

A Constant Production of Present

And/or the possibility for freeing space(s) through contradictions of language,
the (im)possibilities of words, impotentiality and a continuous becoming of something else
through sounds and actions

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Introduction

As the subtitle states, this thesis is about the idea of a free space and the act of freeing spaces. The free space which will be discussed, is a space being free because it is not colonized by human understandings and pre-established ideas about what might be considered valuable. This thesis is an investigation of words and the meanings of words through words themselves and through performative language. *Followed by:* How do you talk about something when words automatically substitute and impose themselves on what is being talking about? *But before that:* The first four chapters in this thesis are based on a performative writing, which took place a year ago. Through the words of the writing and the meanings of these words, the idea of “A Constant Production of Present“ was followed. Would it be possible for the Present to exist as a space constantly producing and constituting its own existence? Without human interference and colonization. Would this be a free space? Could a free space be created through that sentence? And finally, what could written words in a sentence actually create?

The search for a free space came from the feeling of being in a world containing a lot of fear. When we are scared, we cannot see situations and other beings for what they are. Instead they become the objects representing or justifying what we are scared of, liberating our fears by doing so. We colonize them with our views through actively hiding parts and “revealing” others. Ultimately we lose compassion through this act.

Now this earlier performative writing is being developed and questioned by looking at a selection of philosophers, theorists and artists who have worked with language and the idea of “freeing”, especially through words, but also through sound and performance. As the thesis has developed, it has turned into the question of whether it is possible to create a work of art, a thought - anything really, which will be completely free from human colonization. *Leading to:* Can you, as a human, look at something and let it be free from *your* view and inherent understanding of things? *And:* the impossibility for a space to exist as free, because the moment you start talking about it, you give it words, which automatically makes it not free.

The questions explored in this thesis are also questions I am working with in my creative practise. I investigate the production of meaning and realities through words and language, with special attention to the interplay between body and language, the inherent meanings of words and how to disrupt these. My practise is based on writing, sound, voices and performance.

A Constant Production of Present, Performative Writing

This sentence: A Constant Production of Present, is in itself a contradiction. Or maybe not the sentence in itself as much as *the reality* of the sentence *in relation* to the sentence. What the sentence says with its words and what it would like to create through actually being, do not fit together. What is meant with this is, that there is some kind of gap growing between the existence of the sentence as written words in a sentence and its existence as an actual, tangible reality or Being. As something realised. Somewhere I read, that you can assume, that everything which is told straightforward, which is told without contradictions - all of these things are wrong.¹ Let us then assume that the contradictory nature of the sentence is not a bad thing. We will return to this contradictory nature later.

A Constant Production of Present. This sentence came into being through another sentence: “The present is nothing but the consequence of a past which does not recognize itself anymore and the product of a future which does not even know it exists yet”. This sentence gave rise to a feeling. A feeling which, when reproduced in text, reads like this: “If past, present and future were actual living beings, this would be very rude. Their being and what they will be, is already determined before they get to exist”.² This could be considered as not being a problem. But what are the consequences of an approach like this? What is an approach like this an expression of? When looking at the present or being in the present, it does not really exist. It is yes, but it is an *is* as an *invention* through human actings. An invention *for* human actings. “Actings” is a merging of the words *actions* and *acting*, which refers to the human act of doing and behaving, as one which is acted. As one of pretending. Actings are essentially continuations of invented truths, which I do not realise I am continuing. Instead I am unmindfully carrying out a pre-established role which I have been given and taught by my upbringing in a Western, Capitalist society. The Present gets dominated by these actings and is’es for something which is not happening yet or is happening no longer. Meaning, that anything existing or anything being done can never be what it actually is, because it is captured and dominated by extrapolated understandings of the past and desires for the future. These understandings lead to

ever-fixed systems in which we move and live accordingly. Questioning rarely, as there is a feeling of the understandings being created by our own views and wishes. What does it mean for the Present that it is existing like this? Being a tense or a time that we fill up with past and future. I am wondering if there is another way of being and what the possibilities of that would be.

What A Constant Production of Present would like to create, is a free space outside of these fixed systems. In such a space, anything is being whatever it is, it is, without being colonized by meanings. Meaning that this is free. Now, what is meant with being colonized by meanings? What is talked about is both meaning as things having to be “a something”. Things not being able to exist as nothing. Things cannot be meaningless and if a meaning is nowhere to be found, we can easily place one through words. Making ourselves comfortable because there is a purpose for the existence of the thing. Ultimately pre-emptying both the word and the thing itself, as they do not have anything to do with what is being forced upon them. The other meaning referred to, is the endless attaching of value to things, in order to make their existence meaningful. Nothing can exist without being valued by what it is, what it has done and what it can potentially achieve. When something existing is considered valuable it is, more often than not, because it can generate something in the end which we can benefit from. Or it has done that already. The existence of it has a purpose. This meaning then, also connects with our understanding of the past and our wishes for the future. Instead of the present existing for what it is, it exists through being judged by the past and the future. In the end and also in the beginning, who are we to just colonize things with meanings? When one is being colonized by meanings with whatever one is or does, one is not free. One no longer has agency over one’s own existence.

I think that the concept of potentiality has never ceased to function in the life and history of humanity, most notably in that part of humanity that has grown and developed its potency to the point of imposing its power over the whole planet.³

¹ Hito Steyerl, *November* 2014 <https://vimeo.com/88484604> (accessed 27. December 2016).

² Both sentences are written by myself as a part of a poetic writing, Spring 2016, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

³ Giorgio Agamben, *On Potentiality, Potentialities, Collected Essays in Philosophy* trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (California: Stanford University Press 1999), p. 177.

A Constant Production of Present. Let us imagine a space in which the Present is existing as a Being which is constantly producing and constituting its own existence. A Present not drawn from the outside. This would be a free space. An unoccupied space. The Present, referring to a space and not the presence of something and not someone being present. Instead it is the Present as the thing. The thing as time. Time as space. When the Present *is*, is a Present with a capital P, the Present becomes a Being. Taking up and creating time and space. Instead of being something we inhabit, by imposing our wishes on. For the Present to exist as a free space, producing this free space by constituting its own existence, it has to be a Being in order to not be occupied again.

Contradictions and Capital P's

- (im)possibilities of words

So the Present *is*. One might ask immediately, if this *is* can ever actually happen through a sentence. Is it possible for immaterial words in a sentence, to create time and tangible space? It is this “possibility of words” that A Constant Production of Present is concerned with. This move from not (yet) tangible words in a sentence, to a space and Being.

At this moment, the Present as a word is doing something through the sentence in which it is, every time it is written and read. What exactly is it doing? This question returns us to the opening statement in the previous chapter.⁴ It also opens up the first contradiction: words carry inherent meanings. And many of them. Entire landscapes and histories of already spoken sentences of meanings. A word is never just a word. A word's meaning changes depending on what other words it is in relation to, its context and how it has been used in the past.⁵ This is in itself not a contradiction. However, in relation to A Constant Production of Present being a sentence of words wanting to create a space in which everything will exactly be free from being colonized by meanings, it is. We can call this act of colonizing through words “the power of words”. Which also has the reversed effect of colonizing the word as well. In addition, when writing that the Present with a capital P is a Being, we need someone to read and understand the capital P, as this is what makes the Present a Bbeing in this sentence. Capital P's only exist through written words. For now, the space of A Constant Production of Present is a sentence needing an engaged reader or participant. A sentence, which needs its capital P to be “seen” and understood. Moving away from the power of words; returning to the space of the possibility of words. Considering that when words can create and dominate through carrying inherent meanings, they might also carry the potential to “free” the Present and make it possible for it to exist as a free space. The travels of a capital P.

Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze write in their book *A Thousand Plateaus*: “In the course of a day an individual repeatedly passes from language to language (father to son, lover to lover, as boss (...)). And they are not the same languages”.⁶ To this I would like to add the written word.

⁴ “This sentence: A Constant Production of Present, is in itself a contradiction. Or maybe not the sentence in itself as much as the reality of the sentence in relation to the sentence”, p. 6.

⁵ Here I have to catch myself in already thinking about the word in terms of how it has been used in the past, assuming that it has a past. Instead of looking at it for what it is..

⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota 1987), p. 94.

Really, I would like to not separate it from the spoken word. Through the different languages used, different *spaces* are created. Different *times* are created. Different *views* and *meanings* are created. Even though the words used are the same, they create differently based on whom or what they are in relation to. This quote also speaks about how commonplace it is to switch between languages. Words create. Sometimes they create things that are not there. How much does the reality and the actuality of a word carried into physical existence, correspond to the promise of the written or spoken word? This is the possible contradiction we are concerned with.

A Constant Production of Present. Again we have to return to the important fact that this is still a sentence made of words. We should therefore look at the word *constant* and the word *production*, because they reveal more contradictions. *Constant*: referring to something occurring and remaining the same over a period of time. Predictable, consistent and unchanging. These features make a constant easy to fix. It is easily caught. *Production*: referring to the action of making and manufacturing. Often connected to the idea of a product to which value can be given. Things with value can be sold and exchanged for money, as in Capitalist societies. Like a *constant*, it too is easily fixed into a system. The nature of the word *constant* and the nature of the word *production*, this nature being based on our general way of understanding them, fights against what the Present would like to achieve through Being.

So what interferes with the Present's possibility for Being? Inherent human understandings. If we understood *constant* and *production* differently, maybe they would not fight against the Present? Instead of creating preconceptions around the Present before it has a chance to show itself, which again leads us back to the power of words and away from the possibility of words.

In order for the Present to exist by producing itself, it will have to be the *creator* of the foundation for itself to exist from. In addition it has to *be this foundation* and *be the space itself*, at the same time. Placing a structure around the Present for it to exist within, in this moment, the Present will go back to being a *caught present* and not Be. This happens all so naturally because of viewing the structures around in light of previous things, or things to come and so, the Present gets caught in being an existence of other times. More specifically other meanings derived from dominating understandings of these times and times to come. This means that it is already being something else or somewhere else, before it is. Imposed desires. Not being free.

Uncounted

- different times creating time and “Un-”, a prefix.

So how will the Present come into Being, when we consider the contradictions just described? Even though we talked about the possibility of words opening up for a space of understanding a capital P, the difficulty arising here is the impossibility of words. Now this means, that anything that will ever be described and anything that will ever be looked at, will never be free, because it is said with words and looked upon with eyes and the nature of *that*, is the same nature as the previous *that*, which returns the Present to a “caught present” when anything is introduced to it. Of course this can be taken to an extreme in which it is not possible to talk about anything because words will always have been in relation to something else before. We would constantly have to invent new languages to go with our new eyes in order to get around this impossibility.

When Hannah Arendt says that everything existing, living or dead, presupposes a spectator in order to exist, I nod my head.⁷ When even “nothing” needs the surrounding world creating in order to exist, this makes sense. Like silences can only exist between “visible” sounds. Being and appearance coincide. How does this correspond with everything just written? We understand that the Present needs its capital P to be seen, read and understood, but at the same time it needs to not be seen, or considered, as a way of not being colonized. How do I exist if I am not being seen? And how does that work when I myself is seeing and considering my surroundings everyday? While things naturally disappear in my views of meaning when I look at them, at the same time as I am not being seen. Should it really be necessary to become invisible in order to be free?

Instead of talking about not being seen, I can talk about being uncounted. (un)Counted naturally leads to thinking about organising things, beings and experiences by counting and collecting them into systems in which they can be tracked and valued. Instead of thinking that in order to exist as free, I have to exist outside of this world, I can think about the inbetween's of this world. Existing in the relation of the im to the possible and the un to the seen. The un to the word

⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Life Of the Mind* (New York and San Diego, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Inc. 1977,1978), p. 19.

and the thought. All of these lived out of being written words and instead *become in* the world. Un-world. Hence a space not drawn from the outside, but drawn from the un-counted spaces inbetween.

I came across the idea of uncounted experience through a writing by the artist Emily Roysdon. In her writing *Uncounted*, she writes “(...)nothing is the realm of uncounted experience”.⁸ Either “nothing” is the realm of uncounted experience, existing as uncounted experience. Unseen time. Or nothing is the realm of uncounted experience, as an uncounted experience cannot consciously exist. Roysdon gives different names to time; solitude, rehearsal. Creating different measures of time through different combinations of words and lengths of inaction, in order to create more time.⁹ Creating time is an important part of seeing and an important part of seeing without colonizing. Making time before inherent or automatic understanding. Words can make time. The space before a word can too.

Just after writing the above, something happened when I needed a break from writing. The break passed by washing the floors of the room in which the writing took place. Filling up inbetween time. As an attempt to retell what happened, the now following existence of the words to come are written in present -ing form.

⁸ Emily Roysdon, *Uncounted*, from Frederique Bergholtz (If I Can't Dance I, Don't Want To Be A Part Of Your Revolution 2012-2014), p.1.
⁹ Emily Roysdon, *Uncounted*, pg.1.

There is this moment in the livingroom. The floor is being wet from the washing of it. For the floor being wet and washing, all of the chairs surrounding the dinner table standing on the wet floor are turning upside down, resting on top of the dinner table. This is the moment. The floor is still being a floor with all of its functions of being a foundation on which other things are standing, even though it is being wet. The dinner table is still being a table with all of its functions of being a surface on which things are, even though the chairs are turning upside down on top of it. With this I mean, that the dinner table on top of the floor is confirming the floor existing as floor and the chairs are confirming the table existing as table. But the chairs are being something else. Nothing is confirming the chairs. This is the moment. Even though they are in the shape of being chairs, they are no longer actual chairs in the function of chair prescribed to them. They are not for sitting on. Suspended in time created by the floor being wet, they are waiting on top of the table. Waiting time. Watching the floor drying. They are pausing in their existence. A pausing of the chairs becoming un-chairs. The chairs undoing their chair. Confirming the un-chairs is nothing. Maybe inside this moment of wet and drying waiting time, the un-chairs living in the living they are doing through pausing, are free as they are not being what they are?¹⁰

Solitude. Rehearsal. Adding waiting time. Waiting time is a funny time. Even though time passes, the space of this time is not the same time as the time outside, because you cannot do anything. It cannot be counted as a time producing something other than a waiting body, but the waiting time would not exist without the body waiting. They do not lead to anything together, they do not move forward. They are both temporary durations, escaping what is considered to be meaningful production. An invisible structure is given to you, in which you can exist as not being what you are.

There may be allocated different times to the written moment on the opposite page: the time of the chairs in relation to the wet floor and the table. The time of the waiting body observing. The time of recalling it. The time of writing it. The time of reading it now. The space produced by the body reading it. The time of this being written. The time of this now being read. We could go on forever like this, but the choice of giving words to the moment in the first place, might stop us from that.

