

*The Cremation Project*

*novel*

with

*Ada & Carter*

*short story*

and

*Art in/to Writing in Kenneth Goldsmith's Fidget and*

*Day*

*critical commentary*

By

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I declare that all the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Andrea Mason

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## Abstract

This thesis considers the impact of art practice on creative writing, and comprises a life-based novel, *The Cremation Project*, and related short story *Ada & Carter*, and a critical commentary, ‘Art in/to Writing in Kenneth Goldsmith’s *Fidget* and *Day*’.

In the critical commentary, through analyses of artist-turned-poet-turned-word-processor Kenneth Goldsmith’s texts *Fidget* (2000) and *Day* (2003), I argue that Goldsmith’s conceptual approach – a practice he calls Uncreative Writing – rather than being mere showmanship, uses language as art-form. In privileging process over semantic meaning Goldsmith promotes a form of materiality which demands that we pay attention to the visual surface, to words as objects and to the page as a site of writing. In *Fidget*, Goldsmith records all his movements across 13 hours, written without the use of a pronoun. The text enacts the body, and draws us into its subconscious. In *Day*, Goldsmith transcribes a copy of the *New York Times*, 1 Sept 2000. Confronted by chunks of text interspersed by lists and columns of numbers, it is text-as-image which interests our eye. Whilst the conceit for these works is the starting point, it is the physicality of both the process and the texts and the authorial choices involved in their making which are central to our understanding of the published artifacts. These works constitute an act of language – *Fidget* is writing as sculpture, *Day* is writing as painting.

I foreground Goldsmith because his work has enabled me to grow as a writer, undertaking a practice I now refer to as writing-making.

## Contents

### **PART ONE**

The Cremation Project	7
Ada & Carter	145
Notes	160

### **PART TWO**

Art in/to Writing in Kenneth Goldsmith's Fidget and Day	161
Introduction	162
Fidget	185
Day	202
Conclusion	222
Bibliography	225

Part One

*The Cremation Project*

novel

## NINE

This morning you woke up and realised the truth. You are a fly caught in a spider's web, and they are all in on it: Thérèse, Lucia, Konrad, possibly even José. You drop your keys on the table and walk into the middle of the studio to look at your new piece, a chain tapestry of *The Raft of Medusa* by Gericault. You left it unfinished. Now, the bottom left corner, a dead-looking young man splayed, naked, on the raft, being held on by an older man's strong arm, is complete. Did you ask one of your assistants to come in? Was it at the party, and you didn't notice? Two nights ago Lucia burst in at 5am, rich couple in tow and José, her current art collector squeeze. She is determined to broker a deal on the raft, offering you up as her art prodigy, her wild child, despite the fact that you have a gallery, and that that is Konrad's job. José scampered around the studio like an excited puppy, finally dropping down onto the raft you made out of Bubble Wrap and vinyl tape. You're either crazy or a genius, he said, and jumped up to slap you on your back. You played along, just in case. But you're tired now. The party, you feel, is over. You and Thérèse are over. Maybe you and Konrad are over. You are over. You stand smoking, and eye the piece, a five metre high seven metre wide actual-size reproduction. It's epic, your magnum opus. You've been working on it for months, since the Basel art fair, where Konrad whipped the rug out from underneath you, and gave over more than half of the stand to a new younger artist. You suck on the cigarette. Konrad loves me, but if he's going to go pussy on me: you suck the cigarette hollow and extinguish it under your heel. You pull your camera bag off over your head, and pick up an empty champagne bucket. You pull your knife out of your jacket pocket, a stubby object not unlike an oyster knife, put the bucket on the floor near to the piece, and detach a length of chain from above the head of the dead young man. In your version the old man can't hold on any more, and lets the young man go. You open a link above the man's huge arm, and drop this second length of chain into the bucket. You continue working around the upper outline of the two men. Twenty minutes later the piece looks as if some chain-eating beast has taken a bite out of it. ¶ You are barefoot now, wearing a flower-print kimono. You pick up the coffee pot, and step out into the yard where you have created a rubbish garden, to empty the coffee grounds. You want a drink, but you're trying to give up. You've been working through coke-fuelled marathons. Now it's finished you will ditch

the coke and the alcohol and stick to weed. The arguments with Thérèse have been getting worse. She's started filming you when you argue. You're worried that if she shows the footage to Konrad it really will be game over. 'Ouch.' In the dark you tread on a shard of glass. You limp back inside, put the coffee pot down, sit on a stool and lift up your foot. You need tweezers to pull out the glass. You bend your head towards your foot. You notice the chest hair poking through a rip in the collar seam. You remember your dad at the age you are now, his thickened torso and solid forearms covered by a golden fuzz and the shock in his eyes when you beat him at an arm wrestle, as if you'd knocked out a light for him. You were the man now. At art school you made paintings of stocky men with thick forearms locked in battle across a table, bullish faces contorted. It isn't over yet, you're just getting started. You clamp onto the shard and ease the tiny fragment out. You dab the wound with toilet paper, and return to the kitchen area, where you left a joint burning in the ashtray. It has burnt down. You don't mind pain. When you were a kid you had your teeth filled without anaesthetic. The dentist leant her breasts against your arm, whilst you held your mouth open wide, resisting an urge to bite down. At the age of three you chopped off the top of your left hand fourth finger and were sorry to leave hospital after months of attention. You fill the bottom of the coffee maker with water, pack coffee into the filter, screw the top back on, place the pot onto a ring, and turn it on. You rifle through the debris on your desk, looking for your lighter. It has a purple, upside down drawing on it of *David's* cock, made as a souvenir for the last show you and Alix did together. Before she gave up on you, or at least on making art with you. Something had to give, she said. You call Thérèse. Your kimono falls open as you press the square digits on the landline phone. You prop the phone under your ear and hold out the lighter. A fan of pubic hair mushrooms out from the base of David's cock. You look down at the pubic hair mushrooming from your cock. You look at the mole just above the pubic hair line near your right hip bone. It looks darker. What was it Jeff Koons said in his film with Cicciolina. We're totally Rococo, baby. Well I'm baroque, baby, all the way. The phone call goes to answerphone. Konrad then. 3am. You leave a long rambling message. You drag on the joint a final time, hold your breath, blow out, put the joint out, and hang up. The coffee pot splutters. You take an oven cloth and lift the pot off the burner. It hisses as it sings the wooden work surface adding to the black rings already burnt into it. You pour coffee into an espresso cup and stir in three lumps of sugar. ¶ You sit on a stool with your right leg bent, your foot on the stool, and pull across a large heavy book, open at *The Raft of the Medusa*. You stare at it. You look

across at the chain curtain. You look again at the picture. All those waxy torsos, tossed together. You look down at your own waxy cock and balls which flop over the edge of the stool, like a clock from a Dali painting. You look again at the chain piece, all that soft flesh pixellated into 1cm square links of cold aluminium chain. You stare at the tiny particles of dust which dance in the hot air rising from the hot coffee. Like me, a dancing monkey in the spotlight, suspended by hot air. You move around the studio and gather things up. Tea lights. You go into the garden to pick flowers – orange marigolds and red nasturtiums. You walk on the broken glass which covers a large section of the garden. 5am. The sun is hot, and a pile of vegetable peelings smells pungent. You carry the blooms inside the studio, rattling through a layer of blue chain which covers the doorway. You continue to collect up random items: plastic toys, your dildo sculptures, mini-DV cassettes. You pick up a pair of pink fairy wings, from where they are draped over a stool. You tie them on. You untie them. You make carrying straps for the raft out of vinyl tape; the raft is light but awkward to carry. You tie a red silk scarf around your waist and put your Rizla papers, dope stash, tobacco and lighter in the large square pocket. You sling your camera bag over your right shoulder, the raft over both shoulders and pick up the holdall. You push your feet into a pair of hotel slippers, which sit in front of the bedroom door, and swig back the last dregs of coffee. You put on your mirror shades, which are tucked into the blue chain covering the front door, and struggle to exit as the chain gets wrapped around your neck. You manoeuvre sideways through the door, and exit the main front gate. At the main road you stick out your thumb. A pickup truck pulls up. You flash a smile: ‘La Seine?’ ¶ The driver, a well-built man with sideburns, wearing work overalls shrugs. ‘Pourquoi pas?’ He keeps the engine running as you throw your stuff into the open back, and jump in. You slam the door shut and roll a joint, balancing the Rizla on your left thigh. You take a drag and offer it to the driver. The driver shakes his head. ‘C’est chaud.’ ‘Oui.’ Carter winds open the window. ‘T’a perdu ton pantalon?’ The driver, faces forward, impassive. ‘Oui.’ Carter leans back. The radio plays *Born To Run*. Twenty minutes later you are deposited close to the river. At the river’s edge, you set light to the tea lights, and launch them one by one, onto the river. Some of them stay alight. You skim the cassettes in, then the dildo sculptures, then the toys, and they bob on the surface of the water. You undress and tie the red scarf around your head, the knot to one side. With the flowers and sunglasses in your hand you edge the raft ahead of you and enter the water. The cuts on your feet sting, and it takes you a few goes to climb on. You push against the tide. You sit cross-legged, and pick the petals

off the flowers, and throw them into the water behind you. You untie the scarf and wave it as you attempt to stand up. 'Ahoy,' you cry. 'I'm the Übermensch.' And then nothing. Body-sponge. Teabag.

## THIS IS WHAT SHE IS DOING NOW

### A

A blue colouring pencil.

A blue plastic bag

A bobbin wound with copper wire.

A bodice, JPG, size 12.

A bottle of Thierry Mugler After Shave.

A bowl.

A corner cut from a linen tablecloth, used as a rag.

A crumpled sheet of toilet paper.

A Davidoff cigarette tip with torn paper trail.

A grey T-shirt, armpits stained and smelling of sweat.

A jar of Liquitex Acrylic: titanium white.

A left foot Cesare Paciotti insole.

A linen tea towel with a fleur-de-lis motif, a present from his grandmother.

A matchbook from a restaurant, Manus et Janette's: Spécialités des Poissons et des Crustacés.

A note which read *you naughty man*.

A pack of Gouache Fine Professionnelle, 150ml.

A pack of Oscilloccinum.

A pair of grey, knee-length Gant socks.

A pair of men's tights, thick, black, soft.

A pair of silk socks: one dark brown, the other faded.

A piece of moulded grey plastic.

A pot of fast dry enamel paint, left over from an artwork they made together.

A pot of pink glitter.

A pubic hair.

A right foot shoe, Cesare Paciotti, burgundy patent leather slip-on with pointed toe and lace-up detail.

A roach end.

A set of joke shop teeth, fat molars protruding from bubble-gum-pink gums.

A small, white, cotton pillowslip.

A Zippo wick, unused.

**Alix**

Alix gets a roll of black bin bags.

Alix watched the lascivious curl of his lips as he read the note.

Alix holds them up.

Alix would have felt too self-conscious to wear something like that.

**Another**

Another right foot shoe, also Paciotti: black leather slip-on, with pointed toe, a silver buckle, and weave detail.

**As**

As she comes alongside the wall she sees that they've been tossed back into the garden.

**Carter**

Carter used to do this in their attic flat.

**Champagne**

Champagne corks.

**Did**

Did Thérèse wear the corset?

**Drizzle**

Drizzle mists the window.

**Had**

Had the packages arrived on the same day, he would have put the T-shirt on, walked into the kitchen without pants, used the tea towel to dry some cups, and made a coffee.

**He**

He had two pairs: a scratchy woollen pair, with lace-up fly, and a dirty white ribbed-cotton pair with a regular fly.

He knew how to live, she thinks, with his perfume, his designer clothes and his fish restaurants.

He knew where his parents kept their porn stash.

He played rugby at school.

He wore long johns when they met.

He would pour the cold coffee into a pan, add milk, heat it up slowly, and pour it into hot chocolate bowls, red for her, blue for him.

### **Her**

Her coffee is cold.

Her friend is leaving.

Her heart thuds.

Her instinct is to throw the pants away.

### **His**

His name painted on in black brushstrokes.

His stuff, sent over by the gallery after he died.

### **In**

In the cellar, she pulls out the over-sized Habitat bag from underneath the stairs.

In the past she was the person taking the pictures.

In the third box she finds a pair of pink fairy wings.

### **Inside**

Inside, a large piece of scrunched up canvas.

### **Is**

Is it possible for one person to be a home?

### **It**

It has been in storage all these years at a friend's studio.

### **Its**

Its heel is heavily scuffed.

**It is**

It is light but large and awkward.

It is date-stamped: 19 04 94.

**Items**

Items totalling 4,000 euros at JPG.

**Jean**

Jean will be home from school soon.

**Lengths**

Lengths of coloured chain attached to pieces of paper with the name of the colour handwritten in French, samples from when he changed supplier.

**Maybe**

Maybe Thérèse did too and wore it anyway.

**Men's**

Men's or women's?

**Of course**

Of course, she thinks, it's too late, they're no good to anyone.

**One**

One day, walking home, she can't see them.

One night, drunk and naked, he fell on top of his parents in bed.

**Rain**

Rain.

**Receipts**

Receipts, information cards, hotel brochures, hotel slippers, links of chain, toilet roll

centres, used razors, used toothbrushes, half-empty toothpaste tubes, screwed up bits of paper.

### **Seven**

Seven artist brushes, their handles smeared with paint.

### **She dumps**

She dumps the Habitat bag in the cellar.

She dumps them in the green wheelie bin.

### **She**

She always marvelled at his capacity to ping from being a man receiving a T-shirt with an embroidered cock on it, to a man receiving a linen tea-towel from his grandmother.

She balls them up and throws them back into the bench.

She can't decide what to do with the wings.

She digs into the stew.

She doesn't like perfume, or jewellery, or make up.

She flips open the seat lid and finds a pair of stiletto-heeled boots, size 5, a moth-eaten silk kimono and a pair of sheer men's pants.

She found it unusual, exotic.

She grew up in an abstemious household.

She holds them between her right forefinger and thumb.

She imagines the bulge of his cock as he parades and poses, filming himself, or having Thérèse or someone else take pictures of him.

She liked how it looked on him.

She looks at one of the receipts.

She lowers the box onto the concrete slab.

She makes a pot of coffee, and returns to the cellar.

She picks the pants out of the bench and holds them up.

She piles the other three large boxes on top of each other in the garden.

She places the wings on the low wall at the front of her house, where she routinely leaves things out for people to take.

She pours the coffee into a pan, adds milk, and warms it up.

She presses it to her nose.

She puts it in the washing machine.

She rams the nylon bag into a nook in the kitchen.

She retrieves them, muddy and torn, a snag has become a hole.

She scores the crucifix of red and white FRAGILE vinyl tape with a scalpel.

She slides the bench, stools and striped bag into the cellar.

She stares at the boxes in the garden, caved in by rain.

She sticks her hand in again and pulls out a black T-shirt with white stitching.

She stuffs the canvas and the items from the first box into the bin bag.

She thinks about the meal at Manus et Janette's.

She wants to take each item in turn, consider it, and re-box it, whilst she decides what to do with it.

She will need to cook.

She wraps her arms around the top box and lifts it down.

### **She has**

She has bought a pack of twelve, small and stackable.

She has the bag on the floor at her feet, her back to the metal stairs.

She had only ever seen men wearing long johns in Cowboy movies.

She has to collect.

### **She is**

She is hungry.

She is reminded of a T-shirt he received in the post, from a girl he made a film with, on which the girl embroidered the outline of a cock and projectile drops of cum.

She is being healthy.

### **She opens**

She opens out an archive box.

She opens the bench, and looks at the wings.

She opens the brown soggy flaps.

She opens the lid and sniffs.

She opens three of the sent over boxes, and stuffs the contents into a huge Habitat bag.

### **She takes**

She takes down a second box, and cuts through the tape.

She takes them into the cellar, and stuffs them into the bench.

### **She was**

She was there when the girl called.

She was with him when he bought it.

### **The**

The bathroom door rattles in its frame.

The bench, ugly, diminutive, further crowds the kitchen.

The box is half-empty.

The edges of the box dig into her biceps as she presses it against her chest and face. The first item is a shiny silver package that leaks pink pigment.

The girl was 20 to his 35.

The higher he ascended the pointier his shoes became.

The pants, the boots, the torn kimono, have a whiff of seediness, like the pervasive chemical drift of coke, which invaded him.

The perfume is in her nostrils.

The seams accentuated his wide shoulders and a lean torso. The stuff invades her house for weeks.

The T-shirt is full of holes.

The toe and heel are worn.

The wings sit on the wall for days.

### **There's**

There's no label on the bag, but the contents have a pleasing pliability.

### **They**

They also smell of perfume.

They're covered in bits of dust.

They carried him, corpse-like, back to his bed.

They did that once, when they were first together, ran around wearing just T-shirts in a friend's apartment which they were flat-sitting.

They glow with toxicity, along with the stiletto-heeled boots and the nude pants.

They look homemade.

They sat on upturned milk crates either side of a tiny oak table salvaged from the Greenwich gasworks, and ate cream cakes from the Italian patisserie down the road.

**This**

This is what she is doing now.

**Two**

Two packs of Dextropropoxyphene Paracetamol Biogram.

**Wolford**

Wolford, size small.

**When**

When they were together he wore steel toe-cap boots, trainers, and latterly, Church's brogues.

**Who**

Who was there?

**Why**

Why does she find it so abhorrent?

**Wow**

Wow, she thought, when he told her, wow.

**Yet**

Yet he's dead and she's alive

**EIGHT**

CARTER AND THÉRÈSE GO TO MEXICO

CARTER AND THÉRÈSE ARE FEATURED IN *PARIS MATCH* WHICH THEY BUY AT THE AIRPORT SHOP.

THÉRÈSE WANTS TO BE A FILMMAKER.

ON THE PLANE, CARTER ACCUSES THÉRÈSE OF BEING IN LEAGUE WITH LUCIA.

CARTER IS PARANOID AND THINKS EVERYONE IS AGAINST HIM.

THÉRÈSE DUMPS CARTER AT MEXICO CITY AIRPORT.

CARTER IS PICKED UP IN A BLACK JEEP WITH BULLET PROOF DARKENED WINDOWS.

CARTER ARRIVES AT JOSÉS' GATED COMPOUND WHERE HE IS WELCOMED BY IDENTICAL JAPANESE TWINS.

WHEN THE TWINS SHOW HIM TO HIS ROOM CARTER BUMPS INTO *POP* BY CHRISTIAN COLE AND IS GESTICULATED AT BY SALLY GREEN'S ARM AND FIST SCULPTURE.

CARTER IS DISAPPOINTED. HE WANTED TO BE FRESH MEAT NOT THE END OF A LINE.

CARTER WANTS A CIGARETTE.

CARTER SMOKES IN HIS ROOM AND SETS OFF AN ALARM WHICH BRINGS JOSÉ.

JOSÉ SHOWS CARTER THE GALLERY SPACE. IT IS FILLED WITH BAGS OF CHAIN.

CARTER FEELS LIKE HE HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED.

CARTER IS WOKEN BY DOGS BARKING.

JOSÉ ARRIVES. IT IS DARK. 'YOUR GUESTS ARE HERE'.

CARTER IS LED INTO THE STUDIO, NOW SET UP WITH A LONG DINING TABLE AROUND WHICH SIT THE GUESTS.

THE GUESTS CHEER.

CARTER IS ANNOYED. HE TELLS JOSÉ TO TAKE OFF HIS CLOTHES, THAT HE WILL MAKE HIM INTO AN ARTWORK.

CARTER MAKES A CHAIN OUTFIT ON JOSÉ. THE GUESTS CHEER.

THE GUESTS AND JOSÉ DANCE.

THE GUESTS CHEER.

CARTER MAKES HIS EXIT. LUCIA NEVER ARRIVES.

## DEAD MAN'S STUFF, ESPECIALLY, IS NO GOOD

A bag of rags.

A bit, he replied.

A black leather Harley Davidson boot, women's, with a metal-tipped spike-heel, pointed-toe and a thin line of orange piping.

A blue cotton item.

A copy of *The Economist*.

A film flickered, highlighting his limbs and his hand wrapped around his cock.

A full cup, surely, she would have said.

A jumper.

A plastic box of poster paints, containing 21 10p-sized circles of colour which glisten as if wet from recent use.

A right foot boot, with a brogue-style shoe, and a canvas leg section which laces up at the front and zips up at the back.

A roller-coaster ride of them against the world, the result of which finds her in a room, digging through the dusty items of a dead man.

A shit smell.

A small man.

A tiny naked Carter, clambered up a ladder in front of his chain-link version of Fragonard's *The Swing*, which hung on the wall behind the tent, and perched on its top rung.

A V-neck sweater is dusty and fragile, its left shoulder ravaged by moths.

A violent Japanese porn film.

After years of moving from house to house she finally feels at home.

Afterwards, in Maxim's, Alix stared around at the women, the young only distinguishable from the old by their fresh skin and hair that moved.

Afterwards, she lay next to him, her head in his armpit, his scent not unlike the pungent stink when cats spray to mark territory.

Ah!

Alix, come out,' he said.

Alix considered.

Alix held off briefly and proceeded to eat the chocolate cheesecake.

Alix inspects it.

Alix presses a finger onto the white.

Alix tips the contents of the Armani bag onto the bedroom floor.

Alix throws the DVD cover onto the pile.

Alix turns it over and inspects its sole.

Alix turns the item around in her hand and pushes the tail section down through the tied ends.

Always bringing up the rear.

An Armani bag with fabric handles.

An instruction manual for a table tennis table.

An orange ping pong ball: Shildkrot, Germany.

An urge to pee.

And so am I.

And yet this isn't for her.

At first she was sympathetic, and tolerant of the tubes of Daktacort that littered the bathroom cabinet and kitchen drawer.

At its centre she sees a nail.

Back in her bedroom she puts the items into a second laundry bag, and zips it up.

Back in their flat, the phone rang.

Be hard to tear, she thinks.

Bits of blue thread stick out.

But it was always Carter's work.

But she's the grown up, right here, right now.

But the area for the head is too shallow.

Can we have some ashes, she said, to put under a tree, so that Jean will have something of him, a place to find him.

Carter angled the viewfinder further towards her.

Carter built a six foot high cardboard fortress, and got Jean to paste on magazine pages, wine labels, and stickers.

Carter presented her with the cork, in which he'd wedged a 50p coin.

Carter referred to himself, often, in the third person: Carter needs a cigarette, or Carter is tired.

Carter's studio in Paris was littered with bags from luxury stores and empty champagne bottles.

Carter swung her around.

Come and look, he said.

Dead man's stuff, especially, is no good.

Did he feel he had a stake in the world, finally?

Did Jean use it when he stayed with Carter?

Did that hurt, she said.

Did Thérèse buy it for him?

Did you go to The Royal London, the voice asked.

Does it matter, she said.

Does she need to keep anything?

Finally, the balancing and bending, her left hand working his cock, the right hand with a finger up his arse, became too uncomfortable.

For luck, he said.

Front row seats, where Carter sat with Jean on his lap, in between Thérèse and the choreographer.

Half of the circular compartments are empty.

Have you made anything else, the woman asked.

He bought it, then, as a matter of interest.

He flipped the viewfinder towards her and pressed play.

He is going to leak out, she thinks, whilst I'm asleep, like the Genie in the bottle.

He is fucked, she thought.

He hadn't liked to read.

He leered, or sneered, which was it, and rolled away to smoke a cigarette.

He read out from the mags, broadcasting to visitors as they wandered around the show.

He shoved a camera in her face when she was in labour with Jean.

He stayed at the gallery most nights, and crawled about underneath the stage, where he had a sound system and a stash of porn mags.

He took Jean off Alix as they entered the theatre, and waved her towards a row at the back.

He wanked, slowly, slowly, then more vigorously.

He was projecting a porn film onto her, and filming it.

He was prone to eczema breakouts: itching and scratching.

He went on to use almost every person who passed through his studio in the work.

He will ask where they came from.

Her chest and throat feel thick.

Her finger print shows up, grey on the white.

Her usual drink then was Thunderbird.

His black-footed skinny legs dangle down.

His lean torso, in the black T-shirt with the white seams, squares its shoulders.

His parents took his ashes away after the cremation and conducted a burial.

How can there still be a smell?

I haven't seen the dead body, and I have no access to his burnt remains.

I saw your advert in *Modern Art* magazine, the voice said.

If an item is wearable, is it wrong to give it away?

If this was Carter's life now, she thought, he was welcome to it.

Indeed, a strange concept; how much would you like, half a cup, a full cup?

Is it coming from the bag?

Is this stuff something that Jean needs to have, or even know about?

It comes down, hits the edge of the desk and pings off under the bed.

It feels cold enough to snow. It feels tainted, like hazardous waste.

It has a deep band, which ties at the front as she holds it, with curved panels to give a hat shape, and a flap or tail section at the back which tapers to a point.

It has scope, room for improvement.

It's a pill-box, from the second world war, which we glazed as a philosophical gesture, she said.

It's a pre-made bandana.

It's dirty and covered in patches of yellow mould.

It's like handling items from a desecrated crypt, she thinks.

It's scalding.

It's some sort of bonnet.

It's too large for a child.

It lands tights uppermost, feet caught beneath the pile of T-shirts and jeans, which gives the crotch even more of a thrust.

It looks like a child's paint set.

It makes up the pair.

It smells musty.

It was cold, around 5am.

It was in this way that they began their collaboration.

Jean always called him Carter.

Just say whatever you think they want to hear, he said.

Later, at a private view, they discussed the merit of being phoned by a New York gallerist.

Later, the drinking and coke made the rashes angry, and she no longer cared.

Let me know when you do something else, she said, and they forgot to.

Like her emotions, rustling and settling.

Look at this, he said.

Lopsided from historical subsidence, the house is a survivor like her.

No, they said, we don't want to separate him.

Now it was his thing, part of the work.

On one side of the page Bugs Bunny bursts through three concentric orange rings, like the bearer of astonishingly good news, whilst Tweety Bird rides a see-through bubble in which Felix the cat sits looking furious, which is the way she feels right now, doing this.

On the other side of the page, an advert for a film by Warner Brothers looks paltry compared to the sharp-lined cartoonry of Disney.

One end is stitched, the other is frayed, where it's been cut or torn.

One time, she wet her finger, and inserted it, gently at first, then harder, into his anus.

Perhaps the items are settling?

She bounces the ball against the floor

She called them the night before.

She can recall many times when he ruddered his cock up between her breasts, or came on them.

She can't sneak the socks into Jean's drawer.

She carries the clothes bundle up into her bedroom.

She collects the bundle of items from the chair, and presses the crotch of the black tights to her chest.

She comes upstairs to go to the loo.

She could be subsumed by him, or go all in.

She doesn't want to ask Jean if he wants the clothes.

She dumps the laundry bag in the half-finished kitchen.

She feels like the girl in *Tomorrow's People*, which she watched as a kid and was more frightened by than *Doctor Who*.

She flips through it to check if there's an article about Carter.

She found it sweet.

She gets up, walks across to the radiator, and picks up the T-shirt.

She grabs an empty laundry bag and transfers the items from the Habitat bag into it.

She handled the balls, traced the line of his scrotum with her middle finger, and nudged the tip of his penis into her mouth with the heel of her hand.

She has another basket of laundry to hang out.

She heard him muttering, and moving about.

She heaves the bag upstairs into her bedroom and sticks her hand in.

She imagines Carter watching the film with Thérèse, sharing a fat joint and stroking her arm.

