma upon the “host” body, my reading privileges the fold over fragmentation in order to reveal the ways in which both Cahun and Zürn make the incorporated presence of the other essential to their approaches to friendship, collaboration, and the performance of clairvoyance.

147 Krauss notes that Duchamp’s negotiation of the fold in his Rotoreliefs creates a directional reversibility, where, in those works, the patterning on the moving disc seems to reverse itself through optical illusion as the disc spins. Through such a paradigm of fold/reversibility, this double movement backward and forward echoes the critical parry of my project in this dissertation – that a collaboration might be convened that moves with directional reversibility through the history of the works, back and forth from Cahun and Weiner or from Zürn and Weiner. See Krauss 42.
Zürn’s anagrams first appeared in the volume *Hexentexte* in 1954. In a preface to that volume, Bellmer points out the violence of the phonemic, syntactic, and semantic recombinations of the poems, as well as the “alien responsibility” that the use of chance creates in their composition. 148 Renée Riese Hubert, in her study of the collaborative partnership of Zürn and Bellmer, analogizes the repetitions of body parts and reconstituted joints of Bellmer’s doll sculptures to the repetitions of linguistic elements and the reorganized syntax of Zürn’s anagrams (“Self-Repetition” 146). As Hubert notes, Zürn posed nude and bound with rope in Bellmer’s 1958 doll-inspired portraits of her (Fig. 6.2). Bellmer’s own artistic treatise, *Petite Anatomie de l’image*, draws the comparison between the pliable syntax and morphology of the anagrammatic sentence and the multiple possible articulations and disarticulation of the body (45). In this analogy, the joint’s dis- and rearticulation comes to represent a formal model for both Bellmer’s sculptures and Zürn’s poems. The emphasis is on that fragmentation of the body and the violent, forced angles of a new joint, or syntax. Yet, Christina Svendsen, in her translator’s preface to Zürn’s novel *The Trumpets of Jericho*, notes that Bellmer’s presentation of the anagrams conveys the self-interest of his analogy between her work and his own (xv).

In Saussure’s definition of the anagram, presented by Jean Starobinski, the device is a linguistic constraint that requires the writer to create a new phrase from all the phonemes present in an original phrase or theme, often someone’s name in the Latin tradition that he studies

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148 See Bellmer “Preface to *Hexentexte*” in the dossier edited by Hubert “Introducing Unica Zürn.”
(Starobinski 14-15). Saussure’s image for these anagrams of “les mots sous les mots” (or of “words upon words,” in English translation, as if heaped upon one another) evokes diachronic layers of text, or of one text hidden beneath another by the various permutations of the phonemes. However, as will become evident, the permutations of the anagram in Zürn’s work, especially those included in L’Homme-jasmin, evoke layers created by a fold that challenges diachronic or synchronic models. Instead, Zürn’s anagrams emphasize a turning back onto the self, literally a repli sur soi, in the prose text of L’Homme-jasmin. Yet, even in this “involution,” to borrow the term that Ribas uses to describe the structural logic of Zürn’s drawings, Zürn uses the anagram itself to incorporate other voices into her text in what she considers a collaborative gesture. Indeed, in The Trumpets of Jericho, Zürn begins her visceral, novelistic fable of childbirth and artistic creation with the movement of an unborn child (a literally incorporated body) within the curtain-like folds of her intestines (Trumpets 1-2).

Like Hubert who assigns a general importance to the influence of Bellmer on Zürn’s development as an artist, Victoria Appelbe argues for Bellmer’s crucial role in inspiring the development of Zürn’s anagrams. Appelbe’s exposition rightly makes this point. However, her description of the formal qualities of Zürn’s anagrams reveals an imperfect fit of analogies such as Hubert’s that compare the joints of Bellmer’s dolls to the “joints” in Zürn’s anagrammatical poems. Appelbe writes that the anagrams unveil (dévoile) a latent meaning hidden beneath the surface of each anagram’s original phrase. The description recalls Saussure’s exposition of the anagram but does not reckon fully with the figural terms for representing the formal processes at work in composing the anagrams. The anagrams may unveil, or reveal, a secondary layer of language, but Zürn then mines this original layer for its substances – its letters – in order to mix them back into each other, to fold them into new arrangements.
Less than a violent reorganization of language, or parallel to it, Zürn creates her anagrams as an exemplary form in which to practice the psychic fusing of the self and the other through what she terms “incorporation.” Zürn folds (incorporates) anagrams into the structure of *L'Homme-jasmin*, so that the folds of her poems serve as a model for the collaborative folds (meeting points) of the prose narrative as she describes the experience of others coming to inhabit her body and consciousness. Of the anagrams, Annie Monette argues that the constraint of the poems’ composition becomes a strategy of liberation from the kind of violence Bellmer locates in the poems of *Hexentexte* and produces a reversal of effect: the constraint no longer functions as an imprisonment in language but as an occasion for emancipation from this kind of imprisonment (47). Similarly, I propose here that rather than articulated constructions of rearranged linguistic elements built on the model of Bellmer’s dolls’ joints, the anagrams represent spaces of infinite linguistic folds that elevate a language game or poetic constraint to the incorporation of multiple substances and identities into the poem, recalling the experience of incorporation dramatized in *L'Homme-jasmin* and “Les jeux à deux,” as well as by its evocation of the scene of ingestion in *Dark Spring*. As Appelbe puts it, “[S]on oeuvre nie la notion d’individu en mêlant les pronoms” (30). Appelbe’s choice of the verb “mêlant” (from mêler, to mix) is apt for it contains the sense of folding one substance into another. Whereas other critics cited by Appelbe, especially Jean-François Rabain, who was also Zürn’s psychiatrist, emphasize the joint as a figure for Zürn’s semantic and morphological manipulations in the anagrams – and so, draw a connection to the disarticulated and rearranged joints of Bellmer’s dolls –, Appelbe remains ambivalent in her assessment of the anagram’s structural logic, if not in her evaluation of Bellmer’s overriding influence on their invention by Zürn.
The figure of the fold links sculptural motifs that run through the work of Cahun, Michaux, and Zürn to other formal structures and thematic concerns in their work. For Gilles Deleuze, the fold (le pli) serves as an essential figure in his revision of traditional metaphysics. In *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, the figure represents a process of transformation, or differentiation, of what exists. Instead of the same, Deleuze’s fold emphasizes difference as the grounds for his ontology. In doing so, he sets interior and exterior space – or what could be called “Différent” – in relation to each other through the fold. As he writes of his reading of subjectivation in the work of Michel Foucault,

> [...] le double n’est jamais une projection de l’intérieur, c’est au contraire une intérieurisation du dehors. Ce n’est pas un dédoublement de l’Un, c’est un redoublement de l’Autre. Ce n’est pas une reproduction de Même, c’est une répétition du Différent. Ce n’est pas l’émanation d’un JE, c’est la mise en immanence d’un toujours autre ou d’un Non-moi. (Foucault 105)

Deleuze makes the fold the model for the immanence of self and other, inside and outside, to one another.

Deleuze points to the privileged place of sculpture, of the sumptuous folds of a baroque work like Bernini’s *St. Teresa in Ecstasy*, in understanding the fold. As he writes, “The Baroque refers not to an essence but rather to an operative function, to a trait. It endlessly produces folds. It does not invent things […] the Baroque trait twists and turns its folds, pushing them to infinity, fold over fold, one upon the other” (*The Fold* 3). The fold creates a multiplicity within a unity, as Deleuze describes it, on the model of the labyrinth that folds in on itself to create a multiplicity of paths. The fold in the Baroque idiom, for Deleuze, benefits from an “unlimited freedom,” or, as he puts it, “Folds seem to be rid of their supports – cloth, granite, or cloud – in order to enter into an infinite convergence […]” (*The Fold* 34). Deleuze identifies Michaux’s work as an example of the fold’s extension beyond the Baroque period, or as the operative
concept that allows the Baroque to extend as a style beyond its historical moment (The Fold 33). In Cahun and Zürn’s work, the fold figures a paradoxical distance and incorporation for both artists in their relation to their muses and eventual artworks.

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In an early manuscript entitled alternately “Amor amicitiae” and “Les Jeux Uraniens,” Cahun intervenes in, and in so doing disrupts, the philosophical tradition of friendship as expressed in the terms *amor amicitiae* and *amor concupiscentiae*.149 Often reduced to “love of friendship” and “love of desire,” respectively, these terms actually refer to more precise divisions within the type of love they describe. As Thomas Aquinas, an important medieval commentator on the question of *amor*, notes in his *Summa Theologica*, “The movement of love […] has a two-fold object: the good thing which is wanted for someone […] and the one for whom it is wanted” (Aquinas, 1a2ae, Q26, Art. 4 73). Within this double movement of love, *amor concupiscentiae* (love-of-desire) denotes a love that takes its object for other means (e.g. the pleasure, sexual gratification) whereas *amor amicitiae* (love-of-friendship) denotes a love for the object itself. Combining the influence of scholasticism and Aristotle’s thought in his own work, Aquinas derives some of the distinction between the two terms from the Greek philosopher’s commentary in the *Nichomachean Ethics*.

Aristotle, in Book VIII of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, describes three kinds of friendship: that based on utility; pleasure; and goodness (204-5). These first two kinds of friendship,

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according to Aristotle, are less than ideal. They are based on fleeting or contingent states, ones that change with the circumstances of friendship (utility) and with the growth of the individuals as their natures and desires change (pleasure). The last kind of friendship, based on the equal goodness of the partners, forms a stable equation between the friends. Of this kind of friendship, Aristotle concludes that it is “permanent” and that “it is those who desire the good of their friends for the friends’ sake that are most truly friends, because each loves the other for what he is, and not for any incidental quality” (205).

The fragments that comprise Cahun’s philosophico-poetic treatise “Amor amicitiae” playfully upend the definitions set forth by Aquinas and Aristotle. In her text, an equality between friends remains but the definition of what makes the friends “good” has shifted. Instead of a system of ethics, Cahun suggests a system of aesthetics that equates friend with friend for their status as artist and/or art-object (a kind of breathing artwork that evokes the figures of Pygmalion and Galatea). As Cahun writes, “Mieux que l’amour, l’amitié est un art” (489). In this declaration, Cahun combines a Romantic ideal of the artist to an Aritotelian ideal of virtue. She elaborates, “Elle exige aussi la vocation native, la prédisposition, l’instinct généreux, le tempérament impulsive […]” Cahun prioritizes the Romantic tempestuousness of a poet such as Shelley, a fragment of whose poetry Cahun includes as epigraph to her text, and continues, “[…] mais elle demande encore à ses disciples l’exercice fidèle de son culte et la pratique de la vertu” (489). Here, the tempestuous Romantic spirit must be tempered by a competing rappel à l’ordre within the personality of the friendship artist. The friend must be loyal to a sacred cult (in the context of Cahun’s later Héroïnes, the Sapphic cult comes to mind) and to virtue.

Addressing herself to the friend at the end of this passage, Cahun reworks the Aristotelian equation of good and good in friendship: “Ami, tu poseras pour moi puisque tu veux me servir de
modèle; je te mettrai en prose afin de t’aimer comme si je t’avais fait” (489). As Cahun tells us, “la beauté” is the object of friendship. One friend acts as model; the other captures that pose in an artwork. On either side of the equation, one finds beauty, a kind of aestheticized goodness. Here, both partners serve their friend out of the recognition of “beauty,” which for Cahun transcends pleasure or utility as does goodness for Aristotle. However, written from a masculine subject position, this text also ascribes an erotic valence to friendship, subverting the division that Aristotle draws between the good and the pleasurable. And, in fact, Cahun chose “Les Jeux Uraniens” as the alternate title for the manuscript of these prose poem fragments, referencing the late-nineteenth century sexological category for male homosexuality.