Sometimes I think about all of the minute actions we do throughout our days. Negligible actions passing by un-noticed. Un-seen, un-felt, un-remembered and un-counted. We might argue whether they exist at all, because they have no known effect outside themselves because no-one knows about them. Uncounted existences unaccounted for. Meaning cannot be attached to them. If I were to think of a specific uncounted existence right now, it would no longer be an uncounted existence that passed by un-noticed. Like the moment on the opposite page. It would all of a sudden mean something and disappear in my words. So this idea is thought about, without knowing if what is thought about is ever here or not. They are some things which are, without having ever been. Un-Be.

un-¹ | ΛΠ |

prefix

1 (added to adjectives, participles, and their derivatives) denoting the absence of a quality or state; not: *unabashed* | *unacademic* | *unrepeatable*.

• the reverse of (usually with an implication of approval or disapproval, or with another special connotation): *unselfish* | *unprepossessing* | *unworldly*.

2 (added to nouns) a lack of: *unrest* | *untruth*.

un-² | ΛΠ |

prefix

added to verbs:

1 denoting the reversal or cancellation of an action or state: *untie* | *unsettle*.

2 denoting deprivation, separation, or reduction to a lesser state: *unmask* | *unman*.

• denoting release: *unburden* | *unhand*.

The prefix “un-” talks both about something not existing, like the repeatability of an action which is *unrepeatable*; the actual existence of an absence. *And* the reversal or cancellation of an existing action or state. At the same time, it talks about some kind of release, as in *to unburden*. Thinking about the chairs; they are un-chairs because of the absence of their actual function due to the wet floor. This leaves them in a state of release by making it possible for them to not be dominated by the fact that they are chairs to which value can be given. The un-chairs exist because of their absence of chair. Or their gain of “un-”. When thinking about an “un-thought”, something un-counted or un-seen, we have to think about this movement of reversing an act before it has existed, leading to a release. So when thinking about the un-thought, I can think about it as something on its way in the mind, but instead of bringing it forth by words, it gets to stay in this space before and thereby enter into a state of release. It becomes something other than thought, by not being dominated by words. Letting it reveal itself as what it actually is, by not being. Probably without anyone ever knowing this. As with the un-counted action to which meaning cannot be attached exactly because it passes by un-noticed, the knowing of the thought would make it no longer an un-thought. Maybe we have to think about to un-know. ¹²

11 Screenshots of the results of a search in Oxford Dictionaries, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/un-> (accessed February 16, 2017).

12 When looking at the definitions above we have to take into account that in the case of “the reverse of” there is something stated in brackets about an implication of approval or disapproval, or with another special connotation. This says something about how “the reverse of” existing in relation to something else, like the word selfish, comes with a very present secondary meaning. Again returning to the difficulties of words as we are using words to write.

Potentiality of Not Being

- space X and Continuous Becoming.

Returning to the Present. Just the fact that this sentence exists; A Constant Production of Present, makes it impossible for the Present to Be. It is not being, because this sentence is written. It is not being, because this sentence is read. It is not being because this sentence is being understood. It is *not*, because this sentence *is*. The sentence is the structure around the Present which makes it impossible for it to Be.

Or possible for it not to be.

*Maybe,
the possibility for the Present not to be,
is where it exists and where it is free?*

Opening up another possibility for this space potentially already existing, but no one knows about it exactly because the moment an eye is turned towards it and looks upon it, it disappears. The moment it is thought about, even before I realise to have given it words, it disappears.

In *On Potentiality*, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben discusses the idea of potentiality and impotentiality. He formulates this as the question of what it means to say “I can”, “I cannot”. Quoting Aristotle, he writes: “To be potential means: (..) to be in relation to one’s own incapacity. Beings that exist in the mode of potentiality are capable of their own impotentiality, and only in this way do they become potential. They can be because they are in relation to their own non-being”.¹³ Like vision can be potential only in relation to darkness; non-vision. Sound can be potential only in relation to silence. “Can” to “cannot”. Aristotle opposes potentiality to actuality.¹⁴ Potentiality disappears when it becomes actual. When the actuality of darkness is vision, darkness do not exist when vision exists. Agamben disagrees with this and he connects impotentiality to the idea of being free: “To be free is not simply to have the power to do this or that thing, nor is it simply

¹³ Agamben, *On Potentiality*, p. 182.

¹⁴ Agamben, *On Potentiality*, p.177.

to have the power to refuse to do this or that thing. To be free is (...) to be capable of one’s own impotentiality, to be in relation to one’s own privation”.¹⁵ Being in relation to the existence of one’s own cannot. Being in relation to one’s own “un-”.

Not Being. Non-being. To un-be. Imagine the moment just before the space of A Constant Production of Present is thought about. It is not, not-a-thought, because it is on its way in the mind. It is moving. Still it is not yet a thought, because a thought is created and brought to the mind by words. It is an un-thought. Another way to talk about this is through “language X” of Deleuze and Guattari, which is: “Language A in the actual process of becoming language B”.¹⁶ Something on its way (like the thought), without being yet. Instead it is existing inside the actual process of becoming. We can compare the space of the thought becoming, to the space of “language X”, though we do not have a known A to depart from. We do have a B to arrive at, which is the thought existing completely consciously in the mind through words. Just think about this space “X” for a little bit. Think about the time it takes for the thought to exist without having been given words. Stretch out and expand this time as much as possible. This time is the space in which the Present can un-be. If this becoming continues, it will create the time which will create the space in which it can be, and if this becoming continues, it will create the time which will create the space in which this can be, and if this becoming continues, it will create the time which will create the space in which this can be...

How can this becoming continue? This question arises when we consider Aristotle opposing actuality to potentiality. As an answer, Agamben asks us how it is possible to consider the actuality of the potentiality to not-be.¹⁷ The moment something is actual in its not-being, it is fully being its non-being and is therefore no longer only not-being. It is being not-being. This could be read as the to-not-be disappearing as it is being to-not-be, but in reality it means that it preserves itself by passing fully into actuality. It is continuously being it’s to-not-be instead of being to-be.

¹⁵ Agamben, *On Potentiality*, p. 183.

¹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 106.

¹⁷ Agamben, *On Potentiality*, p. 180.

Considering Agamben, we can talk about a mode of existence and a method for existing. The mode in which the Present can exist, is its actual existence as non-being. This mode through which the Present can exist, exists because the Present disappears every time we start talking about it - which is a contradiction. This contradiction is the method for existing.

When asking before how this becoming can continue, and even earlier if this *is* can ever happen through a sentence, we can answer: return to the beginning of writing that the sentence has two sides to it - the existence of the sentence as written words in a sentence and its existence as an actual, tangible reality or Being. If we think about that exact space in between the existence as a sentence and the existence as an actual reality or Being, in this exact contradiction, this is where it can exist. Imagine the words contradicting the existence of the Present, constantly making it possible for it not to exist. Because of these contradictions it is possible for the Present to not be fixed because it cannot exist. Instead it exists as a continuous becoming. Imagine the several contradictions pushing the understanding of the Present around from different sides in order for the mind trying to understand it and capture it, constantly having to change the ways in which it relates. Once you think you have reached a steady point of understanding, this is contradicted by something else, even before you have the time to formulate that thought. In the end allowing the Present to continuously morph and combine itself in different ways through ever changing contradictions and spaces. Leaving it as free. The things which we cannot pin down because they are in a process of becoming something else, are free. The existence of this space, is its actual impotentiality. It's existence as non-being. Within this contradiction of the reality of the sentence in relation to what the sentence would like to create, within the space of this contradictory relation, lies the possibility for the Present to exist. And this "failure" of the space, is constitutive of the idea itself. Within it's failure, by living and being it's failure, the Present has agency.

What is essential is that potentiality is not simply non-Being, simple privation, but rather the existence of non-Being, the presence of an absence; this is what we call "faculty" or "power".¹⁸

The space is failing, but its failure becomes a continuous becoming and transforms into agency. And a continuously becoming is a free space, as it is not a fixed space.