She is no closer to making any decisions.

She's tired.

She knows what happens to stuff: it sits in bags and boxes in an attic, or a basement, or clutters up living space, until finally you crack, and take it to the dump, or pile the boxes ten feet high in a yard and burn them.

She liked that she made him shout.

She loaded the laundry items onto the radiator before she went to sleep.

She looks at the laundry bag from a distance, and weighs up her opponent, preparing for the fight.

She needs fresh air.

She picks out a sheet of A4 paper, a test sheet for a printer, with blocks of colour, and a grid of fine black lines.

She placed her empty spoon centrally on the plate when she finished.

She places the solitary shoe next to the solitary boot.

She pressed the finger in harder as she sucked.

She presses it back onto the radiator, and tucks the shoulders over the top.

She pulled it out, and swapped hands.

She recalls his smell.

She remembers how, when they first met, probably after the first time they had sex, they drank champagne, and filled the bed with pistachio shells.

She shoves her hand back into the laundry bag.

She slid down his torso, her body suppressing his cock, which pinged up as she slid past, and her face was in line with it.

She smelt him close by.

She stared sullenly and chewed her nails, whilst he made laddish banter with the boys at the depot.

She stuck her legs up on the dashboard as they drove, feeling like her body was full of ants, so desperate was she to get out of there, back to her room and her book.

She takes a sip.

She thought she heard him exclaim.

She thrusts her arm back in the bag and picks out a scrap of paper torn from a French comic.

She unpegs the items from the line, including clothes belonging to her and Jean, and

balances them on her arm.

She walks over to a garden chair and flips the bundle onto it.

She wakes in the night.

She wants to get a handle on it all as a body, an entity.

She wanted to film the arguments.

She was bathed in a glow.

She watched as he ejaculated across the girl's pink frothy skirts, shook his now flaccid penis, and turned to look at the camera, eyes shining, his face a topography of cracks and crevices.

She woke up to the noise of the TV next to her on the stage.

She wonders if she became just another body for him.

She zips up the second bag, containing the items she has yet to sort through.

She and Carter did that once, with stuff from their loft.

She and Jean weren't invited.

She climbed off the stage and got into the tent.

She climbed out of the tent.

She goes back down into the cellar to get another laundry bag.

She goes into the back sitting room, where a temporary kitchen is assembled and unscrews the coffee pot.

She hears rustling.

She hears the coffee bubble up.

She imagines his armpit hair poking through the holes.

She imagines the builder coming out into the garden, looking at them, and at her.

She imagines Carter and Thérèse, blasting Wagner, and skipping around the candle pyre in his studio.

She looked at the ladder, in front of the chain piece, a few feet away from where they sat.

She looked at Carter, standing behind the tripod.

She pegs out the new stuff, blowing on her fingers in between each item.

She pegs up the last pair of pants from the new load, pulls the line to raise it up and ties it off.

She pulls at the loose threads, and adds it to the pile.

She pulls out a DVD cover: *Cannabis*, starring Serge Gainsbourg and Jane Birkin.

She pulls out a length of beige elasticated webbing.

She puts her arm into the bag again, and pulls out a pair of size 6 Ann Klein silk trousers.

She puts the bandana on, goes into the bathroom and looks in the mirror.

She puts the coffee pot onto the hob, and goes back down into the cellar to bring up the laundry bag.

She returns to the bedroom, and throws it onto the pile.

She returns to the line, mounted on a pulley system on the side of the house.

She sat down on the floor.

She sat alongside him in the van, and felt like a wife.

She turns it over.

She turns her head away, as she repeatedly thrusts her right arm into the lucky dip, to avoid the dust.

So much bloody stuff in the world.

So they had no grave, she and Jean.

Stuff is no good.

Suddenly, he was a man concerned with world affairs and the economy.

Sweat and coke and alcohol and cigarettes.

Table tennis was her thing, she played as a kid.

Ten years' worth of accumulated junk, childhood stuff and hand-me-downs that was threatening to bring down their living room ceiling.

That's the money shot, he said.

That must have been close to the end.

The back cover is purple with yellow writing and a drawing of Jane Birkin, with a cut out flower in her hair.

The boot is covered in dust, and has spots of mould on the leather upper and the sole.

The builders, who have been in the house for weeks, have been using the cellar as their changing room, and mess room, making instant coffee with an electric kettle.

The DVD is missing.

The first Alix + Carter artwork was a half-page advert in an art magazine: a panoramic photograph of a pillbox in a field, and their telephone number in white out of a black border at the bottom of the photograph.

The front cover is yellow with purple writing, and a drawing of Gainsbourg's craggy face, and a cut-out of a smoking gun.

The full feet make her think of the Lost Boys in *Peter Pan*, snuggled into their sleep suits, waiting to be taken care of.

The Gant socks are ok, she notices as she unpegs them.

The Habitat bag sits covered, now, in an unmanageable coating of plaster dust.

The jumper has deep, ridged cuffs and waistband, paint stains on the front, and small

moth holes under each arm pit.

The label says L'Homme Invisible, Paris.

The left-foot burgundy shoe.

The left stiletto-heeled boot.

The man on the front, the woman on the back.

The most affecting thing is the smell, a sickly, heavy perfume, with under-notes of sweat and dirt.

The muse.

The next item is a long length of purple nylon rope, half an inch in diameter, its ends cut and taped.

The only thing that matters is the work, he said.

The patent has scraped off at the toe, around the lace-holes, and the heel.

The Royal London was the hot art school of the day.

The rule seemed to be to extract a spoonful of dessert, and leave the spoon sitting on the plate.

The smell sticks in her nose as she navigates the joists of the kitchen floor.

The stuff is closing in on her.

The tights and T-shirt and other laundered items lurk, now, in the bottom drawer of her chest of drawers.

The tights dangle on the line, a pair of disembodied legs.

The tights mock her from their perch.

The T-shirt, despite having been left overnight in the machine before being hung out, still smells of perfume.

The T-shirt has a hole in the heart, a tear in the shoulder, and several small holes in the torso.

The T-shirt will go into the bin, she decides.

Then there was a smell.

There he is, sitting on the radiator.

There's a hole in the seam of the zip.

There's a split in the leather on the instep area of the sole in the shape of a tiny crucifix.

There's still so much to go through.

There isn't.

Thérèse's?

Thérèse did that.

They were making their final show as Alix + Carter.

This dead body is not dead, she thinks.

This way we can spend more time together, he said, and pulled doggy eyes.

Through the hole at the shoulder blotchy red rashes would be visible.

Through the window she sees the builder in the kitchen, replacing the floor.

To accompany him on boring jobs that he didn't want to endure alone such as driving vans for an art moving company.

Today the builders haven't turned up, so today she can re-engage with this thing that she is doing.

Two brass paper clips are hooked into it, one on one edge, the other on the opposite edge, at opposite ends.

Two tickets to Palais Garnier, seats 280 and 282, for Carter and Thérèse.

Was it a missed opportunity?

Was it Carter's or did he buy it for Jean?

What if Jean thinks stuff *is* good.

What is it, the woman said.

What should she have said, she thinks now.

What, those, she'll say, they belong to my dead ex-boyfriend, I thought I'd freshen them up for him, just in case he wants them back.

We're the artist,' she said.

When she inspects more closely Alix sees they are splashes of candle wax.

When she was reading he pawed at her like a cat.

When the girl looked out of the window, all was still, and when she looked again, the standing stones had crept closer to the house.

Who cleared out Andy Warhol's stuff after he died?

Who's the artist, an American voice asked.

Whose was it?

'Yes,' she said.

## SEVEN

In Basel, Carter and Thérèse walk side by side through the temporary corridors of the Basel Art Fair.

In Basel, Carter wears a knee-length navy blue frock coat with brass buttons.

In Basel, Carter says, ‘Do you think they’ll be running the projections? I know they don’t if I’m not around to set up. Is this coat ok?’

In Basel, Thérèse appraises Carter and says, ‘Dandy.’

In Basel, Carter says, ‘Are we ok for money? I don’t want to presume Konrad will buy lunch.’

In Basel, Thérèse says, ‘I’ve got cash.’

In Basel, Carter is on fire, and for once it isn’t coke-induced.

In Basel, earlier, at the hotel Carter raised Thérèse’s small frame on his feet, their hands clasped, and flew her to Arizona, her spiritual home, she said, a thing he used to do with Alix when they first met: they were almost the same height, weight and shoe size.

At the Basel Art Fair, Carter and Thérèse arrive at the stand for Konrad Glass Gallery.

At the Basel Art Fair, the Konrad Glass Gallery stand is divided into two areas, and it is in the smaller section that a single *Boogie Woogie* piece by Carter is displayed without projection.

At the Basel Art Fair, the girl sitting behind the desk asks, ‘Can I help you?’

At the Basel Art Fair, Carter says, ‘I’m Carter Barnard,’ and ‘What the fuck’s this?’ and gestures at six large grey and white grid paintings.

At the Basel Art Fair, the girl holds out a press release and says, ‘A young Swiss artist called Otto Fischer,’ and ‘Aren’t they amazing.’

At the Basel Art Fair, Carter says, ‘What a pile of shit,’ and ‘Where the fuck is Konrad?’

At the Basel Art Fair, Thérèse squeezes his arm and Milena and Konrad appear with Rebecca Scott, the London gallerist who represents Dan Winters, and who has the stand next door, which is filled, as Carter sees, with works by Dan, an artist Carter has a history with.

At the Basel Art Fair, Milena says ‘You’re here,’ and takes hold of Carter’s elbows and kisses either cheek.

At the Basel Art Fair, Carter says ‘What the fuck is going on.’

At the Basel Art Fair, Konrad introduces Carter to Rebecca unnecessarily.

At the Basel Art Fair, Rebecca cheek kisses Carter and says ‘Dan’s around. Dan, come on out.’

At the Basel Art Fair, Dan wanders into view from behind a partition at the back of Rebecca’s stand, and his face clouds: he hasn’t seen Carter since he kicked him out of his place in London two years ago.

At the Basel Art Fair, Carter puts his hand out and Dan ignores it.

At the Basel Art Fair, Rebecca asks Carter ‘Have you got work here?’

At the Basel Art Fair, Carter is suffering and Thérèse, standing next to him, looks as agitated as he feels and Carter unnecessarily introduces Thérèse to Rebecca.

At the Basel Art Fair, Rebecca is smiling at Thérèse and saying ‘We met last year at the Swiss Bank Gala dinner, you were with another artist, Jake Miller, how is he, I liked his work.’

At the Basel Art Fair, Rebecca turns to Carter and says ‘I heard about your show with Bloom,’ and Dan smirks and disappears behind the partition, probably to have a line – Carter recognizes the hard set of his face – and Carter is trying not to take coke just now, but despite their falling out he very much wants to join Dan behind the partition, until he hears the snorting laugh of Dan’s girlfriend, Jan Black, who is the person who did the actual kicking out of Carter from Dan’s studio when Carter failed to leave and instead set up for a film he was making, which involved the consumption of a large consignment of alcohol and the Olympics on TV and a couch planted up with potatoes for a show whose theme was beer.

At the Basel Art Fair, Carter reaches into his jacket pocket for his cigarette and Rebecca Scott says, ‘I’ll see you at the Opening Party later, give my regards to Alix,’

At the Basel Art Fair, Carter winces and wonders when they will forget about him and Alix.

At the Basel Art Fair, Thérèse has wandered off and is walking around the stands, filming.

At the Basel Art Fair, Carter says ‘What, are you the artist now?’

At the Basel Art Fair, Thérèse points the camera in his face.

At the Basel Art Fair, Carter can't decide whether to have it out with Konrad, or at least with Milena, but he knows they'll give him some guff about the projections not helping with sales, he's heard it before.

At the Basel Art Fair, he makes his way to the café area and finds Lucia at a table with a young man.

At the Basel Art Fair café, Lucia says 'Darling, we've been waiting for you.'

At the Basel Art Fair café, Carter puckers his lips against the stretched, over-tanned cheeks of his wannabe patron MWAH MWAH whilst Thérèse stands at a distance, filming.

At the Basel Art Fair café, Lucia pats the seat next to her and introduces Carter to the young man: 'this is Otto,' she says, 'your stand partner.'

At the Basel Art Fair café, Carter looks at the smooth-skinned, short-haired young man, and shakes his hand across the table.

At the Basel Art Fair café, Lucia squeezes Carter's thigh, as she turns to him and says, 'Darling, how are you holding up, Thérèse told me, Konrad always was an old rhinoceros, I'm surprised he took you on really, darling, you're far too excitable for him, let's get you a drink.'

At the Basel Art Fair café, as Thérèse approaches the table Carter wonders how she worked so fast in delivering the morning's occurrence but mostly he simply feels annoyed.

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening, Rebecca, Dan and Jan stand drinking near the Rebecca Scott Gallery stand, as Carter approaches, his arm linked with Lucia's, who hauls him across towards them.

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening, Lucia puckers up to the air either side of Rebecca's cheeks and says 'Rebecca, darling, how are you' and 'do you know our hot-blooded young man, here, Carter Barnard, he's a genius, have you seen his work.'

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening, Carter turns to Lucia and says 'Rebecca's from London, Lucia, we're old friends,' and takes a glass from a circulating tray.

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening, Jan pulls Dan away from the group and shouts out 'Carter Barnard is a sponging piece of shit.'

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening, Lucia says ‘Oh well, darling, it can’t hurt for her to see you through someone else’s eyes, I want to show you off,’ and ‘Christ darling, what did you do,’ as she shepherds him away.

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening, Carter shrugs, and says ‘I can’t remember, someone threw a bottle, Dan at me, or maybe it was me at Dan.’

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening, Konrad and Milena are talking to clients in the Konrad Glass Gallery stand, and Konrad glances across at Carter as he grabs a fresh glass of wine and shouts ‘so fucking dull,’ and gestures at the grey paintings and says ‘this is my show, you promised me Basel.’

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening, Milena comes over and puts her hand on Carter’s arm and says ‘Christ Carter, get a grip,’ and he says ‘oh just fuck off,’ and pulls his arm back and spills wine on Milena and Milena backs away and Thérèse keeps filming and Milena turns to Thérèse and says ‘Why don’t I call a cab, get him back to the hotel,’ and Konrad continues talking with the client and Thérèse puts her camera away and says ‘Alors, mon cheri, on y va?’ and Carter says ‘oui, ma Cherie, on va y,’ and makes his way to the bar and Lucia who went away comes back and says ‘There you are,’ to Carter, and she is on the arm of a sun-tanned, dark-haired man and she says ‘look darling, here’s José.’

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening, José says ‘so lovely to meet you again, such a pity not to be able to see more of your works,’ to Carter, and Carter says ‘I’ll show you my works,’ and fumbles with his zip and Lucia says ‘Darling, not now, let’s get dinner, you can show us your cock later,’ and she tucks her arm again into Carter’s and she and José and Carter and Thérèse go to the restaurant.

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening at the restaurant, Carter and Lucia and José and Thérèse are shown to a table for eight and Lucia ushers Carter into a seat next to her and every time he makes a motion to stand up Lucia presses her hand firmly on his thigh, and he sits back down and Thérèse and José sit opposite and Carter looks across the dining area and recognises many faces in the room and despite everything he feels a burn of satisfaction and he is exactly where he is supposed to be and the reduced stand is a blip and he is a star and Lucia knows it and Thérèse knows it and Konrad knows it and Elena knows it and Rebecca knows it and Dan knows it and Jan knows it and even the new kid knows it and Alix knows it and Ellery knows it and he is hungry.

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening at the restaurant, he whips a menu card out of the hands of the waiter who has arrived at their table and says ‘what’s on the menu?’ and ‘I want something from the forests, something with oom-pah-pah, wild boar, or stag, something with horns,’ and Lucia touches his arm and says ‘are you feeling horny, my darling,’ and Carter looks across the table and sees that Thérèse is deep in conversation with José and Carter lights a cigarette and takes a deep drag and a waiter fills their glasses with champagne and Carter rests the burning cigarette in the ashtray and picks up his glass and stands on his chair and raises his glass and Lucia is talking now to a well-preserved lady to her right who has just arrived with the new kid and Konrad and Milena, and Carter brandishes his glass left and right and says ‘to the fucking art fair, I salute you,’ and Konrad says ‘Ah, the man himself.’

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening at the restaurant, Carter, who is wearing a kilt now not jeans and is going commando feels a hand on his cock and he stumbles off his chair and he is pulled to his feet by Lucia who says ‘Darling, how else was I going to get your attention, I thought I’d hold onto it in case you felt inclined to raise your skirts,’ and Carter had been inclined to raise his skirts and Carter watches as Konrad nods polite greetings to everyone at the table which now includes Otto and the well-preserved older lady and Milena and Konrad cheek kisses the older lady and shakes hands with Otto and pats him on the back and does not look at Carter and Carter raises his glass again, to make further comment and is interrupted by Milena who asks if everyone has ordered, and Carter declares ‘I’m having stag.’

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening at the restaurant, Konrad who is sitting next to the young man and diagonally opposite Carter leans in to the young man and gestures to Carter and the young man turns to Carter and makes a salute and Carter lifts the white table cloth and crawls underneath and stops on his hands and knees in front of Thérèse’s knees and shoves his hand up between her legs and she kicks him which buckles the arm he is leaning on and he continues along and emerges at the far end of the table next to Otto who, whilst his enemy, is also his friend.

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening at the restaurant, Otto says ‘hurrah, our hero emerges from the undergrowth,’ and ‘congratulations,’ and pats Carter on his back, and says ‘please meet Frau Potts, she is the wife of the director of the Basel Kunsthalle where I have a show just now as well as with Konrad,’ and he winks at Carter, and says ‘I am happy to be your stand mate’ and Carter takes the hand of the well-preserved older lady who looks at him sternly and he makes a showy bow and kisses her hand and the well-

preserved older lady retrieves her hand and continues her conversation with Konrad.

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening at the table at the restaurant, Otto says 'no hard feelings' and Carter looks at him closely and finds that he is at least ten years his junior and says 'Salut, I have left my cigarette burning, will you join me in the tunnels' and he nods downwards and the two of them now crawl underneath the table and Carter leads and there isn't much room and they trample their hands and knees on people's leather clad feet and exposed toes and they emerge at Carter's seat next to Lucia and Carter says 'Lucia, shall Otto sit on your lap or shall I.'

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening at the table at the restaurant, Konrad quietly requests a chair to be squeezed in between Carter and Lucia, at the same time as the food is delivered and a chair is delivered and Carter's cigarette has burnt down and left a lot of ash in the ashtray and smoke in Lucia's nostrils and Carter lights a new one and offers the packet to Otto and Otto shakes his head and Carter raises his glass and says 'prost' and Otto and Lucia and Thérèse and José and Konrad and Milena and the well-preserved older lady raise their glasses and Carter carves a chunk of steak and holds his fork across the table to Thérèse.

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening at the table at the restaurant, Thérèse points her camera at Carter and Carter takes the meat off his fork with his fingers and puts it into his mouth and licks his lips and stares into the camera and holds up the rest of the steak and bites into it and allows the juices to run down his chin and notices that the red light on the camera isn't blinking and puts the steak down.

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening at the table at the restaurant, Carter turns to Otto and says 'Otto, please meet José, a very rich Mexican man, and Thérèse, my loving girlfriend, and very rich French woman' and he turns to Otto and says 'are you a rich German man as I know my darling is on the lookout,' and Otto nods at José and Thérèse and says 'José and I know one another but Thérèse I do not know,' and Carter says 'great, have you got any coke?'

Later, at the Basel Art Fair opening at the table at the restaurant, Lucia grips Carter's arm and says 'Everyone's going next door,' and 'darling, let's dance,' and Carter looks across the table at Thérèse, and her teaspoon rests on her dessert plate, loaded with a spoonful of chocolate cheesecake, and she looks bored and hungry and Konrad and Milena and the well-preserved older lady are still in conversation and José and Otto are

rising out of their seats and Carter says ‘wait,’ and loads three sugar lumps into his espresso, and stirs it slowly, his fingers almost completely covered by his shirt cuff, and knocks it back and he and Lucia and Thérèse and Otto and José make their way to the basement disco, a room furnished with white leather banquettes and non-ironic disco lighting and a non-ironic cocktail bar and a non-ironic lit up dance floor and Carter twirls around on the dance floor and he has Lucia on his shoulders and he sees Thérèse go back up the stairs and he thinks let her go, what use is she to me, anyway, and Otto is snaking around the dance floor and he moves close to Carter and he says ‘I know where to get some Koks,’ and Otto pushes forward two guys who are art technicians and Otto knows them and Carter says ‘Can you take her’ and Otto lifts Lucia off Carter’s shoulders and during this transition Lucia says ‘darling, I could have told you where to get some Koks,’ saying koks in a funny way to sound Swiss-German and she pats his arm and Carter says ‘I feel like taking the vapours, shall we,’ and he and Otto and the art technicians ascend the stairs which Thérèse ascended some moments earlier and they exit onto the street.

Outside, Otto makes the deal and turns to Carter and says ‘the Zoo or the Rhein.’

Outside, Carter needs to pee and performs a small jig on the pavement and says ‘Der Rhein, of course.’

Outside, Otto says ‘sehr gut, the zoo is a long way.’

Outside, Carter follows Otto along a wide main road which leads to the river, and they negotiate a non-littered shrubbery and emerge onto a paved course way at the edge of the very wide river and they hunker down and Carter pulls a square piece of mirror from his jacket pocket and Otto tips out a small mountain of white powder and Carter holds the mirror with his left hand and pats down his pockets with his right hand looking for a credit card.

Outside, Otto says ‘Schau.’

Outside, Carter takes the credit card and divides the powder into two long lines and the grains of coke bunch and stick together like iron filings, a bit like the art world, he thinks, no grain wants to be cut off from the group, and the first line smarts against his throat and he gulps down the bitter phlegm at the back of his nose.

Outside, Carter films as they walk along and after half a mile along they arrive at a river taxi, moored up, and Otto jumps on and Carter makes the leap, and they climb a small barrier to access the bridge and the door is locked and Carter turns around and sees

two life boat dinghies through the camera lens which bob about behind the taxi.

Outside, Carter points and says 'Otto' and puts his camera away, and climbs back over the barrier and together they pull a dinghy alongside the taxi and Otto climbs down into it, and stands up and holds onto the edge of the taxi as Carter steps in and Carter unties the dinghy and they push away.

Outside, Carter and Otto lay down and the boat drifts and Carter points his camera at the sky and Otto asks 'does it look like what you expected it to look like,' and someone shouts 'Otto, up here' and Carter angles his camera and films a young man who hangs over the balcony of the Hotel Les Trois Roses and Carter sees Thérèse on the balcony, next to the young man, and she doesn't look down and on another balcony Carter sees Konrad and Milena and Lucia and José and Carter raises a hand and effects a royal gesture and they are not looking.

Shortly afterwards, they bump into a small jetty.

Shortly afterwards, Otto grabs onto a post and pulls the dinghy in next to a slipway and holds the dinghy steady as Carter steps off and Carter obliges for Otto and Carter films the flapping sails of the moored yachts and runs the camera across a clubhouse sat on the first floor of a large boathouse with an external metal staircase and Carter and Otto climb the stairs and Otto tries the door handle and Carter slides back down the metal balustrade and half jumps half falls off the end and manages to keep filming.

Shortly afterwards, Carter says 'Where are the strip clubs?'

Shortly afterwards, Carter and Otto scale a wall and walk back into town.

Shortly afterwards, Carter films the neat shuttered buildings and shop windows.

Shortly afterwards, at the entrance to a bar there is an exchange between Otto and the bouncer.

Shortly afterwards, Otto says, 'he doesn't like the camera, you have to leave it with him to go in.'

Shortly afterwards, Carter points his camera at the bouncer who shouts at Carter.

Shortly afterwards, Carter dances off up the street.

Shortly afterwards, Otto follows Carter and puts an arm around his shoulders and says, 'I tell him he will be the star, but he's not convinced.'

Shortly afterwards, Carter puts his camera away and Carter and Otto enter the bar down a single flight of narrow steps.

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, Carter bangs the door to his and Thérèse's room.

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, it is 4am.

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, Carter says 'open the fucking door.'

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, the door to the next room opens and Konrad, wearing charcoal grey pyjamas, approaches Carter and says 'Carter, I would like to stay in this hotel again, where is your key?'

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, Carter pats his jacket pockets and feels in his jeans and the key is there and he lets himself into the room and Thérèse sits in the chair, smoking.

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, Carter says 'why didn't you open the fucking door?'

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, Thérèse says 'why didn't *you* open the fucking door.'

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, Carter says, 'Some welcome.'

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, Thérèse says, 'where have you been?'

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, Carter says, 'having fun,' and Thérèse says, 'good for you,' and Carter says, 'haven't you been having fun,' and Thérèse says 'yes, José and I have been having fun, and Elena and Konrad, we went dancing, and then we went for ice cream,' and Thérèse eyes him, unsmiling.

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, Carter says, 'you didn't have to come.'

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, Thérèse says, 'you invited me, actually, Konrad invited me,' and Carter says, 'of course, you're his rich bitch art hag, why wouldn't he invite you, always good to have a euro-trash entourage, it makes him stand out from the crowd,' and Thérèse says, 'you're such a shit,' and Carter wants more coke and he approaches Thérèse and makes to take her cigarette and Thérèse resists and Carter says, 'what the fuck do you do anyway,' and he can taste the white spittle at the corners of his mouth, and Thérèse picks up her camera and pushes it in front of his face and the red recording light is on.

At the Hotel Les Trois Roses, Carter says 'here, let me film you, you're so fucking exciting,' and he attempts to grapple the camera out of Thérèse's hands and Thérèse jumps up and locks herself in the bathroom and there is a tap on the door and Carter

stands still and he hears Thérèse sobbing behind the bathroom door and someone says ‘sir, is everything alright,’ and Carter remains still and he hears the person move away and he picks up his camera and leaves the Hotel Les Trois Roses.

Outside, Carter stands on the pavement and smokes.

Outside, the sky is beginning to lighten.

Outside, Carter turns left and left again, until he finds a café that’s open and the brown tiled floor and metal chairs and optics bar and TV in the corner remind him of the café in the square of the mountain village in France where his parents owned a house, it was Picasso territory, and as a teenager he would sneak out at night and sit at a table with a Pernod, and make charcoal drawings of the hunters and farmers, with whiskery sideburns, thick arms, fat fingers, bulbous noses, wearing overalls, or belted blue trousers, and boots, very German Expressionist, and the walls were decorated with hunting trophies of wild boar and stag and he took Alix there early on in their relationship and she hated it, the patriarchy, the tradition, she was bored, it was a place where fashion and pop and individuality and ambition appeared to have no currency, she said, and that was always her problem, he thinks, she had an idea of herself, she couldn’t just be, and the air is smoky, and stout men stand at the counter drinking espressos and brandy, and smoking and a TV blares news and there is animated conversation between two men at the end of the bar and they wear long blue aprons and steel toe-capped boots and perhaps they work at a morgue, and they remind Carter of his dad, they are upright burgher types, mensch, with strong arms and deep voices, and content to pass the toss, it seems, about, what, about football, about betting, about the news, about their next dead body on the slab and he orders an espresso and a brandy, and drinks and smokes and stares at the news, and the stream of Swiss German sounds urgent and important, it feels comforting, and he doesn’t understand, and he is a visitor, and doesn’t need to understand but what he does understand is that he may have fucked something up, a lot of things, and Konrad overhearing him arguing with Thérèse isn’t good, and Thérèse sobbing isn’t good, and he signals for the tab and places some coins in the saucer which bears the Swiss flag. He exits and wanders until he finds a payphone, an open-sided booth and trams and lorries and cars pass by and he takes out his hotel keycard for the number and he hears several long beeps and a voice says ‘Hotel Les Trois Roses,’ and Carter says, ‘Room 62,’ and the line beeps for a long time and the voice says ‘No

response, sir,' and Carter says, 'Try again,' and it beeps and beeps and eventually Thérèse says 'Yes,' and she sounds as if she's half asleep and Carter says 'It's me,' and Thérèse doesn't speak and Carter says 'I had to get out, Konrad must have heard everything, I think he wants to drop me,' and Thérèse says 'you're being paranoid.'