Though the artist (Cahun) is a poet, the pose of the friend nevertheless evokes sculpture, and so the Ovidian story of Pygmalion. The pose and its translation into the self-referential prose poems of Cahun’s text leads to a unity of the two friends, artist and model, but one that connects their spirits and respects the discrete forms of their bodies. To explore the encounter of friend, body, and spirit, Cahun turns to the traditional discourse around friendship to introduce a third player onto the scene of “Amor amicitiae.” Taking up the received wisdom that the friend of my friend is my friend, Cahun puts this threesome to the test. She begins a new section, “Mon ami et son ami, nous serons si tu veux des héros imaginaires” (490). This friend of the friend, this third player, is described in sculptural immensity by Cahun’s narrator. The first two sentences capture him in a static image, as if on a pedestal, and the description concludes with him returned there, the narrator recounting that the friend will fear he is “trop idéal pour avoir une réalité” like Pygmalion longing for his marble Galatea.

As the passage continues, the pronouns fold into one another. Cahun writes, “Moi, je me cache en lui et te regarde par-dessus ses paupières […] Que suis-je sinon l’amí de mon ami?”
Lui, toi, nous, moi: the reflexive pronoun becomes especially pronounced in the culminating moment of this section. The reflexive verb might be said to fold the action back upon the subject. The equation mon ami = son ami = moi folds with it, incorporating the moi of the narrator into the sculptural form of the friend’s friend. The scenario resembles the narcissistic scene of looking, but the play of surfaces is different, here, focused on the sculptural form rather than the mirror image. Reflection in the story of Narcissus refuses the intervention of reality, or touch: the image in the pool disappears as soon as the water’s surface is troubled.

In a brief reading of the manuscript in his biography of Cahun, François Léperlier asserts that Cahun’s Pygmalion wants to become his artwork so that “Pygmalion et Galatée s’échangent, l’un dans l’autre – s’indéfinissent” (37). While this is true, the maintenance of physical boundaries between the two remains pronounced. Though the narrator does claim that he and his friend resemble one another like “deux mots frères,” the likeness is clearly described as spiritual (“par l’esprit”) and not “par la lettre,” or morphology of their forms. Cahun, thus, approaches Narcissus but rather reworks the Pygmalion scene to preserve physical difference between those who are physically similar (a play, again, on male homosexuality). The reworking of the story of Pygmalion privileges the folds of sculptural form and the relation of touch, the experience of folding one form into another, more so than the narcissistic mirrors Cahun will later deploy elsewhere in her oeuvre. Reading “Amor amicitiae” as determinative of later texts, especially the Aveux, subsumes the structures of Cahun’s Pygmalion to the “néo-narcissisme” she eventually theorizes rather than allowing the figure of Pygmalion in “Amor” to develop parallel to Narcissus.

Cahun figures the god of friendship as a sculpture in “Amor amicitiae,” a solitary and melancholic demiurge on a pedestal (494). The “dieu d’amitié” in this text reveals an intertext of
sculpture, photography, and text in Cahun’s oeuvre, generally. In this description, the god has his hands outstretched, recalling later photographs in which Cahun’s body merges with stone pillars on the property of her estate on Jersey, leaving only her outstretched arms and hands visible in a hybrid human-sculptural form captured in film. In a passage also marked by romantic melancholy, the narrator describes the friend’s rumination on time passed and his efforts to “faire revivre le temps.” In an ironic register, Cahun’s narrator reports, “Le temps, aux mains de l’homme, n’est qu’une machine à travailler; il s’agit de lui donner le plus beau rendement possible, la meilleure qualité de force par les moyens les moins coûteux” (492). The passage covers much territory in connecting the Romantic and Symbolist worlds of the text’s nineteenth-century influences to the modernism that Cahun helped to shape. Cahun presents time as a material able to be held in the hands. But instead of working the material of time, the artist (usurping the melancholic demiurge on his pedestal) works the machine that time has become. This machine is efficient, producing objects of “la meilleure qualité” by “les moyens les moins coûteux,” and the labor it performs is that of an artistic mechanical reproduction giving “le plus beau rendement possible,” like a camera. Working the machine of time implies a working of memory, a reflexive work that folds time and experience together to make them as beautiful as possible in sculptural and photographic surfaces.

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Time, then, can fold in both an encounter with the photograph and with a physical (sculptural) form. Deleuze writes that the new object that a geometry of the fold posits, what he calls an “objectile,” refers to a state of “continuous variation of matter as a continuous
development of form” rather than to a spatial model of a fixed form-matter relationship (19). This question of the temporal status of the object, again, drives a model of collaboration that, in this chapter, develops around the figure of Pygmalion and that connects various participants (e.g. permutations of Cahun/Michaux/Zürn, or of Zürn/Weiner/Cahun) to collaboration through the variation in points of contact that the fold occasions.

If the mirror recurs not only as a literary image and trope in Cahun’s writings but as a visual structure or trope in her photography, mirroring and the mirror image does not always serve the same kind of geometry. As seen in previous chapters, Cahun often posed with mirrors in a manner subversive to the trajectory of the reflected image. In a well-known example from 1928 that I discuss in chapter one, Cahun, in a checkered outfit, looks away from her profile in a mirror (Fig. 1.3). Though her eyes avoid the self-meeting of their own gaze in the mirror, the portrait captures her profile in three quarters view, so that her eyes do project an imaginary meeting point somewhere between Cahun’s real and reflected heads. In chapter one, I discussed the ways in which this portrait engages with the intertext of the Aveux non avenus to propose an opening to the Other in the structure of narcissism, what Cahun terms her “néo-narcissisme.”

I propose, here, however, another image of Cahun, one based again on the structure of a mirror image, at least on first examination. In this photomontage, created around 1928, a doubled, mirror image of Cahun’s profile emerges against a rocky background from a crease in the center of the image (Fig. 6.3). The image evokes the emergence of a face from a clear, reflective rock pool, in the image repertoire of Narcissus, though no water actually appears in the

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150 Deleuze’s term recalls Derrida’s work on the “subjectile” in Antonin Artaud’s drawings. The subjectile as Derrida theorizes it following its technical definition as a surface or support for painting is at once both of these things, surface and support. The subjectile can become both subject and object, neutral support or interested surface. See Derrida “Maddening the Subjectile” 157-58 and 168-69.
image and the portrait is vertically-oriented rather than horizontally as one might expect of an image of a pool. Also, significantly different from a double-headed portrait like Cahun’s 1929 *Que me veux-tu?* (Fig. 6.4), this photomontage sets the two heads, like those of Janus, looking away from one another. Janus, the Roman god of beginnings and passageways, is a fitting reference following Deleuze’s implication of time in the fold. The composition of the photomontage – the side of the image including Cahun’s body cut out of the picture before reversing the image and combining the two photographs into one – suggests that the two excised halves of the frame have folded in on themselves at the seam, or crease, of the axis along which the two heads touch. The fold at the center of the photomontage permits a touching of Cahun’s form to itself that resists the solipsism of a narcissistic image. The figure represented (Cahun’s face) projects itself out in multiple directions instead of projecting inward on itself.

Cahun’s evocation of sculpture in “Amor amicitiae,” as well as in her photographic portraits and self-portraits, tends toward an evolving multiplicity, like the one Deleuze describes in the figure of the fold, rather than the kind of involuted unity represented by her parallel interest in Narcissus. The Janus portrait discussed above and the *Que me veux-tu?* portrait both share a foregrounding of the head as a sculptural bust, a motif that can be found in her androgynous 1920 portrait where she poses in profile, drawing out the resemblance to her own father (Fig. i.1). The motif recurs, too, in a photograph included in Cahun’s archive from 1936 of Sheila Legge and Salvador Dali’s collaboration, *The Phantom of Sex Appeal*, staged in London’s Trafalgar Square during the London International Surrealist Exhibition, co-organized by a French committee including André Breton, Paul Éluard, Georges Hugnet, and Man Ray. For this

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151 Bellmer’s account of the image in his *Petite Anatomie* insists on the importance of misprision in the process of representation, so that an identity between multiple body parts (that is, a foot mistaken for a nose, etc.) makes the image the synthesis of these two images realized together. See Bellmer *Petite* 60.
Surrealist happening, Legge wandered around the square, wearing a long white dress and arm-length gloves, her head covered by a hive of paper roses. In the iconic photograph of Legge, she appears in a hieratic pose with a pigeon perched on her arm, as if she were a statue herself (Fig. 6.5).

Cahun’s photographic staging of her friendships continues this sculptural motif in her photographic oeuvre. Most striking in Cahun’s framing of portraits as sculptural busts is her use of the double head, as in *Que me veux-tu?* Echoing the double, pendant portraits of Cahun and Moore posing with the mirror from 1928 the double head appears, as well, in portraits of André and Jacqueline Breton and Henri Michaux, amongst Cahun’s most important artistic friendships. In a series of portraits from 1935, Cahun poses the Breton couple together in profile, manipulating the image in the photomontage to double and invert André and Jacqueline’s heads (Fig. 6.6).

Michaux’s presence in portraits by Cahun, and specifically his sculptural presence, most clearly links photograph to sculpture to friendship. In an earlier series of portraits of Michaux, taken in 1925 in Paris, Cahun again constructs a photomontage organized around the doubling of Michaux’s likeness through the combination of two photographs in one (Fig. 6.7). Another portrait, depicts Michaux in a frontal view on the right side of the image. Behind him, along the left hand frame, a bronze bust of Cahun by Chana Orloff sits on a side table (Fig. 6.8). Where Cahun doubles Michaux’s head in the photomontage, here she doubles his bust with her own, emphasizing not only a “unity” in friendship but also a multiplicity in the artistic mediums that

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152 The bust appears, too, as a literary/sculptural form in Zürn’s *Trumpets of Jericho*, where the narrator’s uncle’s head is isolated in textual description. Significantly, there, the description of the uncle’s head as a volumetric assemblage of parts (ears, nose, etc.) serves Zürn’s description of a Zeus-like male head-pregnancy. See *Trumpets* 45-7.
convey this affective tie: the flat, two dimensional surface of a photograph and – by visual metonym that links Michaux’s head to Cahun’s bust – the sculpted, three dimensional surface of sculpture. Cahun’s staging of her friendship with Michaux in this subtle double portrait echoes the structures of the Pygmalion myth, especially as reworked in “Amor amicitiae.” Cahun turns the artist (herself as photographer) back into sculpture (the bust by Orloff) while capturing an affectively charged subject (her friend and future literary executor Michaux) in the photograph. Cahun, thus, enters into the photograph, as both artist and model-become-“sculpture.” In a prose poem from his 1949 collection La Vie dans les plis, entitled “La Statue et moi,” Michaux’s narrator attempts to teach a statue how to walk. In facing the difficulty of the task, the narrator, like Cahun’s version of Pygmalion in “Amor amicitiae” before him, becomes more like the statue, eventually becoming unable to walk himself (La Vie 60-61).