18 Agamben, *On Potentiality*, p. 179.

Sound

- departing your creator, John Cage and 4'33"

When we start listening to sounds, we can say something about a being, the sound, having the possibility of departing its creator the moment it is created. An existence which is a becoming through disintegration. It is not an existence of continuous growth in terms of becoming more. The creator of the sound functions as a launcher with the potential for shooting out the sound when activated. The sound detaches itself from its source and disperses as vibrations through space. Bouncing off all of the surrounding surfaces it encounters, which also makes the sound exist for the time it exists. Without anything surrounding it, the sound cannot exist. As a sound departs its creator the moment it is created, it also leaves the values of what created it. No matter what created the sound, the sound itself is free in its becoming. Because of these qualities, I would like to discuss sound in relation to the idea of a free space. Can sound function as a free space or at least help us to talk about it in a different way? When discussing sound here, I have to exclude the human voice speaking words. Spoken words are very different to just sounds. Words we understand as containers of meaning and when hearing someone talk, it is very difficult to ignore the meaning of their words and only listen to the voice as a sound. It would seem odd to ignore the meaning of someone's words and just listen to the sound of them. Therefore, when talking about sound, we are not talking about understandable spoken words, but instead natural sounds, not-natural sounds, music and noises. One can judge the creator of a sound. It can be the result of something very unpleasant and thus will mean something to us when we hear it, because we have attached meaning to it. Imagine the sound of frying food in oil. A warm sound. Hiss, bubble, sizzle! Soft, explosive, sputtering noise. When we do not know that the sound is the sound of frying food, it could just as well be white noise, heavy rain or fire. It is incredible difficult to listen to something without assigning it meaning. But the sound itself has the possibility to free itself from those concepts because of how it exists through space. Sequences of different sounds starting and finishing each other, becoming the sound of a car, slowly extending the beginning of a cat together with the ending of a door slam-wroom-hiss-continuing with...

The sound piece 4'33" by John Cage is also known as *The Silence Piece*, even though it is not silent at all, but it is a piece concerned with silences and "non-silences". 4'33" is the duration of the piece and the minutes and seconds function as a framework in which sounds focusedly have the potential to unfold. I say *focusedly* because everything will always have the potential to unfold, but in this setting the focus is on the specific unfolding of sound. In his writing *Composition as Process*, John Cage writes about silence and sound: "(...) duration alone was also a characteristic of silence".¹⁹ Sound, duration

silence, duration

The first time 4'33" was performed in 1952, a piano was placed on a stage at the Maverick Concert Hall, Woodstock, New York. A pianist was sitting behind the piano, but nothing was being played. Only he closed the lid of the piano to indicate the beginning of the piece and opened it briefly to mark the end of the first movement. The piece has three movements. The audience was waiting for something to happen and as they were looking at the piano player in this situation, they were looking at what could potentially happen. A piano player behind a piano often equals music. Suspended in time, everyone waits. As "nothing" is being performed, other beings; sounds, begin to emerge in the

¹⁹ John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (London, United Kingdom: Calder & Boyars, Ltd. 1971), p. 19.

space instead. Even though I have not experienced this piece myself, I would start with thinking that the experience of the piece performed in 1952 could be similar to that of the wet-floor-waiting-time, discussed earlier. Being in a space of waiting and beginning to notice new things. Different durations creating different waiting times. “Focused listening is radical as it makes us “see” a different world”.²⁰ The piece is concerned with noticing and listening to what is there all by itself, created unintentionally. You could say that there is no music (maybe noises, but not sound as music), but there are more than just many. A move of a foot, rain on the roof, a cough, a zipper being unzipped and so forth. All sounds which can be experienced on the same level as music. We could say that 4’33” is “freeing” natural sounds from being perceived as “just” noise. It liberates all sounds by demonstrating that all sounds are equal. Even liberating “high-brow” music from the pressure of having to live up to being “high-brow”. At the same time, because of our previous line of thinking, this “freeing” also catches the sounds in a space of all of a sudden meaning something. Now everyone is aware of the sounds and they no longer just exist as what they are. Instead they have become expressions of some kind of normally disturbing “other”, which enters our consciousness and makes us aware of its presence as something else than just a disturbing “other”. At the same time, the sounds become expressions of a way of perceiving disinterestedly and impartially. “The silence piece 4’33” will never end, but change into a new lasting mode of perception”.²¹ The piece promises a different way of looking and listening when one walks out. A different attitude towards the world, where noise will not be noise, but simply undisturbing sound. Now we are all carriers of this awareness and everything we perceive will be affected by it and in that way, the piece never ends. A continuous becoming. In a way, can we not say that about everything existing in the world? Which then again can be turned to: “It will never be free, because the moment an eye is turned towards it and looks upon it, it disappears”.²²

The words around 4’33” are very interesting. Every word said or written promises something the piece will do or has done, thereby making it impossible for this promise to exist in actuality. Every word pre-empts the piece. The present of the work is dominated by past and future. Even if the piece manages to fulfill its promise, it will still be captured by the words and meanings existing

20 Quote by Salomé Voegelin, *Sounds Like Silence, John Cage 4’33”: Silence Today*, Dieter Daniels and Inke Arns (Spector Books 2012), p. 40.

21 *Sounds Like Silence*, p. 36.

22 Referring to what is written in this thesis on p. 18.

around it. The space of 4’33” is definitely not an un-counted space. The idea of a framework in which everything can exist “uncolonized” by being encountered disinterestedly, by being free from human concepts, is wonderful. The promise of a way of perceiving your surroundings continuing with people walking out of the door and becoming a continuous becoming as well. Does this actually happen? Maybe it happens because we say it does? It probably does happen to the individuals experiencing the piece. Why not? But the fact that these words exist around it, telling us what it is, makes it disappear. It becomes yet another layer of meaning which we do not notice, and we deceive ourselves with the idea that we are now encountering everything without colonizing. Language supposes and hides what it brings to light, in the very act of bringing it to light.

In a letter to Helen Wolff, Cage comments on the way people received the work. “If one imagines that I have intended any of these responses he will have to imagine that I have intended all of them”.²³²⁴ When reading Cage’s words around 4’33”, we understand that it is created from a desire for unintentionality. At least this was what he wanted. Even the durations within 4’33” are created through chance operations as a way of “freeing the music from all gestures of expression and transforming it into pure reception and heightened sensibility”.²⁵ However, is this not an intention from the beginning? The piece is created with the intention of creating a piece based on unintentionality which will free music and “(...) be perceived in unpredictable ways”.²⁶ Again an intention. Though one creates something in which everything is free, it will still be caught in the wish and the contradictory intention of making it free. Did we ever consider that maybe the sounds do not want to be free? Would it be wrong to say that all of the sounds existing within 4’33” are in fact created by John Cage and therefore they cannot depart their creator? Now they *are* something. Should 4’33” acknowledge the contradictions and the impossibilities of what it promises? Would that free the sounds within it, because we would be aware of our contradictory awareness?