When he returns to the hotel it is 6am.

When he returns to the hotel it is 6am, and he takes a shower.

When he returns to the hotel it is 6am, and he looks at his blotchy skin in the mirror.

When he returns to the hotel it is 6am, and he flexes his muscles and pulls comedy musclemen poses in front of the full length mirror.

When he returns to the hotel it is 6am, and he remembers the wrap in his jacket pocket, and there is probably enough for one line.

When he returns to the hotel it is 6am, and he opens up the square of paper, and it isn't enough for one line and he rubs it on his gums, and considers snuggling in next to Thérèse, who is asleep now, her hair spread out on the pillows.

When he returns to the hotel it is 6am, and he opens the balcony door, naked, and he looks out at the city and flings his arms out wide and says, 'salut, La Suisse,' and the sun strikes his chest as he beats it with his fists and hollers like Tarzan, 'Ah, aaaah ah aaaaaah.'

## ALIX WONDERS IF THE CAR WAS MOVING

A coin bag from Lloyds Bank containing three 35mm slides.

A crossed out word.

A drawing of a skull and cross bones.

A Nat West cheque-book.

A neatly written note about work, money and tidying up the flat.

A notebook from The Groucho Club, A6, with buttery yellow paper and stationery details in racing green.

A packet of photographs of Carter and Thérèse, and an older man, a collector no doubt.

A pencil drawing of a foot.

A polaroid of the room-sized cardboard castle.

A postcard of a shoe.

A sheet of cellophane, on which the words: *The Jesus nod, not everyone gets it.*

A reproduction of *The Laughing Cavalier* painting cut out of a fusty old art book, and stuck in.

A sheet of notepaper from L'Hotel Bohème, on which, in pencil, a phone number.

A sheet of paper on which, in pencil: *Carter loves Alix despite her ... this much is clear, the last two words take longer to decipher, sex drive.*

A sheet of tracing paper on which Carter has traced the outline of the painting.

A snapshot of Carter and Jean, from their last holiday together.

A table napkin, on which he's drawn a plan for the Bloom Projects show.

A taxi receipt for Queens Car Service.

Above this, *slipping the ... what?*

After they split, Carter gave Alix a silk fan in a box.

Alix crunches her shoulders.

Alix drops the shoe back into the bag, and sits cross-legged on the floor.

Alix arrived at the private view and discovered that Ellery had been in Paris with Carter all week.

Alix heaves the striped nylon bag into her new office.

Alix holds the negatives up to the light, and reveals a series of coloured condoms laid on white paper, each condom with a creepy crawly inside.

Alix hovers her foot above the drawing to see if it fits.

Alix takes the actual catalogue from a shelf.

Alix turns the pages of the scrapbook.

Alix turns to the next page.

Alix wonders if the car was moving.

All that's visible of Carter is the top of his head, and one eye, looking down.

Alongside a Shakespeare quote "Art is the stuff of dreams" Carter has written, *shagging your sister* and <<STUFF ART I'M DREAMING>>.

Also in the striped bag: a folder of photocopies of reviews about an exhibition in the 1980s around female representation; scraps of newspaper; a piece of fax paper with three lists, written by her some twenty years ago, which detail a list of medical complaints (his) – itchy red skin, diarrhoea, ingrowing toenail, a to do list, and a D.I.Y. list to which he's added *Demonstrate the allegory Everything is Vanity*, and *Vanity is never yours*.

Always with his cock.

An area marked *Alix's text*.

An emblem of him.

An envelope containing a glossy A4 print of Carter at a restaurant table, dressed with a pot of flowers.

An external shot of his studio.

An invitation for dinner at Maxim's.

Another photo in which Carter wears the heart T shirt.

At the top of the invitation card: *touriste de mes pensees*.

At the top of the page: *Sir Rumpelstiltskin*.

Behind them, a chain curtain of Warhol's *Electric Chair*.

Bits of writing typed in French.

Carter and Thérèse on a tropical beach.

Carter is spread, now, throughout the house.

Carter is twisting his lips.

Carter's face, cut off at the edge of the photo.

Carter's head pops out of a turret.

Carter's left hand, spatulate fingers.

Carter on a ladder, leaning in to fix something.

Carter peeping through the chain.

Collaged around it are pieces of grey card, on which is further scribbled *pow wow black watch* and *fly tribe* in black pencil crayon.

*diamond*

Did he write on the card whilst he sat next to the bleached-blond woman,  
who beckoned him.

Did she contribute?

Did she fondle his cock?

Eyebrows raised.

Facing, a colour photograph of Carter's five metre high chain curtain of the *Mona Lisa*, taped onto grey art paper.

Flecks of spittle foamed at the sides of his mouth, as he stamped his feet.

For all his disarray, he had a system.

*fly ridden riden mosaic*

*GNAT*

Hair sticking up on top.

He also posted to Alix and Jean, in envelopes brightened by shimmery stickers, A4 portraits of himself, private view cards for his shows, and postcards with cheery lines such as *skiing in the Alps, I've had a cold, but it's sunny*.

He continued to present her with the odd item after they split.

He had a knack for soliciting gifts from people: luxury packages of herb tea, rosemary-infused olive oil, coffee table art books, hotel stays, Gucci outfits.

He had no filter, she thinks.

He's nailed it.

He holds up his glass.

He's an artist, the woman said, what do you expect.

He's looking away from the camera.

He's wearing a pink leather wristband.

He liked it, so she gave it to him.

He looks exhausted.

He looks nervous.

He smiles at someone out of shot.

He stands at the foot of a staircase.

He wears a chain necklace, black and silver, with a locket attached.

He wears a military style coat over a white vest.

He wears a snorkel mask, inflating and deflating an empty Capri Sun packet and sucking and blowing through a straw like an asthmatic breathing into a paper bag.

Her idea.

Here, reproduced, is the scrawled on Maxim's invitation.

Hers.

His eye is open but again he's looking down.

His eyes open wide so that the whites are visible above the retinas.

His face is hidden by Jean, and by the neck rest of the person taking the photo.

His face is puffy.

His head presses back into his neck and forms a ring of loose flesh under his chin.

His position as an artist.

His right cheek, corner of eye and forehead.

His wide open mouth reveals molars and a fat tongue.

I'm Rumpelstiltskin, he said, don't you get it?

In another picture Carter and Thérèse embrace underwater, diving tanks on their backs.

In black: *placebo*.

In red: *Pool of blood*.

In the centre of the card, the stigma shape.

In the centre of the plan, an area marked *Trampoline*, and a drawing of a skull and cross bones.

In tiny writing, *troubled my sky why did*.

Invoices.

It has a hole in it.

It's a satisfying thing to open and close.

It looks as if he's asleep.

It looks like Carter's foot.

It lurks in a drawer.

Jean sits on Carter's lap.

Like the transcription of one of his films, in which he dances in front of a mirror to a techno soundtrack.

Lots of crossings out.

Many of the top pages are bent back.

More bits of paper.

More photos in the same setting.

More scribbles.

Next, a colour photocopy of the *Mona Lisa*, laid over with a sheet of acetate, on which he's drawn a nosebleed.

On it he carefully signed his name in white ink.

On the inside back page, two post-it notes contain an address and directions to a restaurant.

On the inside front cover, *STOLEN TOYS*, in wonky, childlike writing.

On the inside lid of the box he wrote, *I'm a Fan*.

On the facing page, a photocopy of a reproduction of Hokusai's *Red Fuji*.

On the left side, a butterfly drawing.

On the next page, a colour photocopy of a photograph of another chain artwork, a reproduction of the screen-printed T-shirt, depicting a heart speared by an arrow, and the word LOVE.

On the table in front of him, a bottle of ketchup, an ashtray, a wine glass, a coffee cup with a sugar sachet in its saucer, a packet of cigarettes and keys.

*open door, door bollocks, partout*

Pasted in, photocopies of the scribbled-on menu card.

Pencil drawings, private view invitation cards, drawings of his degree show installation, an envelope addressed to Alix + Carter, which contains an invitation to

contribute to a New York art magazine.

*proping*

*Propping it up some more to be sure*

Reading the card makes her chest constrict.

She bought it on her 35<sup>th</sup> birthday.

She bought that postcard at the V&A.

She can't read the next word.

She considers placing each item in a plastic bag, and tagging it, as if at a crime scene.

She didn't.

She flicks it up. She flicks through.

She flicks through the final pages of the scrapbook.

She gave it to him.

She fetches the burgundy shoe.

She imagines him scribbling on the card and saying the words out loud, smelling of sweat and perfume, eyes shining *heh heh heh* the woman touching his leg.

She looks again at the drawing of the foot.

She picks out a 10 inch by 3 inch by 4 inch box, white with black lid, Chanel.

She picks up the scrapbook and turns the page.

She presses a spot on her left foot just beyond the instep.

She recognises his toes.

She recognises this phrase as a title.

She'll keep it.

She remembers him in their kitchen, laughing.

She wipes the dust off the cover and opens it.

*slipping a link, sipping champagne, hand in my pants*

Snapshots of Carter with Jean and his parents in his Paris studio.

Standing to his right are a middle-aged, rich-looking couple.

Stuck in on further pages are photographs of his works exhibited at the Konrad Glass Gallery show, and a photograph of Alix + Carter's final show at Exhibit A gallery.

Text at all angles.

The black lid fits snugly, a sheath.

The box is empty, like a mini-coffin.

The builders have finished.

The camera is zoomed out.

The drawing is punctuated by a circular, shaded, puncture mark, just beyond the instep, in the same spot as the stigma-shaped incision on the sole of the burgundy shoe.

The card is thick and shiny.

The front cover reads 'Silver Jubilee 1952-1977: Souvenir Cuttings Book'.

The image is torn just below his wrist.

The man, Asian, wears khaki slacks with his shirt tucked in, a belt and a tie.

The man looks significantly older than the woman.

The man looks uncomfortable.

The man wears yellow trunks and holds a toy shark.

The musty smell leaps to the back of her throat as she unzips the bag and reaches in for the shoe.

The picture is taped in face down.

The scrapbook was the dummy for this catalogue.

The second photograph is a close up of his head and chest.

The shoe is left foot.

The skull is tea-stained.

The spot just beyond the instep is sensitive.

The stairs are carved out of rock.

The stigma shape is in the same spot, relatively speaking, as in the drawing.

The woman is smiling.

The woman pinned Alix to a wall in the gallery.

The woman wears an ankle-length white gauze dress.

The woman is white and skinny with bouffant, strawberry-blonde hair.

Thérèse's head pops out sideways.

They're all like that, she said.

They each hold an ornate flute.

They spent a night at the St Martin's Hotel.

They were the same shoe size.

Things, like this, which she suspects someone gave to him.

Two blank pages.

Two yellow Post-Its, stuck together.

*wish*

Written across the scribblings: *HOT BLOODED!* and *FEVER!*

*You've got to be nuts first and then hone it down, you can't just start from nothing*

## SIX

### *Carter's studio, Villemoble, Paris, 20 March 2001, 11am*

Claude and Severine, Carter's assistants, are up ladders installing *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*. Carter runs a dry tongue around an acrid mouth – his teeth gritty with cocaine dregs – as he rifles through cassettes on the table and on the floor, their titles scrawled onto white labels in black marker pen: *Wanking, Bouncing, Ping Pong 1, Ping Pong 2, Pissing, Girls in Bathtub*. He also has a film of him dancing around in a crash helmet with the cut-out face over his, a fountain film, a film of a picnic in his studio yard, his homage to *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, in which two men are naked as opposed to the woman, a burning Christmas Tree film, films of him making chain necklaces and dresses on people, footage of journeys, footage of advertising hoardings, footage of him making the Rousseau piece with a girl swinging in a hanging chair, naked, drinking beer. He chooses now *Bouncing, Wanking, Pissing*, and the burning Christmas Tree. He is re-creating his recent show at Bloom Projects in New York, to show Konrad. Basel is imminent, and Carter hopes to be given the entire stand.

Claude wanders across. 'Help me clear up.' Carter hands him a broom. They sweep the smaller items, films, clothing, rags, art magazines, newspapers, to the edges of the room.

'Severine.' Carter straightens up and leans on the broom. He is bare-legged, wearing a knee-length navy blue shalwar kameez shirt, and hotel slippers. Severine turns around in her position halfway up a ladder, lengths of chain in hand. 'Help.' Carter gestures at the floor, criss-crossed with wires and cables, and littered with equipment.

Severine frowns. 'Ok.'

Between the three of them they lift the music equipment to the edge of the room, each carrying an item attached umbilically to another: record player to amp, amp to speaker.

'Shit.' A speaker wobbles and falls onto Carter's toe.

Carter trundles over an old-fashioned line marker, given to him by his grandmother. 'I've got the chalk somewhere.' He finds the bag of chalk in a box in the bathroom, and hands it along with a bucket to Claude. 'Two parts chalk, one part water.'

He goes out into the yard to smoke whilst Claude makes the paint. His right toe

throbs. It is the same toe he broke some fifteen years ago doing a picture-hanging job in Mayfair. He's reminded of the sterility and ostentation of that house. He shared a joint with another tradesman who was there at the same time as him, and stumbled up a step with the heavy artwork.

When he goes back inside Claude is filling the line marker tank, splashing white paint on the floor. Carter pushes the marker around the space, and demarcates the site of an absent trampoline, with its rounded corners. The machine is old and bunged up and bumps around, leaving uneven lines. The actual trampoline has been impounded by Bloom, along with the *Mona Lisa* piece and a couple of *Electric Chair* pieces, compensation, Bloom declared, for the physical stress and humiliation of Carter landing on top of him, after a drunken mis-bounce, at Carter's Private View.

Having outlined its outer edges, Carter lifts the machine a foot within the white line, and goes around again. He picks the machine up a second time, shuffles it forward six inches, and makes another outline of the inner bouncing area. He picks up a paintbrush, dips into the white chalk paint and paints in giant springs.

Claude walks past now carrying another chain artwork, the heart pierced with an arrow, which is to be hung across the middle of the studio, at the front edge of the imaginary trampoline, enclosing it within the larger room. The hooks are in place in the ceiling.

'Wait.' Carter signals to Claude to stop. He fetches another stepladder and positions it underneath a hook. 'Don't carry these by yourself. The rail will bend.' He takes an end, and lifts it off Claude's shoulder. They hoist the piece up and sit the rail onto the hooks.

'Wet paint,' Carter shouts to Claude.

Too late.

Claude clomps on the imaginary springs, and traipses white footprints in his wake.

He mimes an apology.

Carter shrugs, jumps down from the ladder, and picks up the paintbrush, which he left balanced on the edge of the paint can. He enters the bouncing zone and writes, in a mixture of upper and lower case letters, the word "trampoline".

He balances four cameras and projectors on stools, stacks of books, and on a ladder. He presses play on the first camera, and walks around to turn on each of the other three, a new layer of sound kicking in each time. He crosses to the table and snorts a line of

coke, one of three already chopped out, and undresses. A fifth camera is positioned to record.

He picks up a lion mask, with wavy mane and cut out eyes and passes through the chain heart. The chain feels cold. He squats down next to the record player, and replaces a classical record with the nearest record to hand, trance techno. In the middle of the imaginary trampoline he makes a powerful strong-legged tuck jump; his penis droops through his legs and pokes beneath his bottom. A star jump. His penis flies up. Two half twists, and a seat drop. He lands with a jolt, straight legged, on the floor. 'Ah.' His wrists take the brunt of the landing. He pushes himself up off the floor, approaches a camera on a tripod, which is recording, mask still on. He licks the lens, a fat pink tongue, and exits the scene to snort another line, his toe and wrist hurting. Whilst hoovering up the coke he spies a bag on the floor, which contains face paints. He takes off the lion mask, and carries the paint pots into the bathroom. He covers his face in white, adds red cheeks, and black stripes of war paint. He bumps into Claude as he exits the bathroom. He's forgotten he isn't alone. 'Oof.' Carter giggles. 'Come for a bounce.' He takes Claude by the hand, and pulls him along. Carter throws up his arms. 'Like this. This is how you get height.'

Claude attempts the movement. Looking nervous. With each jump his face lightens. He laughs now as he throws his arms up vigorously.

'Severine. Come on in.'

The two men fling up their arms, banging against each other. 'Severine.'

The chain curtain parts and Severine appears, with Milena.

Carter thuds to a halt. He kisses Milena on each cheek, leaving greasy red and black stains. 'Come and have a bounce.'

'Put some clothes on Carter. Konrad's here.' Milena thrusts his work overalls at him.

Carter puts them on and follows Milena out into the open space. 'Hey, Konrad.' Carter steps towards him, and holds out his hand.

Konrad stands rigid. 'We may not quite have space for all that.' His face is stern. 'Perhaps we've moved too fast.' He glances across at the coke on the table. 'As it's Europe, shall we have three of the Mondrian pieces. Milena will arrange the pick up.'

Milena, still marked with red, follows behind Konrad as he moves to leave.

As the door to the studio closes Carter bends over to take the remaining line of coke. He measured out three lines to include Claude and Severine, but clearly his need is greater than theirs. He puts on another record and continues to bounce.

The studio is empty. Claude and Severine have clocked off. It's dark and Carter feels a rumble of hunger. He takes a beer from the fridge, and flicks off the lid with a bottle opener on a string on the wall. He picks up a piece of bubble wrap and manipulates it into a ball, which he wraps with vinyl tape. He pulls another length of bubble wrap off a large roll standing near the wall and adds it to the ball. He continues adding layers, like making a parcel for pass the parcel, but without the surprise in each layer. By the fifth wrapping the ball has become a pouffe. He jingles back through the chain and sets it down. He puts the classical record back on and sits on the newly made pouffe.

'Konrad wants me,' he says. He rolls off, lays on his back on the floor and executes snow angels. 'He loves me. He loves me not. He loves me.' His volume increases with each pump of his arms and legs. He remembers Konrad's excitement when he first visited him in his East End studio. Underneath his suit and white shirt Konrad was sweating as he talked excitedly, handling the dildo sculptures, and running his hands through the chain. He especially loved the ping pong film with the bare-breasted umpire, Carter's version of Manet's waitress in *A Bar at the Folie-Bergères*.

Carter swigs the last drops of beer and pisses into the bottle. Drops of pee trickle over the edge onto his fingers as the bottle overfills. He picks up another bottle, with some stale dregs in it, and fills that bottle to just past half way. He places this second bottle next to the first on the floor. Konrad wants shit that doesn't stink. Carter picks up a bowl, and goes into the bathroom. Drops of pee escape as he strains to maintain his balance whilst doing an elevated poo. He puts the bowl onto the bathroom floor, and unrolls some toilet paper, wipes his arse and moves across to the bidet to wash, using his right hand and the lemon-scented soap. In the kitchen area he finds a can of salted almonds, empties the contents onto a plate, rinses and dries the container and takes it across to where he has an easel set up and a trolley full of paints, brushes, rags and pots of water. He perches on a portable painting stool, another hand-me-down from his grandmother, and fills a fat brush with white acrylic paint. The vinyl paint resists the

metal of the can. He shifts across to where he has cans of household paint and opens a tin of undercoat.

Whilst the paint on the can dries Carter wanders back into the main space. He lights up a cigarette and stands in the open doorway. He sucks on the cigarette, and blows out smoke rings. He holds the sucked out cigarette upright and watches as the breeze gently disperses the ash onto his feet. He throws the butt onto his garden. Inside he uses shades of brown and black to render a perfect shit, wide and fat, around the circumference of the can. Using a fine brush, and black paint, he signs his name. He scoops the poo into the can and seals it.

Carter lights up again. He studies the image of the winged helmet on his packet of Gauloises. They think this is what they want, he thinks, the dreams, the wings, but they're the same as everyone else. Bored and boring. He walks back through the chain curtain to collect the wings, re-ties them over the top of the kimono, puts his wallet into his camera bag and slings it over his shoulder. He holds the can up, narrowing his eyes as he turns it around to admire his turd rendition and exits the studio.

Ten chilly minutes later a single tier bus arrives. He enters via the middle doorway, and sits in the low seat next to the ticket validation machine. He hasn't seen Thérèse for days. Her mother is in town, demanding her attention. In a distracted telephone conversation Thérèse mentioned, jokingly he thought, that her mother was setting her up on dates with princes and bankers. I'm out with one of them now, she said, he's called Marten, and works for Deutsche bank. Carter can't remember the last time they had sex. He gets off the bus, and makes his way to the gallery, where a street cleaning vehicle sucks debris from the gutter.

'Hello Sailor.' A drunk-looking man, in tight vest and jeans drapes a flower garland around Carter's neck. 'Look at you. Baby doll. Don't fly away now.'

Carter places his can of shit on the pavement in front of the gallery, and films the man as he spins around and blows Carter a kiss. Carter has an urge to open the can and write his name in shit on the gallery window. Instead he leaves the can where it is, crosses the road and sits with his back against the wooden door of an apartment block. The camera faces the gallery. Carter lights up, and leans sideways to look through the viewfinder, to make sure the can of shit is in the shot. As he does so, the door behind him opens, and a man and woman emerge.

'Ouff!'

‘Qu’est ce que c’est?’

The woman steps over him.

Carter giggles, and gives her a thumbs up. ‘Boogie Woogie.’

The woman turns around and gives him the finger. The couple get into a car and zoom off. Carter presses his eye again against the camera viewfinder and zooms in on the can. He lifts the camera up, lies on his back, and films the sky. He hears the rumble of the street cleaning vehicle. He stays on his back as the vehicle approaches. A splash of water flicks into his face. He swivels around and films the taillights of the retreating vehicle, and focuses his lens on water trickling along the gutter. He zooms back around to the front of the gallery. Across the street a man kicks the can. Carter films him as he takes a long right foot kick and pings the can off a traffic light. It ricochets back into the middle of the road. The man loses interest and continues on. The car returns, and parks now directly alongside where Carter lies. He pushes himself to his feet, and smiles sheepishly at the man and woman as they exit onto the pavement. He takes a bow, and puts his camera back into its bag. The couple eye him as they enter their building. Carter drags heavily on a cigarette, picks the can up from the middle of the road, and deposits it into a small black bin attached with a steel clamp to the lamppost.

## THIS IS WHAT WE AMOUNT TO, THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

**in the gallery –**

A clear presentation that the artworld can assimilate, and within which the artist can do anything.

A shelf at waist height supports carefully positioned household objects.

A toy sheep slumps forward, folded in the middle.

A win win.

Alix hasn't told anyone else about the stuff.

Alix hasn't told her what she's doing.

Alix likes the girl's defiance.

Alix nods her head from the paintings to metal shelving housing dolls houses, Cluedo, a stool, ceramic figurines and a large figurative oil painting.

Alix meets Gemma at the show.

Around the corner, a shelf made out of Spiderman faces, supports a clay figurine of a girl with a large head and curly orange hair.

'Can you re-make it?' Gemma asks.

Hands on hips, she wears a red dress, white ankle socks and black loafers.

Her favourite piece is at the end, a coat hanger resting on a screw on which hangs a blue sequined waistcoat,

'I'm going through this stuff from Carter's studio,' she says. 'I've already thrown some of it away,' she says.

'I know a curator of an Anthropology Museum,' Gemma says, 'Karl Dieter.'

'I reckon I can,' she replies.

It's all about the framing, she thinks.

It's art, she thinks.

'It seems like such a leap,' she says.

It was a question of survival.

It was Gemma's idea to come.

Just as she never talked to anyone when the relationship was going bad.

'Most of it's crap, but I think I should do this,' she says.

'Or maybe not,' she says.

She and Carter lived and worked reactively, until the work became them.

She hasn't even talked about it to Jean.

She gestures at the display.

She is jealous of artists who frame themselves from the outset, who demarcate the lines of their container.

She likes the bars of green soap, stuck together and sitting on a shelf.

She likes the ease with which Gemma suggests this.

She looks at an AJAX tube, dark blue with yellow lettering, perched on a shelf made of tree branches, with a wall-papered back plate.

She reads the pamphlet, which tells her that the artist has redefined the status of the object in art through his continued investigation into what constitutes art objects and the ways in which they are displayed.

She said stop.

She stands next to a red dog with white staring eyes.

She will posture too.

Snow globes, collected by the artist, or donated by gallery visitors.

The artist who names his works numerically, Work No. 1, Work No. 2, Work No. 1347.

The items are widely spaced.

The sifting.

The spaces are important.

The weighing up of the detritus of her ex.

The writer who is working through the alphabet in titling his novels.

They are standing in front of a wall, papered with 1950s style wallpaper, which depicts cutlery and crockery.

They stand in front of a mannequin wearing a jumpsuit, blue one side, orange the other, with a pink left sleeve, yellow right sleeve, and green collar.

They stand in front of a number of black paintings with grids of coloured oblongs around the edges.

They were artists.

Toys, household items, a shelf of salt and sugar shakers.

‘We worked with him once,’ she says.

Why not? she thinks.

### **by the lake -**

‘A baby?’ the woman says.

A drizzle washes their faces.

A horse crosses in front of them on the sandy track.

A wall of glass faces the lake.

A whistle signals to clear the lake.

Alix and Gemma continue on to the café.

Alix and Gemma sit down.

Alix and Gemma walk to the park gate.

Alix and Gemma watch.

Alix doesn’t want to link.

Alix looks at the shoes.

Alix thinks about the shoes and clothes at the edge of the lake, like a mole hill.

Alix watches a white motor-dinghy, which has been puttering about for a while, come back to the jetty and pick up a policeman, and drive across to the bull rushes near to where she stands.

Another group huddles around a pair of shoes and items of clothing.

As they near the lake a number of people stand at its edge, chatting quietly.

As they reach the inner park road, a woman on a hire bike stops.

At the bridge, more people have gathered to stare.

But someone is in the lake.

Does the woman wearing the orange headscarf know the man in the water?

Everything appears normal.

‘Finish the cake,’ Gemma says.

Gemma carries a plate with a slice of lemon drizzle cake.

Gemma raises her eyebrows.

‘Has someone drowned?’ a man asks.

Her bum is cold now, on the concrete bench.

‘I hope not,’ the woman says, ‘I live around here.’

In the time that it takes for her coffee to arrive an ambulance has parked up on the other side of the lake, as well as several police cars, and two fire engines.

‘Is someone in the water?’ Alix says.

‘Is something happening?’ Gemma says.

Is this calm in the absence of knowledge, or is this how people react to crisis?

It is tangy, and buttery: soothing.

‘Maybe,’ she says.

‘No. Maybe. A man, perhaps?’

No one answers.

No one cries, or screams or shouts.

No one on the shore, this side, or the other, waves back.

She doesn’t want to say, is this how it was with Carter?