If Michaux marks one of the points of contact that allows me to fold Cahun’s work into his own and subsequently into Zürn’s in this chapter, it is by such doublings as those described above that appear in Michaux’s poetry and writing. In a prose poem entitled “Double-Tête,” included in the collection of wartime writings Épreuves, exorcismes (1946), Michaux writes of the psychological torment that might result from such doubleness, “Il en est bien embarrassé de sa double-tête et bien mieux s’en tirerait avec une seule. Une pour penser, ça va. Une à l’autre bout pour évacuer, c’est moins bien” (Épreuves 101). The two heads do not so much create an echo chamber as an open space between their two forms that allows a voice or a thought to escape: in one ear and out the other, except now the ears are on different heads. In another of these prose poems, “La Vie double,” Michaux writes of another kind of doubling, one in which a homunculus, whom he calls “mon ennemi plus fort que moi,” comes to inhabit his body.
Recalling the divisions, both political and psychological, of the period of the Nazi Occupation, Michaux concludes, “Voici où en sont les choses, les tristes choses d’à présent, récolte toujours bifide d’une vie double pour ne pas m’en être aperçu à temps” (Épreuves 107). The “récolte bifide” of “tristes choses” not noticed in time recalls the frustration of “Double-Tête” in its description of interior perception lost to an ostensibly exterior experience of space and time.

Between the two heads, and the two lives, those interior processes of perception and thought that should consolidate into one interpretation of experience are turned outward, lost in the spatial and temporal gaps that characterize the repeated forms of this doubleness.

This tension between surface and interior again haunts Michaux in Misérable miracle, his 1972 account of taking mescaline and other hallucinogens. In this text, Michaux combines reflections on his experiences with these drugs as well as drawings completed during his experimentation. This double text, composed of writing and drawing (some of it veering toward the asemic writing of Michaux’s other artistic explorations), takes on a description of the hallucinatory effects of mescaline and hashish (“le chanvre Indien”) on vision. And, though Cahun turns to the photograph to stage her friendship with Michaux, Michaux’s metaphors for these hallucinations express an initial distrust of photography’s surfaces.

Michaux’s presentation of photography betrays an anxiety that belies the psychological possibilities of the photograph already explored in the work of Cahun and other of his surrealist colleagues. Michaux writes, “La photographie, contrairement à ce qu’on a cru […] est cette représentation en function de la lumière, spectacle parfait, où vous ne pouvez entrer, quoqu’il s’agisse de lieux, d’objets, de personnes. Vous passez devant. Vous passez en revue” (95).

Michaux writes, in the lines preceding this passage and in a manner recalling Barthes’ notion of

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153 For an account of Michaux’s activities during World War II, see Nina Parish Henri Michaux: Experimentation with Signs 51-2.
an objective studium, of the details of a photograph – a desert scene with camel and rider – that attract his attention. And, as Barthes is drawn past the general description to the studium to the specificity of the punctum, Michaux is drawn to the cracks (“les anfractuosités”) in the desert rock along the ground, and he takes pleasure in the sophisticated “doigté optique” with which he notices them. Yet, the power of this punctum eludes Michaux at first. These cracks are the detail that emphasizes for Michaux the surface effects that he derides in the passage cited above, those that condemn us to only passing in front of (“devant”) the spectacle of the photo, never to enter into it.

Michaux, however, soon resolves this initial opposition of photographic surface and interior space. Hashish makes the surface of the photograph move, vibrate, and pullulate. He remarks of his newfound wonderment before the photograph, “Le Hashisch déphotographiant les lieux photographiés, vous pouvez enfin y pénétrer” (96). The stereovision that results from this “de-photographing” allows Michaux to revive his faculty of sight. If the cracks in the rock at first remained smooth and impenetrable, Michaux can now access them, along with the texture of their folds, by a vision that approaches the sense of touch. He reports, “Du regard, intense et émerveillé, je tentaculais les palmiers et les roches.” His “tentacles,” long sinuous appendages imitating the form of the cracks, supplement the visual surface effects of light conveyed by the photograph with a sensuous, psychological experience of the folds beneath the photographic surface.

The cracks in the desert rock in Michaux’s photograph hold the key to his reappraisal of photography under the influence of hashish as well as to many of the line drawings he includes in the text. Michaux’s hallucinatory experience of psycho-physiological doubleness in his description of the “stereovision” of his drug trips finds expression in the tight, vibratory folds of
the mescaline drawings, often composed with prominent rifts or furrows (“sillons”) that split the compositions in two along their center axes. Such drawings correspond to the textual description Michaux gives of his mescaline trips. Three weeks after his first dosage and already somewhat habituated to his hallucinations, Michaux reports, “Conscient, seul le sillon était là, le sillon de la fracture, net comme au premier jour” (85). The effect of vibration follows, translated into the tense compression of lines in the drawings, which might also be thought of as layers or folds: “La pullulation, après une apparente éclipse, était revenue, celle des infiniment petits, celle des infiniment possibles, celle des infiniment au-delà” (85-6). The cracks in the desert floor, and the bundles of lines in these drawings, evoke Deleuze’s description of the fold, as they are, at once, interior and exterior. Michaux’s description sets in contrast the two experiences of this infinitesimal scale, at once infinitely small as well as infinitely receding, or expanding (“au-delà”).

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The negotiation of interior and exterior states and spaces defines, too, Zürn’s first encounter with the Jasmine Man, in a dream at age six, as recounted in L’Homme-jasmin. In her original encounter with this dominating figure, Zürn wakes into a dream, passing behind a mirror in her childhood bedroom and into another domestic space that resembles her own. She tries to climb into bed with her mother, but rejects the maternal body before wandering into a garden where the Jasmine Man sits impassively, surrounded by blooming jasmine (15-18). As Caroline Rupprecht argues, the text itself places at odds the omniscient narrative voice of the text with the more unreliable perspective of the unnamed protagonist (133). In terms of the negotiation of
exteriority and interiority, then, an “exterior” narrative voice written in the third person confronts an “interior” voice more closely aligned with Zürn’s own experiences in psychiatric treatment. Zürn reworks the play of interior and exterior space represented by either side of her bedroom mirror for the text itself. As in Cahun’s mixing of artist and muse in “Amor amicitiae,” and as Rupprecht also argues, the narrative tension between the impersonal third person and the semi-autobiographical protagonist makes Zürn the artist an artistic creation in turn.

Most often associated with Bellmer and his influence, especially in the context of studies of collaboration, Zürn’s written texts, as in her anagrams, mine a sculptural intertext that the description of the childhood Jasmine Man encounter continues. The Jasmine Man sits in a chair in a garden. His mute presence and the psychological impact of the encounter with his form render the figure as a sculptural one set in a literary text. Further, the rejected maternal body that repulses Zürn and pushes her to the encounter in the garden, described in its fleshy, massive humidity, recalls the bulbous fleshiness of Bellmer’s dolls or his photographs of Zürn’s bound torso and legs and prepares the second, less repulsive sculptural encounter with the Jasmine Man. If Zürn’s abandoned attempt to find comfort in the maternal bed and body corresponds to the surrealist mode of Bellmer’s dolls and the collaboration they represent, the encounter with the Jasmine Man presents a mute sculptural presence in a more realist, if still hallucinatory, mode.

Instead of the sculptural folds of the corpulent maternal form, the figure of the Jasmine Man permits a narratological fold in the text of L’Homme-Jasmin. Years later, in Ermenonville in 1957, Zürn recounts the composition of her “Notes d’une anémique” and the description included therein of a man who travels within her. Of this man, understood to be the Jasmine Man she “married” in that childhood dream, she writes, “Je suis devenue sa maison” (17). Her first vision of the Jasmine Man folds upon this later stirring of his presence, a fold in time possible in
her text. Between her childhood and this experience in 1957, Zürn has incorporated the Jasmine Man into her own body, figured as a house, and so further complicates the play of exterior and interior space. And, then, “a few days later,” as the narrative voice recounts, this fold repeats itself, indeed completes itself, in the encounter between Zürn and Michaux, the physical double of the hallucinated Jasmine Man.

Ribas’ reading of Zürn’s oeuvre accounts for this kind of incorporation of another being into the body of the protagonist as a sign of involution in Zürn’s work. For Ribas, a surfeit of involution characterizes Zürn’s work, creating an effect of endless turning into the self, of consciousness of consciousness, or of the paranoia often associated with schizophrenia (22). Zürn, for her part in L’Homme-Jasmin, expresses her own belief “par expérience personnelle” in the possibility of one body inhabiting another by “une manière éthérée,” what she calls “un thème ancien” (93). In Cahun’s Janus-like photomontage, the artist refuses interiority by arranging her photomontage so that her two faces look out in opposite directions from the central axis of the composition. The image is not so much a renunciation of other double portraits in which the figure turns in on itself as it is an affirmation of the fold’s incorporation of the exterior into the interior, and vice versa. As in Michaux’s folds, interior space opens onto a vastness more often associated with the exterior. Deleuze describes the involution of the exterior into the interior as the configuration of a surface folding over on itself.154

In fact, in Zürn’s own recounting, the “miraculous” coincidence of the figures of the Jasmine Man and Michaux do not represent a turning toward the interior but rather inspire her to turn toward an inner opening in order to escape the gravity of the meeting with Michaux. Zürn

154 Bellmer’s psycho-syntactical theory of the body accounts for the identity between interior and exterior space similarly through the loop formed by the skin, esophagus, digestive tract, and anus. His comparison is to that of a “gant retourné.” See Petite 34.
makes this escape by obsessing over a numerological system of her own devising in which doubles – like the pair Jasmine Man/Henri Michaux – open onto infinity. In her system, the numeral nine takes on the highest significance and leads her first to its pairing with the numeral six, as its inverted symbol, and then to the numeral eight, a combination of the numerals nine and six superimposed on one another that symbolizes infinity when turned on its side (18-9). Zürn folds each numeral into the next until arriving at the unreachable limit of infinity. In relation to Foucault’s work, Deleuze describes the fold as it formalizes a relationship of “la pensée” to the act “penser” in terms of a similar infinite limit or infinite futurity. He writes, “Le dedans condense le passé (longue durée), sur des modes qui ne sont nullement continus, mais le confrontent à un futur qui vient du dehors, l’échangent et le recréent. Penser, c’est se loger dans la strate au présent qui sert de limite” (Foucault 127). The fold permits a transgression of a temporal divide between past and present in favor of “un temps à venir,” of a time to come that remains future, and so infinite in its promise. As Deleuze continues, “La pensée pense sa propre histoire (passé), mais pour se libérer de ce qu’elle pense (présent), et pouvoir enfin ‘penser autrement’ (futur)” (Foucault 127).

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The figure of the childhood house, the scene for Zürn’s first dreamt encounter with the Jasmine Man, recurs for Zürn in a later hallucination, one which she believes Michaux has sent to her. Sitting in her apartment in Paris, Zürn sees the initials of the real estate company HLM in the street and confuses these letters with Michaux’s initials. The hallucination of her childhood home, described as emerald green and transparent, follows. She is grateful for the vision, even
after it fades. But as the house disappears from her vision, Zürn recounts the experience of a new hallucination. She describes this second vision as follows: “Une grande scène vide, presque obscure apparaît, non comme le produit d’une hallucination, mais plutôt comme une image nette qui se forme au fond de son être. Pourquoi une scène, pourquoi soudain le puissant rayon de lumière qui se porte comme celui d’un projecteur au centre de la scène? Elle fait alors un bond au beau milieu de ce rayon et commence à être sa propre spectatrice” (122). In explaining the effect of self-regard that the hallucination has on Zürn, the passage comments on its own construction, just as Rupprecht argues that the third person narration of L’Homme-Jasmin creates the effect of self-spectacle in Zürn’s work (Rupprecht 133).