In contrast to this, we might consider the audience for a little bit, as they become the actual creators of the unintentional sounds. No matter how passively they sit and wait, they are not passive at all. Every individual in the audience functions as both sound creator and as a membrane through

23 Helen Wolff was the mother of the composer Christian Wolff, a good friend of Cage.

24 Cage, *Sounds Like Silence*, Letter to Helen Wolff, p. 21.

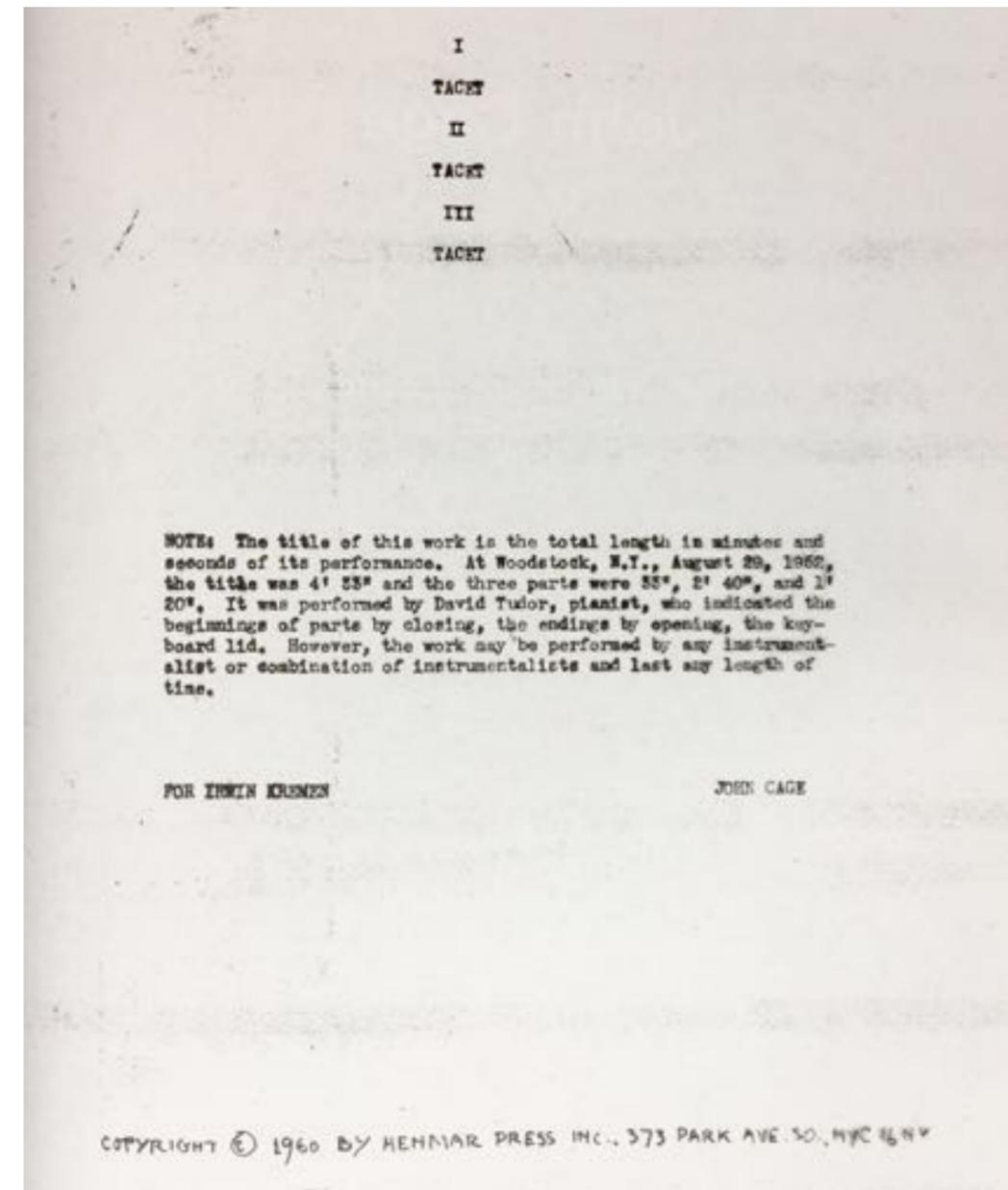
25 Cage, *Sounds Like Silence*, p. 24.

26 Cage, *Sounds Like Silence*, Letter to Helen Wolff, p. 21.

which the sounds travel and bounce off. This adds to yet another reading of the piece, as one which takes the audience onto the stage, switching the role of performer and viewer. With this in mind we might say that the actual act of creating the sounds are unintentional, as this is done by the unknowing audience. Though I will still argue, that this unintentionality gets dominated by Cage's intention from the beginning. This is not a critique of Cage as much as it is a wondering of and through his work. Is it possible to create a work of art, a thought - anything really, which will be completely free from human colonization? Is being free unachievable as a human?

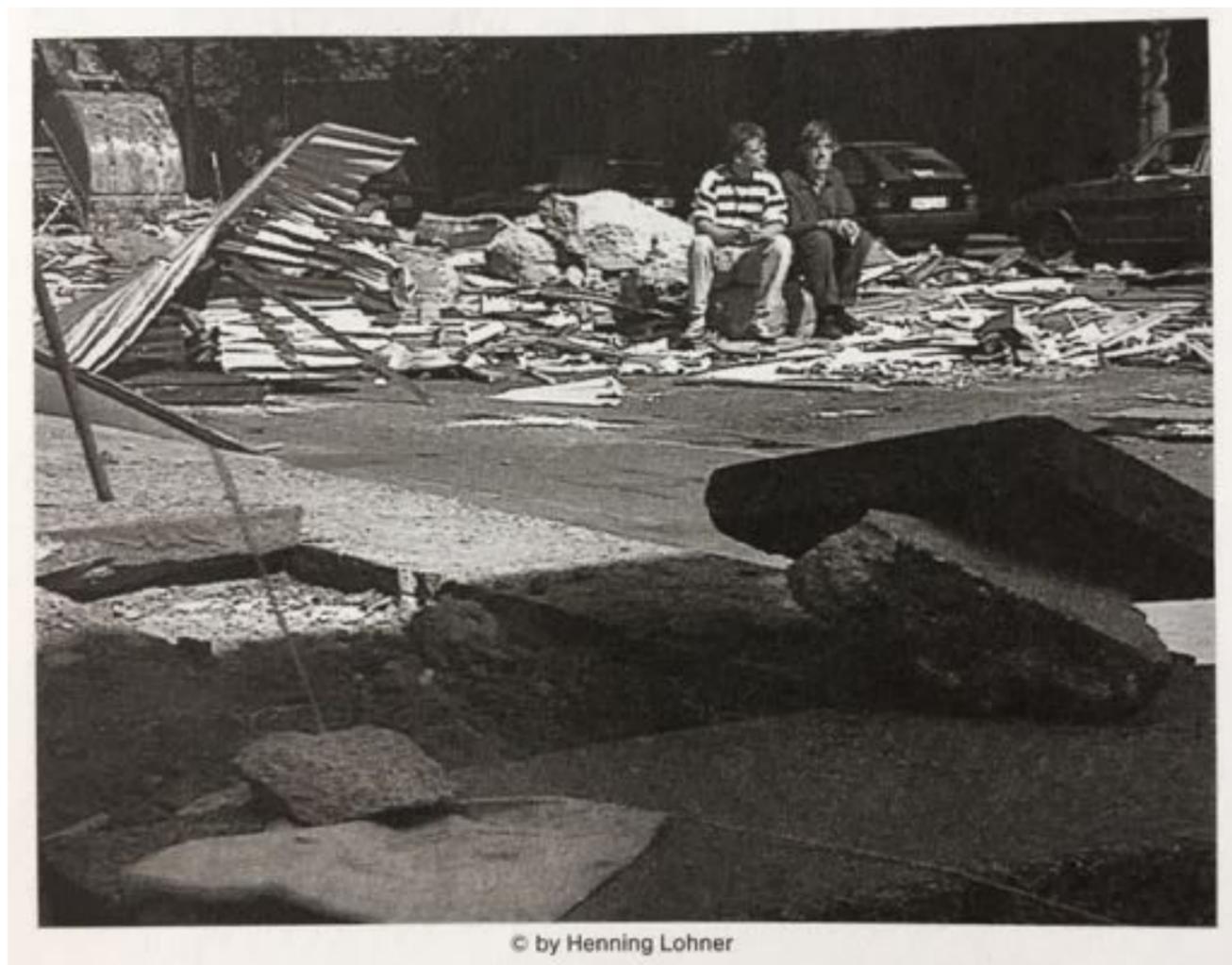
When thinking about it, the piece itself with its durations is not the problem, nor the title 4'33". It is also not a problem to create something with an intention. The thinking of the idea from the beginning might be a problem, when it is claimed that it is created unintentionally. In addition, the attaching of words and meanings, as in the explanatory *The Silence Piece*, interferes with the piece actually being able to do what it sets out to do. Every sound unfolding in this piece is pinned down before it gets to exist.²⁷ 4'33" is the structure around the sounds and even though this structure is only duration, it is not invisible. It is very loud and fixed because of the words around it and therefore, everything existing within the space of 4'33" will be fixed as well.