She hears a siren.

She orders her coffee.

She wants to not make everything about her.

She watches policemen unroll white tape from the boathouse to cordon off the lake.

The boat bobs as the woman waves her arms.

The man stares, and walks away.

The person is surely dead.

The woman looks at them.

The woman’s eyes widen.

They stare at a woman wearing an orange headscarf, who stands up in a paddle-boat a little way offshore.

They stare at each other.

They walk around the terrace on the lake and find a table.

They walk through the soft air of an early spring afternoon, towards the cafe at the far end of the Serpentine Lake.

This is what we amount to, she thinks, the things we leave behind.

‘To share,’ Gemma says.

‘We think so,’ Alix says.

‘What,’ Gemma says to Alix, ‘in case it lowers the tone of the neighbourhood?’

When she thinks of Carter in the Seine, she imagines him face down, his kimono winged out flat on the water like a failed parachute.

**At home –**

A chain necklace with a locket dangles above a hole in the jumper in the middle of his chest.

A mound of bare earth, at its head two upside down bottles.

A reenactment of Courbet’s painting *L’Origine du Monde*.

A stupid idea.

A toy elephant sits on one, and a ping pong ball sits in front of the other.

An artwork?

As she picks the photos out of the box a photograph of Jean falls to the floor.

At home Alix googles Karl Dieter.

Alix brings the box upstairs into the office.

Alix lays out the photographs on the floor, like clues.

Alix picks out a set of contact sheets, six images to a sheet.

Alix picks up another sheet with images of the garden.

And she doesn't ordinarily do that.

At his crotch is a triangle of fake fur.

Behind him an Andy Warhol style *Skull* in silver and black chain hangs in front of a version of Rousseau's *Tiger in a Tropical Storm*.

Blood?

Fake blood?

Carter said to her once, that his chain rendition of *L'Origine du Monde*, represented her.

Frame photos.

Guerilla art.

He also wears a grey tank top.

He also wore a signet ring, and identity bracelet.

He has a joint balanced at the edge of the lion's mouth.

He has a white sheet draped across his torso.

He is asleep on bubble-wrap, his arms above his head.

He must have sensed a note of panic in her voice as she called out.

He outgrew it within weeks, and it sits now in a box, with a lock of his hair and his umbilical cord clip.

He wears a Pierrot clown mask and holds a can of Red Stripe.

He wears green overalls, and a jet of water spurts from a hose as if he's doing a bionic pee.

He would scrutinize her face when she wasn't speaking, repeatedly turning to look at her as they walked along.

'Hello,' Alix says.

Her hands are dusty.

'Hi, Mum.'

His hair has darkened now.

His torso is raised, and he looks up.

In another set of photos, taken inside his studio, he is wearing his trademark long-legged JPG jeans, with turn ups which reach mid-calf.

In photo 1, in the order in which Alix has laid them out, Carter lifts his head to swig the beer.

In photo 2, his left arm is down, his right hand raised, and he's lifting his torso to look at the camera.

In photo 3, the photographer has zoomed out and Carter's left foot is foregrounded.

In the final photo the photographer has zoomed out further making Carter's bed and the chain artwork behind it visible: breasts, torso, pubic mound, and thighs, a headless cunt.

In the foreground, the soles of a pair of boots erupt comically from an earth sarcophagus: she is minded of Murphy or Watt, any of Beckett's bodily afflicted protagonists.

In this photo he sits back, relaxed, left hand resting on the metal arm of a steel tubular chair, right arm resting on right thigh, just above his crotch, and wearing a lion's mask.

It's how I read people, he said.

It's seventeen years since she saw Karl Dieter, at Dokumenta.

Jean, home early, or is it already 4.30pm?

Jean is in the front room.

*Man Buried?*

*Man Drunk and Buried?*

*Man Drowned by Alcohol, in Shallow Grave?*

More photos of a burning Christmas Tree sited precariously close to a stack of timber.

On his right wrist, two dabs of red – paint?

Ordinarily he would sit at his computer here in the office.

Ordinarily they sit in boxes on a shelf, in a loft, under a bed.

Pigment?

Round red cheeks, bright blonde hair.

She and Carter had rocked up with their caravan artwork, and set up on the town square.

She bought him the locket.

She can't decide whether to frame it and give it to him, or if it will make him sad.

She can't remember a time, in his Paris days, when he wasn't wearing those jeans.

She emails Karl.

She hastily gathers the photos, and stands on a stool to place them on the top shelf of her bookshelf, where they lurk, like a porn stash.

She goes into the bathroom and washes her hands.

She hears a key turn in the front door.

She pushes it in between a stash of cards on a shelf.

She remembers it, soft wool over hard biceps.

The final set of photos show Carter on his bed, naked, on his back, his legs bent at the knee.

The photographer has zoomed in.

The reply arrives within two hours.

The shoes are the burgundy Cesare.

The soles of his feet are black.

The speed of its rejection means she shelves the idea immediately.

The stash of A4 photographs from the striped nylon bag are now in a box in the cellar.

There are four further photos, all of Carter wearing a Carmen Miranda mask with eye slits adorned by green eyeshadow, hair made up of fruit, his body sits square to the photographer, his mouth twisted into an expression which Alix recognises as one of irritation, a certain pout.

They'd had a tiny gold identity bracelet made for Jean when he was born.

Three of the contact sheets show the burning Christmas Tree, and another one focuses on an area of his garden full of upturned wine bottles.

When she looks more closely she sees it's an old school jumper from which the sleeves have been cut.

## FIVE

### *Bloom Projects, New York, August 2000*

The cuffs of Carter's white linen shirt flap over his hands as he tinkers with the position of a projector. He walks across to where his London assistant, Jules, is up on the scaffold lifting a work into position: Boucher's *Reclining Nude*.

'Let's take this one down. Swap it for the Mondrian.' Carter points up.

'Fuck's sake.' Jules lifts the piece off the hooks and drops it onto the scaffold platform and climbs down. 'You're insane.'

Carter feels like Jules looks. They went to bed at six am, when Carter rubbed the last granules of coke into his gums. He wants a line right now. 'Bring it down.'

Jules scowls.

Carter climbs up the scaffold, and rolls the piece around its metal rail. It's lightweight compared to most of the works, constituting a chain fringe of the woman's head, the top of her shoulders and buttocks, and the largely brown and green background. He lays the work at the foot of the wall, and rummages in a box. The floor of the gallery space is littered with bags and boxes of chain, further rolled up works, lengths of wood, dolls, toys, cables, a turntable, boxes of records, rags, and Carter's and Jules's luggage. At eight am the concierge of the Hotel Chelsea knocked on the door of their twin room and delivered them a notice to quit. Carter was less than impressed by its faded sense of legend anyway, and was ready to relocate to The Gramercy. He finds what he's looking for, a box of charcoal. 'Help me set up the overhead projector.'

Jules sits cross-legged on the floor and flicks through the record collection.

The front door opens, and clicks against a layer of chain hung across the front window and door. Carter hears a familiar clack of heels, and hears Ellery snigger as her companion, Bloom, bats his way through the screen with one hand as if fending off a swarm of bees. In his other hand he carries a brown paper grocery bag.

'Picnic. Beigels with a schmeer and beer.' Bloom proffers the bag. He joins Jules on the floor, and pats the floor beside him to Ellery. 'Does this man ever stop?' He nods across to where Carter has set up the overhead projector on a small stepladder and projects an outline of the Boucher image onto a piece of canvas.

Jules eyes Carter. He tears a beigel in half and chews and swallows it in a couple of

gulps. He takes the other half across to Carter.

Carter shrugs, and traces the outline of the woman lying on the chaise longue in charcoal onto the canvas.

‘Where’s the bottle opener?’ Bloom asks.

Jules takes the bottle out of Bloom’s hand and cracks it open with his teeth and hands it back to Bloom. He cracks a second bottle open, which he offers to Ellery. She sits on the floor, legs out in front, her pink tutu skirt splayed out around her on the floor. Tits pert in vest top.

Ellery takes the bottle.

‘To our artist, the disco-genius.’ Bloom clinks his bottle against Ellery’s.

Carter swoops across and grabs Bloom’s bottle out of his hand, takes a swig and hands it back. He makes a bow, his shirt falling up his back, and returns to his drawing. He wipes the charcoal from his fingers onto a rag, steps back, and squints to look. The arse needs to be plumper. Well-padded, more like Alix’s arse.

Both Alix and Thérèse left messages at the hotel this morning. Maybe he should have invited Thérèse to come. Make it clear to Ellery that he’s moved on. But why worry. She’s here now, and Thérèse isn’t. He continues sketching in the woman’s legs and feet, using the projected outline as a guide: black charcoal on canvas. The woman from the painting presses her arms and upper body against the arm of the sofa, her legs apart, right knee on a cushion, left knee and left foot resting at the front edge of the sofa. An unusual position. Not ideal for sex, unless a man were to lay bodily on top of her. Not impossible, but not as easy as having her seated facing front, or kneeling against the sofa, arse up. What does Alix want, he wonders? Probably something to do with Jean. Or money? She needs to get a job. Does she think this is so fucking easy?

‘Wonderful. Magnificent. Let’s get the disco ball up.’ Bloom walks around to stand behind Carter. Carter wants to bat him away, like a fly.

He continues working.

‘Jules. Hey, Jules man. Pull this ladder over here.’

Jules lumbers to fetch the ladder. He dwarfs Bloom, with his big thighs erupting out of cut-off denims and steel toe cap boots. Bloom grips a hand around one side of the ladder, to help. Jules could swing the ladder and twirl Bloom around, give him a ride. After all, that’s what he wants. A ride.

Carter fills in the drawing using broad strokes. He runs through his head which film

goes where. Pissing-on-the-couch film goes here, on the *Reclining Nude*, in the north-west corner. Wanking-up-the-ladder goes diagonally opposite, in the south-east corner. Alignment is important for the energies. But this puts *Wanking* in the Travel and Helpful People zone. Should it go in the north-east corner, to align with Love and Relationships or in the centre of the wall, to align with Children, Creativity, Projects?

He pulls out a crumpled Bagua plan from his back jeans pocket.

He and Alix once employed a Feng Shui expert for a show, to tell them where to position things to optimize the potential for wealth and productivity. They made few sales, but the show looked good.

Fuck. He's put fire and water pieces at a right angle; they should be on opposite north south walls. He has to change it all.

Ellery swings in a cane hanging chair in front of the chain rendition of *Tiger in Tropical Storm*, naked except for a black chain corset and a G-string. Carter peers through his video camera view finder and shouts instructions: 'Swig the beer.'

He re-positions the tripod, and shifts the angle of the camera upwards.

'Look at the camera. Eat some nuts.'

Bloom is spinning records on the turntables. He's wearing a yellow wig, and a snorkel mask.

No one wants to go home. Carter wishes they would. He wants to lie in the middle of the installation and run the projections to make sure he's got it right. The coke's running out. Maybe that will see them off. He knocks out a skinny line on a square of mirror and sniffs it up through a dollar bill. His nose is runny and makes the end of the note soft. He wipes his nose on his sleeve and swallows. He holds out the mirror and wrap to Jules, currently hefting boxes and rolls of canvas into the storeroom.

Two gallery assistants, skinny male art students, Jack and Isaac, struggle to re-install the three-layered *Great Wave*, which Carter has decided, after all, to re-position on the north wall. Some pieces have been tried out on every wall. Despite the constraint of the Bagua, there are overriding aesthetic concerns. On the left wall two nude female torsos preside. One of whom tweaks the other's nipple, *Gabrielle d'Estrees and one of her Sisters*. Licking flames are projected over them; the film of the fire of the stuff from their loft which he and Alix burned in their studio yard some years previously. That fire seemed to have started something. After that their work was consistently vandalised and

burnt. They made interventions which were out of context. Glazing a pillbox in a field. Putting art in boxes in a vending machine to sell at £4 a box. A caravan parked outside a gallery.

*The Swing* is also hung on the north wall, in front of the wave. Carter has his own titles, but finds it easier to refer to the pieces by their original titles. On the south wall, with the front window and door, he's hung a triple-layer version of Andy Warhol's *Mona Lisa*, straddling Knowledge and Wisdom, Career, and Travel and Helpful People. Forwards of this he has *The Laughing Cavalier* piece in the Career section. In the south east corner, a section of the curtain is pulled aside, and the film of Ellery, swinging in the hanging chair, eating nuts and fruit, is projected.

Bloom approaches, eyes gleaming. 'Shall I call up some girls.'

'We've got girls here.' Carter takes a length of blue chain and approaches Bloom. He wraps the chain around his neck, and makes a collar and lead, and walks him across to the nipple tweaking curtain. He attaches the loose end of the chain to the curtain. 'You're her nipple piercing.'

Bloom splays himself against the chain and holds up his arms. 'Cuff me to her.'

'Let's not overdo it.' Carter returns to the central area. 'Let's clear up all this shit and get the trampoline out.'

Carter, Jules and the assistants wheel the trampoline into the centre of the space. On the floor, in spray can, Carter has written the zone's designation: Spiritual Health + Well-Being, except that he's written Spirit(s) HELL WELL Being. He grabs a can of white spray paint, and draws a skull and cross-bones in the centre of the floor. The element associated with this zone is earth. Carter intends to confound that notion by seeking to fly. He wants to go as high as he can.

The trampoline is heavy and awkward to manoeuvre. Jules and Carter force the sides of the trampoline down. Carter focuses his camera on the centre of the room. Ellery has fallen asleep; the flesh of her right upper arm, bottom, under thighs and right cheek ooze out between the diamond-shaped gaps of the string-webbing. Her feet dangle, toes pointing down, as the chair swings. Her right hand clutches the beer bottle, and there's an intermittent click, click, click as one monkey nut after another falls through the holes in the seat, spilling from an overturned cellophane bag.

'Jules, music.'

'Jack, turn on the film.'

Carter undresses, leaving a pool of clothes on the floor. He looks for his camera bag amongst bags and boxes.

‘Yoo hoo.’ Bloom jangles his chain shackle.

Carter ejects the mini-dv film, and writes *Hanging Chair II* on the white label. He puts this film into an empty case, and takes out a new sealed film. He tears the cellophane off with his teeth, spits it onto the floor and inserts the new film into the camera. He presses the red record button, and climbs onto the trampoline.

‘I want to bounce.’ Bloom’s voice is drowned out by the pumping techno. The lights go off and the films play. Twin disco balls reflect the light from a strobe light. A cheap plastic disco ball rotates limpingly in the corner underneath the wave.

‘Oooo, oooo oooo ooo oooo ooooooh! Raaaaaaaah.’ Carter roars as he bounces, kicking his legs up behind him and throwing his arms out wide, hands stretched out, thumbs upwards, head tilted slightly down, a fleetingly, giddy version of the Christ the Redeemer statue. He spins around 180 degrees as he lands and bounces again, facing Bloom.

Bloom’s eyes are half-shut. Both Bloom and Carter scream once more as Bloom shoots his load, which lands just short of the trampoline, on top of Carter’s shirt.

The assistants have left. Ellery is asleep now on the inflatable chair pasted with porn, a piece she helped to make. Jules has disappeared. Carter takes the camera off the tripod and pans around. The reclining nude, bottom right on the west wall, flows into the wave, set behind the swing, on the entirety of the north wall. The wave continues right onto the east wall, with the heart bottom right on the east wall. The volcano sits at the top left on the east wall, and a second *Laughing Cavalier* is in the middle of this wall. Above and below, in front of and behind, are exotic flowers from childhood drawings, multi-colour zig-zags, Mondrian’s gridded *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, Warhol skulls in silver with a glinting gold tooth, and Warhol electric chair, in various colour combinations. Bloom lays slumped and snoring. Carter covered him with a grey art blanket. In a corner at the front end of the gallery stands a mirrored screen made from the old doors of the South London flat he shared with Alix. One panel mirrors the projection of Carter standing up a ladder, wanking; another panel mirrors Carter lying naked in Dan’s studio, shades on, in front of the chaise-longue planted up with marigolds and potatoes.

Satisfied, he lies on his back on the trampoline. Light flickers across his body, as if clouds are moving very fast in the sky, intermittently blocking the sun. They all want

something, he thinks. Gallerists. Patrons. Girlfriends. Well he'll give them something. He feels his skin goose-pimple at the thought.

Ellery's coke is burning a hole in his shirt pocket. He knocks out a line on the reception desk, bending down behind the raised counter. Jody, a pretty gallery intern, stands guard for him whilst he snorts. Not that he's hiding it from Bloom. Carter hasn't seen him all day. At eight am, Carter unhooked him and offered him another beer, but he walked off, flicking off the light switches as he went. As Carter straightens up he indicates a second line chopped out for Jody. Jody shakes her head and Carter snorts it up.

He puts the wrap into the top drawer of the desk and snatches a glass of champagne. The soundtrack of the films is overridden by the noise of a DJ, pumping out Carter's techno tunes from a hastily constructed DJ booth.

Carter makes a gymnastic leap onto the trampoline, where people are bouncing.

'Surf's up,' he roars.

His arrival knocks two people off balance. He unhooks his kilt and flings it into the crowd. It's caught by a woman who hooks it around the waist of the man she's with, over his American Apparel shorts. The man, on roller skates, circles her, heels together, toes and knees out wide. Carter also flings his shirt into the crowd, and begins to bounce. The other bouncers move to the padded edges.

Carter hears the lyrics of *Twisted*, "can you get me high", and uses his arms to power his jump even higher. Beads of sweat pour down his torso and the backs of his knees. The people sitting on the edges of the trampoline climb off and form a ring around the trampoline, clapping and chanting 'higher, higher, higher,' and 'twisted, twisted, twisted.' At least that's what he hears. On his next landing he sinks deep into his knees, so low that his balls touch the trampoline. Clenching every muscle in his body he roars, and thrusts his arms up high. In the moment of the thrust he sees Bloom approaching.

Something about him looks disconcerting. Carter half-turns, lands awkwardly, and catapults off the trampoline. He head butts Bloom. A pain reverberates through his head. The rest of his body is saved a similar impact by his falling on top of Bloom, knocking his glasses off his face. For a moment they make eye contact.

Bloom's expression is such that Carter twists himself quickly away. It isn't so much the look of disgust in his eyes, but the fear. Carter, on his back on the floor, lays still, arms and legs out wide. Faces look down upon him.

Ellery crouches next to him. 'Can you get up?' She extends her right hand.

He tries to pull her onto him.

'Not now. Abe is hurt.'

Carter's head feels like he's been hit by a sledgehammer. He's covered by a large piece of bubble wrap. He's disgustingly sweaty. He puts a hand up to his forehead. The lump is the size of a Fabergé egg. He should have gone to hospital. Bloom went in a taxi, and refused to allow Carter to travel with him. Carter knew his blood was full of coke, so it was probably best to skip it. He sits up on his elbows, and his head spins. 'Fuck.' He feels like he's going to vomit. He shuffles along on his bottom to the edge of the trampoline, puts his legs over the edge, and slides down, scraping his back as he does.

'Ah!' He plops his feet onto the floor.

'Ellery.'

No response.

He moves slowly across the gallery to the toilets at the back of the office, still naked. He bursts through the office door. Erik, the gallery manager, is asleep on the leather swivel chair. Carter makes it to the toilet and throws up. As he sits with his head over the toilet bowl he hears someone come in behind him.

'You're a fucking mess.' It's Jules.

Carter vomits again.

'Here.' Jules offers Carter a glass of water.

Carter drinks it, and immediately feels sick again. He remains with his arms wrapped around the toilet bowl.

The gallery phone rings. Erik picks it up. Carter hears his own mobile ring.

'Hello.' Erik. 'Abe. How are you? Yes, he's here. Ok. Ok.'

Carter's mobile is still ringing.

Erik puts his head in at the door. 'Bloom says he's not coming back to the gallery until you've left. And Ellery's fired.'

'It's not Ellery's fault.' Carter reaches for his phone as he speaks and puts it to his ear, but the caller has rung off. Carter doesn't save numbers, but he recognises it as Thérèse.

'Come on man, get dressed.' Jules stands over Carter.

Carter gets to his feet, replaces his kilt and shirt, socks and shoes. His chain bracelets jangle as he dresses.

'Let's check you out at a hospital.' Jules shoulders Carter's camera bag, and the two shuffle out of the gallery.

Carter stands outside Ellery's first floor apartment in Queens and shouts her name.

A sash window slides up, and she pokes her head out.

'Let me in.'

Something large and square is hurled through the window. Carter moves across to pick it up from where it lands on a hedge in the front yard. As he does, Ellery's black chain dress follows. It whips down and catches his bruised lump. He stands the painting up and assesses it. Not so bad. It depicts Daniel Lambert: the fattest man in England at the time of his death in 1809. It's one of a series of paintings he made in between his and Alix's partnership ending, and making the work he now makes. A moment of anomaly: a deviation back into painting, to prove to himself that he really was an artist, was that it?

He steps back to view it.

'Sir.'

Carter turns around. A female cop wears a short-sleeved uniform shirt, buttoned up to her neck, blue close-fitting trousers. She fingers the handcuffs that hang from her belt. Her colleague, a man, approaches from the car. They each carry a gun.

'Sir. We've had reports of a disturbance. Would you mind telling me what's happening.'

'Why don't you tell me what's happening.' He smiles.

The cops don't smile back. 'Were you in a fight?'

The male cop picks up the painting. Its left edge, Carter notices, is bashed from the fall. 'Does this belong to you, Sir?'

'I don't know, does it?' He gave the painting to Ellery as a gift when they first met.

'What's this?' The female cop picks up the black chain dress.

Carter shrugs.

'Have you been drinking, sir?'

Carter holds up his hands in mock surrender.

'Do you mind coming with us please, Sir.'

Carter is manhandled into the back seat of the police car.

'Do you always wear skirts, Sir?' The female officer raises her eyebrows.

'Do you always wear pants?'

'Take a seat on the bench. A complaint has been filed.'

'I might file one myself.' Carter shimmies his hands down the front of his body.

'Sit down.'

She returns and presses a sample pot in his hand. 'Toilet's there.' She points to a steel-faced door across the corridor. 'Put it on the trolley outside when you're done.'

Carter offers up a pot of dark pee, and sits back down on the bench.

Later, the officer pushes a tray towards him, containing his confiscated items.

'Sign here.' The officer rips off the docket and hands it to Carter.

'What about the fat man.' Carter points to where the painting sits, bagged up, leaning against the wall behind the officer.

Carter puts the painting under his arm and steps out into a blast of heat.

## WHO THE FUCK ARE SKAMANAGE?

### A

A bag of face paints.

A Becks Beer promotional T-shirt, XL.

A bit of fluff clings to the inside of the bottle.

A black fabric shoe-bag.

A black Chanel glasses case, empty.

A black kohl pencil from the Body Shop.

A blonde, curly-haired wig.

A bottle of Coco Chanel perfume, almost empty.

A brass candle stick has a nymph wound around its stem and globs of pink wax congealed on the underside of the sconce.

A Bricorama carrier bag contains shards of curved, yellow glass.

A brown crocheted shawl.

A bundle of painting rags, a used tissue, a length of grey chain, a pair of jeans.

A champagne cork: CHAMPAGNE DBUTZ.

A cherry pip.

A copy of *Dictionnaire pour les petits de 1 an*.

A cotton kimono, white with a grey-blue repeat pattern of a Japanese landscape.

A dildo, its bottom end broken off, wires trailing.

A drop of dark liquid spills onto the floor near her bare feet.

A flyer for a *Scooby Doo* movie.

A football fan, plastic hand clapper, red, white and blue.

A further dribble bubbles underneath the bottle top.

A glossy catalogue containing pictures of clowns and musclemen.

A Google search reveals them to be an Icelandic band formed in 2000 constituting a young couple.

A green plastic skipping rope; the white handles with yellow cuffs and pink tips look like sci-fi cow udders.

A hair pin.

A green Signal toothbrush with a long hair stuck in its bristles.

A Harrods carrier bag.

A headless cuddly toy.

A JPG jacket, torn along its central seam.

A length of wood, with rounded ends.

A navy blue linen jacket with brass buttons, of which two are missing from the left cuff.

A pair of dungarees.

A pair of fake fur ear muffs.

A pair of folding sunglasses, hinged across the nose and half way along each arm.

A pair of Gucci loafers.

A pair of orange fishnet tights turned inside out.

A peach stone.

A pearly white Chanel glasses case, empty.

A piece from a toy motorbike.

A piece of walnut shell.

A pink T-shirt.

A plastic case containing make-up brushes.

A plastic stamp detailing a family of chickens from a toy printing set.

A poster for the Skamanage 7" single *Hold My Hand*.

A print out of an *Ask the Expert* document about maggots, in French.

A selection of mini Babar books, in French.

A shame.

A shoe insole, right foot, Cesare Paciotti.

A single link of blue chain, crushed.

A splodge of yellow paint marks the right shoulder.

A square of black fake fur.

A strip of printer labels.

A SWATCH watch, stopped at eleven minutes past three.

A technical drawing template of variously sized ovals.

A tin of Café Crème cigars with four cigars inside.

A tiny plastic Union Jack hat, a souvenir from the VE day celebrations in 1995.

A toy ape, split on its torso to reveal white foam padding.

A toy diamond.

A toy fighter jet.

A toy giraffe's head.

A toy gun.

A toy spider.

A toy wigwam.

A toilet-roll tube.

A translucent pink document wallet.

A TV remote control.

A window pops up – Sign in to Spotify or register.

A wooden wine box.

A Woolworths carrier bag.

After several failed attempts – that user name is taken, that email address is taken – she succeeds and a track begins, retro electro, monotone vocals, an 80s vibe.

After they split, on her own with Jean, she felt like the lamp-lighter in *The Little Prince* lighting the lamp on the planet with no people, and the planet turning ever faster, until the lamplighter was lighting the lamp and putting it out every minute.

Alix bends down and wraps her arms around his shoulders.

Alix clicks play on *Feast*.

Alix is relieved.

Alix is tired.

Alix pushes the scarf into the washing machine, closes the door, adds powder, chooses the Wool Handwash cycle, and hopes for the best.

Alix puts the lid on this box, marks it DEAD 7 and adds it to the stack.

Alix throws this item into the now full box, puts the lid on, and lifts it onto a white metal cabinet.

Alix turns the shoe over to inspect the sole.

Alix wants to finish going through the final items in the cellar.

Alix turns down the corners of her mouth as she picks this out of the laundry bag and drops it into the box.

Alix turns them over.

All the others she's seen before.

An aluminium picture-hanging strap.

An empty Marlboro packet, inside which a filter tip and a circular disc of sticky back plastic.

An empty Thierry Mugler scent bottle.

An envelope, unused, from the Cadogan Hotel, London.

An Expedia.co.uk ticket wallet, also empty.

An Optikinetics 6" Effect Wheel.

An Yves Saint Laurent clear plastic bag contains a pair of white cotton underpants, with no fly and a cotton drawstring at the waist.

Another picture book: *Meet Babar and his Family*.

Another used toothbrush.

Art has a sanctity to it.

As Alix picks it up something hard knocks against her knuckles, a metal dagger charm.

As she steps down into the kitchen the Becks bottles on the top of the cupboard catch her eye.

At first she registers them as animal shapes.

At least she did.

At the far end of the cellar, on top of the camping gear, the hanging chair is bubble-wrapped and secured with FRAGILE tape.

At the foot of the cellar steps, to her left, are the two laundry bags, each half-full, that she brought down from her bedroom.