Yet, just as the relationship between artist, muse, and art object in Cahun’s Amor amicitiae collapses or folds the three terms into one, Zürn’s text confounds the same players: Michaux as muse or giver of the hallucination, Zürn as its recipient and scribe, and, finally, Zürn as an art or textual object (or, here, as performer) produced by the collaborative experience of the hallucination. The incorporation of the Jasmine Man into her body that Zürn describes in “Notes d’une anémique” becomes integral to her artistic process. In the accompanying text to the French edition of L’Homme-Jasmin, “Notes concernant la dernière (?) crise,” Zürn describes this type of collaboration as such. Writing of an experience drawing while under the telepathic control of the “Homme Blanc,” a combination of the Jasmine Man, Michaux, and Bellmer all in one, Zürn describes the fits and starts of artistic creation that she shares with the Homme Blanc: “Quand elle hésite à dessiner un nouveau trait elle peut être certaine qu’il va, par un nouveau signal, l’aider à continuer. Cette collaboration est pleine d’harmonie et le résultat de qualité” (174). This collaboration, then, represents an aesthetic ideal for Zürn. However, its creation is not without strife, and in a fit of anger at the ceaseless demands of the Homme Blanc, she destroys her paper,
ripping the image to shreds. The anecdote corresponds to drawings Zürn completed while a patient in the episodes recounted in *L’Homme-Jasmin*. Zürn understands these drawings, completed in notebooks and magazines gifted to her by Michaux, as collaborative works, as well. In one of these notebooks, Michaux inscribed the back of the front cover with a dedication to Zürn that recalls the infinitely folded interior spaces of *Misérable Miracle*: “Cahier de blanches étendues intouchées / lacs où les désespérés / mieux que les autres / peuvent nager en silence / s’étendre à l’écart et revivre… / Pour Unica / Henri Michaux” (*Pour Unica* 62).

Zürn conceives of this collaborative relationship as one based on a profound, even disturbing, friendship of devotion. On this point, in *L’Homme-Jasmin*, she maintains that her obsessive devotion to the Jasmine Man/Henri Michaux, whom a Parisian psychiatrist insists Zürn regards as a “saint,” cannot be reduced to love (“amour”). To defend this position, Zürn insists that her devotion has nothing to do with love but rather, “[…] avec la frayeur profonde et inguérissable qu’elle a éprouvée lors de sa rencontre avec lui, rencontre que la vision de l’Homme-Jasmin avait très exactement préparée” (88). Rather than assigning psychic rupture to the first vision of the Jasmine Man, Zürn instead locates “la frayeur profonde” in its repetition, in the moment of narratological folding, in the encounter with Michaux (“lui”).

For both Cahun and Zürn, Michaux comes to stand in as a figure for friendship, and so as a sort of muse. Yet, the muse also gives articulation to the interior depths that both Cahun and Zürn bring to the surface through the model of the fold. The doublings of Cahun’s photography of friendship hint at the later doublings of Zürn’s anagrams and narratives that fold space and time onto one another in the two encounters with the Jasmine Man. Remarkably, here, the fold incorporates other “bodies” into the body of Zürn. The fold comes to account, in other words, for the collapsing of the ideal Aristotelian equation of friendship in which good equals good in
Cahun and Zürn’s models of artistic creation and collaboration. As well, in its incorporation of artist and muse, artist and artwork, into one body, it reworks the surrealist conception of the muse as a beautiful, mad woman. Zürn’s realization of this *action* of folding one “body” into another, however involuntary through her experience of mental illness, presages the breakthrough of Weiner’s own clair-style in the early 1970s just as Zürn’s text is published posthumously in France and raises the possibility of their own *jeu à deux* of historical coincidence.
Chapter Seven. Absence in the Indexical Present: Adrian Piper and the Collaborative Work

In the photograph, a young woman sits on a New York City bus, her hands crossed politely in her lap and with a bath towel stuffed into and hanging out of her mouth, to comic and bewildering effect (Fig. 7.1). Another woman sits turned away from the spectacle, wearing sunglasses and a leather jacket with her back against the young woman’s shoulder. I have thought – like anyone who has taken a crowded bus or subway in NYC has thought – the same as this woman in her sunglasses must be thinking in the image: Thank God I’m wearing these sunglasses – as if the lenses could frame a barrier between you and the perceived threat posed by the other’s strangeness. At the far right of the photograph’s frame, an older woman peers over at the towel and cheeks of the first woman, whose eyes look over to meet her suspicious gaze.

That first woman is, of course, Adrian Piper, documented in the midst of one of her notorious street performances of the early 1970s, part of her Catalysis series. This specific image comes from the 1971 performance of Catalysis IV, documented by the artist’s friend Rosemary Mayer (the sister of Bernadette and then-wife of Vito Acconci). In each of these street interventions, Piper roamed in public, without announcing her actions as a performance or an artwork, while altering her appearance or comportment in some way to shock the public surrounding her. In Piper’s own description, she aimed to “catalyze” the audience toward a destabilizing reaction that could interrupt their quotidian states of business as usual. Her body, in these street performances, would be the catalytic agent of change in this interruption (“Talking” 42-3). And, to these passers-by, she must have seemed herself “distinctly unstable,” as John Bowles puts it, fittingly so for a catalytic agent (Adrian Piper 182).

This chapter turns to Piper’s style of confrontation and rapprochement in her artwork in order to push the question of collaboration pursued in the previous chapters to its limits. Piper
draws to the fore a thread that unites the work of all of the artists discussed in this dissertation, and especially in part two, from Oppenheim’s clandestine dinner party to the ambiguous place of the reader-viewer’s own body in the space of Mayer’s installation – namely, that to engage in a type of collaboration predicated on absence is to reject the collaborative gesture even in inscribing collaboration into the artwork. The photographic documentation by Mayer of *Catalysis IV* makes this tension evident. In the image discussed above, one of five that document this intervention from Piper’s wait at the bus stop to her literal rubbing of shoulders with other riders, Piper at once repels the woman sitting beside her while drawing in the gaze of the other, however freighted with caution and distrust that gaze seems to be. In *Catalysis IV*, the collaborative force of the performance radiates from an equally ambivalent object – that of Piper’s body as she styles her appearance to shock while remaining impassive to the reactions of those around her.

Born in New York City in 1948, Piper studied at both the School of the Visual Arts and the City College of New York, setting out on her dual track as artist and philosopher before completing her PhD in philosophy at Harvard University. First influenced by the apolitical formal concerns of minimalism and Conceptual art, a political awakening around 1970 instigated by student protests at City College, unrest over the war in Vietnam, and her own burgeoning sense of the effects of racism on her life, pushed her to develop a Conceptual style of art that could also account for her personal role as artist in the world. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, in such works as *The Mythic Being* and the installation *Cornered* (1988), Piper developed a critique of race and its discourses through an approach to art making at once highly personal and eschewing the personal. Piper diverged from the Conceptual and minimalist practice of artists like her friend Sol LeWitt, whose ideas in “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art” represent an
important early influence on her work.\textsuperscript{155} Her works for the *Mythic Being* series, for example, made use of autobiographical details in the form of material from her childhood and adolescent journals as well as the construction of the persona of the Being himself, a performance mask similar to the personae of Cahun, Zürn, and other women artists from the avant-garde. As Maurice Berger argues, Piper’s embrace of both masquerade and autobiography, devalued by her Conceptual art peers, places her work ahead of innovations in work by other artists by two decades (“Styles” 23).

Piper’s early life as a New Yorker, especially in the two decades of the 1960s and 1970s, connects her to Bernadette Mayer and Hannah Weiner despite the fact that she did not have close relationships with either of these women. The street actions of *Catalysis* belong to the context of late-1960s work by many artists, including Weiner, that were published in a special *Street Works* edition of Acconci and Mayer’s *0 to 9*, edited by John Perreault. Piper did work closely with Rosemary Mayer and though she and Bernadette never worked together, Piper praises the formal stakes of Mayer’s poetry in her 1970-73 essay, “Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object” (37). Piper’s use of personal memories to address a public audience, as Cherise Smith points out of the artist’s use of her journal entries for *The Mythic Being*, echoes the strategies of Mayer’s *mise-en-scène* of her *Memory* (“Re-Member” 50).

Like Hannah Weiner, whose pre-clairvoyant works were staged in streets, bars, or her loft, Piper’s interest in performance included private and public performances and actions carried out in those same types of spaces. Indeed, a formative moment for Piper’s questioning of subject- and objecthood in her artwork occurred while working as a go-go dancer in a downtown

\textsuperscript{155} LeWitt was, too, a friend of Hannah Weiner’s and his foundational text first appeared in *Artforum* in 1967. See LeWitt.
Manhattan club where she would lose her senses of self and of responsibility to a partner while dancing alone in a cage above the bar (“Kinds” 89; “Preparatory” 96-7). On May 2, 1970, Piper presented an untitled performance in a series of works presented that afternoon, and organized by Weiner, at the bar and restaurant Max’s Kansas City, a famous club in the New York art and celebrity scene frequented by Andy Warhol, amongst others.156

In this chapter, I focus, for the most part, on the period between Piper’s disillusionment with the “pure” forms of minimalist abstraction and the beginning of her Mythic Being project, roughly covering the period 1968 to 1972. Piper’s work from this early period culminates in an essay that first appeared in Artforum in 1973, entitled “In Support of Meta-art.” In this essay, Piper argues for the importance of putting artistic process on display in the work, so that the art object as an end product of artistic activity would not supersede the means of conceptualizing and creating the object. As Bruce Altshuler points out, the first-person form of this meta-art includes autobiography and expository analysis while also opening out onto the social and political contexts of the work (101). Piper’s own art writings belong in this framework of meta-art, and so must be read both as performative texts, or as parts of the works, and as straight documentation of Piper’s activities.

In this period, in works like Catalysis and the Hypothesis series (1968), Piper began to develop two crucial concepts – those of “catalysis” and the “indexical present” – that guide her later engagements with racism and xenophobia, and formal innovations in audience participation. As discussed above, catalysis refers to the artist as the catalyzing agent of an artwork, often a street action unannounced as an art performance. In Piper’s words, “Ideally the work has no

156 Max’s Kansas City was the subject of a 2010 exhibition at Loretta Howard Gallery in New York City entitled Artists at Max’s Kansas City, 1965-1974: Hetero-Holics and Some Women Too. See Tuchman.
meaning or independent existence outside its function as a medium of change. It exists only as a catalytic agent between myself and the viewer [....] This process/product is in a sense internalized in me, because I exist simultaneously as the artist and the work” (“Talking” 42). So, in the Catalysis actions, Piper, while wandering the city in clothes doused in a noxious mixture, or while taking items out of a purse filled with ketchup at a Macy’s counter, or while walking down the street in a shirt covered in wet paint with a placard around her neck announcing “WET PAINT,” aims to provoke by confronting her audience of passers-by with an experience that will catalyze a change in perception of the everyday space around them (Fig. 7.2). To emphasize the dematerializing of the artwork and its reduction to the encounter itself in Piper’s description cited above, Piper only photographically documented two of her Catalysis actions, the bus trip with which I opened this chapter and the wet paint action described above.