27 Referring to what is written in this thesis on p.1 "(...)Their beings and what they will be, is already determined before they get to exist".



When even the duration is no longer a fixed duration and the work can be executed with any instrument (if any at all), we could really be left with a tool for a different way of looking.

28 Cage, Typewritten linguistic version of 4'33" (Tacet), Getty Research Institute, 1960.



29

Later executions of the work have included listening silently in a public space. One could also sit at home and do 4'33" for many hours, which then expands the piece into deep meditation and active mindfulness.

29 Video documentation of the performance of 4'33" at the former German-German border checkpoint Invalidenstrasse, Berlin, August 1, 1990. *Sounds Like Silence*, p. 250.

Pianist Potential

We can also consider the pianist. So far I have not come across anyone addressing the pianist when writing about 4'33". If we continue with thinking in the line of potentiality, the pianist has the potential to play. The pianist also has the potential to-not-play. It is similar to the example used by Agamben when he discusses the actual act of impotentiality. "The actuality of the potentiality to play the piano is the performance of a piece for the piano; but what is the actuality of the potentiality to not-play?"³⁰ Agamben concludes that there is truly potentiality only where the potentiality "to-not" does not lag behind actuality, but passes fully into it (actuality) as such.³¹ If we really think about it, this last potential of "to-not-play" of the pianist in 4'33", does not exist as potentiality. It is from the beginning not a potential, because it is already happening before it became potential. It is determined beforehand, that the pianist is *doing* "to-not-play". Therefore, the potentiality of playing becomes the "to-not" instead, as he does not have the potential to play in the way this work is planned. The "to-not-play" of the pianist, by being planned in advance, leaps over its own possibility for fully passing into actuality. It was never actual. Switching the roles of the potential of *to-do* and the potential of *to-not-do*. In addition, the pianist becomes a visual representation of what we are supposed to think about and listen to. Without the pianist, the piece could be read as the idea of someone not showing up or maybe he forgot his sheets of music? One might consider the piano as a sculptural object. The presence of the pianist contradicts the unintentionality of the piece as he becomes an intentional visual representation. He also directs us to understand and without him, maybe this understanding would not happen? At least we are thinking about and writing the word unintentionality an awful lot.

30 Agamben, *On Potentiality*, p. 183.

31 Agamben, *On Potentiality*, p. 183.

Multiple Meanings or Multiple Perspectives?

Within the concept of 4'33" and the creation of it, there are many contradictions. The contradiction of intentional unintentionality is ultimately what leads to multiple meanings existing within the same work. Either drowning it or allowing it to not be fixed in one meaning and instead being inbetween several. The contradictions pushing the understanding of 4'33" around from different sides in order for the mind trying to understand it and capture it, constantly having to change the ways in which it relates. This allows 4'33" to continuously morph into something else and combine in different ways with ever changing contradictions and spaces. Leaving it as free.³² Again we are arriving at a running-in-circles without ever reaching a fixed conclusion. Instead we are multiplying perspectives. Reaching a conclusion would probably kill the work completely. It is interesting, that when we swap *multiple meanings* for *multiple perspectives*, we all of a sudden have a completely different understanding of the contradictions. However, whether one encounters the piece in an optimistic-contradictory way with possibilities, or focuses on how it is just not capable of doing what it promises, depends on how we choose to look. It is intentional and it is a deliberate "thinking about". A conscious choice. Despite the difficulties of the piece, I do believe that it comes close to letting sounds show themselves as what they can potentially be. The sounds function as expressions of a way of considering and engaging with the world, which can be difficult to put into words because of the contradictory nature of them.

"Nothingness, (...), is not empty as an ending, rather, a potentiality through which other beginnings can become born", David Toop writes in his essay *Dying Away Upon the Ear*.³³ This essay is a part of a large, commemorative book of 288 pages concerned only with 4'33" and the significance of the piece. To me, the title *Dying Away Upon the Ear*, expresses how the moment something is being picked up by human attention, it dies. It becomes the human view. In fact, David Toop's chapter in the book is titled *Nothing To Hear*, which only adds to both the title of the essay and this particular quote, which functions as the opening sentence to his writing and now here as a quote of open closure to our ending beginning to become. I believe this is a very beautiful quote to end this thinking through 4'33" with, to which I have nothing to add.

³² Referring to what is written in this thesis on p. 8.

³³ David Toop, *Nothing to hear, Dying Away Upon the Ear. Sounds Like Silence*, p. 57.

Guy de Cointet's abstraction of words

- *Going to the Market* and *Tell Me*

Going to the Market is the title of a painting and performance work by the French artist Guy de Cointet. What do we see? A white door in a white wall on a white floor. A woman pointing at a non-symmetrical painting, somewhat in the shape of the state of Texas, filled with letters and numbers. One question mark. The painting has a border. The border consists of 8 thick, black lines and three coloured lines - orange, blue and green. Through a performance, executed by this well dressed actress, the painting is activated. The individual letters and numbers in the painting have been assigned a specific value, which the actress uses to unfold a story. The blue border is the river. The green border is the forest. Towards right is the market and towards left is home. The story told is a story about love, the difficulties of love and ultimately the reunion of the lovers involved. It is a peculiar story which feels comfortable and familiar, because of the way in which it follows the structure of mainstream love stories: love is followed by conflict and drama which separates the lovers involved. After a while, some kind of relief enters, which makes love return. A woman runs away from a party and ends up in a forest, where she is attracted to a magical river. For about six days now, things have been uneasy between her and her lover. Heading towards the market to get medicine, because of feeling ill in the night, the magical river catches her attention when she needs a rest. She falls into the water. Two gentlemen passing by save her. They have a slight accent from Luxembourg. At the end, the woman is reunited with her lover, who turned right instead of left at a crossroad and by a coincidence met her in the forest. The story is told as an everyday-kind-of monologue, acted towards the audience.

This work interests me, because of the way in which the story is told and how the performance is created through the painting. At the bottom of the painting we see "35 H". This stands for 35 miles pr. hour, which is the speed by which Adul drove carefully before hitting the crossroad. As the actress speaks these lines, she points at the specific numbers and letters in the painting. Adul was from the United Kingdom aged 38 (U K 3 8). A brilliant engineer since 1959 (E 5 9). Z O R is the name of the woman in the story spelled backwards (her name is Roz).



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34 Guy de Cointet, *Going to the Market*, 1975. Still from performance, performed by Mary Ann Duganne, The Temporary Contemporary, MOCA, Los Angeles, 1985. Courtesy: Estate of Guy de Cointet / Air de Paris, Paris and Greene Naftali Gallery, New York. <https://frieze.com/article/guy-de-cointet> (accessed on February 13, 2017).