## **B**

Back from school.

Booklets for the camcorder.

Booty from an event sponsored by Becks beer, the bottles having a Damien Hirst spot label.

## **C**

Carter flipped the top off one of the bottles with a lighter, swigged the beer, pissed

into the bottle and forced the top back on.

Carter was very good at *being* the something.

Carter's as a child, that he passed on to Jean.

Carter's Sony Handycam, open, its stomach empty.

Collar size 15.

Cuffs held together by links of silver chain.

## **D**

Did Carter model himself on him?

Did he flirt with the wife?

Did she laugh?

Did someone pack the contents of his bin?

'Do you want to come and have a look,' she says.

## **E**

Especially as almost all the stuff is from the time after them.

Everyone milled around on the pavement opposite the Tate, a choppy River Thames to their left.

## **F**

Five plastic clothes pegs, one broken.

Five silver birch saplings sway in the breeze.

From his childhood?

From the second bag she pulls out a flower-patterned Christian Lacroix scarf.

## **H**

‘Have a look in the fridge,’ she says.

He couldn’t let anything go.

He dances on the front step as she approaches the door.

He doesn’t shrug her off.

He drops his school bag, flings off his blazer, kicks off his shoes, and bounds up the stairs to the toilet.

He is getting tall, bony, shaking off his pre-teen softness.

He leans on a long cane, leaning back slightly, and holds his head high.

He wore his clothes and shoes to their bitter end, a thrifty dandy.

He wore red tartan trousers and a T-Shirt with Dougal on the front and did vox pop interviews with people who remembered the war.

Her fingers stink of stale water, from the sponge.

Her hand is sticky from where the seat was taped shut with vinyl tape.

Her lungs feel dusty.

His cock is like a phantom limb.

His recycling of everything, his use of every bit of footage.

Horn buttons, three on the left breast, two on the right.

## I

‘I’m going through some stuff of your dad’s,’ she says.

In the cellar Alix moves a bag of laundry off the bench, and lifts the lid.

‘Is there anything to eat?’ he shouts.

It clatters as she shakes it. It has two large holes at the collar, and both arms are almost torn off.

It smells of washing powder and dampness.

It’s almost endearing.

It’s art, isn’t it, like Manzoni’s shit?

It’s the last day of June.

It’s worn at toe and heel, with some holes in the sole, and again that stigma shape on the instep.

It’s no fun trawling through it.

It will fit Jean.

## **J**

Jean.

Jean calls down.

Jean eats cereal, and watches *Modern Family* on his computer.

Jean might like it.

## **L**

Like he was building a living museum around himself.

## **M**

Maybe Carter met them.

More French picture books.

## **N**

Next, a blue towelling sleeve, cut from a bath robe.

## **O**

Of all the items, she might keep this.

On the inside collar is a thin strip of purple – Jean's favourite colour.

On the one hand she likes it.

On the other hand, every item that reeks of indulgence makes her depressed.

On the way home they went into a pub in Kennington and pretended to be part of

something.

On this last one, the hinge is broken.

Only the collar holds the pieces together as a garment.

Other times they stayed in the box.

## **R**

Rat tat tat.

Right now they sit on top of the cupboard in her kitchen.

## **S**

Several brown envelopes.

Shards of broken yellow glass, from the sunglasses.

She does not enjoy the hot weather, the pressure that she ought to be outside doing something summery.

She can't remember why.

She chews the skin on the fingers of her right hand.

She decides to keep it.

She doubts he'll wear this either, but it's in one piece.

She folds up the laundry bag.

She goes upstairs.

She googles Skamanage.

She has an archive box ready to fill.

She's been working hard these last thirteen years to put it all behind her.

She has carried them from house to house with each move.

She has drunk a large cup of tea and eaten three biscuits.

She has kept this bottle all these years.

She holds them up.

She isn't a picnic or BBQ person.

She is reminded of that again now.

She is wrung out.

She lifts the lid of each stool in turn.

She likes to work.

She looked around to see if anyone was watching.

She marks it DEAD 2 with a black marker pen, and opens out a new archive box.

She marks it DEAD 4, and adds it to the stack.

She mops the dribble on the bottle.

She opens out another archive box.

She opens the bag containing the items that she's been through once, and quickly fills a box.

She presses the ape stomach-down on top of the camera and forces the lid on to the box.

She pushes it open forcefully, and waits to see if it will hold.

She puts a lid on the box and writes DEAD 6.

She puts her hand into the bench and pulls out a T-shirt screen-printed with a pair of pink tits.

She puts the book in the box.

She puts the lid on and sits on the box.

She puts the sponge in the bin.

She returns to the cellar.

She returns to the kitchen and washes her hands.

She returns upstairs to make dinner.

She rolls them up and presses them into the box.

She says, 'Soon.'

She scrawls DEAD 3 on the side of the box, and sits it next to the other boxes.

She scribbles DEAD 5 on the side of the box.

She scrunches it against her nose.

She sits at the kitchen table facing the garden.

She stretches the T-shirt out.

She throws the T-shirt into the box.

She squeezes the sponge out, and mops up the spillage on the floor.

She steps back.

She still has it.

She still revolts at having to pick them up.

She takes down the bottle of piss, and angles it up to the light.

She wants to feel like those trees, like she still has scope for growth.

She wants to keep going.

She will finish this process: a tiny yellow cuddly toy, a toy ant-eater, a second candle stick, the pair to the first one, also wrapped in bubble wrap – apparently the candle sticks have some value – she throws it into the box, a decorative ceramic pot containing foreign coins, a Sony Ericsson phone – she removes the battery, there’s no SIM card – she puts the phone aside to take to the dump, two large marbles, a pair of toy clown shoes, a toy ape, a toy alligator, a toy frog, a toy scorpion, a toy Maid Marion, five more toothbrushes – of course, the toothbrushes are part of the work, a toy horse, a toy dragon, a toy ghost, a toy dinosaur, a toy corsage, a deflated balloon, a toy gorilla, a toy Red Indian, a toy toad, six toy horses, a toy hen, a toy tiger, a toy giraffe, a Kinder egg toy, three toy cows, four toy goats, a blue foil butterfly on a cocktail stick, a plastic orange Kinder egg – inside, a tiny jigsaw puzzle, a headless toy cowboy, a toy panther, more toy cowboys and Indians, a toy pig, a toy sheep, a butter knife with horn handle, a toy rat, a toy chicken, two red-handled paint scrapers, another toy spider, a toy signpost: AKALI SPRINGS 5 miles, a length of silver and blue chain, a pair of joke googly eyes.

## **T**

The bag with the broken zip has stuff in it that she still hasn’t sorted through.

The bench is empty.

The cellar is murky and damp.

The coffee bubbles up.

The cover of another book depicts Louis XIV wearing a hat with plumes over a curly wigged head, a blue frock coat with huge folded back red cuffs, out of which sprout frilly white cuffs, black knee breeches, red stockings and black buckle shoes.

The crotch area, lined with white cotton, presses forward like a cod-piece.

The cuddly toy’s head.

The Instruction Manual for the Camcorder Canon GL2 NTSC.

The items manifest like carnage, like a life tipped out, its entrails strewn along the runway after the crash.

The JPG jeans, with the calf-height turn up.

The left lens, yellow, is broken in half, the pieces of yellow glass from earlier.

The lid falls forward when she lets go.

The label depicts a rearing horse with a bushy mane and tail.

The lining is torn away at the inside back collar.

The other blue towelling sleeve.

The right shoe is splashed with red paint.

The sheer pants, medium, by Yiannis Ziros Studio.

The stools are worse for wear.

The three stools still sit where she shoved them months ago, underneath the iron stairs, also covered in building dust now.

The arms of a pair of sunglasses, broken in the middle.

The water in the old sponge stinks, piss stored for 19 years in a bottle doesn't.

The third stool contains an orange silk Oswald Boateng shirt.

There are a few more items.

There's a level of violence to these items, she thinks.

There's no odour.

There's nothing of any value for Jean.

There's something not quite right about light-blue long johns.

They are a band from Iceland, "one of ten we should care about", according to buzzfeed.

They are worn at the heel, and spotted with mould.

They bought his and hers pairs in Bombay in 1990.

They have a huge tear in the arse that extends to the crotch, like a bum flap.

This life he lived after their split, at the time, made her feel worthless.

This time it does.

Three empty wallets for Eurostar Business tickets.

Three paper masks, a witch, Libertas and Cleopatra.

Three rusty screws.

Two crumpled plastic sleeves.

Two disposable Gillette razors.

Two wine corks.

## W

'What are you doing down there?' he says.

'When will dinner be ready?' Jean asks.

Who carried the bottles of warm piss home?

Who the fuck are Skamanage?

## FOUR

**moving** the heavy metal gate opens and Carter bursts through, eyes shining. Thérèse follows. Behind them, two removals men heave rolled up chain artworks. Carter unlocks the door to his new Paris studio. Thérèse and the men go inside. Carter returns up the path in a hurry. He exits the front gate, and returns carrying a wooden lift top stool. He passes the two removals men and nods at them. They return down the path with another rolled up chain piece. Carter stops in front of the studio, where there's a small, concreted area. He puts the stool down and calls Thérèse. Thérèse comes out. He indicates for her to sit on the stool. She smiles and sits. Carter returns to the lorry. The removals men also walk back up the path. Carter walks down with a box of household items. The men carry another chain artwork. Carter walks back to the van and returns with another box of household items. The men return to the lorry. They come back down the path with a small pedestal table. Carter comes back outside and instructs the men to bring the table onto the terrace. There's just enough room for it. The men return to the van. Carter returns to the van, and comes back down the path with a matching stool, which he places on the other side of the table. He goes into the studio. The men walk down with another chain artwork. Carter emerges ten minutes later with a tray holding a coffee pot, two espresso cups, a silver spoon, a box of sugar cubes and a selection of pastries on a plate. He sets the tray down on the table. Thérèse pushes her long hair behind her ears. She plops a sugar cube into her coffee and stirs it in. Carter indicates the plate of pastries. Thérèse shakes her head and takes a sip of the coffee. Carter plops in two spoons of sugar and stirs vigorously. He takes a packet of cigarettes out of his shirt pocket and places it on the table. They each pull one out. Carter thrusts his right hand into his jeans pocket and pulls out a lighter, and holds it, lit, to Thérèse's cigarette. She takes a drag, rounds her back and leans back as she blows out. Carter takes a slurp of coffee, lights his cigarette and stands at the edge of the patch of earth behind the tall metal fence of his front yard. He drags hard on his cigarette, takes another gulp of coffee, turns around and winks at Thérèse.

**i love Paris** Carter pushes open the tall glass door to the Konrad Glass Gallery. 'I'm back,' he shouts.

A young woman sitting at the long white desk jumps and frowns. ‘Pardon?’

Carter gallops across, effects a bow and holds out his hand. ‘Rosa. It’s me.’ His chunky silver identity bracelet clatters on the counter top.

The woman accepts his hand.

‘That’s a limp hand shake, Rosa.’ The woman frowns.

‘Where’s Milena?’

‘Is she expecting you?’

‘If she isn’t she should be.’

Rosa presses a button on the phone. She whispers into the receiver. ‘Milena will be out shortly.’

Carter wanders into the main exhibition space and looks at the work: a group show including one or two British artists.

‘Carter.’

Carter turns around. Milena stands behind him. He lifts her off her feet.

‘We weren’t expecting you,’ she says, and kisses him on either cheek.

‘Well, I’m here, and I need some cash.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘I mean, I live here. I arrived two weeks ago. I’ve been staying with Thérèse, I moved into a studio today in Villemomble. I’m out of cash. All the moving costs.’ Carter lifts his hands.

‘Let me talk to Konrad. That’s great news, to have you here.’ Milena places her hand on his arm.

‘Can you do it now?’ He tilts his head.

Milena frowns, and retreats.

Carter continues to inspect the show: a large gridded screen print of Gilbert and George, the artists either side of a shit crucifix. They also appear naked and upside down. Carter observes their flaccid dicks.

Milena returns. ‘Konrad has suggested L’Église for dinner. We’ll see you there at seven.’ She hands over an envelope. ‘Here’s 100 euros for now. We’ll discuss this later. Welcome.’ Milena smiles thinly.

‘Merci. And salut. Until tonight.’ He kisses her on either cheek, and waves the envelope at her. He’s on a retainer, but it isn’t enough. You have to spend money to make money.

Later, Carter and Thérèse sit opposite Konrad and Milena at the best table in the middle of the restaurant. Thérèse pans around the restaurant with her camera.

‘How’s the work coming on for the Bloom show?’ Konrad asks.

‘Madame. S’il vous plait.’ An elderly waiter holds up the palm of his hand to Thérèse. She brushes away a strand of hair and puts the camera down on the table, leaving it on record.

‘Great. That’s why I’m here.’ Carter.

‘You’ve come to Paris to make your work for New York?’ Konrad says. ‘It was time for me to leave London. London’s over.’

**smashing bottles** Carter pulls his white towelling robe together and ties the cord. He puts his feet into a pair of fluffy pink mule slippers. He picks a cigarette out of the packet on the table, lights up and opens the studio door onto a grey dawn. He walks up the concrete path and opens the front gate. A young man is pulling a tripod bag out of the back of a Citroen. He swings round and puts out a large hand to Carter.

‘Salut. Vous êtes prêt.’ He looks Carter up and down.

Carter shrugs. ‘Salut, Vincent.’ He forgot Vincent was coming. He helps him lug in the equipment, and puts on a pot of coffee. Vincent sets up his camera in a corner of the studio. Carter peeks through the viewfinder. In the foreground he sees rolled up lengths of chain artworks taped round with white tape with the word FRAGILE in red as a repeat motif: FRAGILE AGILE FRAG RAGILE FRGA AGILE. To the right a length of metal rail is suspended on top of a box; lengths of red chain drip down and pool on the floor. In the middle of the floor is a raised area on two levels, covered with beige carpet. The higher level, towards the back is mounded with pillows and bedding. At the front edge of this plinth, to the left, is a box of mini-dv cassettes. Each with handwritten titles. To the right of this box, on the lower level plinth area is a projector, a DVD player, a cassette player, another projector. In the middle of these silver boxes, a tailor’s dummy is dressed with a chain necklace and crisscrossed with chain around its hips. To the left of the dummy, more hi-fi equipment, behind it a cardboard box, to its right another cardboard box, with lengths of silver gaffer tape stuck on. Right and left a number of papier-mâché pouffes, drizzled with paint. Cables, various other empty boxes, mounds of paperwork and books. To the right of the tableau, a ladder. At the

back of the scene a floor to ceiling chain curtain depicts a spaceman and the Stars and Stripes. Behind that a silver and black Warholesque *Skull*. To the right of this, various chain layers. Behind these layers, just visible, in the doorway to the bedroom, a shopping trolley. It would make a good establishing shot for a film, he thinks. Carter moves away as Vincent moves in behind the camera. Carter goes into the bedroom and comes back out wearing a space helmet and approaches the camera.

Vincent clicks the shutter several times.

Carter removes the helmet and dishes out two fat lines of coke onto the table. ‘Want some?’ Carter holds out a rolled up note to Vincent, and points to the table.

Vincent shakes his head.

Carter stirs two sugar cubes into an espresso, and knocks it back. He clangs the cup back into the saucer, and goes into the garden. Smash.

He hurls a green wine bottle against the concrete. Shards of glass spray into the open doorway of the studio.

Smash. Carter looks up, and smiles, eyes wide. He picks up another bottle and hurls it. ‘Huh huh huh.’

Vincent comes out of the studio with his camera and tripod. Further down the pathway Carter has set up his video camera on a tripod, and is recording. He stands now with a bottle in each hand. The bottles are hurled as Vincent fumbles to re-set up his camera. Carter grins, and goes back into the studio, giving Vincent just enough time to put in a new film roll. Carter snorts another line, comes back out, and hurls seven or eight bottles in quick succession. He goes over to his video camera, puts his eye to the viewfinder, and adjusts the camera angle. Vincent sets up next to Carter’s camera. Carter goes into the studio again, and comes out naked except for an Indian feather headdress, and walks across the broken glass barefoot.

**picnic film** a low moon illuminates the scene: Carter, two women, and a second man, sit around picnic items on the concrete terrace. Both men are naked. A bubbling pot is balanced on a single-ring outdoor burner. The steam rises and occludes the vision of the camera. A naked Carter places himself between the pot and the camera and stirs the stew. The man, sitting in profile to the right of the tableau bends his left leg and presses his knee into his left armpit. The two women sit across from each other chatting and laughing. Carter looks into the camera viewfinder and shouts an instruction to the man.

The man turns his face towards the camera, and extends his bent knee away from his armpit. He leans his left elbow on top of his knee. Carter moves around to the far side of the scene and bends as if to pick something up.

The montage is achieved.

The steam of the stew continues to rise. The man and the two women stand up.

The man bends down and picks up his trousers. He puts them back on. He bends and picks up a checked shirt, which he puts on. Carter fills up everyone's wine glass and hurls the bottle onto the garden patch. 'Prost.' Carter downs his wine in several gulps and smashes the glass at their feet. One of the women copies him. Then the man, and finally the second woman.

Carter sweeps the broken glass onto the broken glass section of the garden.

'Try this.' Carter hands the broom to the man, and runs across the glass. He grins.

The man hands back the broom, and ventures slowly onto the glass. He walks, slowly, one foot in front of the other. He holds out his arms, as if on a tightrope. His eyes are focused ahead of him, his mouth remains tight-lipped. The women enter the studio.

The man is back on the concrete terrace.

He sits on the floor and inspects the soles of his feet. Carter leans down and shakes his hand.

The two men go inside. The broom, which has been left leaning against the studio wall, forms a triangle which frames the place where the man sat. The tape ends.

**midnight** the camera has been shifted to film the garden, angled down. Carter, dressed in overalls, digs a body-sized hole. Chain clinks as the two women and the man move in and out of the studio doorway, through the chain, which hangs in front of the door. They clink wine glasses.

Carter lies in the hole. The man shovels the earth pile onto Carter, using a child's spade. The women pass back and forth in front of the camera. The man continues shovelling, leaving only Carter's head and boots uncovered.

Carter laughs, the whites of his eyes visible.

One of the women puts a pair of sunglasses onto his face. Carter rests his head back and looks upwards. The other woman picks up a tiny plastic Union Jack hat from the debris in the garden and places it on top of his head. He moves his head and it falls off. The woman laughs and re-perches it. He holds his head still.

The man sits on the ground next to Carter. He places a cigarette in Carter's mouth and lights it. On Carter's nod he takes it out. Carter coughs, and attempts to blow a smoke ring. But he loses too much smoke when he coughs. The man puts the cigarette back into Carter's mouth. Carter nods, and the man takes it out. Carter achieves a wavery ring which floats up at an angle, tentative then gaining velocity, like a fire lantern. He nods to the man, and the man removes the cigarette.

Carter says something, and nods at the man.

The man puts the cigarette back into Carter's mouth and moves away. Carter stares at the camera, the cigarette held between thick lips. He looks to his left, and nods again.

The man returns into the frame and removes the cigarette.

Carter puts his head back. The tiny hat has already fallen off. The man retreats once more.

Smoke trails from the cigarette drift across the front of the camera.

**bistro** Carter, Thérèse, José and Lucia sit at a small square table in a chic Marais bistro.

'José has a penchant for British bad-boys.' Lucia raises her eyebrows and tilts her head towards Carter.

'In my collection I already have a Dan Winters, a Jan Black, a Sally Green and several Hirsts.' José sits upright.

'José owns 5,000 square metres of exhibition space in Mexico.' Lucia looks around for a waiter.

'What's that in feet,' Carter says. 'I'm old-school.'

Thérèse looks around and fiddles with Carter's camera.

'Well, around 16,000 square foot ... is it foot, feet.' José leans on the table with his elbows, and leans back as the waiter arrives to pour the wine.

'To 16,000 square feet,' Lucia announces, and raises her glass. Thérèse films her.

'Hurrah.' Carter grins, and raises his glass to clink Lucia's.

A waiter hovers.

'Darling, try the sole. Very good for the sperm count.' Lucia touches Carter's hand, and looks across at Thérèse.

Carter puts out his cigarette, and holds out the menu card. 'I'll have steak,' he says.

‘Bloody.’ He turns to Thérèse. ‘Maybe you should have sole,’ he says. ‘How’s your sperm count.’

‘Un salad vert.’ Thérèse hands her card to the waiter.

José is offering you the opening exhibition at his new Foundation.’

‘What about Konrad. Is he on board?’

‘Did you sign in blood darling?’ Lucia forks some greens up to her mouth.

In fact, Carter hasn’t signed anything. But there’s a code, a mutual understanding. Konrad is his dealer and gallerist, and by rights has first dibs on all new work. He is of course also paying Carter a retainer. He kind of owns him. But this is just a meeting, a meet and greet. Carter likes to stay open to opportunities. But it’s early days with Konrad and Carter doesn’t want to piss him off.

‘Your steak, monsieur.’ The waiter sets down his plate.

Carter carves into the meat. Blood oozes onto his plate. He lifts the meat to his mouth. Lucia leans across the table and dabs a dribble of blood from Carter’s chin.

**DO YOU THINK THERE'LL BE A DAY WHEN WE MEET AND WE DON'T  
TALK ABOUT HIM?**

**5.30am**

I want to come and see you, he said.

Her back hurts.

I'm in London, he said.

She fetches her laptop and sits in bed, emailing and googling.

She gets up to pee.

She has slept in her clothes two nights running.

She's fully dressed.

She looks at the clock.

She's restless.

She tries to go back to sleep.

The previous day Patrick called.

They settled on breakfast the next day.

**8am**

At 8am she wakes up Jean.

He's supposed to go in to school for a music lesson.

'In a bit,' he says.

Jean looks at his clock, and turns over.

'Jump in the shower,' she says.

She tickles his bare feet until he stirs.

**10 am**

Is Patrick lost, she wonders.

She chops.

She has mushrooms.

She paces.

She waits.

### **11am**

‘A pubic hair,’ she says.

A rattle sound.

Alix and Patrick descend into the cellar.

Alix fetches a roll.

Alix nods.

Alix opens up the scrapbook and shows him the pencil drawing of the foot.

Alix throws the nude pants into the drawer in which she stores tea towels.

All that urgent eating.

And he has bigger feet.

‘And there’s the prossie chair,’ she says.

‘Aren’t you meant to be at school?’

Bingo.

‘Bring it. We’ll do it there.’

‘But you can’t just say it was all bad,’ Patrick says.

‘Can I take it upstairs?’

‘Cocks cocks cocks.’

‘Chuck it,’ he says.

‘Come and visit us in the summer,’ Patrick says.

Eyebrows raised.

Everything else, item by item, is dumped into the bin bag.

‘Evidence.’

‘Frame them,’ he says.

‘Get a bin bag,’ he says.

He dumps the stuffed gorilla, the long johns, the candle holders.

He’s tall now.

He places the photos and sketchbooks together on the table.

‘He was developing a Jesus complex,’ Alix says.

‘He had a good body,’ she says.

He holds up a small blue toy safe and shakes it.

He fishes through the stripy bag some more.

He shows her a new piece, a sound installation, with text.

He titters, and holds it up to the light to look for the use by date.

He waves a small sheet of orange paper in front of her.

He clambers through and picks it up.

‘Help me lift the bench,’ she says.

How do they get on to it?

I can practice at home,’ Jean says.

‘I don’t read,’ he says, ‘it’s the dyslexia.’

‘I loved him,’ Patrick says.

‘I have these phrases,’ Patrick says.

‘I mean it’s shit,’ she says.

‘I mean there are toilet roll tubes in there,’ she says.

‘I mean there are used razors, and toothbrushes,’ she says.

‘I remember first meeting you both,’ Patrick says.

‘I’ll keep that,’ she says.

Inside, a single unopened condom.

‘Is there more,’ he says.

‘It has to go,’ he says.

It’s a notice of arrest for being drunk and disorderly in New York: Charge 647(f) Bail:

PC RWS, Disposition: Drunk.

‘It’s as if an enraged lover has gone through his stuff and torn his clothes and broken things,’ she says.

Jean comes into the kitchen to make some toast. Jean bites into the toast.

Jean shrugs.

‘Look at the cocks,’ she says.

‘Look at this,’ he says.

Long discursive sentences.

‘Let’s go out,’ he says.

‘Let’s smash it open outside,’ he says.

‘No, that’s you. Keep those,’ he says.

‘Open it,’ she says.

Patrick bends down and rummages.

Patrick fishes them back out.

Patrick giggles.

Patrick is an artist.

Patrick is happy, because ordinarily he doesn't like to work with text.

Patrick looks up.

Patrick picks it up and reads some out.

Patrick pulls out his notebook.

Patrick pulls out the photos she hates.

Patrick reads her some lines from his notebook.

Patrick stands over the stripy bag.

Patrick snorts.

Patrick studies one of the A4 photos.

Patrick titters.

Patrick wants to see the show in the gallery at the end of the road.

Patrick writes stuff down too.

'Put these aside, any works on paper. Get rid of everything else.'

She brings the box upstairs.

She decides to show him the shoe.

She gets the scrapbook.

She goes down into the cellar and takes a punt on a box: DEAD 4.

She has replaced the photos in the bag, to keep everything together.

She holds up the nude pants.

She holds up the shredded JPG jacket.

She lays the shoe upside down on the table.

She opens it and points to the menu card.

She picks out the crushed sunglasses, their central wire torn and mangled.

She picks up a glasses case, which sits on top of the washing machine and holds it out to him.

She points to a drawing on a serviette.

She points to the back of the cellar.

She pulls out a stash of folded posters from one of their exhibitions, and puts them in the bin bag.

She pulls the stripy nylon bag into the kitchen from the office.

She pulls out more stuff from the box.

She puts her fork down and looks at him across the table.

She puts it on.

She stretches them wide against the white kitchen wall.

She takes him down into the cellar, and gestures at the boxes.

She opens the bench.

'Stuff. The gallery sent it over from his studio in Paris,' she says.

Taller than Carter.

'That stuff was easy,' he says.

That was how they got on to it.

'That'll be nice for someone. They can repaint it for their kid's room. It'll be gone when you get back.'

The blonde wig is still inside.

'The photos are harder. Let's take a break,' he says.

The contents of these two boxes are bagged up and tied.

*The following property was taken from the arrested person: wallet, tobacco, a key, cassette tape, necklace, identity bracelet, ring, notebook, pencil.*

The square of black fake fur.

The toilet roll tube.

The toy ape.

'There's all this stuff,' she says.

They are eating mushrooms on toast, and looking at things on her laptop, a performance she's working on.

'They're like some kind of gay porn prop,' he says.

They each take up a box.

They go through the stripy bag together.

They return inside and drink the tea.

They take it out to sit in front of the wall.

'This is just cocaine,' he says.

'Very Carteresque, this writing,' she says.

'We need more bin bags,' Patrick says.

'We need to open it,' he says.

‘Well that might still be useful,’ he says.

‘What do you think happened?’ she says.

‘What’s in here?’ he says.

‘What’s this,’ he says.

‘What stuff?’ he says.

Which box is it in?

### **3pm**

A long table houses a plate with sweet meats and tea glasses.

Alix is minded of Carter as she stirs in a sugar cube.

‘Can we have some cakes,’ Patrick says.

‘Don’t renegade will you.’

‘Do you think there’ll be a day when we meet and we don’t talk about him,’ he says.