For Piper, the catalytic agent that sparks these encounters marks the indexical present. The indexical present refers to what Piper calls “the concrete, immediate here-and-now” (“Xenophobia” 247).157 The concept, according to Piper, originated with some of her earliest works, including the artist’s book published by 0 to 9 Press, Here and Now (1968), and the collaborative performance Meat into Meat (1968). Performed with her boyfriend at the time, David Rosner, Meat into Meat tracked the progression of hamburger patties into cooked hamburgers consumed by Rosner in nine photographs. Conceived to document a temporal process with the original title Five Unrelated Time Pieces, Meat into Meat instead became a performance about Piper’s relationship to Rosner, and so about the indexical present time of the performance (“Xenophobia II” 261). An important element of the indexical present, as seen in

157 Rosemary Mayer echoes this adherence to the physical presence of the artist and audience to each other in an essay on performance from 1973 in which she pays close attention to Piper’s works from this period. See Mayer “Performance and Experience.”
both Catalysis and Meat into Meat, is the here-and-now conceived of not only as a metaphysical moment in time, but as the scene of interaction (often antagonistic) between people. As Piper writes in her meta-art description of Meat into Meat, “This was the first confrontational performance I had done. Like almost all of those to follow, it involved both testing my personal or psychological survival and also defending it at the same time” (“Meat” 10).

Piper’s definition of the confrontational as requiring both a defensive and offensive posture in relating to the other – or in cohabitating with the other in the context of Meat into Meat’s domestic scene – calls to mind the terms of Roland Barthes’ investigation into communal life in his 1976-77 Collège de France course, How to Live Together. In these lectures, Barthes pursues a concept that he terms idiorrhythmy, or what he calls a “fantasy” that becomes operative as a concept once he encounters the word in texts about the living habits of certain monastic orders. As Barthes puts it most simply, idiorrhythmy refers to a sort of being alone together, or a communal living arrangement “[w]here each subject lives according to his own rhythm” (6). Throughout his lectures for the course, Barthes interrogates different kinds of spaces, drawn from his readings of novels, for their possibilities in facilitating such arrangements. Part of the concept of idiorrhythmy, like the confrontational push-and-pull of Piper’s early indexical present performances, requires distance and absence from the other, even in his or her physical presence. I propose in this chapter a similar kind of idiorrhythmy as the unintended, but constitutive, effect of Piper’s confrontational work, especially as seen in the early period of her oeuvre. I will also suggest that Barthes’ fantasy is a parallel one to the form of collaboration I have pursued over the preceding pages and chapters. Like the photograph, the here-and-now encounters of Piper’s indexical present include the separation, distance, and absence that her confrontational performances put into play.
Considered as a performance, Piper’s *Meat into Meat* plays out in private, for the camera, in Piper’s loft, a privileged locus for her work, as Weiner’s loft was for her work from the same period. Weiner’s 1968 *Open House* performance had invited friends and strangers into her home for a party-happening, but her earliest “clairvoyant” text, composed at the onset of her first psychic experiences in 1971, also takes place in her loft apartment. *The Fast*, unpublished until 1992, well after she had gained notoriety as a “clairvoyant” poet with the publication of *Clairvoyant Journal*, documents the onset of Weiner’s psychosomatic phenomena and details her efforts to mitigate their effects by avoiding metal, other people, and certain foods over a period of twenty-one days. The text functions similarly to Piper’s meta-art texts. Written as Weiner transitioned from work more explicitly rooted in the art world to her work as a “clairvoyant” poet, *The Fast* experiments with making transparent the processes of performing “clairvoyant” work.\(^{158}\) Weiner’s working notebooks from the project make this more evident. Entitled “Between I and,” the notebooks include rudimentary tables drawn to track the location of hallucinated “zaps” on Weiner’s body.\(^{159}\) In *The Fast*, Weiner translates this kind of data into the prose narrative of her secluded “fast.”

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\(^{158}\) Like Meret Oppenheim’s *Spring Banquet*, a feast evoked by its opposite, the fast in Weiner’s title, Weiner’s text deals with a ritualized scene of artistic and biological imperatives.

\(^{159}\) These notebooks are available in Hannah Weiner’s papers in the Mandeville Special Collection’s Archive for New Poetry at the University of California-San Diego.
Weiner’s tracking of such somatic data as where she felt the physical effects of her psychic experience recalls the rationalized presentation of Piper’s spatial and temporal experiences in her *Hypothesis* series (1968-70). Piper created *Meat into Meat* in the context of this series and the other installments, a series of documented “situations,” took place largely around her loft. John Bowles points out that instead of engaging the viewer in the work’s completion as she had in earlier works, Piper instead works self-reflexively in *Hypothesis*, interrogating her own role as the viewer (*Adrian Piper* 69). Piper’s essay about *Hypothesis* announces this break as one with her earlier “pure” conceptual work (“Hypothesis” 19). For the nineteen “situations,” Piper took photographs of her field of vision at random intervals and then plotted each photographic instance on a graph with two axes representing space and time, respectively. She then attached the photographs to the bottom of the graph, drawing lines from each space-time point to its correlated photograph. As in Weiner’s attempts to record the experience of her hallucinations in the rational form of a scientific table in her notebooks, Piper’s *Situations* also record her experiences in a rational form tracking spatial and temporal coordinates of her actions. Yet, unlike her later works and unlike Weiner’s autobiographical staging of her psychosomatic experiences in *The Fast*, Piper abstracts her body and autobiographical presence in *Hypothesis*. As Bowles writes, the appearance of Piper’s name in the materials collected in the *Hypothesis* works “[…] represents nothing more than a disembodied point possessing neither volume nor mass” (*Adrian Piper* 81). Though her stated conclusion to the project’s rationalization of subjective data was that “only human objects are also *subjects*” (“Hypothesis” 19), the embodied subjectivity of Piper as artist and object is not yet fully realized in the series, but will be as she begins to situate her body more explicitly in her work, as in her street actions.
In some ways, *Hypothesis* and *The Fast* establish inverse formal relationships to the same question of self-reflexivity. Though Weiner begins her text with a gesture toward Minimalist and Conceptual-inflected record keeping in her working notebooks, she produces an autobiographical text that follows a linear narrative without recourse to the supplements of data or photography. Indeed, Weiner reveals an anxiety toward photography in *The Fast*. During a difficult period of hallucination, she imagines herself as prone, her photograph being taken. Piper’s project, on the other hand, eschews the narrated autobiographical disclosures of Weiner’s project while embracing photography.

*Hypothesis* does, however, establish a vocabulary of private performances organized around the topos of the artist’s loft that Piper shares with Weiner. Both make crucial use of the quotidian elements of their lofts. Piper’s *Hypothesis: Situation #10* (1968) (Fig. 7.3), for instance, captures snapshots of a commercial on her television screen and much of the drama in Weiner’s text centers around her ability, or inability, to use her shower, sink, or kitchen utensils due to her heightened aversion to metal. In his lectures, Barthes refuses the possibility of idiorrhythmy’s emergence in the apartment, where focus on the conjugal drama of the bedroom makes unrealizable the fantasy of distance in living together (8). Barthes takes up “distance” as one of the operative terms in his lectures. He writes of the aporia of distance that he confronts, in which he is unsettled by other bodies, fantasizes a state free from desire and rules for attaining it, only to realize that such an extinguishing of desire would lead to the end of his desire to live. As he puts it, “If I can never touch anyone else, what’s the point in living?” (73). Yet, still Barthes must look elsewhere than the domestic apartment to find his fantasized state of Living-Together. Though Piper’s *Meat into Meat* inscribes *Hypothesis* in the space of a domestic, conjugal scene
with Rosner’s participation, the rest of her situations situate the work in self-reflexive relation to herself – like Weiner, in the relation of the artist to herself within her artist’s loft.

The artist’s loft, then, becomes a special kind of apartment, invested with desires other than the banal conjugal ones which threaten Barthes’ delicate balance of distance in Living-Together. The French minimal and conceptual artist Daniel Buren, in an essay from 1971 entitled “Fonction de l’atelier,” notes that the studio holds an important a place in defining the artwork outside the framework of the museum or gallery and specifies three conditions that shape the studio space as 1) at the origin of the work, 2) a private space, and 3) a fixed location dedicated to the creation of moveable artworks. In this essay, Buren also draws a categorical distinction between the European artist’s studio, or atelier, and the phenomenon of the American artist’s “loft.” The loft serves as the frame and place of origin for work by Piper and Weiner, and Piper’s documentation of her sometimes “private” loft performances is one facet of her experimentation with forms of dissemination outside the gallery circuit. The dematerialized artwork of performance can be transported outside the loft once rematerialized as documentation, in photograph or text. Briony Fer highlights the cases of Richard Serra and Eva Hesse as examples of the trend in the 1960s in thinking of the studio as a state of mind rather than a fixed, physical location (157). As such, the private space of the studio could exist as transportable (like the work itself) to the street or the loft apartment.

160 The use of the loft studio recalls Brecht’s opposition of the “dramatic laboratory” to the finished artwork, in Walter Benjamin’s analysis of the avant-garde dramatist’s work, wherein the experimental work of the theatrical space serves to effectuate a distancing effect, echoed in the Barthesian “distance” of Living-Together, between work and viewer. See Benjamin 100-01.

161 For more on Piper’s use of alternate media and performance in disseminating her works, specifically in the context of The Mythic Being, see Smith Enacting Others 69-74 and “Re-Member” 51-5.
Whereas Buren focuses his distinction of the loft from the *atelier* on the material differences between the two kinds of spaces (size, quality of light, etc.), the New York artist’s loft also evokes a communal context specific to its time and place. This is evident in a happening-inspired work like Weiner’s *Open House* but also in Lucy Lippard’s description of the Conceptual art scene at the time as a “studio community” on and around the Bowery where artists such as LeWitt, Eva Hesse, and Robert Smithson lived, worked, and socialized (“Escape” 19). In this context, the loft, both private and social in Piper and Weiner’s works, represents a site of contested distance. Piper develops her first confrontational performance in the encounter documented in *Meat into Meat*, and *The Fast* ends with the delicate separation between the public and the private in the space of the artist’s loft. At the end of her harrowing fast, Weiner recounts how for much of the period of her sequestration her loft door had remained unlocked (40). When a girlfriend of an upstairs neighbor peeked in the unlocked door, Weiner recounts how she had been unable to ask her for help, due to the negative reactions she had to the energy emitted by the woman’s boyfriend. As Weiner writes, “I guess I yelled pretty loud a couple of times when it got painful, I told her I was playing a tape” (40). Answering a neighbor’s pained cry, the woman enters the unlocked loft – as if responding to an illicit invitation – only to be refused entry by Weiner, who offers the subterfuge of a recorded representation of pain as responsible for attracting the woman’s attention, and despite her need for help in that moment. The loft door both acts as a site of connection and preserves distance, placing Weiner in an aporetic quandary similar to the one Barthes describes in his lectures.

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162 In the context of New York City poetry, an episode of Richard Moore’s public television show *USA: Poetry* featuring Frank O’Hara and the painter Alfred Leslie, recorded on March 5, 1966 and broadcast on September 1 after O’Hara’s death, sets up a chiasmatic relationship between the artist’s loft and the poet’s apartment. O’Hara visits Leslie’s loft studio and Leslie sits in on the composition of a poem in O’Hara’s apartment. See Moore.
In *Food for the Spirit* (1971), a private performance documented in notes and photographs, Piper poses nude in a mirror in a series of fourteen photographs (Fig. 7.4). As the portraits progress through the series, the image becomes fainter, Piper’s body and the overall composition taken over by shadow in the underexposed photographs. In the summer of 1971, while a philosophy student at the City College of New York, Piper sequestered herself to her loft in order to devote herself to the study of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, the practice of yoga, and fasting. As Piper recounts, “Often, the effects of Kant’s ideas were so strong that I couldn’t take it anymore. I would have to stop reading in the middle of a sentence, on the verge of hystericcs, and go to my mirror to peer at myself to make sure I was still there” (“Food” 55). In the quasi-spiritual experience that Piper describes, she devised a procedure “to anchor [her]self in the physical world” by taking her photograph in the mirror. Whereas Weiner’s agitated state comes on unprovoked with the onset of her visions and sensory phenomena, Piper induces her heightened psychic state. Yet, both Piper and Weiner document their private performances of mitigating the material conditions of psychic disturbance, and both sets of performance documents end in an expression of material exhaustion. Underexposure obscures the subject of Piper’s last photographs in the series. Weiner’s text ends with the rushed, exhausted syntactical elision of a brief sentence, “And so the fast ended last page” (43).