Literally and visually, this work reduces words to their basic, visual components. Leaving them in an existence in which meaning cannot be given to them anymore. Followed by the activation and re-meaning of them through the story and the performance. Extracting information from the individual letters and connecting them to a whole universe of meaning and history. This piece was performed five times during the artists life. Each time, the story was supposed to be the same. I say *supposed* because I have never seen any of the performances, but only the recording of one of them. So whether they actually were I do not know. Crossroads, turning points, miscommunication and coincidences are important parts of the story. Turning left instead of right becomes consequential for our characters.

Non-meaning is represented through the letters without words, but the words still exist as letters within the physical structure of the painting. The structure of the fixed story. Aesthetic value has been loaded onto them as well. As we need the pianist in 4'33" in order to get an understanding of what we are a part of, maybe we need something aesthetically pleasing or interesting to look at, in order to look? I am aware of the fact that this piece was not created with the intention of specifically freeing words from their meanings or freeing through words, but it relates to this idea because of what the painting in the performance does. Assigning meaning to a letter, which in this case is a fixed meaning for the purpose of the story.

In another performance by Cointet entitled *Tell Me*, the woman Mary, driven by the need to find her comb, walks into a stack of cubes arranged on the top of a table. All of the cubes fall out of their stacked order and she yells: "MY PRECIOUS BOOK!". She destroyed her book. She continues with saying that half of a sentence is broken and one word is beyond repair. As the order of the cubes break, so does the structure of the words. A stack of cubes is obviously not a book, but by saying that it is, it becomes a book in this performance. Because of her emotional reaction, we are inclined to believe it. An agreement is now established between the audience and the performer: within the duration of the performance, these cubes are a book. Mary continues with turning one of the cubes, telling a story by reading it from all six sides.



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Referring to the title *Tell Me*, Mary tells a story to the character Olive. Mary is horrified and emotional while telling the story as she is re-living the episode. As Olive cannot hold back her excited impatience, she says: “TELL ME!”. As an answer, Mary unfolds what I believe to be the most crucial part of the story as silent hand gestures, touching the palms of Olive. The only experience we as an audience have of the story told, is Olive’s bodily reaction to it, which is enough for us to understand it’s horrors. She sighs, touches her chest and frowns her forehead. Olive concludes the storytelling by saying: “Obviously, it was the wrong box!”. “Absolutely”, Mary replies.

These two sentences are said with such a lightness, that contradicts the dramatic expressions of the actresses two seconds earlier. As soon as an emotion or mood is established, it is swept away and substituted by something completely different, before we can capture it.

This way of living and sharing emotions through gestures and sounds, reminds me of a few lines from Arendt’s *Body and Soul; Soul and Mind*. She writes: “(...) the life of our soul in it’s very intensity is much more adequately expressed in a glance, a sound, a gesture, than in speech”.³⁶



37

³⁶ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, p. 31.

³⁷ Mary telling the story to Olive. Still-shots from a recording of *Tell Me* at MoMA, New York, 1980. <https://vimeo.com/205684780> (accessed on March 21, 2017).



38

Guy De Cointet questions and plays with our inherent understanding of words attached to their physical representation, or the other way around. Additionally there is the very important aspect of the material works within the performances, only being activated when the performances are being performed. During the time outside of “performance duration”, they can still be looked at and “read”, but the individual letters in the painting or the blue of the border, will not lend themselves to any specific reading or meaning in terms of words and language. The stacked cubes are just cubes in a stack and no one would know that they are a book until the woman in the performance tells us. The words of the performers create the meanings and the realities of the objects, and the presence of the objects demand the performers to act and speak in relation to them. They are driven by the objects. It is interesting to mention that later in his career, Cointet replaced material objects as callers for action with immaterial light and sound.

³⁸ Mary reading the cubes. Still-shot from a recording of *Tell Me*. Performed at Centre Régional d’Art Contemporain Languedoc-Roussillon, Sète, France, 2006, <https://vimeo.com/channels/1184036/40242722> (accessed on March 21, 2017).

Khlebnikov considering words

“Let us consider two words: lysina [bald spot] and lesina [tree trunk]. Mountains lacking les [forest] are called lysyi [bald]; the exact area deprived of les is called lysina [bald spot]; any individual tree, a part of les, can be referred to as lesina. Should we not attribute an opposition in meaning to these two words distinguished only by a change of vowel, y to e?”³⁹

Here, we do end up considering more than just two words with Velimir Khlebnikov in his essay. Velimir Khlebnikov was a Russian poet and playwright who lived from 1885-1922, an important part of the Russian Futurist Movement. Together with the poet Aleksei Kruchenykh he created *Zaum*, which is an experimental poetic language in which meaning is indeterminate. The language *Zaum* can be translated into English as “beyondsense”.⁴⁰ “Beyondsense language means language situated beyond the boundaries of ordinary reason, just as we say “beyond the river” or “beyond the sea”.”⁴¹ When reading *Zaum*, words and letters come across as almost tangible objects and sounds, that can be moved around in order to create a different meaning by rejecting their function as mediators of common sense. Khlebnikov compares our “normal, common language” to that of the child playing with dolls, or riding a wooden chair as a horse. Within the space of play time, the chair is a horse and the dolls are real people with feelings. Replacing both the horse and people. “In language, scraps of sound are used to make dolls and replace all the things in the world”.⁴²

Though *Zaum* is a language situated beyond reason, opposing normal language which pins down and pre-empts, Khlebnikov tries to create and describe a way in which *Zaum* would be intelligible to reason, as to be used as an actual language. “If we take any given word, say chashka [cup], we have no way of knowing what each separate sound means in terms of the whole word. But if we take every word that begins with the sound ch—chashka, cherep, chan, chulok, etc. [cup, skull, vat, stocking]—then the common meaning that all these words share will also be the meaning of ch, and the remaining letters in each word will cancel each other out. If we compare these words

39 Velimir Khlebnikov, *Collected works of Velimir Khlebnikov volume 1, Letters and Theoretical writings* trans. Paul Schmidt (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press Cambridge 1987), p. 266.

40 Janecek Gerald, *The Transitional Poetry of Russian Futurism* (San Diego: San Diego University Press, SDSU Press 1996), p. 1.

41 Janecek Gerald, *The Transitional Poetry of Russian Futurism*, p. 140.

42 Khlebnikov, *Collected works of Velimir Khlebnikov*, p. 283.

beginning with “ch”, we see that they all mean “one body that encases or envelopes another”; ch therefore means case or envelope. Thus does beyondsense language enter the realm of sense”.⁴³ Khlebnikov is breaking down the components of different words in order to see what they have in common through sound in relation to meaning. The sound “ch” now has a universal meaning: bodies in which another body can be.