‘It’s good with sugar,’ the invigilator says.

‘Let’s have tea,’ she says.

Ordinarily she wouldn’t take sugar.

Outside, they hug goodbye.

Patrick takes a sip of tea and looks at her.

She bites into the honey-soaked cake.

She shrugs.

The invigilator nods.

The invigilator pours two glasses of steeped leaf tea, and places a glass in front of each of them.

‘There were two Carters,’ Patrick says, ‘the gregarious, charming, crazy Carter, and then the demon Carter, the Carter he became.’

They finish their tea, and look around at the other gallery goers.

They sit down.

They walk around the exhibition, work by new artists from Iraq.

**5pm**

When she gets home the bench has gone.

**7am**

A police helicopter circles overhead.

Alix is awoken by shouting.

At the top of the page Carter has written, in childish joined up handwriting, *The Übermensch*, and at the bottom, *Je suis ma mère et ma père*.

Back in the house she opens out a final box for the scrapbook, photos and sketch books, lurking in her office.

But a lot of it is plastic.

He has made me that.

He texts back: *a foreign coin*.

In the kitchen she finds the pants she'd stuffed into a drawer, and the empty glasses case with the condom in the cellar.

It has turned the corner into the next street, but they allow her to toss the bag in.

It still isn't everything.

I'm the Übermensch now she thinks.

I'm Jean's mother and Jean's father.

In fact she and Patrick only bagged up two boxes of stuff.

It is a half-truth.

Maybe she should just burn it all?

She feels a sense of dread.

She fetches a bin bag and stuffs the shirt and scarf into it, and goes up to her bedroom to collect the other washed items still in her bottom drawer, and shoves them into it.

She goes back out into the garden to look, and feels the ground vibrate beneath her feet.

She races downstairs and opens her back garden gate.

She runs out into the street to chase the refuse truck.

She texts Patrick: *I tossed the bin bags*.

She watches as the jaws of the truck eat the bin bags.

The bin men.

The orange silk shirt and Louis Vuitton scarf have survived being washed and sit folded on the table.

The hanging chair is tossed on top by a bin man wearing gloves.

The remaining DEAD boxes sit in the cellar.

Toxic.

*What was in the safe?* she adds.

Why can't she shake him off?

**THREE**

CARTER'S PRIVATE VIEW AT KONRAD GLASS  
GALLERY.

ALIX ARRIVES WITH JEAN.

THEY FIGHT.

ALIX AND CARTER SPLIT UP.

## WHILST SHE WAS MAKING ART SHE DIDN'T LIKE ART

**In bed:** writing, reading, thoughts about illness, thoughts about death, eating, drinking, over 20 degrees is too hot, sweaty, smelly, *women get smelly when they get older*, Evening Primrose Oil, watching films, watching *Orange is The New Black*.

**In the kitchen:** sink, dishwasher, radio, mortar and pestle, washing up liquid, tea towel, toaster, a pink plate, a white pasta plate, a yoghurt pot, compost caddy, hand-blender, small chopping board, large chopping board, pepper-mill, garlic pot, two wooden spoons, a carving knife, galvanized metal wastebin, marbled plastic washing up bowl, a large food waste bin, a sandwich maker, an oven tray, a small pan, a glass containing used teabags, cuttings from broccoli, a stainless steel steamer – with missing panels, a bottle of olive oil, a fork, a coffee pot, a hob kettle, oven, three kitchen chairs, large table, bench, a rucksack, a framed drawing called *This is Everyone's Life*, which begins with Optimism, and progresses through Feeling Immortal, Work, Realising That Life is Short, Muddling Along, Halfway – at 20, Carter's age when they met, he was already Halfway – The Downward Slide, and Wishful Thinking, an oven glove, a white mug, a stainless steel saucepan, a postcard, a Fortune Cat: gold with silicone whiskers, a pot of grated parmesan cheese, a blue bowl, a white bowl, a pile of clean laundry, an empty biscuit packet, a carton of Mango juice, a pair of stag antlers, a reindeer rope-light, a wardrobe repurposed as a crockery cupboard, a green globe paper decoration, a large white serving bowl, a flask, a stainless steel water jug, a yellow pedestal fruit bowl, a yellow globe paper decoration, a cat water bowl, a cat food bowl, a large bag of cat food, a cork-topped laundry stool.

**In the hallway:** a Mu light fitting, white, coats on pegs, shoes, a framed pencil drawing into which are lodged a number of postcards, a polaroid by Gemma, and a page torn from a magazine depicting the Freitag store in Switzerland: a tower of containers – she likes containers, and towers – a candlewick bedspread on the stairs: washed and folded, waiting to be taken up, a towel, a P. E. bag, a Freitag bag made from upcycled items: used truck tarps, bicycle inner tubes, discarded seatbelts, and recycled airbags.

**In the garden:** small concrete paving stones in-laid into grass, a yellow plastic stool, a magnolia tree, which gifts her in May with large waxy pink flowers, the seed pods of which drop heavily through June, an unidentified tree in a pot – it has two main branches with delicate leaves, the five silver birch trees, a wooden cabin, a bird feeder, a red plastic stool, a white climbing rose: Mme. Alfred Carrière, a blowsy hydrangea. Through the fence, she hears the neighbour's yapping dog, and remembers the scene in *Anchorman* where the Hell's Angel played by Jack Black kicks Ron Burgundy's dog off the bridge. Her neighbour's dog looks just like that dog. Will she jump over the fence, kick it up into the sky. Where would it land? It isn't the dog's fault. It yaps at signs of life, at the large black cat, which sits on the roof of the shed, or at her cat. She imagines people in the streets yapping at each other. Her neighbour's garden comprises of a rectangle of concrete, around the edges of which are flower beds filled with pumpkin plants and beans. Occasionally she hears the tap of his garden fork against the concrete as he turns the beds. In the middle, a swing made of old scaffold poles and set into the concrete reminds her of the scene in *Toy Story* when a mechanical spider with a dismembered doll's head crawls across the mean kid's concretised yard. And yet the old man sings to himself, and chats to the dog. Every couple of weeks family members sit on the swing, and chat away, and hang out laundry, his children and grandchildren. As regularly as her neighbour's garden fills with family members she googles How To Be Happy. Most recently she copied out a mantra, in red pen on a square of paper: Desire less, be content, avoid unnecessary activity, practice complete discipline, do not seek security from your discursive thoughts. She is a displaced person. Carter roared through life without stopping to look over his shoulder. Her neighbour's apparent contentment reminds her of the inertia she worked so hard to escape. At family parties, as a child, she weaved amongst her aunties and uncles and older cousins, rolling her eyes and repeating *house, car, job, house, car, job* like an anti- mantra.

The dribble of her neighbour's tap sounds like someone peeing. She can see into his kitchen from her bathroom window, which is tiny and cramped, still divided into three small rooms: scullery, toilet, dining area. The first time she saw his white head in the kitchen she felt afraid. She had never seen a black man with white hair before. He looked like death. He hangs his upturned mop on the wall outside his back door. When Alix sees him in the street, wearing his cap to walk his dog, she smiles, and says hello.

He is called Melville. He told her his name when she first moved in, across the low picket fence which divided their back gardens. He has lived there 50 years.

Alix hears her neighbour, now, as he opens his back door. Small slow steps. She peers out of her bedroom window, where she sits at her desk, and watches as he plops down a coir doormat, holds a yellow garden hose and turns it on to dribble water over the mat. She only ever sees functional items on the washing line: sheets, wash cloths, floor mats. A dribble of water again as he waters the pumpkin and bean plants. A cough. No music from his house today. Sometimes she hears swing tunes or country.

**In the street:** as soon as the temperature goes beyond 25 degrees, at certain of the households, people stand for hours on their doorstep. One group makes a party in their driveway. They grill sausages, and sit on rusty fold out chairs, or lean against the wall, arms folded, chatting and laughing. Kids wobble up and down the pavement on scooters. She walks on the other side, not wanting to interrupt the group by walking through, or rather, not wanting to be looked at. The street drunk roams the pavement whatever the weather, talking at volume to himself, or anyone who will listen. Alix invariably encounters him as they each arrive at a street tree, where there is only room for one to pass.

**Whilst she was making art she didn't like art:** this changed in New York. She saw a show by Urs Fischer, with Jean, at the New Museum on the Bowery. As they entered a crowd of people were grouped near to the wall. Alix and Jean stood for a while on the edge of the group. As the crowd dispersed Jean stepped forward and a fat pink tongue shot out of the wall.

'Oh.' They both shrieked.

'Do it again,' Alix said.

Jean moved backwards and forwards. The tongue popped out again.

'It looks real?' Alix said. She wanted it to be real. She imagined the artist, standing behind the wall, living his work, playing the prankster. A croissant, upon which perched a blue-winged butterfly, dangled from the ceiling.

In London, she and Jean go to a comics exhibition at The British Library. One exhibit is a quotation by Bob Fosse:

LIVE LIKE YOU'LL DIE TOMORROW  
 WORK LIKE YOU DON'T NEED THE MONEY  
 AND DANCE LIKE NOBODY'S WATCHING

Yeah, she thinks. Yeah.

Later, she googles Robert Fosse and discovers that he died at 60 of a heart attack. Carter lived and worked to that maxim, and died at 36.

How can she live like she'll die tomorrow, and be a parent, and not die prematurely?

Men who make maxims.

Do they not worry about premature death? Or do they feel invincible, stuck in the Feeling Immortal stage.

Carter wanted to fly. And took as many drugs and partied as hard and worked as hard as he could to do that. Did he feel he had been able to fly. Or that he was going to die trying.

What maxims do women make?

Susan Sontag gives good maxim. Alix reads them on Brainpickings: "10 Rules for Raising A Kid". She especially relates to no. 10: "Don't presume that just 'cos you don't like to bath or hair wash your child won't want to." Jean takes daily showers and owns as many jackets, which he buys on ebay, as she does knickers. What then if Jean does want to keep Carter's stuff? She thinks about the remaining boxes lurking in the cellar.

**All the different versions of 'Hallelujah':**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYiMJ2bC65A>: KD Lang in the presence of Leonard Cohen.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBo-n\\_17XU0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBo-n_17XU0): Rufus Wainwright, whom she saw sing this song live at the Hop Farm Festival in 2008. She attended with a bunch of artist friends, all couples, and their kids. As a single parent she felt peripheral.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FpwjQLZTTs>: Leonard Cohen. She recently read or watched or listened to a documentary about Leonard Cohen – maybe it was a Wikipedia entry. He began his artistic life as a poet and novelist, then took himself

off into Mediterranean exile with a young wife and became a lyricist. Re-reading Cohen's Wikipedia entry now, Alix discovers that his daughter has a son with Rufus Wainwright. This blending of artistic genes excites her. And Cohen, still living and performing, who has undergone serious financial troubles, is a trooper.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKnxmkOAJ88>: Jeff Buckley, long dead it seems, and yet born the year after Alix and Carter. He also drowned, in Wolf River. Did people cluster around a pair of shoes and a pile of clothes on the river's edge. How many other people have died in Wolf River, or the Seine, or the Serpentine Lake. The Wolf River, she reads, is recognized as offering public benefit to the Mid-South in various ways, not least by providing safe harbor for floodwaters, which would otherwise cause a faster flowing river and flood risks. The Seine and the Serpentine Lake equally have enormous beneficial attributes to their locales, not least as sites of beauty. Meanwhile, these water bodies swallow their victims whole.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aplWTXEcY70>: Alexandra Burke, winner of the X Factor in 2008. Alix saw that final. She watched the first episode of this year's new series of X Factor, in which the age limit has been reduced to 14. Who will have the conversation, she wonders, with those children, and explain the inevitable demise of their pop career. By definition a pop star must appeal to a teen audience. But perhaps the journey is worth it. Better to do than to not?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oa\\_q6Jnukg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oa_q6Jnukg): Regina Spektor wrote and performed the theme tune to *Orange is The New Black*. Alix resisted this series on Netflix for some time, preferring series about writers living in New York, of which HBO, pleasingly, produce many. One evening, having exhausted the choices, she selects this show, and binge watches for the rest of the day.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEOZLQ3d1FI>: John Cale, a founding member of The Velvet Underground. His version of 'Hallelujah' became the definitive one, adopted even, later, by Leonard Cohen. An experimentalist, he organized a Fluxus concert.

The builders are back to renovate Jean's room, the contents of which have to be relocated into her room. She hasn't got to everything quickly enough, or hidden her dirty knickers on the floor. They are heaving boxes and re-locating furniture. With builders in the house an uncomfortable intimacy occurs similar to that of patient and

doctor and you can't pretend you're anything other than a pissing, shitting, farting human being, who eats from the fridge, bleeds on their sheets and picks their nose.

The bookcase in Jean's room needs to be dismantled; when they resituate the radiator it will no longer fit. Last night she emptied it of books and piled them onto a chest of drawers in her room.

'Can it go somewhere else?' Marten says, his head on one side. He clearly dislikes the idea of dismantling something he built. The only option is her bedroom. He's in there before she can pull the duvet down. The two of them brush errant flakes of skin and stray hairs from her bed-sheet, and pile the books there, so that they can move her chest of drawers to make way for the bookcase.

She should have boxed the books up over the weekend, instead of watching box-sets.

## TWO

### *Hackney, London, February 2000*

Carter lies flat on his back on a futon mattress in the bedroom of his new studio. He has used monies from a recent art prize for emerging artists to put down a three month deposit on a live/work studio in a former print works in Hackney, an upmarket affair, with white walls, sanded parquet floors, and high ceilings. It's his third studio in six months; things are moving fast. Not least the situation with Ellery. He's been up most of the night with her and a lesbian couple, friends of hers, making a film. They left about an hour ago.

Bzzz.

Shit, it must be Alix. He asked her to come and help make the work for the Paris show whilst he's in New York. He's going to check out Bloom Projects, where he's also been offered a solo show, and to visit the Armory Art Fair. Bloom and Ellery want to tout him around ahead of the show.

Carter levers himself up and shuffles out into the corridor. He stubs his toe on a length of wood which lies across the hall floor. 'Fuck!' He presses the intercom to buzz open the front door of the building, puts his own front door on the latch and shuffles back into bed.

'What the fuck is this?' Alix stands over him holding out a heavily perfumed card.

Carter gazes blearily at it.

'Who the fuck is sending you Valentine cards?' She opens it and a pressed snowdrop falls out. 'It's got to be Ellery.'

Carter sits up. 'It could be anyone.' His neck muscles contort into long hard sinews. 'I've got lots of people after me. I can have anyone I like.' He snatches the card. 'Did I ask you to open my post.' His grin turns to a snarl. Then, he smiles again, and his body relaxes. He runs his tongue around his dry mouth. 'Can you get me some juice?'

'Get your girlfriend to get it. Shall I call her?'

Alix marches out of the room.

Carter slid back under the duvet and rolls to one side.

Minutes later Alix pulls the duvet off him. 'That's my fucking duvet. Why have you

got it? Has she slept here, under my duvet?’

Carter turns to face her. ‘This is what I don’t like about you,’ he says. ‘Always interrogating me.’

Alix throws the duvet back onto him.

‘Can you make me a coffee?’ he says. ‘Or just get in.’ He holds the duvet up. ‘I need to check on Jean,’ Alix says, and exits the room.

Later, a television provides welcome background fuzz as Carter makes a mumbled attempt to justify the bombshell he’s just dropped, that he plans to stay with Ellery in New York rather than stay in a hotel. ‘It’ll reduce costs,’ he says, talking with bits of chain between his teeth, whilst he levers chain links, and attaches lengths to a red and blue chain rendition of an *Electric Chair*.

Alix has Jean latched onto her right breast. ‘Let the gallery book you a hotel,’ she says.

In the previous months Ellery has visited the studio with potential collectors, and invited him to dinners and nights out, all strictly in the capacity of his now being a “happening” artist. Or so he told Alix. And there have been phone calls. Alix asked him once if he slept with her, after a birthday dinner when he stayed overnight at Ellery’s. She tried to sleep with me, he said. She’s useful. That’s all. She has contacts here and in New York.

The TV programme blares away about a pregnant stripper whose manager boyfriend has been sleeping with one of the other strippers. ‘What difference does it make anyway?’ Carter says. He stops work and gestures towards the television, knife and chain in hand.

‘Well, we’re human beings, and we have emotions. It makes a difference.’ Alix transfers Jean from her right breast to the left.

‘But it doesn’t need to make a difference to their relationship does it?’ He puts lengths of chain back into his mouth and continues working.

‘Are you trying to tell me something?’ Alix looks uncomfortable, sitting cross-legged on the floor.

‘Maybe.’

The landline rings. Carter goes across to where it sits screened by a large piece of canvas, which muffles the sound.

It's Ellery. 'Have you told her yet?'

'Kind of.' Carter leans in to the wall. 'No. I mean, she knows. She must know. But I still need her this week. Eve and Jules are away.'

'Are you still sleeping with her?' Ellery asks.

'Yes.' He puts the phone down.

'Why does she need to ring you at this time of night?' Alix asks when he returns to where she's sitting. 'She'll see you tomorrow.'

'She just wants to be involved.'

Later that night, when he and Alix are in bed, the phone rings again, goes to voicemail, and rings again.

### ***Heathrow Airport***

Carter stands next to Alix in the airport lift. He asked her to drive him to the airport, with Jean. He wears dirty jeans and denim jacket and pulls a carry-on black Samsonite. Alix grips the handles of the pushchair. The lift from the short-stay car park deposits them on Level 1 for departures and Carter marches ahead as Alix wheels the pushchair across the threshold of the lift. They have time until take-off, so they head towards one of the chain coffee outlets, which provides faux leather armchairs and white plastic tables on the indoor concourse.

Carter scans the area beyond the café whilst they stand in line for coffee. He spots his friend Karen standing near a Money Exchange outlet and approaches her. As he returns Alix sets down a tray on the table, slopping coffee over the edges of the cups, which soaks the serviettes on the saucers.

'Why do they put serviettes under the cup. It's annoying. Who's that?' Alix nods across to where Karen is in line for money.

'She's a photographer, Karen Baker. She works a lot in New York. We arranged to get the same flight when I met her last week at a dinner at Ellery's.'

'Why doesn't she have coffee with us, if you're travelling together?'

Carter shrugs and chews on a nail, which he spits into the ash tray. He takes out a packet of Camel cigarettes. Jean starts to cry. Carter lights up as Alix picks him up.

'Oh, sorry.' He waves his hand, batting at the smoke and opens out his newspaper. He turns his back to her to read it. He drains his cup and gets up. They approach Karen.

'Karen, this is Alix.' Carter scratches his chest as the two women execute a limp

handshake. Karen turns away almost immediately, folding herself into Carter, chumming up ready for the journey they're about to share. At the last moment Carter kisses Alix briefly on the lips. 'Be good,' he says. He giggles and waves, and turns his attention to Karen.

### ***JFK Airport***

As Carter and Karen exit through the Nothing To Declare customs doors a shriek goes up, and a camera flashes. Ellery, red-mouthed, in spike heels and a polka dot dress, holds a placard saying "Star, That's What You Are", alongside car service drivers looking for "Mr. Patel" and "Sharon Morgan". She is flanked by two exuberant men. One of them, Ronaldo, is someone Carter knows from London.

'Smile, gorgeous.' Ronaldo snaps another picture. Carter lifts his T-shirt and sticks his tongue out.

'Karen. Meet Ronaldo, a fashion/art dandy of the highest calibre,' Carter says.

Karen offers a hand to Ronaldo, after cheek-kissing Grigorio, Roberto Cavali's fashion assistant, also in town for the Armory Show.

'Carter, this is Grigorio. We've done a few fashion campaigns together,' Karen says.

'Maybe Grigorio can do some shots of you.' Ellery moves next to Carter, and puts her arm around his waist.

'Smile.' Ronaldo snaps Carter and Ellery together.

Carter turns to Ellery and licks her cheek. Ellery screeches and giggles.

'You're so cute together,' Grigorio shrieks.

### ***New York, New York***

Carter, Ellery and Karen drive uptown to Queen's. Carter shoots the scene through the window. He brings his camera back inside the cab and pans around to reveal Ellery and Karen. Ellery twists in her seat behind the driver, where she sits facing Carter. 'Sir, if you could pull up on the right, Sir. Anywhere here is fine.'

A bag, and then a brown coat obscures the shot as Karen climbs out. She pokes her head back in. 'Listen, if you go out tonight, don't forget to pick me up.'

'We won't, don't worry.' Carter swivels the camera now to focus on Ellery's face.

'Do you need some cash for the cab?' Karen asks.

‘No. We’re alright for money aren’t we?’ Carter says to Ellery. Ellery giggles as the cab moves off. ‘You were great last night.’

‘Oh, thanks.’ Carter says. ‘You were good in the film. Putting those flowers in your fanny.’

Ellery giggles again.

‘Listen. Let’s make that our secret,’ Carter says.

‘You were the one who blurted out that we’re making a film. I just want to draw people’s attention to how good you are.’

‘I did say sorry. But we won’t tell anyone about the film from now on.’

‘Ronaldo says I’m a nightmare sometimes.’ Ellery stretches her legs forward and puts her feet on Carter’s lap.

‘You are a nightmare sometimes.’ Carter trains the camera on Ellery’s face.

‘What? You think I’m sexy?’ She leans forward, and twists around again to talk to the driver. ‘Sir. Could you take the next left please, Sir?’

### ***Carter’s studio, Hackney***

Carter buzzes the building entrance to the studio. Back a day later than planned, he wears a red and blue leather biker’s jacket. He pushes through the entrance door into the exposed-brick, concrete-floor hallway. Alix opens the studio door. He evades her eyes and bustles inside.

‘How’s New York?’ Alix asks.

He looks her up and down. Unwashed hair and milk-spotted pyjamas. She smells of roast lamb and rice pudding. ‘Nice to see you’ve made an effort.’

‘Nice jacket,’ Alix responds.

‘Is there any coffee? Who’s here? Has anybody called?’ He puts a cigarette in his mouth and picks up pieces of paper from the ledge by the phone. He marches around the studio, stepping over lengths of wood and bags of chain.

Alix goes into the kitchen.

Carter, cigarette dangling out of the corner of his mouth, squats in front of Jean in his bouncer chair and tickles his tummy. ‘Tickle, tickle.’ His identity bracelet and several chain bracelets jangle. Jean stares at him, and gurgles. Alix stands watching from the kitchen door. He straightens up and greets her with a kiss on each cheek. His stubble rasps against her skin.

The coffee percolates on the hob.

Alix sets a tray onto the large Art Deco table, a treasure from their furniture-auction-going days. She pours out the coffee.

Carter, still standing, spoons three teaspoons of sugar into his, stirs and knocks it back. 'Ellery's coming over later, so you may want to take Jean home.' He doesn't look at her, as he says this. Then, watches as she picks Jean up out of the bouncer, changes her mind, and puts him back in and leaves the room. His mobile rings. It's Ellery. He talks softly into the mouthpiece and laughs.

Jean starts to cry.

Carter hangs up. He throws Jean up and catches him.

Alix comes back into the studio. 'You're an arsehole.' She goes back into the kitchen.

Carter straps Jean back into his chair and follows. Alix is dressed now and he sees that she's wheeled her suitcase into the hallway.

'Did you finish the Warhol?' He looks at her through narrow eyes.

Alix squeezes past him, coming out of the kitchen. Her right breast brushes against his arm. He follows her back into the studio, watches as she picks up Jean out of the bouncer chair. He lights up another cigarette. Alix walks past him into the hallway, and sits Jean in the pushchair.

'That's it. Take him away from mean Daddy. Horrible Carter. Is that what you'll tell him. Daddy was so mean. You can't see Daddy.' His jaw feels tight. 'It's your fault. You left me, remember.'

'I was trying to save *us*,' she says.

'You got cold feet.' He hovers over her in the hallway. 'Go on, run away. Typical. Things get hard, and you run away.'

She buckles the pushchair straps, opens the heavy front door, and wheels the pushchair across the threshold. She comes back for the suitcase, and wheels it into the hallway.

'Look, let me call you a cab,' he says.

'No.'

'Always the martyr. Fuck off then.' Carter slams the door shut.

That evening, Carter calls Alix at home.

‘So how *was* New York?’ Alix asks. ‘You never said.’

‘Fun.’ He drags on his cigarette, and blows out.

‘So you’re sleeping with Ellery.’

‘Yes.’ He drags again and blows a smoke ring. He hears Alix gulping sobs. ‘Did Karen know. About you and Ellery?’ she says.

‘Yes.’

‘Does she want kids?’ Alix asks, after a pause.

‘Yes,’ he says. ‘She thinks it would be really cute to have a kid with me.’ Carter stubs out the cigarette.

‘Jesus Christ. What about me, us?’

‘She’s willing to share,’ he says.

‘How gracious of her.’

‘She says you can go to Paris.’

‘Jesus!’

Finally, ‘why don’t you talk to her,’ Carter suggests.

‘Why would I want to do that?’

Carter hands the phone to Ellery who has clacked into the space behind him with a bottle of red wine and two glasses. He holds out the receiver to her.

‘Alix,’ Ellery says.

Carter sits on a stool at the table, and constructs a joint. He likes hearing Ellery say Alix’s name in her American drawl. It exoticises her. Why can’t they all just get along.

‘I know he has responsibilities here in London that he has to take care of, but I just really enjoy him when I see him. I don’t even know him that well.’

Ellery puts down the phone.

Carter takes a deep toke on the joint, and offers it to Ellery, who shakes her head.

‘She’ll be alright,’ he says. ‘She’s strong.’

### ***Carter’s studio, Hackney***

With one week to go before work is due to be shipped to Paris for his first solo show, Carter and his London assistants, Jules, Eve and Tara, are hard at work. Ellery is also involved. A detailed rendering of the original *Mona Lisa* painting, using all the available colours, is being worked on in two halves by Eve and Tara, having been constructed on a scale twice as big as the Warhol versions. The studio is divided into two by a large

ceiling-hung canvas screen. The side which faces these *Mona Lisa* pieces, where Eve and Tara are at work, is blank. On the other side the canvas is drawn on, a charcoal rendition of Warhol's *Electric Chair* screen print. Several chain renderings of this piece hang in front of the canvas drawing, and are reflected in a mirrored wall. The front layer is the red and blue version, which Carter is working on.

Jules and Carter are sawing lengths of wood, and climbing up and down ladders to fix the chain artworks to the ceiling, or lift them down and relocate them. They've been working 12-hour days for the last two weeks, the assistants often sleeping over. A cheap, portable stereo plays mixtapes of commercial house and garage belonging to Jules. Ellery and Tara are cutting images from porn magazines and pasting them onto a black inflatable chair to make a papier mâché coracle. Carter sets up the video camera and presses record.

The telephone rings. Carter goes behind the screen to take the call. Although he has a mobile phone, he still likes to use his landline. 'Just working. Just working,' he says. It's Alix.

Empty champagne bottles are dotted around on the floor, on plinths and on tables. Eve stands now to one side, sipping, and observing proceedings.

The phone rings again. Eve looks across at it and looks at Carter. He shakes his head and goes around behind the screen. 'Just working, just working,' he says again.

Tara, dressed in a low-cut top and bum-skimming skirt, bends over to paste the porn onto the chair.

Eve walks around behind the video camera and peers through the viewfinder.

'Want to be in it?' Carter comes up alongside her.

She frowns, shakes her head, and moves away.

Carter looks through the viewfinder and shifts the angle of the camera. Ellery turns around and pokes her tongue out.