Piper and Weiner both set separation from their social lives as the condition for their loft performances. *Food for the Spirit* replicates this condition of distance within the performance in exploring the distance of the artist from herself. The distancing effects of the performance speak to the radicalness that Amelia Jones locates at the heart of Piper’s nude pose as a black woman, that is as a philosopher and metaphysician and as an embodied female subject (Jones 162).

163 To underscore the importance of privacy to this work’s history, Piper did not exhibit the work publicly until 1987. See Bowles 207.
Though Bowles asserts that Piper shows no evidence in *Food for the Spirit* of having understood her experience of Kant’s texts and ideas in terms of blackness at the time, he points to Lorraine O’Grady’s assessment of *Food for the Spirit* in her essay “Olympia’s Maid” as “the catalytic moment for the subjective black nude” and so as without precedent for considering blackness in the context of such portraiture and performance (Bowles 207; O’Grady 177). Piper’s historicized critique of Kant’s universalism and the yogic practice of meditative transcendence come together in *Food for the Spirit* to allow an exploration of the body as containing both subject- and objecthood. If in the *Catalysis* actions, Piper turned her body into a catalytic agent, or object, to create the artwork as an interaction between herself and an unwitting public, in *Food for the Spirit* she transforms herself into an object to be considered by herself as simultaneous subject, or viewer. However, Bowles argues that the photographs in *Food for the Spirit* can only fail to provide proof of the artist’s bodily existence since the photograph only documents the past presence of its object (212). 164 Though I contend elsewhere in part one that the photograph has the power to reach into the future as a performative text, as well as to index the past presence of an object, 165 Bowles asserts that such an understanding of the pastness of the photograph allows

164 Yona Backer points to Derrick Adams’s more recent use of iconic performance photographs by post-WWII artists in his own performances, for which he poses his body against projections of these photographs by artists, such as Piper, David Hammons, Joseph Beuys and others. Adams’s use of this photographic documentation challenges the idea that the photographic image attests only to the pastness of the event and the absent materiality of the photographed object, imposing as it does his own material body and performance on the image. Adams’s intervention might be thought of as rematerializing the body in the same way that Piper hoped her self-portraits would re-ground her study of Kant in the material world. See Yona Backer’s “Performance Trace: Staged Actions, Live Art, and Performance Made for the Camera” in Cassel Oliver *Radical Presence* 24.

165 Naomi Beckwith’s reading of perspective and point of view in this series is more in line with my interpretation of Cahun’s mirror photomontage in the *Aveux non avenus*, as I discuss it in chapter one. Beckwith points out that the audience takes on the position of the mirror image in the perspective of these photographs, suggesting that the viewer nearly performs a drag identity
Piper to continue in her transcendental study of Kant while problematizing the historical impossibilities it presents to her as a black, female subject (212-13). What’s more, these photographic conditions of the private performance bring to the fore an important characteristic of the concept of distance, that is the push and pull between absence and presence as its defining poles of social experience. Fully understood as a private loft performance, then, Food for the Spirit complicates the concept of distance in Living-Together as one inherent to the artist’s experience of self as both subject and object framed by the private space of the loft studio.

1970: The Saturday Afternoon Show at Max’s Kansas City

During one hour on the afternoon of Saturday May 2, 1970, thirteen artists take over the nightclub and restaurant Max’s Kansas City at 213 Park Avenue South, a popular hangout for the city’s artists, musicians, and politicians. Two of these artists stage performances that complement one another. Hannah Weiner climbs up on the bar, issuing orders and instructions to the wait staff working the floor. Adrian Piper inserts herself into the flow of foot traffic around the bar, attempting to obstruct it by stumbling around deprived of her senses. She covers her eyes with a sleep mask, wears long gloves, pants, and long sleeves, and plugs her nose and ears. While the performances unfold, patrons sit around at small tables snacking on the free meatballs and chicken wings that the bar serves with drinks. If Carolee Schneemann is present as she often is in the decade leading up to this 1970 afternoon, she might be waiting for a doggy bag from the kitchen, filled with scraps to take home for her dog (Sukenick 200). A busboy might be readying as Piper. As Beckwith writes, “[…] the viewer is now implicated in a three-dimensional tableau rather than simply visually engaged with a two-dimensional image.” See Beckwith “Dark Mirrors: Performance Documents as Bodily Evidence” in Cassel Oliver Radical Presence 31.
the backroom for the arrival of its regnant patron, Andy Warhol. In a brief description of her performance that afternoon, written long after the fact in 1981, Piper describes the scene at Max’s Kansas City as follows: “To even walk into Max’s was to be absorbed into the collective Art Self-Conscious Consciousness, either as object or as collaborator” (“Untitled” 27). Of course, I argue here, as Piper does elsewhere, that both positions might be occupied at the same time.

The untitled intervention at Max’s Kansas City was not Piper’s first performance in a bar. As a seventeen year-old, she had performed as a go-go dancer in a glass cage suspended in front of the bar at the nightclub Entre Nous. That experience helped Piper imagine her own body as an object in the catalytic exchange of an artwork as well as in the negotiation of distance between herself and her collaborative audiences. In two essays written in the early 1970s, Piper describes her awareness of herself as a “performing object” in her role as a go-go dancer (“Kinds” 89; “Preparatory” 91). Indeed, Piper makes her pleasure for the solitary space of the cage clear when she writes, “I really love dancing in that cage, mostly because I’m SUPPOSED to be dancing as well as I can all alone” (“Preparatory” 96). As Sarah Jane Cervenak sums it up, the pleasure of dancing all alone was the result of the cage’s “deregulated space” (121). Though performed in the public space of the discothèque, the glass cage afforded Piper the distance to experience this objecthood removed from the reach of her audiences.

Piper’s performance at Max’s elaborates on the themes and formal concerns of the artist’s experience as a go-go dancer, while continuing in the vein of the Catalysis performances.166 As

166 In the text of a lecture performance published in 1992, Piper explicitly places the Max’s Kansas City performance in the Catalysis series. She also incorrectly attributes the organization of the afternoon’s events to John Perreault, Weiner’s often collaborator and participant at Max’s Kansas City, rather than to Weiner herself. Perreault addresses the frequent erasure of his and
she had for the *Catalysis* series, Rosemary Mayer documented the Max’s performance (Fig. 7.5). Unlike the more private, loft-centered performances documented by *Hypothesis* and *Food for the Spirit*, Piper attempts to maximize the dissonance between the public setting of her untitled action, albeit in a context framed by the specific social world of the nightclub, and the self-closure and rejection of interaction that that action performed. Elaborating on her description of the unique social context of Max’s cited above, Piper writes of her decision to deprive herself of her senses in this performance: “In doing so I presented myself as a silent, secret, passive object, seemingly ready to be absorbed into their consciousness as an object” (“Untitled” 27). The terms of Piper’s description slyly echo those used by the critic Michael Fried in his critique of minimalist artwork, “Art and Objecthood,” and attest to the influence of minimalist “theatricality” on Piper’s own work.167 As in the *Catalysis* actions, Piper’s body as object should have catalyzed a reaction in the viewer that would have served as the artwork.

However, Piper’s performance at Max’s Kansas City did not elicit the same responses as her street actions. In a 1972 interview with Lippard about *Catalysis*, Piper expresses her belief that the separation of audience and performer ruins the piece in play (78). Instead of the surprised passers-by she had encountered in the *Catalysis* performances, the audience at Max’s Kansas City was, at least in part, a savvy group of people acquainted with the New York nightlife scene and art world, perhaps including other artists. Of the quotidian presence of such patrons at the bar, Schneemann recounts, “We’d come in, ten or eleven of us, almost naked, with

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167 In this well-known critique of minimalism, Fried juxtaposes modernist “presentness” with minimalist “presence,” which he associates with theatre rather than visual art. Piper’s art directly engages with the confrontation of an abstract “presentness” and the theatrical “presence” of the body and the art object in the encounter of audience and artwork. See Fried.
greasepaint and glue and the performance would be sticking to us” (qtd. in Sukenick 233).

Mayer’s documentation of the performance makes evident the lack of surprise with which patrons encountered the sensory-deprived Piper. In 1971, Piper explained her preference for performing unannounced as a strategy for breaking down the separation between audience and performer; otherwise, these participants remain trapped in a psychological configuration akin to “a stage surrounded by rows of chairs” (“Talking” 44). Performing at Andy Warhol’s preferred night spot, Piper encounters – or rather does not encounter, for the photographs document no physical contact between a stumbling, blindfolded Piper and her audience – an expectant audience. Taken on a city bus for Catalysis IV, Mayer’s photographs reveal witnesses either shocked by or willfully ignoring Piper’s behavior beside them. Mayer’s photographs for the Max’s Kansas City performance, however, show Piper standing isolated beside a table, where three young women look up at her as if an intermission at a dinner theatre had just been interrupted by the expected return of one of the actors to the stage.

The failure of Piper’s intervention to catalyze the kind of reactions her street Catalysis pieces had instigated finds its inverse corollary in one of Piper’s two My Calling (Cards) (1986-90), a later performance designed to be carried out in bars and nightclubs. In these performances, which Piper describes as “reactive” rather than confrontational, the artist hands out small, rectangular calling cards in social situations in which she feels an offense must be pointed out in order to “prevent co-optation” (“My Calling” 219). The first card is intended for dinners during which a guest, not realizing that Piper is black, makes a racist comment. Following the comment, Piper would hand her card to the offending party, printed with a text pointing out her racial identification and his or her offensive comment. My Calling (Card) #2 (for Bars and Discos) addressed masculine aggression and misogyny. When Piper would find herself alone in a bar, she
would hand this second card to men who continued to make unwelcome advances toward her after an initial, polite refusal of their company. The text of these cards reads:

Dear Friend,

I am not here to pick anyone up, or to be picked up. I am here alone because I want to be here, ALONE.

This card is not intended as part of an extended flirtation.

Thank you for respecting my privacy. (“My Calling” 221)

If the cage at Entre Nous provided Piper with the “deregulated space,” as Cervenak terms it, to be alone in public, the Calling Card #2 performances attempt to establish a deregulated space by deploying an inverted invitation. Piper requests that her male interlocutors cease to speak with her by handing them a calling card typically designed to invite conversation or to introduce one party into conversation with another. Unlike the Catalysis actions, or the My Calling (Card) #1 performances, these cards for encounters in bars make explicit the tension between collaboration and its rejection in Piper’s work. Piper does not hope to catalyze a reaction in My Calling (Card) #2 but rather hopes to defuse or short-circuit a reaction.