In another essay titled *Let us consider two words*, which the first lines in this chapter are quoted from, we get an understanding of how some words, according to Khlebnikov, can be built, connected and placed in opposition to each other, by looking at the meaning of a single letter. Like the sound of “ch”. Accepting this, new words can be built in order to create a “freer” and more expressive language. Throughout this text, he assigns specific and constant meanings to single letters. Particularly the letter “l” and the letter “t”. He begins with considering the word lysina [bald spot] and the word lesina [tree trunk]. Only the letters “y” and “e” are different in these two words. Swap one for the other and we are talking about a tree trunk instead of a bald spot. “Y” and “e” are now considered letters of disparity, whilst the letter “l” is considered a constant element of identity. This meaning and concept of “l” manifests itself when Khlebnikov develops his argument. We go through the words l’nut [to lean towards], legkost [lightness], l’net [the individual], back to les [forest] and on bil [he beats]. According to Khlebnikov, all of these words, because of their “l”, contain an element of constant decrease in distance produced by the object or subject talked about in relation to the subject studying it. For the tree, there is a contained meaning of growing, leaning towards and upwards in its lightness of the “l” of les [forest]. The man beats, he is not being beaten himself. The man actively decreases the distance to what is beaten. If the “l” in on bil is exchanged with a “t”, the sentence becomes on bit [he was beaten]. Instead of actively beating, he has now attracted a force and is instead beaten himself. The “t” leads us through the words tianut’ [to attract], tiazhest [gravity], tyn [palisade] before we end up at on bit. “T” then stands in opposition to “l” and indicates a decrease in distance produced by a force attracting affections and influences

43 Khlebnikov, *Collected works of Velimir Khlebnikov*, p. 383.

upon the more passive subject or object - like the man who was beaten. Actions attached themselves to the man. “As soon as les [forest] falls within the sphere of action of t, it becomes tes [timber]”.⁴⁴ The change of a letter turns an actively growing and light-reaching forest into passive and dead timber and as timber is created by cutting down the tree, making it fall, so does the word fall as well. Which I find to be a very beautiful way to talk about this action *within the sphere of “t”*.

We can now begin to imagine how one can build completely new words based on the idea of a letter containing some kind of identity, which, by placing it in another word, can add to or expand the meaning of an otherwise fixed word. If we return to the idea of the un-thought, we can again think about the meaning of “un-” and relate it to Khlebnikov’s thinking. “Un-” being both a prefix which talks about the reversal of an act and the undoing or release of something. To undo a knot. These concepts we can connect to the thought, which creates the idea of an un-thought, in which there is a reversal of the act of bringing the thought to the mind by words just before it is. By this, leaving the thought in a state of release in the space before the one of words.

In this short text, Khlebnikov travels through a stream of associations based on the meaning assigned to individual letters. Freely associating words despite their differences in “common meaning”. What to think? It allows for a very free approach to language in which “ch” can be the universal sound for “one body that encases or envelopes another” and be placed in other words in order to give them a second layer of understanding.⁴⁵ At the same time, two seemingly different words can be connected because of their “l” and the constant concept of “l”. With this in mind, would it not make sense to see this as an expression of how a word is never just a word because of the multiple meanings even a single letter contains? All of a sudden, a forest is connected to the words unrestrained [likho] which is connected to privilege [l’gota] and permission [l’zia]. “Defining the contours of the turbulent state of being of the unrestrained person who does not stop at murder”.⁴⁶ This can be read as a very liberal translation of “l”. A passive individual, like the man who is beaten, is calm [tikho]. Tikho, only being different from likho [unrestrained] because of one letter, therefore becomes the opposite of unrestrained, even though calm would not be the exact opposite of

44 Khlebnikov, *Collected works of Velimir Khlebnikov*, p. 267.

45 Khlebnikov, *Collected works of Velimir Khlebnikov*, p. 284.

46 Khlebnikov, *Collected works of Velimir Khlebnikov*, p. 267.

unrestrained when first considered. The calm [tikho] is “like a drying pond, open to every influence from without”, which does contain a strong, negative connotation.⁴⁷ Despite the poet being free in her or his creation, this leads to the words and sounds themselves not being free. Yet, when words are created by humans and the human is free in her or his creation with them, maybe the word is free as well? This means that if the “ch” of Khlebnikov is not free, then the “un-” is not too.

Introducing Guy de Cointet to Khlebnikov

Despite Khlebnikov’s thoughts being in Russian in 1920 and Guy de Cointet’s being French expressed in English in 1975, they relate to each other. Khlebnikov is considering the meaning behind a letter and what that might open up, and Cointet is expressing the idea of a meaning behind a letter in his work. Making connections of words and what they represent, based on nothing but a letter or a sound. Letters on their own we do not understand, but placed in sequence of each other they create meaning. Or when the child of Khlebnikov rides the wooden chair which, within the duration of play time, is a horse. As when the woman in *Tell Me* knocks over her book, which is a book only within the duration of the performance. When “l” connects the tree with the act of leaning towards, maybe the concept of a duration outside of common time, connects the cube-book within the performance of Cointet with both the play-time of Khlebnikov and wet-floor-waiting-time? Un-time.

47 Khlebnikov, *Collected works of Velimir Khlebnikov*, p. 267.

Connecting Back, Concluding

A lot of things come through in this thesis that have something to do with time; waiting time, unseen time, rehearsal time. The time it takes for the thought to enter the realm of words. The space before the realm of words, which really is just time. Stretching out time in order to create more time. Play time. Temporary durations. In a world where things move fast and the possibility of doing something is always there, making time in order to look and speak without colonizing is difficult.

If we expand “focused listening” to “focused attention, engagement or looking”, and still consider it as being radical because it makes us “see” differently, we need time. The works and people discussed in this thesis make time. Even when they are captured by our experience of them and me giving them words, within the time of reading this thesis, they make us aware of time and what exists within it. Making time in order to think about the words used to describe what is seen.

Again we realise, that the more we talk about “it”, the more we give “it” words, the more “it” gets lost and disappears. This is not to suggest that we should not talk, that would be dangerous, but it is a consideration of how to talk in order to avoid capturing what we are talking about. We have to return to the idea that in order to be completely free, something has to be un-seen. Or un-known. When we think about a sentence *creating*, we can consider how questioning A Constant Production of Present lead us to “un-”. Words in a sentence can create space through the way in which I engage with them and how this “engagement” inhabits me. I believe that “un” is something we can think through and create with, but it is not something we can actually be. Instead it allows for a creation with a different “back and forth” movement to what is being talked about. Being in relation to one’s own “un-”.

Another return, now to the idea of creating a freer language not governed by inherent meanings of fixed words. The poet being free. The sounds being free. The Present as a free space. These concepts all deal with some kind of a different perception of how we normally look at things or experience situations. Trying to open up something beyond common sense. They are not trying to

change the situation. They are not trying to do anything else, but to open up the situation by making us aware of how we look.

In the end, I think it is impossible to talk about what I am trying to talk about as I am trying to talk about a space before language, which I cannot touch because I only have language. Even if I remove the fact that I am using words carrying inherent meanings in order to describe something existing outside of words carrying inherent meanings, another problem arises; every single person included in this text, Agamben, Arendt, Roysdon, Cage, Cointet, Khlebnikov, carry meanings with them into the text. Nevertheless, as the pianist is needed for direction and noise is needed for silence, so are they obviously needed as well. Without poetics, art, sound and a lot of time, it is absolutely impossible to talk about this in a way in which it does not disappear.

In this case, A Constant Production of Present is a space for acknowledging the contradictions of being a human wanting to not colonize or to be colonized oneself. It is a contradictory sentence creating this space. A rehearsal space in which beings can exist in time, in order to see if it is possible to let them be what they are. See what happens if they are. An un-world in which there is time in the sentence to think without colonizing, at the same time as there is time to acknowledge that the moment I think this, I am colonizing already. A space and time for having multiple realities, contradictions and feelings existing simultaneously. Letting them transform each other and continuously morph. Now moments of seen time becoming un-seen and known time becoming un-known. I think we have to think about un-knowing what we know, as what we know is largely based on what has been fed to us through words, since we were born. Un-knowing those automatic norms, that are still being fed to us.

I will conclude with a couple of questions. What in our world makes “being free” an urgent question? Should being free not be a given? What makes us feel captured? *And*, is it possible to be free and letting your surroundings be free, when you are a human being with desires, presumptions, love and anxieties, encountering the world?

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