'Yeah baby,' Carter says, still looking through the viewfinder.

Jules continues climbing up and down ladders to fix hooks into the ceiling, in between chopping up and snorting lines of coke on a pink oval plinth which doubles as a coffee table.

The phone rings a third time.

'Someone really wants to talk to you,' Eve says. Her large brown eyes express sorrow.

'I'm just working,' Carter says a third time. 'I don't know when I'll be finished.'

Finally, he takes the call.

'I'm not coming,' Alix says.

'What do you mean, you're not coming. It's my show. You have to come, and bring Jean. My family will be there.'

'So what?'

'Look, your ticket's paid for. Just come for the night.'

'Why?'

'Because you owe it to me. I won't have any respect for you if you don't come. Anyway, why wouldn't you come? It doesn't matter about Ellery. It makes no difference to us. She's just useful.'

'One night.' Alix says.

Carter slams down the phone and joins Jules at the pink plinth.

**ALIX KNOWS THE CHAIRS ARE UNCOMFORTABLE BECAUSE SHE HAS  
TWO AT HOME**

**Wed 5 Aug, 2014**

Alix cycles to the Serpentine Gallery.

Alix gets into the red-sheeted bed.

Alix has the choice to enter the exhibition to the left or the right.

Alix knows the chairs are uncomfortable because she has two at home.

Alix puts her bag in a locker, drinks a half-cup of water and approaches the final gateway.

Alix removes her boots.

Alix stands up, circles the room, and enters a room to the left of the main space.

Alix takes off her boots and climbs into the bed.

Alix wants to follow.

Alix watches, closes her eyes, watches, closes her eyes.

An older woman, with short bleached-blond hair, sits down on the edge of the plinth.

And how did they get there?

Another assistant points to a table full of industrial-looking black headphones.

At the door to the exhibition space they are inducted into the workings of the exhibition.

Blissful.

Both still there.

Breathe.

Breathe.

Contained.

Close eyes.

Close eyes.

Close eyes.

Close eyes.

Eventually, there's movement.

Emergency stop-start breathing.

Everyone has become a symbiotic part of the other: the pushy men, the beautiful girl, the weeping woman, Alix.

Eyes closed.

Finally, she is first in line.

Green?

‘Have you been before,’ the young man asks.

He covers her with the sheet, and tucks it under her chin.

He pulls back the sheet and she lies down.

He takes her hand and leads her to a green-sheeted bed.

His shoes sit neatly at the edge of the road.

Just one other person turns up whilst she’s there.

Looking at the statues in the beds.

Marina circles the space, and takes the hand of one of the black-clad gallery assistants, and leads her through a door, which closes behind them.

Marina has led a young woman to stand and face the wall, at the foot of Alix’s bed.

Marina returns with a second lady.

Mostly occupied.

‘Next ten,’ he says, and ushers them to the gallery entrance.

No one standing.

‘No,’ she says.

Nothing can go wrong here.

On Lupus Street, an elderly man lies in the recovery position on the edge of the pavement.

One of the men stands forward of her again, to her right now.

One woman, flip flops on the floor in front of her, sits down on the edge of the plinth.

Or the purple one in the far corner?

Others sit on uncomfortable wooden IKEA chairs around the edges of the room facing the plinth.

Outside the Serpentine Gallery there’s a queue.

Peep.

Peep.

Peep.

Peep.

People stand, eyes shut, on a low plinth made up of square boxes.

People with eyes closed, except one lady, the yoga lady, who sits on a bed, crouched forward.

‘Please put away your bags, phones and watches,’ the young man tells them, and opens the door into a locker room, a liminal space, where people sit quietly on soft benches, or dose up on water in see-through disposable cups.

People are transformed once they are inside the exhibition.

People walking around.

Safe.

She enters left.

She feels bullish, determined to be first off the mark as a gallery assistant comes across.

She imagines the drowned man pulling at her ankles.

She is a statue in a bed.

She is building Alix an army of silent swaying warriors.

She is content.

She is the first person in the water.

She lies for a long time.

She must also not speak.

She opens her eyes.

She pushes back the sheet.

She returns instead to the main space, and stands against the wall, as the weeping woman did before her.

She shakes her head.

She sits down and sees that Marina is sitting in the same row, eyes closed.

She stands and walks into another room, the other side of the main space.

She stands with the woman, a spectral presence.

She still looks sad.

She watches as the older woman smiles at Marina as she takes her hand and leads her to stand against a wall.

She will swim first.

She wonders how long people stand on the plinths.

Sensory deprivation.

Silence.

Still no one in the pink-sheeted bed.

Suddenly, an urgent need to breathe, as if she has forgotten how.

The central space is busy.

The line dissipates.

The red-sheeted bed is near to the outside wall.

The teenage girl with her does the same.

The unoccupied beds are pink or red-sheeted.

The weeping woman stands up, and leans against the wall opposite Alix.

The woman finds a tissue and brings it up to her eyes.

The woman in the chair diagonally opposite her weeps silently.

The woman puts her feet together in a yoga pose, knees out wide.

The young gallery assistant dressed in black indicates for her to follow him.

There are camp beds covered by coloured sheets: pink, red, yellow, orange.

They stand for forty minutes.

This girl with waist length hair and shorts so short her bum cheeks show drew an intake of breath, earlier, from the men in the queue behind Alix.

This room is also full of beds, with green, blue and purple sheets.

Two male police officers are present, smiling, as well as two older women.

Two men edge ahead of her in the queue.

Watched over.

When she has exhausted her sense of who she is and who she can be in the green-sheeted bed, which felt like a bit of a cheat since she has already spent some considerable time in the red-sheeted bed, she visits the exhibition at the extension gallery which involves her walking across the bridge over the lake where a large HD video installation, with doodlings like hand-drawn tattoos on the computer-generated avatar, a drunk man, a bar stool philosopher, is viewable across two screens from one position and three screens from another position.

When she has exhausted her sense of who he is and who he can be, the words barely audible, a melancholic crooning, a yearning for a lost love is it, she feels sunk.

When she has exhausted her sense of who she is and who he can be, the words barely audible, and what he might be saying, she buys the accompanying book looking for explanation, and stands on the bridge over the lake to read it.

When she has exhausted her sense of who she is and who he can be, the words barely audible, and what he might be saying, she, having bought the accompanying book looking for explanation, and standing on the bridge over the lake to read it, and finding therein none, feels sunk, and she understands that art is experiential, like *Catch 22*: one must reproduce not describe, and she is literal, and she looks down at the river and she sees how it would be easy to jump in, all bets off.

When she has exhausted her sense of who she is and who he can be, the words barely audible, and what he might be saying, she, having bought the accompanying book looking for explanation, and standing on the bridge over the lake to read it, that night watches *Marina's Diary*, on her laptop, onto which, every day at midnight Marina posts a blog entry, her reflections on the day: she was thinking of Van Gogh all day, she says, she experienced visions, when we don't move we start seeing molecules of the air; like energy particles that are very real, that's what Van Gogh was painting, she says, a dance of these invisible particles of energy, she says, in her accented English, a guttural 'k' in front of words, and her face and long black hair looming out of the white backdrop, and she wants to be immersed in the work so that she's almost invisible, she says, and today, she says, she felt the particles of the energy in the space, for which, she says, you need total stillness of your body and mind, and Alix feels privileged to have witnessed such a moment, to have seen Marina immersed in the work, eyes shut as she sat on the uncomfortable chair.

### **Thurs 7 Aug**

A crazy dream.

A man climbs out of a bed covered by a blue sheet.

A maroon-sheeted bed is empty.

A small section of her front tooth severs off.

A transcendent space, like an airport or train station or hospital, where there is a common sense of purpose.

A woman in a blue dress standing against the opposite wall stares at Alix.

Alix doesn't want to get into this bed.

Alix feels cheated, that the assistant, a young woman this time, didn't tuck her in under her chin.

Alix nods.

Alix returns to the room with the beds.

Alix stares back.

Alix walks across the space.

Alix walks around to the other side, and gets in.

An assistant enters with a girl, and tucks her into it.

Another row of chairs faces the walls.

*But they lie close together.*

Carter's 24 and 48 hour coke-fuelled binges: it's for the work, he said.

Chairs face the central plinth.

Cycling home, she feels an urgency to see Jean.

*Everything is at a tilt.*

Having had big ideas about cleaning up, putting on laundry, cooking, instead she spends hours googling Marina Abramovic looking at the performances she did with Ulay.

He balanced a half-eaten burger on his right thigh.

He had had a fight with an umbrella, he said at *The Face* Christmas party.

He'd met her once in Paris with Konrad.

He tried to give up coke, and, in his final week, alcohol.

He sat on a chair in the middle of the studio, wearing a blood-splattered T-shirt, and moving a beer can slowly along the shaft of his cock.

In front of her, a man's head, with a T of hair.

In the far corner a young woman with long black wavy hair.

In the room to the left, camp beds are covered with purple, maroon, blue, red and green sheets.

In the room to the right, people are walking slowly, individually and in pairs, some holding hands.

It feels important to be here.

It's a horse, he said, for Bianca Jagger.

'Maybe, yeah,' he says.

Mayonnaise dripped down his leg.

No meals to cook, no laundry to hang.

Not dope though.

One day, just before their split, she arrived at Carter's studio around 10am.

People are more restless than yesterday.

'Shall we watch a film,' she says, 'after dinner.'

She awakes feeling hollowed out, and hears a crunch.

She circles the main room.

She decides to go again to the Abramović show.

She drowns.

She enters right.

She hears 'oh' escape her lips.

*She's aware she must not take this man.*

*She's in bed with a man, someone else's boyfriend.*

*She's somewhere with a lot of people.*

*She is taken by the hand by the young man from the gallery.*

She lifts her head and notes her neighbours.

*She sees again the final image she saw at the other show: a flayed body, laid out on the axis of the pubic area: the front cut out around the pubic bone, no genitals, the back retains its anus.*

She returns to the main room, and leans against the wall. She sees one assistant lead a woman onto the plinth.

She stands against the wall by the window.

She stands against the wall for a short time in this room.

She walks to the bed and takes off her shoes.

She watched as droplets of condensation fell onto his hand.

She wonders about the extremism.

Some time in, a wave of green flashes across her eyes.

The assistants appear less active.

The assistant covers her with the sheet and folds the top edge back mid way on her chest.

The assistant looks at the girl.

The assistant looks at her.

The assistant pulls back the sheet.

The assistant stays a while holding the woman's hand.

The autopsy stated that he had marijuana in his bloodstream when he died, no alcohol, no coke.

The fingers of his right hand were bandaged.

The girl shakes her head.

The girl's friend hovers by the entrance.

The horse blocked her entrance into the studio.

The umbrella, attached to a wooden trestle, constituted a horse's head, along with a saddle made of art blankets with chain for reins.

*Then he's gone.*

There are no shouting drunks, no yapping dogs, no shuffling men hosing their doormats.

There are just a few people standing on the plinth.

There is more movement up and down from the chairs.

This used to be their thing.

To her left an assistant, her back to the wall, whispers to another assistant standing beside her.

To her left, an older woman, short, wavy brown hair.

What is it about blue?

When she gets up much later they are still lying there, eyes closed.

Write about it, he said, maintaining a slow ecstatic grin.

### **Friday 8 Aug**

A chair becomes free and Alix sits in it.

A few people stand, swaying, eyes closed, on the plinths.

A young girl with long brown hair lies in the bed at her feet.

Again, people are walking, slowly.

Again, whilst standing in the queue, people spill out of their groups and try to

edge ahead.

Alix and Carter also met young and became a 24/7 item, making art, their studio, for years a 504 Peugeot pick-up truck.

Alix closes her eyes and puts her hands on her thighs, as she has seen an assistant tell another woman to do.

Alix expected intense thoughts and feelings to arise during these sessions.

Alix looks into the room on the right.

Alix sees her rise.

Alix sits for a bit longer and gets up to leave.

Alix stands against the wall.

Alix wonders if she enjoys the contact with the young men.

All the chairs are taken, and lots of people stand against the walls, there's a sense of overcrowding.

An assistant whispers in her ear, that the exhibition is closed.

And sits back up.

Each time, she lifts her head to look around.

Eventually she insisted that they get a studio as Carter took over their flat with sheets of glass, industrial clocks, art materials, debris, a stuffed magpie, cast-off picture frames from the gallery he worked in, cut holes in the walls, and dug holes in the garden.

Every now and then she opens her eyes to see if Marina is still there.

Eyes shut.

For a long time she is.

Having put her bag into a locker, she weighs up which way to enter.

He doesn't seem to understand what she's saying.

He leans forward again, and rests his arms on his thighs, and rubs his hands together.

He looks cross.

He shakes his head, and withdraws.

He strokes her arm with his left hand.

Her eyes closed.

How will it affect what transpires, whether she enters left, as she did the first time, or right, as she did the second time.

In each of the gaps, three rows of three chairs face inwards.

In fact a kind of emptying has occurred.

In it Marina reveals herself as a young woman in love with Ulay.

Is that it – women nurture, endure and survive.

It is a lovely thing to see her arms entangled in his.

It looks like a violin.

Marina bends and whispers something to him, and leaves the room.

Marina hugs the young man ahead of Alix, and asks him about the instrument he carries on his back.

Marina is followed by two security guys: short haired clean-shaven men in check shirts and blue slacks, unsmiling, and with crinkled foreheads.

Marina sits next to a young man who leans forward, and rubs his arms.

Marina sits on a chair, in a front row.

Marina stands at the door, and shakes hands with gallery visitors as they exit.

Marina walks across and stands by the window; the spot where she brought people to stand on Alix's first day.

Men do bloody battle, and conquer or die.

Once, a live magpie fell down their chimney.

Or stand, or crouch against the walls.

People wander past.

Quite a few people stand on the plinths.

She enters right.

She gets in, and sleeps.

She sees that she is directly opposite Marina.

She loved him, Marina said, and felt that it was forever.

She shakes Alix's hand, gives a warm smile.

She stands with her arms entangled around the man's right forearm, like creeping vines.

She returns to the main space.

She sees people led to beds and tucked in.

She tries again.

She visits a third time.

She walks across to the other room, in which, happily, she finds camp beds.

She wakes herself intermittently with a snore.

That night Alix watches *The Artist is Present*, a documentary about the making of the work for the recent retrospective at MOMA.

The back of the chair digs into her spine.

The bed here now has a purple sheet, and is empty.

The man continues to sit.

The plinth in the main space has been rearranged into a square platform, with sections placed diagonally at each corner, creating gaps.

The room is busy.

The sheets are purple, maroon, pink, red and green.

They travelled in a van, and made art, and felt that their world was contained.

They made a list of all the catastrophes that had befallen them to date.

When she has exhausted the memories of all the catastrophes that had befallen them she watches *Frances Ha* and over-identifies with the heroine, a person striving towards an idea of something, but who never arrives, or fits: the scene of Frances using a credit card to go to Paris, just to prove that she can, and spending a jet-lagged weekend in a stranger's apartment is so sharply reminiscent of lonely days Alix spent walking about Paris when she was persuaded by Carter to take Jean to see him, and a weekend in a modernist hotel in Marseille – she saw it in a magazine and thought it looked glamorous and in fact the roof top pool was a paddling pool and was deserted – on her birthday; Carter came for one evening, then went to see a client, he said, in Salzburg, and she stayed three further nights alone with Jean; of course the movie ends hopefully – Frances reframes her expectations, moves to Washington Heights, instead of Manhattan, takes up the admin job offered to her at the dance school where she'd hoped to be offered tenure, and choreographs a show, instead of striving to become a dancer, unlike Alix whose furious struggle will not dissipate.

### **Sun 10 August**

A gallery assistant approaches her end of the queue.

A gallery assistant is still talking to a group of young people in the queue behind her.

Again, they are informed that, even though Marina came outside earlier to ask people in

the queue not to stay too long, people are however staying a long time, and there's increasingly a chance that people at this point in the queue will not get in.

Alix plans to spend the afternoon there, but when she arrives at the gallery the queue snakes beyond the gallery courtyard and into the park.

Alix pulls her hood up, and holds her bag pressed against her chest inside her coat, to protect the book and notebook inside it.

Alix stands uneasily, colluding in the denial.

And has things to do.

Because they are different, special, and they will be the one to escape death.

But she doubts it.

But why, she thinks.

Each one believing that they will be the one to hold out; others will give up, they will be the special one, the one that gets in.

Everybody stands firm.

For a brief moment Alix is determined to hang on.

I'm soaked.

I'll do it. I'll be the one to leave, she thinks.

In every lake and river.

In her house.

In houses.

It is raining heavily.

It's the final day of the Abramović exhibition at the Serpentine.

Rain seeps into the nape of her neck and through her coat sleeves.

Responsibilities to attend to.

She is alive.

She looks at the panoply of umbrellas.

She really can't afford to stand for two more hours, getting completely soaked, only to be turned away.

She thinks again about the man who drowned.

She walks back through the park, enjoying its emptiness, the sky above a white sheet.

She walks across the grass to an exit, somewhat self-conscious.

She was in the queue for two hours.

She wears wellies and a raincoat but does not carry an umbrella, as almost everyone

else in the queue seems to.

That will be good for them.

‘That would be good for you, wouldn’t it,’ the assistant laughs.

The lake bubbles high.

The rain rains harder.

There are no badges for standing in this queue, just as there were no badges for remaining as long as she did in a relationship gone bad.

There are dead people everywhere, she thinks.

They will wait for everyone else to surrender, they will get in.

This time several gallery assistants come down the queue at once.

Twenty minutes later, the rain presses down in increasingly huge, torrential droplets, which course along the tarmac.

‘We think it will be a three hour wait for you; by which time it will be 5.15pm.

There’s a risk you will not get into the show.’

‘We think you might be better off spending your time elsewhere. It is very unlikely that people at this end of the queue will get in,’ they say.

‘We’ll be fine. These other people just need to leave,’ one of them says.

Why don’t I just admit defeat and go home?

Will she discover later that those people got in?

## ONE

*Hackney, London, October 1999*

Later that day, Carter and Alix face each other across a wooden table in F. Cooke's, a pie and mash shop on Broadway Market. Carter rumples his hair in the antique mirror alongside them, and lights a cigarette.

'So that gallerist came to see me.' He grins and makes a triumphant face at her. He stubs out his cigarette in the well-used tin ashtray, picks up his fork and attacks the meat pie.

'Do you plan to be at Dan's full-time now?' Alix asks.

'Maybe not. He just gave me this.' Carter pulls out the note and hands it across the table. 'You keep it.'

'What happened?' Alix looks at the note.

Carter shrugs. 'You didn't want me, Dan doesn't want me. Clearly I'm a nightmare. We had a fight? I can't remember. He's just jealous. I've got stuff going on.'

'He's got stuff going on.'

Carter shrugs again.

'Anyway, maybe it's better. You don't want me around, smoking and drinking, and waking you up. I'm going to be a star. Konrad Glass has offered me a solo show in Paris. I'm going out to see the space next week.' He jerks out his right arm to pick up the chilli dressing and shakes it over his food. 'Ha ha ha, hee hee hee.' He shakes the bottle at her. 'Go on. Spice up your life.'

She takes it.

'Don't look so glum. It's just a studio,' he says.

Alix brings out a pregnancy pee stick. 'Here's one we made earlier,' she says.

Carter pulls a marker pen out of his pocket and draws a Keith Haring baby onto the stick. 'Now you'll have something to remember me by,' he says, ecstatic.

## A GOOD DAY FOR A BONFIRE, SHE THINKS

### **an island above a sea of foolscap suspension folders**

Alix sits in her bed, an island above a sea of foolscap suspension folders, full of her and Jean's life: details of probate and the estate, utility statements, mortgage info, insurance details, her will, life insurance, school reports, birthday cards, drawings, info on cabins, solar power and gardening, Alix + Carter ephemera, bank statements, self-assessment files, university certificates, Jean's school photographs, letters from Carter's parents, unsent letters to Carter's parents, postcards from Carter. Also on the floor, a laundry bag, with some items tipped out, where she rummaged to find a pair of jeans to pack for a festival she has just been to with Gemma. She recently moved the filing cabinets, which housed these folders, from the landing outside her bedroom into the living room. The cabinets were obstructing passage, and obscuring a window. She is taking five or six folders with her each time she goes downstairs and sorting through them. What if she dumped it all? What's the worst that could happen? Yesterday, she looked at a folder of medical records.

### **on this same wall**

Alix's eyes drift around the room to a picture of a man leaning against a white and pistachio-green painted fence, blu-tacked to the wall to the right of the window, behind him, a mountain range, and the tips of conifers, to his left a small log hut with a Chinese sign attached. Looking above this picture she reads the words *Drizzle* and the number 217 written in pencil on the wall, the name of a paint colour and its corresponding chart number. On this same wall, dots of Blu-Tack left behind from sheets of paper which detailed Susan Sontag quotes, notes and a timeline for a text piece she is working on. These quotes sat above her desk at the time of their being tacked up – she has since moved her desk and removed the quotes and notes because her parents were coming to stay. When they left, she stripped the bed, threw open the window, and moved the furniture around, so that on the wall where the desk now faces, she has a new set of communications – a scrawled schedule detailing the next six months, a To Do List, and a daily timetable, lists which she has also written onto

sheets of paper, onto Notes in her phone, into a notebook and into her diary.

### **on the wall against which the desk is now placed**

On the wall against which the desk is now placed, she has written the word *responsibilities*, and underneath this: *money-work, health/exercise, mortgage, bills, food* – bottom line needs. To the right the word *worries* and underneath *money*, and *not making anything good*. The writing on the wall is a map of her terrors. To the left, taped up, a photocopied book cover of a special edition of *Rashomon and Other Stories* by Ryunosoke Akutagawa with collaged graphic images of an old crone, mouth agape, eyes staring, hand resting on a dead person, a skull, a disembodied man's head, cut off at the chin, a praying mantis looming in front of a house, a crow perched on a rooftop, other crows of the murder flapping in the sky, and a seated man who rests his chin on his hand: the visceral mournful economies of life and death. What is she afraid of? What's the worst that could happen, the counsellor said. Alix should have asked her for a Bucket List of "The Worst That Can Happen" scenarios, ranked 1 to 10. Why are you late, she said at Alix's first session. He was saying things to me, Alix said, that it meant I didn't trust him, if I came, it meant I didn't love him. You had an appointment. Imagine if this were a job interview, the counsellor said. I'm frightened of his anger, Alix said. The counsellor, wearing a white cable knit jumper, her hair flat on her head, stared impassively. They sat on blue upholstered chairs in a picture less room, with high up windows, and a laminate coffee table in between them, which housed a box of tissues.

### **on the desk**

On the desk are plastic folders containing print outs of the short stories she is working on, a green plate, a white mug, a pile of newly washed towels. To the right of the desk a wooden crate provides an impromptu shelf, and houses a number of books: *Molloy*, *Murphy*, *Against Expression*, *Portrait of an Eye*. Also, a festival wristband, a pack of Blu-Tack, a packet of Morning Glory seeds, another stack of books whose titles, from her vantage point, she can't see, a pack of highlighter pens, some tea lights, a tape measure and a box of Tampax. She's just returned from the festival, where, a week early, her period arrived late on the Sunday night. She wadded up her knickers with

toilet paper in the campsite portaloos. The next morning at 8am she approached the campsite reception. As she entered the tent, a young man sat shuffling paperwork. A second young man lumbered in with a 16 roll pack of toilet paper under each arm.

‘Yes?’ The young man at the desk.

She hesitated, waiting for the second man to disappear, but he stopped, toilet rolls still under his arms, and looked at her also.

‘Um. Do you have any ... girly things?’

Girly?

The young man behind the desk looked around the tent, and looked back at her.

‘I don’t think so, but the Co-op’s across the road.’

‘Oh, I thought it might be on Sunday opening hours, as it’s a Bank Holiday.’

‘Nope.’ The other young man shrugged his shoulders with his purchases. ‘I’ve just come from there.’

Today’s embarrassment box ticked.

What’s the worst that could happen?

### **along this same wall**

Along this same wall is the door, on the back of which is a double brass hook. On the hooks hang two bath towels, and an H&M bag containing a jumper waiting to be returned. Clothes are not her strong suit. She likes the idea of a uniform, jeans and a top, which she can wear every day. She wants as few things as possible to make decisions about. The third wall houses a radiator and a double socket.

### **in the alcove**

In the alcove to her right sits a yellow chest of drawers on which sits a bedside lamp, and more books: *The Unconscious*, *Politics*, *Amerika*, *Walden*, *Dead Souls* and *Haunted*. *Haunted* and *Dead Souls* are interleaved; she’s half way through one, and twenty pages into the other. Of this pile she’s finished *Amerika* and *Walden*. She’s ten pages into *Politics*, her second attempt, and has dipped into and skim read *The Unconscious*. She plans to succeed this time with *Politics*. She hates to give up on a book.

At the festival, she is walking into the town with Gemma.

‘Do you have more than one book on the go at a time?’ Gemma says.

‘Always,’ Alix says. ‘I started re-reading *War and Peace* two years ago. I’m half way in.’

‘I need to finish a book before I move on,’ Gemma says, ‘or abandon it.’

‘I don’t abandon books,’ Alix says.

‘Does that mean I’ve abandoned *War and Peace*? It’s been over a year since I read it.’ She feels sad for *War and Peace*.

In her bag she is humping around two further books, *Agua Viva* and *Hell’s Angels*.

She will dump the files, she decides. Today. And the cabinets. Who needs filing cabinets these days. They’re a dead weight. Massive metal containers with concrete bottoms, like tombs.

### **she’s not comfortable**

She’s not comfortable. The bed’s headboard is two wooden slats, which the pillow pushes through. This is the first grown up bed she’s owned. With her and Carter it was always mattresses on the floor. After they had Jean, Carter complained about being pushed out of the bed, and they purchased a super kingsize handmade mattress; big enough for all of them. She took the mattress with her when she moved out of the flat. She and her sister shouldered it up the stairs. They got stuck on a corner; eventually the mattress sprang onto the landing, like childbirth. Five years on, and after a final incidence of cat piss, the mattress had to be abandoned. Then she slept on a single futon on the floor, or hunched in with Jean, until one day, she suffered a haemorrhage, from high up in her nose. Her sister came to stay to help out, and she had no bed. She ordered a frame and mattress online. As soon as it was built she didn’t like it, but she had it now. It would have to stay. Her periods stopped for three years after Carter’s death. And then, that morning, she woke up to blood pouring out of her nose and eye. It was Carter, she said, coming out of me. The ghost of Carter, being exorcised.

Now, her new mattress hosts dark brown stains from period bleeds. She’s at the stage where the first 24 hours are haemorrhagic. At the festival she stopped hourly at portaloos, to keep ahead of it, the smell of the blood-drenched pads like rotting

meat. *Women get smelly as they get older.* An art curator friend, 15 years her senior, told her that. At the time she said nothing, and hoped for the best.

To her left, balanced on the bed, a cereal bowl and a bookmark. At the end of the bed, right of her foot, a new book. *A Death in the Family*, by Karl Ove Knausgaard. So as well as *War and Peace*, *Dead Souls*, *Haunted*, *The Unconscious*, *Vanity Fair*, *Portrait of an Eye*, and *Against Expression* she's now abandoned both *Hell's Angels* and *Agua Viva*.