1972: Philip Zohn Catalysis as Singular Folie-à-deux

The collaborative tension made so explicit by the My Calling (Card) #2 interventions, arising out of the tense encounter between Piper and men who could not accept sexual rejection, reveals the role of absence at the heart of Piper’s performance works. Despite her investment in the indexical present, and her powerful construction of situations that work to dismantle racism and sexism in the here and now in certain works, Piper’s early performance works circle back to

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168 Further complicating the complex interaction of the desire for and rejection of collaboration, Piper has included cards for her viewers to take with them when these works have been exhibited. See the illustrated checklist in Berger Adrian Piper: A Retrospective 205.
the absence or rejection of a collaborative duo. In no piece is this made more evident, nor given more affective weight, than in a 1972 performance entitled Philip Zohn Catalysis.

Though its title places it, like the untitled performance at Max’s Kansas City, in the context of work in which Piper objectified her body to work as a catalytic agent of change for those who encountered her strange behavior, Philip Zohn Catalysis does not actively permit the collaboration of any actor physically present other than Piper. For this performance, Piper recorded her half of a phone conversation with her best friend Phillip Zohn, who died of AIDS-related encephalitis in September 1983 eleven years after the piece’s creation in May 1972, and then transcribed and performed it as a monologue at dawn on several street corners on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where Zohn was born. On the street corner in the early morning air, Piper dances between a public and private enactment of her friendship with Zohn. Like her earlier Catalysis actions, this one reveals itself to any potential viewer (who might be on the street with her so early? grocers opening their stores? cab drivers catching an early breakfast after an overnight shift?) without explanation, without the contextualizing framework of the labels of “art” or “performance.” But, unlike those actions, this one is a private memorial. At the same time, Piper performs, in order to subvert, a kind of “craziness” that the passer-by, the grocer, the cab driver, might assign to her identity as a woman of color.

Piper’s stated interest in creating the piece was to preserve a sense of the uniqueness of the friendship she shared with Zohn, specifically in the way they communicated with one another. As she writes,

[...] I wanted to incorporate my relationship to him into my sense of self as a separate individual. I didn’t want to become him, because that would have meant negating my relationship to him; I wanted my relationship to him to become part

169 For an excerpt from the recording, see http://www.adrianpiper.com/vs/sound_zohn.shtml
of myself, something that would concretely continue to exist and supplement my memories even when we were not in contact. (“Phillip” 57-8).

Piper’s description of her intent for the piece recalls the origins of Unica Zürn’s anagrams, whose composition was directed by psychically-received voices and presences which she also described as “incorporated” into her own being. In an interview published two months before the *Zohn Catalysis* performance, Piper tells Lippard of her experiments in addressing a monologue to passing strangers in the street without doing anything to frame her speech as directed to those strangers. Piper refers to this mode of non-address as an effort at incorporating these others into her own consciousness (76). However, unlike Zürn’s experience with incorporation, or even Weiner’s experience of her own clairvoyance, Piper wills the incorporation of her relationship to Zohn into her person.

If the voices that Zürn and Weiner incorporate and document in their artworks make present an absent collaborator, Piper’s strategy makes *absent* her collaborator. Piper does not perform a dialogue, nor a monologue derived from Zohn’s part in their conversation, but rather only her part of their phone call. Cherise Smith, discussing a component of *The Mythic Being* series that Piper begins a year after the *Zohn Catalysis*, identifies the structural role of separateness in a set of photographs documenting a staged mugging committed by Piper’s Mythic Being persona (*Enacting* 55). This separateness informs much of Piper’s work in the period leading up to *The Mythic Being* as discussed in this chapter. In preserving the memory of her relationship to Zohn, she leaves silent his part in that collaboration, marking a difference and separation between the two that the work cannot undo. With Zohn’s death a decade after the performance, this silence becomes even more resonant and poignant in its refusal to supplement memory with the voice of the lost loved one.
The silence of the lost collaborator – in this case, the friend – makes this *Catalysis* count amongst one of the private performances Piper staged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Despite declaiming her monologue on city street corners, the early morning hour of its performance and the absence of dialogue hide part of the work from the audience. City streets are sparsely populated at dawn, and the incorporation of Zohn into Piper, or the loss of his voice to unrecorded silence, hides part of the work from view. As Fred Moten argues, “Piper talks of partitioning herself in order to avoid accommodating people’s needs for an oversimplified other […] Like funk music (in her understanding of it), Piper is modular, syntactical, internally differentiated, polyrhythmic, high fantastical” (250-51). Piper’s *Zohn Catalysis* profits from this process of syntactical differentiation in its incorporation of a relationship – that is, of an entire syntactic system of an affective order – into her person. Moten asserts that this compartmentalization represents a kind of privatization, though he also recognizes that Piper often follows this move toward the private with a reopening onto the social (251).

The absence of Zohn’s rejoinder in the conversation-monologue that Piper performs invites audience response in ways similar to her later installation *Cornered*, which further explores this strategy. In *Cornered*, Piper speaks to audience members in a video message, explaining the legal ambiguities of her father’s racial identification, and so revealing her own struggles with passing as a light-skinned black woman, before asking the audience members (specifically white audience members) to reevaluate the likelihood of their own pure “whiteness” in the face of contrary statistics. The piece engages viewers through a play of interpellation and the shifting pronouns “I” and “you,” and the setup of the installation, with the television literally cornered behind an overturned table, dramatizes the compartmentalization that separates “I” and “you,” presumably as preamble to both parties climbing over the table to realize a new social
configuration. Walking down the street in the early light, would that grocer or cab driver have been startled by the first line of Piper’s Zohn performance? “Oh, were you sleeping?” In their own fatigue, would they have tried to answer her before she cut them off, continuing with an even stranger question, “I’m fine. Were you in the bathroom?” (“Phillip” 58).

Barthes expresses ideas of privatization and socialization similar to Moten’s interpretation of Piper’s work in grappling with the concept of enclosure in his lectures, where he conceives of enclosure as that which defines a territory as well as the identities of those within that territory (58). Like Piper, who found freedom in the enclosure of the glass cage as a dancer at Entre Nous, Barthes interrogates the distance between the social and the private in specific spatial paradigms. Filed under the heading of “Écoute/Hearing,” Barthes asserts in his reflections on this theme that sound can delimit a territory as much as other sensory phenomena (79). In this logic, Piper’s retreat within the glass disco cage is reinforced not only by the logic of touch (the solid barrier between Piper and her audience) but also by a different mode of hearing (as when Piper reacts differently than do her onlookers to the songs, lost as she is in the music). The apartment, according to Barthes, presents a more “masterable” range of sounds than the house. In the apartment, an inhabitant can attribute foreign sounds to a neighbor, and so naturalize them, or at least make them seem less threatening. For the house-dweller, all sounds target the owner (80).

These two domestic enclosures offer different models for Living-Together, one locked in the privatized space of ownership, and the other fit into the modular arrangements of renting and urban density.

The Zohn Catalysis, a sound piece in its documentation if not in the strict sense of its first performance, challenges the split between the private and the public in taking the performance of a cherished friendship onto the city streets. In its open-ended structure, the Zohn Catalysis invites
the involvement of passers-by, directing language into the social space of a street encounter, only to refuse any rejoinder. Barthes, to circumvent the dominance of romantic models in imagining a coupled pair, proposes a couple characterized by a shared alienation, brought together in a frenzied, momentary relation that he calls “Folie-à-deux” (67). As Barthes imagines the pairing, “Regardless of the motive, the setting, the excuse: it’s clear that the pair find each other unsettling, a form of mutual agitation of an erotic (rather than sexual) sort. In such situations, there can be no doubt that the group becomes the spectator. For a short while, the pair structures the group” (67-8). Though Piper describes finding great understanding in her relationship with Zohn, and not agitation, her desire to incorporate that relation into her own body and being indulges its own erotics. Piper transfigures the sexual relationship with David Rosner in Meat into Meat into the friendship relationship with Zohn, eroticized through her desire to incorporate it. The performance of the monologue and its silent, ghostly supplement structures a group response in its location in the street, making present passers-by the impossible spectators (impossible because they can never hear Zohn’s half of the performance nor come to know him after his death) of the conversation.

Folie-à-deux, the kind of frenzy that Piper creates in Phillip Zohn Catalysis, contests the presence of encounter in Piper’s “indexical present,” substituting for it a transitory mode of relation based in absence. While Piper’s performance of a “mad” or “crazy” black woman raving in the streets contributes to a constructed “madness” in her work similar to Zürn’s, a folie not unlike the one Barthes describes also emerges from the Phillip Zohn Catalysis. Like Zürn’s incorporation and Weiner’s clairvoyance, absence founds this experience of duality within the

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170 This is similar to John Bowles’ comment on Piper’s use of photography, a medium that documents the absence of the no longer present photographed subject, in Food for the Spirit to document material presence. See Bowles 212.
subject. In a roundtable commentary on whiteness, Piper suggests that racial categories (amongst others including gender and class) prevent full access to the indexical present. As she writes, “In time, all such aspects may emerge as ornamental corks dancing on the water, decorating rather than submerging the indexical reality of who and what we are” (“Whiteless” 65). Piper describes the indexical present through its absence in this essay, marking it by its own futurity in a time when such categories will be understood for the problematic social constructs they are. That time, as Piper recognizes, is not yet the here and now. In the present time of encounter – that present time that is ours, in which we continue to work to dismantle such categories – the work of collaboration begins with a fraught presence, an absent presence expressed in the “mutual alienation” of Barthes’ “Folie-à-deux” and Piper’s catalysis.

2013-2015: Participation and The Probable Trust Registry

In her most recent work, Piper returns to this mode of collaboration that founds itself in a constitutive absence of partners. The Probable Trust Registry (2013) constructs an alienated community out of the form of a legal contract. Enacted in several locations since its inception by Piper in 2013, including at the 2015 Venice Biennale where Piper won the Gold Lion prize for best artist in the festival, The Probable Trust Registry includes an installation of three desks, styled as corporate reception areas complete with attendants (Fig. 7.6). Piper invited participants to sign a contract at one of the three desks, asking them to agree to one of three terms: 1) I will always be too expensive to buy, 2) I will always mean what I say, or 3) I will always do what I say I am going to do. One of each of these declarations is affixed in gold

171 For a brief summary of the project at the time of the award’s announcement, see Kennedy.
lettering to the grey walls above each desk. According to the “rules of the game” set out by Piper for the performance, the exhibitor mails all of the signed contracts, or “Personal Declarations,” for each declaration to all of the respective participants in that declaration, as well as to Piper’s Adrian Piper Research Association (APRA) Foundation in Berlin. Signatories can only contact each other with the permission granted by contactee to contactor through the intermediation of, and release of addresses by, the exhibitor.

Piper’s performance instructions classify the work as a “participatory group performance.” Instead of the shock of catalysis and its particular brand of collaboration, participation requires the supplement of these contractual rules to initiate the audience into the work as participants. Here, Piper draws on the work she completed after her early experiments in Catalysis or in My Calling (Cards). In Funk Lessons (1982-84), for example, Piper created a collaborative, pedagogical environment in which she lectured on the history of Funk music and dance for largely white audiences, inviting them to freely respond to her lectures rather than passively accept her lesson before involving everyone in a dance lesson. As Piper states her intention in “Notes on Funk I-IV,” a retrospective essay on the project, “Dialogue quickly replaced pseudoacademic lecture/demonstration, and social union replaced the audience-performer separation” (196). In these dialogues, Piper replaced the jolt of collaborative confrontation from Catalysis with the “social union” of a participatory performance.

The arrangement of audiences into different styles of social encounter in Piper’s works reveals a split between collaboration and participation, in which neither functions as simply as antonym or synonym of the other. Jennifer Drake’s assessment that Cornered “immediately brings the audience into the performance as participants, willingly or unwillingly” forecasts the manipulation of this tension in Piper’s work that follows (228). However, the formal aspects of
the works that are “participatory,” that is the invitation to dialogue during a lesson or a set of posted “rules of the game,” grant the audience of these later performances an awareness of their own position within the work that Piper withholds, or attempts to withhold, from the audiences of Untitled Performance for Max’s Kansas City or Phillip Zohn Catalysis. As critic Chloe Bass points out in a review of a 2014 staging of The Probable Trust Registry at Elizabeth Dee Gallery in New York City, “trust” can refer to the confidence assigned to one person by others in a group as well as to a physical location, a repository for legal documents or other valuable objects (Bass). This “trust,” as relational object as well as sited location, at first seems to affirm the presence of the participants in the work – both to each other and to the agreement they sign.

However, the impossible task demanded by the declarations inscribes absence, once more, in the work. Participants will fail, and the social formation of the registry reiterates this future absence by way of failure. Each signatory will not always fulfill the reciprocal trust demanded by the contracts, and so trust will be met at times with absent trust. Similarly, participants, though gathered together by their names listed in the registries, go on to live their lives separated from their comrades. The wall of relative anonymity that separates them can only be breached through a highly regulated process that mimics the bureaucracy of a corporate HR office. In Barthes’ fantasy of idiorrhythm this kind of separation is vital to the viability of Living-Together. He presents the walls of cells in a monastic compound as one possible model for the kind of communal solitude he imagines (9-10). Yet, still, Barthes demands the physical presence of others in his fantasy of solitude. Piper’s collaborative works, at their most catalytic, substitute the presence of the indexical present for the absence that separates each of us in the here and now, however unified in working for a different future of more harmonious ways of
living together. Just so, the beginnings of the collaborative work in the fraught presence of
Barthes’ “folie-à-deux” requires a special mode of partners working together, united in absentia.
Conclusion.
Other Person

“J’appelle poème une forme de vie qui transforme une forme de langage et, réciproquement, une forme de langage qui transforme une forme de vie. Donc un poème transforme celui qui l’écrit, mais aussi il transforme celui qui le lit.”

— Henri Meschonnic

“Qualities not in the content of the work can be felt by a reader if the author has power […]”

— Hannah Weiner, “Other Person”

In the image, a woman, head wrapped in a scarf tied around and beneath her chin, wears an overcoat, like a raincoat but more similar to the heavier coat an English country gentlewoman might wear while traipsing about her estate, hounds rushing out in front of her. The detail that sticks, that returns my attention to the image again and again, that pricks like Barthes’ punctum, is in the woman’s teeth and what they clutch. A Nazi insignia. This is an image I have long looked at, studied well. But something in this specific image, the one in the browser on my computer screen as I write, prevents me from following that punctum into the fantasy of the photograph. The play of light and shadow is not right, the colors too saturated. And was not this image a black and white photograph when I looked at it before? Am I looking at Cahun?

In fact, the résistante in this portrait is not Cahun but the artist Sarah Pucill, restaging Cahun’s portrait in her own home (Fig. c.1). For a film entitled Confessions to the Mirror (2016), based on Cahun’s wartime writings in Confidences au miroir, Pucill restaged late portraits of Cahun at La Rocquaise by projecting photographs of the estate, taken by Pucill, onto the interior

172 The quotation is poet and theoretician Henri Meschonnic’s from an interview with Esther Orner and is cited in Chloe Laplantine’s study of the poetics of Benveniste’s linguistic theory. See Laplantine 13 and Meschonnic.
walls of her own home. The film still examples the performative iterability of Cahun’s post-war performance of her and Moore’s Resistance status, as I discuss in chapter three.

_Confessions to the Mirror_ is the sequel to Pucill’s first film to deal with Cahun’s legacy, _Magic Mirror_ (2013), which restages Cahun and Moore’s earlier photographs and photomontages from the 1930s and the text _Aveux non avenus_. In _Magic Mirror_, Pucill’s animation of the photomontages from Cahun’s text, set to the sound of scissors cutting paper, reinscribes the creation of Cahun and Moore’s images in the medium of film. Pucill, for her part, writes in the project description for _Confessions_ that “[t]he performance of following the trace of Cahun’s and the couple’s life and work is etched into the texture of the film […]” (“Confessions”). Pucill, in exploring the performativity (and not just performance) that such an “etching” inaugurates, reimagines Susan Gubar’s Sapphic “fantastic collaboration” of the 1920s and 1930s with the figure of Cahun now standing in the central place of Sappho.

Pucill’s engagement with Cahun’s legacy inspires similar questions to the ones that drive this dissertation’s framing of collaboration. Who am I looking at when I’m looking at the work? Whose message am I receiving? These questions are already inherent to Cahun and Weiner’s works, especially as outlined in my discussion of Cahun’s “neo-narcissism” in chapter one, as well as in the “clairvoyance” that Weiner theorized for her own poetics. When I look at an image of Cahun in the guise of one of her many personae, do I see Cahun the performer or Moore the director? Do I see myself – in the image, in the text? Am I seen – by the image, by the text? When I collaborate, is collaboration understood in its nominal form (the artwork as product of collaboration) or in its verbal one (the process as collaboration)?

These questions point to the exchange of collaboration, between two creating subjects (artists, writers), as well as between the artists and their audiences. Based on a similar model of
exchange, Émile Benveniste’s linguistic theory of enunciation demonstrates the way in which subjectivity arises in language. As he explains in “Subjectivity in Language,” the speaker assumes the subject position of the pronoun “I” in speaking it in discourse. What’s more, for every “I” that emerges in discourse, a complimentary “you” coalesces as its partner pronoun. This dialogic relationship in discourse puts the mantles of “I” and “you” into circulation amongst their speakers as one speaker addresses a “you,” only to be addressed in turn as the “you.” The use of these personal pronouns, and so the emergence of subjectivity, is a performative, citational act. Of their use, Benveniste concludes that “[…] it is a fact both original and fundamental that these ‘pronomial’ forms do not refer to ‘reality’ or to ‘objective’ positions in space or time but to the utterance, unique each time, that contains them, and thus they reflect their proper use” (219).

Further, Benveniste argues that the repetition of these utterances must correspond to the “present instance of discourse” to give the pronouns meaning and to confer subjectivity upon the speaker. In Benveniste’s theory, the present tense of the instance of discourse, and thus of subjectivity, is not an assurance of self-presence in the present tense. Kaja Silverman describes the discontinuity of the “I”/“you” exchange as characterized by fits of starts and stops, or as she writes, “In the space between two discursive events, subjectivity, like the processes which sustain it, falls into abeyance” (45). This abeyance, as a suspension of the instance of discourse, scrambles the presence of the subject to him or herself as well as to a “you.” What’s more, this abeyance opens subjectivity to its relational structure, passing from the “I” to the “you” across this space and time of the suspension of its terms. This suspension, this space of abeyance, then, becomes the space of relation and conversation, characterized by the temporary silence of the pronouns “I” and “you” that makes such a relation possible.
The emphasis that Benveniste places on the first and second person pronouns does not erase the third person from discourse, despite Benveniste’s contention that the enunciation of “he” or “she” cannot confer subjectivity on a speaker since they cannot be spoken by the one to whom they refer. All of the artists in this study contest this notion, especially Zürn and Weiner, whose autobiographical mode is one organized around the estranging effects of third-person narration. And, if the artwork can be imagined as a conversation, or as its own instance of discourse, performed for or overheard by the spectator, as Kathleen Fraser imagines the reader’s experience of the poem, then can that spectator be thought of as occupying this third person position with something akin to the agency of he or she who speaks the “I”? In this schema, the spectator becomes the “he” or the “she” tacitly ignored by the work, placed outside the arena of an exchange between “I” and “you” while remaining the constant concern of those speakers as their audience.  

In the first part of this dissertation, the imagined collaborative dialogue between Cahun and Weiner has this effect on its witness, the critic. As Cahun and Weiner take up the discursive positions of “I” and “you” in my approach to reading their works, I am left with the “he,” to eavesdrop. The artists and art works that I explore in part two, each reconfigure this relation between “I”/“you” and “s/he.” The documentation of Meret Oppenheim’s dinner party refuses full access to the critic; Bernadette Mayer’s *Memory* leaves the spectator suspended in memory between a work of imaging and writing that cannot be his or her own; Unica Zürn’s narrates an autobiographical self from the third person, leaving the reader at an even further remove from the

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173 This triangular model of subjectivity recalls somewhat the psychoanalytic model of deferred action that Hal Foster suggests for understanding the history of the avant-garde and its neo-avant-garde repetitions. See Foster *The Return of the Real* 29.
“I” and “you”; and Adrian Piper directly addresses her audiences while, at times, denying them recourse to respond to her address.

In the semitoitic film theory that she advances, Silverman relates aspects of the filmic work to the pronomial persons of Benveniste’s theory of enunciation and discourse. Silverman, relaying the tenets of a strain of film theory characteristic of the journal *Screen*, describes the reconfiguration of Benveniste’s dialogic model into a model that accommodates a third term. Out of a speaking subject (the production of the film) and a subject of speech (the narrative, or discursive element, of the film) a *spoken subject* emerges.\(^{174}\) In a seeming inversion of Barthes’ *texte scriptible*, the text now writes the subject who is the viewer of the film, contouring the viewer’s subjectivity through the effects that the film and its narrative has on the viewer. Simultaneously incorporated into and exiled from the film s/he watches, the spoken subject is, in a sense, written by the text that plays out across the screen. Extrapolated to the terms of my inquiry into a performative mode of collaboration, the collaboration sparked by the comparative study of two artists like Cahun and Weiner “speaks” the critic (as “s/he”) who discovers this impossible collaboration. Chloe Laplantine argues similarly in asserting that Benveniste’s poetics proposes analysis as an activity which does not identify the poem as object but rather shows that poetic language (“le langage poétique”) is that which transforms a subject (“transforme un sujet”) (17). In the example of an artistic work created in collaboration with a deceased artist, specifically that of Sarah Pucill’s films and photographs, the collaboration of Cahun and Moore “speaks” Pucill into the triangular relation as this new, third collaborator.

\(^{174}\) This triangular relationship echoes the conceptual roots of Benveniste’s notion of discourse in Freud’s psychoanalysis, in which a dialogue between analyst and analysand creates a sort of third text, or as Benveniste writes, “‘language’ which acts as much as it expresses something.” See Benveniste “Remarks on the Function of Language in Freudian Theory” 66.
The style of avant-garde collaboration that I draw out of the relation between Cahun and Weiner, and identify in the work of Oppenheim, Mayer, Zürn, and Piper, does not assume avant-garde status for a simple challenge to the authority of the author. Instead, the performative possibility of a work like the happening *Hannah Weiner’s Open House*, which inaugurated an endless cycle of circulation of the positions of artist and audience through the document of the invitation, refuses to settle the positions of “I” and “you” amongst its “original” participants and instead recirculates these positions in the future encounter of critics, scholars, readers, and viewers of the work with the performance’s documentation. Collaboration opens beyond the relational tie that tethers “I” to “you” and reemerges once a future “s/he” identifies it, becoming, in turn, a collaborator both within the text of the work and in the work of its creation.
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Figure i.2

Claude Cahun, untitled self-portrait, 1927
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Tom Ahern, portrait of Hannah Weiner, 1978
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Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, portrait of Claude Cahun, 1928
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Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, portrait of Marcel Moore, 1928
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Claude Cahun, untitled self-portrait, c. 1938.
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