To the left of the bed, a chair functions as a side table. On it sits a coffee pot, a coffee cup and her mobile phone. In the left alcove is a rail empty of hangers. It's the only hanging space in the house, but she rarely wore any of the items that were hanging there, so she piled the clothes into bin bags. What's the rule? If you haven't worn something for three months it should go. Perhaps that rule should apply to relationships: if you haven't had sex in three months, end it. If you haven't made each other laugh in three months, end it. If you haven't been kind to each other in three months, end it. But what about all the weeks, months and years in which you have had sex, did make each other laugh, were kind to each other. Is the relationship like the half-finished book that you keep carrying around in a bag, because you're still in the middle of it, and you don't give up on books?

What's the worst that could happen?

Where do you draw the line?

She looks out of the window at the clear sky.

*Ada & Carter*

short story

## Side A

### Inventory

It could start here, in this way, with this list of items stored in their loft between 1987 and 1997: a handmade doll with ping-pong ball head, a wok, two wok stands, a 7-inch diameter cake tin, a Carlsberg ashtray, a Westclox alarm clock, a bamboo vegetable steamer, 25 bed springs, a copy of *The Highway Code*, a copy of *Cocktails and Mixed Drinks*, a copy of *Not Just a Load of Old Lentils*, a copy of *Nicholson London Streetfinder*, a sheet of paper with four handwritten recipes, a copy of *The Principles of Company Law*, an opened bag of Evo-Stick tile grout, a Rawalpindi-Islamabad Tourist Brochure, a Bombay events brochure, a Lahore Streetmap, a Delhi Tourist Brochure, a box of broken white tiles, two plastic bicycle horns, a jack-to-jack, three 1.5 volt batteries, two tins of vapour ointment, a rusty, empty Old Holborn tin, a round Tupperware pot without its lid, an India Tourist map, torn, a copy of *A D. H. Lawrence Miscellany* by Harry T. Moore, an Edgeworth Pipe Tobacco tin containing a burnt match, a Scotch C-90 cassette and a Tampax *Classics* cassette, a red, plastic water pistol, a Sony HF S-90 cassette, a novelty tune device, a bobble hat egg cosy, hand-knitted, the back of a plug, two feet of electric cable, a green toy soldier, a rectangle Tupperware lid, two Polaroid flash cubes, two jack plugs, 15 fluorescent tube light fittings, a chopstick, a 25-watt bulb, a mirror plate, two screws, a putty rubber, a black and white check shirt, a blue rugby shirt, two pairs of Levi jeans, a pair of black dinner suit trousers, a school tie, a pair of dark blue dinner suit trousers, a copy of *Man, Woman & Child* by E. Seagal, a copy of *Economic History Vol. 1*, a copy of *Galleries Guide*, September 1988, an empty cassette case, several party invitations and club flyers, a Spud-U- Like badge, a red Travelcard holder, a cannonball, a black beret, three postcards in frames, a Fleur-de-Lis Scout badge, a pack of coloured sticky-back paper, six Christmas cards, a Stitchery kit, a steel coat hook, painted white, the round Tupperware lid, a pack of playing cards marked “return to bar please”, a photocopied article about artist Jan Vercruyse, a Rimmel lipstick: coffee shimmer, a bag of stair-carpet clamps, a pebble, chipped, two Rubik’s cubes, a vase, a printing block, a bowl carved out of a coconut shell, two biros, two pencils, a No. 7 lipshaper pencil, a thick rusty sewing needle thrust into a wooden bobble wound with thick black thread, a

plastic novelty watch, a brass castor, a toy rhino, a 3<sup>rd</sup> place swimming certificate, a crayon, a toy sniper, a toy spaceman, a toy jeep, a toy spacecraft, a bar of black wax, a broken teapot handle, a broken glass, a Stanley Knife blade, an A4 ring binder, a page torn out of *Men Only*, a selection of polyester ties and cravats, a pair of brown leather loafers, men's, a blue Bomber-jacket, a bag of rags, a black leather bum bag with broken zip, a school tie, a tape measure, a red plastic Yo-Yo, a pair of thermal leggings, a ping pong bat, a toy wooden clock, a JOB cigarette rolling machine, a box of foil wine bottle tops from a wine-making kit, a feather-tipped dart, a Roxy Music cassette, a leather cigarette case, an Ever Hot milk jug, a boxed tie pin, a souvenir sheath knife with a fake bone handle, a pair of wooden castanets, a pair of cuff-links, a black plastic chess pawn, a Wordsworth board game, two pieces of Spirograph, 27 Scruples cards, a glass decanter, a leg from an artist's wooden mannequin, a goatskin flask from the Pyrenees, a Boomerang, with instructions, a travelling chess set, a Yugo Pocket Solitaire game, a selection of warped 7" singles, a Reckless Records carrier bag, a tiddlywinks disc, a wooden die, an Indian ceremonial dagger, a black bow tie, a ceremonial Ghurka knife, an empty darts case, a packet of Silica gel, two glass lemon squeezers, a selection of letters, a felt gonk, hand-sewn, an empty contraceptive packet, a tube of Immac, opened, a jar of coconut oil, half-used, a jar of Pond's coldcream, opened, a box of firelighters, opened, a pencil case containing seven felt tip pens, a crayon, a popper- point pencil, a protractor and a cartridge pen, a bottle top, a bottle of Aramis setting lotion, an A4 plastic sleeve, a tin of talcum powder, a Pifco mini-electric fan, a desk lamp, a carved wooden jewellery box, a Boots 1200 hair dryer, a handmade clay ashtray, 15 foam hair rollers, an orange swimming hat, a box of medicinal charcoal tablets, a tube of Vichy self-tan cream, opened, a tube of Vitapointe hair conditioner, opened, two Chinese bowls, a handmade clay bowl, a tea caddy, rusty, a plastic watch from Hula Hoops, a bottle of Tea Tree oil, a Holland & Barrett brochure, a black plastic comb, a pair of folding travel scissors, a black Marker pen, a plastic credit card wallet, a No. 17 Hideaway stick, used, a pot of plum Pearly Shiner eyeshadow, used, a Papermate Rollerball pen, a black kohl pencil, used, a wooden clothes peg, a bottle of Guerlain scent, opened, a padlock, locked, a friendship bracelet, a pot of Miss Selfridge powder eyeshadow, used, a white eyeliner pencil, used, several toy dinosaurs, two emery boards, used, a roll of sticking plaster, nine hairgrips, a Monopoly £10 note, a college grant statement, four keys, a plastic-handled scalpel without blade, an eau de toilette sample of Grey Flannel, a miniature clay pig, a

yellow lipstick, used, a twenty centime coin, a First Class stamp, unused, a tube of Supa Glue, empty, a plastic button, a marble, six squares from a mirror ball, thirteen more screws, two hooks and eyes, four drawing pins, a safety pin, a drill bit, a Telefon cassette, four hessian sacks, a tin of peppermint vinyl matt emulsion, a small non-stick frying pan, a Mastermind Game, a Travel Scrabble, a collection of Stamford School calendars, 1974-1984, a recipe folder, empty, a picture frame, a black leather belt, the *Guardian* newspaper, 13 November 1989, scrunched up, a tube of Titanium White oil paint, twenty pieces of artist's charcoal, in a red carrier bag, a soiled rag, a Sally Line Duty Free carrier bag, a bottle of Liquin, a Barclays Bank folder, also empty, a chess and draughts set, a skateboard helmet, a pair of Dr Marten brogues, brown, size 7, a pair of Le Coq Sportif rugby boots, size 8, a tin of assorted screws and nails, six rubber washers, a water pistol, a Smiths alarm clock, a white cotton dinner shirt, collarless, a grey wool blanket, a pair of Orange Label Levi 501s, a pair of cycling shorts, a pair of white Levi 501s, an embroidered handkerchief, a paint roller, a chipboard off-cut, an aluminium attaché case, locked, a Spirograph set, a car radio-cassette player, a wooden mantle clock, an embroidered pyjama case, a yellow corduroy recorder sleeve and cleaning brush, a *Girl Guide Patrol Leader's Handbook*, a German vocabulary exercise book, a gas-mask, five more printing blocks, a digital alarm clock, a gardening glove, a cyclist's water bottle, five carving knives, a wooden table leg, an empty jam jar, a fifties-style salt cellar, a door-chain, a block of coloured notepaper, a brown plastic comb, a brass incense-stick holder, a survival knife in a leather pouch, a chocolate grater, a glass cake stand, a toy horse, two plastic sunflowers, a sunglasses lens, a key fob, a bag of incense cones, a number of Junior Girls Table Tennis trophies, plaques and medals, a paint brush, stiff with paint, a white T-shirt, a pair of Reebok jogging trousers, a check shirt, a pink eiderdown, a 7" single, *Lily of the Valley* by Queen, a Red Records carrier bag, a credit card receipt, a length of fly strip, a number of exercise books, a Peugeot 504 pickup vacuum pump, a set of darts in a yellow plastic case, a charcoal grey V-neck jumper, a roll of Gum tape, a game of Jack Straws, four Bakelite light switches, nine Bakelite door knobs, a 4H pencil and an HB pencil, a Jones sewing machine manual, five workmen's gloves filled with sand, several birthday cards, a sheet of writing paper, a typewritten CV, a diary page: 27 March 1982, a packet of Anadin, a toy whistle, a selection of foreign coins, a skipping rope, a copy of the first edition of *Zing* magazine, autumn, 1995, a chrome soap dish, a cardboard box, a rusty saw, a cream mug, a copy of *The*

*Independent*, 2 December 1989, a Peugeot 504 pickup starter motor, 17 packs of Tampax super, a wet and dry sanding block, a copy of the *London A-Z*, a red cat collar, an upright vacuum cleaner, a black gent's umbrella, a dartboard, a Singer sewing machine in a wooden case, a white plastic promotional Frisbee, various art catalogues, a feather pillow, a plastic rain bonnet, an Etch-A-Sketch, two A4 brown envelopes, a packet of pink Post-It notes, three 6-inch plastic rulers, a Bic biro, its end chewed, a wine bottle cork, *Arena* magazine, January 1986 to Sept 1988, *Blitz* magazine, May 1987 to May 1989, a shopping list, a dental appointment card, six Greenflag Breakdown car window stickers, two sachets of Nutrine sweetener, a box of Lil-lets, a pink Hoover hairdryer, a Guinness beer mat, an ICA Membership Card 1995, a table tennis ball, a British Gas pamphlet, a ball of string, a family photograph with a person's head missing, a UB40, more club flyers, an empty Weetabix packet, a stack of children's books and Annuals, two David Essex posters, two Donny Osmond magazine cuttings, a copy of *Die Welt*, 2 March 1988, a photograph of Mandy, a 1976 diary, a crochet hook, a hand-made felt pencil case, a pack of Plasticine, a pack of acrylic paints, a beach ball, deflated, a ski hat, a further bundle of letters, a CND membership card, 1981, a YHA Membership card, 1981.

## Side B

### Word Association

Gran, Chinatown, Habitat, rust, pub smells, blue, awkward, Steptoe & Son, boredom, useless, thrift, copy, irritating, gratuitous, false economy, fear, excitement, incomprehension, noise, hoarder, parp, circuitry, landfill, menthol smell, old men, the '70s, travel, fuddy-duddy, containment, spent, vulnerability, bad pop, water fights, peeling label, stupidity, sentimentality, waste, time-wasting, nostalgia, Barratt housing, exotica, backstage, industrialisation, frustration, dim, drilling, D.I.Y., a secret, Ska, posh, the '50s, burden, ownership, big bands, confusion, heavyweight, Cork Street, empty, nightlife, kitsch, compartments, reenactments, cliché, ugly, Dad, Blue Peter, tradition, spendthrift, junk, fridges,

cheeky, aspiration, puberty, dysfunction, beach, school playground, pretend, self-belief, tourism, school, drawing, Woolworths, repairs, childish, hope, plastic, mediocrity, colouring-in, boys, imagination, kitchen, Star Trek, wax rubbing, gold crocs, danger, sharp, order, intrigue, legacy, style, function, pedant, fashion, discipline, picture-hanging, 8, cowboy movies, cheap, decadence, yellow fingers, young fogey, Wheeltappers & Shunters Social Club, smooth, bombastic, old-fashioned, naff, boys, Costa Brava, charity shops, annoyance, Scrabble, leaky biros, Happy Families, decadence, self-destruction, boars, Aussies, money-wasting, bedroom, loft, Soho, plastic, lost, gifts, dress-up, question, careless, thwarted, redundant, apricot flavouring, craft, sex, hair, skin, face, fire, school, colour, excitement, half-moon, ink, hot summers, Mum, college, sweat, pickup truck, reading, treasure, hot air, squidging, pretend, swimming lessons, India, 1983, 1981, 1984, adult ed, market stall, prize, antiseptic, ignorance, Brick Lane, Victoriana, loud, stuff, magazines, Fresher, two hearts, smoky eyes, laundry, spice, useless, hippy, young, *Elle Magazine*, life-cycle, nails, First Aid, bun, capitalism, socialism, metal, inertia, contained, kitsch, the '80s, France, postage, fumes, haberdashers, Wales, disco, cross-heads, sewing lessons, corkboard, punk, tools, recording, scratchy, bad taste, camping, thrill, yard sale, his father, *Woman's Weekly*, Waddington Gallery, hand-me-downs, 24, intoxicating, life-drawing, studio, day-trip, painting, give-aways, distraction, protection, Oxford, Stamford, Grandad, wage-slave, fun, mechanical, anachronistic, art movers, out-of-fashion, pervy, the '90s, acquired, decorating, off-cuts, spy, rotation, Techno, heavy, yellow, potential, institutionalised, words, bizarre, foraging, black box, pair, lukewarm, jumble sale, junk yard, recycling, secondhand shop, paranoia, giftware, barbers, homeware, fad, haute cuisine, afternoon tea, cowboys, Poundland, trash, souvenir, Trivandrum, Butterfly brand, lazy, James Dean, estates, loggers, feathers, rock, Brixton, employment, flies, freedom, engines, 180, uniform, picture-framing, pick-up-sticks, the '40s, domesticity, hard, regular, John Lewis, art, childhood, delicate, tyranny of the norm, organisation, bog-standard, *Whistle Down The Wind*, charity collections, paving stones, adventure, dislocated, faff, rain, tea, fickle, garage, bulk buy, rough, joy, fleas, out-of-date, theatre, gamesroom, auction, marketing, esoterica, homesteading, daytrippers, magic, business, notes, classroom, functionality, talisman, boxy, DMs, food, needles, tow trucks, pink, fingers, excess, bar, arty, 21, utility, knots, missing, survival, Heaven, shit, cartoons, gypsy, rainbow, study,

girlfriend, 11, found, stitching, manipulation, water-based, sea, Austria, friends, revolution, walking.

### **Categorisation**

*Toys:* a handmade doll with ping pong ball head, a red, plastic water pistol, a green toy soldier, a toy rhino, a toy sniper, a toy spaceman, a toy jeep, a toy spacecraft, a red plastic Yo-Yo, a toy wooden clock, several toy dinosaurs, a water pistol, a toy horse, a toy whistle, two plastic bicycle horns, a felt gonk, hand-sewn, another water pistol, a toy horse, a toy whistle, a dartboard, an Etch-A-Sketch, a beach ball, deflated.

*Handmade items:* a handmade doll with ping pong ball head, a bobble hat egg cosy, hand-knitted, a bowl carved out of a coconut shell, a handmade clay ashtray, a handmade clay bowl, a friendship bracelet, an embroidered pyjama case, a handmade felt pencil case. *Cookware:* a wok, two wok stands, a 7-inch diameter cake tin, a bamboo vegetable steamer, five carving knives, a chocolate grater, a small non-stick frying pan. *Smoking paraphernalia:* a Carlsberg ashtray, a rusty, empty Old Holborn tin, an Edgeworth Pipe Tobacco tin containing a burnt match, a JOB cigarette rolling machine, a leather cigarette case, a handmade clay ashtray. *Clocks & watches:* a Westclox alarm clock, a plastic novelty watch, a wooden mantle clock, a digital alarm clock, a Smiths alarm clock. *Ironmongery:* 25 bed springs, a steel coat hook, painted white, a bag of stair-carpet clamps, a brass castor, a padlock, locked, four keys.

*Instruction manuals:* a copy of *The Highway Code*, a copy of *Girl Guide Patrol Leader's Handbook*, a Jones sewing machine manual. *Academic Guides:* a copy of *The Principles of Company Law*, a copy of *Economic History Vol. 1*. *Recipe books:* *Cocktails and Mixed Drinks*, *Not Just a Load of Old Lentils*. *Books of maps:* a copy of *Nicholson London Streetfinder*, a copy of the *London A-Z*. *Stationery:* a sheet of paper with four handwritten recipes, two biros, two pencils, an A4 ring binder, a pencil case containing seven felt tip pens, a crayon, a popper-point pencil, a protractor and a cartridge pen, an A4 plastic sleeve, a black marker pen, a Papermate Rollerball pen, a tube of Supa Glue, empty, four drawing pins, a recipe folder, empty, a bottle of Liquin, a Barclays Bank folder, also empty, a block of coloured notepaper, a number of exercise books, a 4H pencil and an HB pencil, a sheet of writing paper, two A4 brown envelopes, a packet of pink Post-It notes, three 6-inch plastic rulers, a Bic biro,

its end chewed. *DIY*: an opened bag of Evo-Stick tile grout, a box of broken white tiles, two screws, a Stanley Knife blade, a tape measure, thirteen more screws, a drill bit, a tin of peppermint vinyl matt emulsion, a tin of assorted screws and nails, six rubber washers, one paint roller, a chipboard off-cut, a paint brush, stiff with paint, a rusty saw, a wet and dry sanding block. *Tourist Brochures*: a Rawalpindi-Islamabad Tourist Brochure, a Bombay events brochure, a Delhi Tourist Brochure. *Stereo equipment*: a jack-to-jack, two jack plugs. *Electrical equipment*: a jack-to-jack, three 1.5 volt batteries, the back of a plug, two feet of electric cable, two jack plugs, 15 fluorescent tube light fittings, a 25- watt bulb, a Pifco mini-electric fan, a desk lamp, a Boots 1200 hair dryer. *Medication*: two tins of vapour ointment, a box of medicinal charcoal tablets, a bottle of Tea Tree oil, a packet of Anadin. *Kitchenware*: a round Tupperware pot without lid, a bobble hat egg cosy, a rectangle Tupperware lid, a chopstick, a round Tupperware lid, a broken teapot handle, a broken glass, an Ever Hot milk jug, a glass decanter, two glass lemon squeezers, two Chinese bowls, a handmade clay bowl, a tea caddy, rusty, five carving knives, an empty jam jar, a fifties-style salt cellar, a chocolate grater, a glass cake stand, a cream mug. *Maps*: a Lahore Streetmap, an India Tourist map, torn. *Non-fiction*: *A D. H. Lawrence Miscellany* by Harry T. Moore. *Cassettes*: a Scotch C-90 cassette, a Tampax ‘Classics’ cassette, a Sony HF S-90 cassette, an empty cassette case, a Roxy Music cassette, a Telefon cassette. *Novelty Items*: a novelty tune device, a Spud-U-Like badge, a plastic novelty watch, a plastic watch from Hula Hoops, a miniature clay pig, two plastic sunflowers. *Photography equipment*: two Polaroid flash cubes. *Picture-hanging equipment*: a mirror plate, two screws, thirteen more screws, a drill bit, a roll of Gum tape. *Art equipment*: a putty rubber, a crayon, a leg from an artist’s wooden mannequin, a black Marker pen, a plastic-handled scalpel without blade, a tube of Titanium White oil paint, twenty pieces of artist’s charcoal, a 4H pencil and an HB pencil, a pack of Plasticine, a pack of acrylic paints. *Clothing*: a black and white check shirt, a blue rugby shirt, two pairs of Levi jeans, a pair of black dinner suit trousers, a school tie, a pair of dark blue dinner suit trousers, a selection of polyester ties and cravats, a blue Bomber-jacket, a pair of thermal leggings, a white cotton dinner shirt, collarless, a pair of Orange Tab Levis, a pair white Levi 501s, a white T-shirt, a pair of Reebok jogging trousers, a check shirt, a charcoal grey V-neck jumper. *Novels*: *Man, Woman & Child* by E. Seagal. *Listings Magazines*: Galleries Guide, September 1988. *Invitations & flyers*: several party invitations and club flyers, more club flyers.

*Accessories:* a red Travelcard holder, a black beret, a Fleur-de-Lis Scout badge, a selection of polyester ties and cravats, a boxed tie pin, a pair of cuff-links, a black bow tie, a carved wooden jewellery box, a plastic credit card wallet, a friendship bracelet, a black leather belt, an embroidered handkerchief, a brass incense-stick holder, a key fob, a bag of incense cones, a black gents umbrella, a plastic rain bonnet. *Weaponry:* a cannonball. *Hats:* a black beret, a ski hat. *Pictures:* three postcards in frames. *Craft materials:* a pack of coloured sticky-back paper, a Stitchery kit, a bar of black wax, a tube of Supa Glue, empty, four drawing pins. *Cards:* six Christmas cards. *Homeware:* a steel coat hook, painted white, a vase, a Pifco mini-electric fan, a desk lamp, a handmade clay ashtray, a picture frame, a chrome soap dish. *Games:* a pack of playing cards marked “return to bar please”, two Rubik’s cubes, a feather-tipped dart, a black plastic chess pawn, a Wordsworth board game, two pieces of Spirograph, 27 Scruples cards, a Boomerang, with instructions, a travelling chess set, a Yugo Pocket Solitaire game, a Tiddlywinks disc, a wooden dice, an empty darts case, a Monopoly £10 note, a marble, a Mastermind game, a Travel Scrabble game, a chess and draughts set, a Spirograph set, a set of darts in a yellow plastic case, a game of Jack Straws, a white plastic promotional Frisbee. *Photocopied material:* a photocopied article about artist Jan Vercruyse. *Cosmetics:* a Rimmel lipstick: coffee shimmer, a No. 7 lipshaper pencil, opened, a No. 17 Hideaway stick, used, a pot of plum Pearly Shiner eyeshadow, used, a black kohl pencil, used, a pot of Miss Selfridge powder eyeshadow, used, a white eyeliner pencil, used, a yellow lipstick, used. *Souvenirs:* a pebble, chipped, a bowl carved out of a coconut shell, a souvenir sheath knife with a fake bone handle, a pair of wooden castanets, an Indian ceremonial dagger, a ceremonial Ghurka knife. *Printing materials:* a printing block, five more printing blocks. *Haberdashery:* a thick rusty sewing needle thrust into a wooden bobble wound with thick black thread, a plastic button, two hooks and eyes, a safety pin. *Certificates:* one 3<sup>rd</sup> place swimming certificate. *Porn:* a page torn out of *Men Only*. *Shoes:* a pair of brown leather loafers, men’s, a pair of Dr. Marten brogues, brown, size 7. *Cleaning equipment:* a bag of rags, a soiled rag, an upright vacuum cleaner. *Bags:* a black leather bum bag with broken zip, a Reckless Records carrier bag, a red carrier bag, a Sally Line Duty Free carrier bag, an aluminium attaché case, locked, a Red Records carrier bag. *Uniform items:* a school tie. *Sports equipment:* a ping pong bat, an orange swimming hat, a skateboard helmet, a pair of le Coq Sportif rugby boots, size 8, a pair of cycling shorts, a cyclist’s water bottle, a table tennis ball, a ski hat. *Home-brewing*

*equipment*: a box of foil wine bottle tops from a wine-making kit, a wine bottle cork.

*Outdoors equipment*: a goatskin flask, a survival knife in a leather pouch. *Vinyl records*: a selection of warped 7" singles, *Lily of the Valley* by Queen. *Miscellaneous*: a packet of Silica gel, six squares from a mirror ball, four hessian sacks, two Donny Osmond magazine cuttings. *Personal memorabilia*: a selection of letters, several birthday cards, a diary page, 27 March, 1982, a family photograph with a person's head cut out, a photograph of Mandy, a 1976 diary, a bundle of letters. *Rubbish*: an empty contraceptive packet, a bottle top, a wooden table leg, a sunglasses lens, an empty Weetabix packet. *Firelighting equipment*: a box of firelighters, opened.

*Hairdressing equipment*: a Boots 1200 hair dryer, 15 foam hair rollers, a black plastic comb, nine hairgrips, a brown plastic comb, a pink Hoover hairdryer. *Promotional items*: a Tampax *Classics* cassette, a plastic watch from Hula Hoops, a Holland & Barrett brochure, a collection of Stamford School calendars: 1974-1984, a white plastic promotional Frisbee, six Greenflag breakdown car window stickers, a Guinness beer mat, a British Gas pamphlet. *Travel equipment*: a travelling chess set, a Yugo Pocket Solitaire game, a pair of folding travel scissors. *Hardware*: a wooden clothes peg, a door-chain, a length of fly strip, a ball of string. *Perfumery*: a bottle of Guerlain scent, a eau de toilette sample of Grey Flannel. *Toiletries*: a tube of Immac, opened, a jar of coconut oil, half-used, a jar of Pond's cold cream, opened, a bottle of Aramis setting lotion, a tin of talcum powder, a tube of Vichy self-tan cream, opened, a tube of Vitapointe hair conditioner, two emery boards, used, 17 packs of Tampax super, a box of Lil-lets. *First Aid items*: a roll of sticking plaster. *Correspondence*: a selection of letters, a college grant statement. *Currency*: a Monopoly £10 note, a twenty centime coin, a selection of foreign coins. *Postage*: a First Class stamp, unused. *Newspapers and Magazines*: the *Guardian*, 13 November 1989, scrunched up, a copy of the first edition of *Zing* magazine, autumn, 1995, a copy of *The Independent*, 2 December 1989, various art catalogues, *Arena* magazine, January 1986 to September 1988, *Blitz* magazine, May 1987 to May 1989, a copy of *Die Welt*, 2 March 88. *Bedding*: a grey wool blanket, a pink eiderdown, a feather pillow. *Car Hi-Fi equipment*: a car radio-cassette player.

*Musical equipment*: a pair of wooden castanets, a yellow recorder sleeve and cleaning brush. *University books*: a German vocabulary exercise book. *Protective equipment*: a gas-mask, a gardening glove. *Gardening equipment*: a gardening glove. *Plaques, trophies, medals*: a number of Junior Girls Table Tennis trophies, plaques and medals. *Receipts*: a credit card receipt. *Car engine bits*: a Peugeot 504 pickup vacuum pump, a

Peugeot 504 pickup starter motor. *Antiques*: four Bakelite light switches, nine Bakelite door knobs. *Artwork*: five workmen's gloves filled with sand. *Professional development*: a typewritten CV. *Fitness equipment*: a skipping rope. *Storage items*: a cardboard box. *Pet equipment*: a red cat collar. *Sewing equipment*: a Singer sewing machine in a wooden case. *Lists*: a shopping list. *Appointment cards*: a dental appointment card. *Food items*: two sachets of Nutrine sweetener. *Membership cards*: an ICA Membership card 1995, a CND membership card, 1981, a YHA Membership card, 1981. *Registration cards*: a UB40. *Children's books*: a stack of children's books and annuals. *Posters*: two David Essex posters. *Crochet equipment*: a crochet hook.

## **Promession**

### **a. list of categories:**

Toys.

Handmade items.

Cookware.

Smoking paraphernalia.

Clocks & watches.

Ironmongery.

Instruction manuals.

Academic guides.

Recipe books. Stationery.

D.I.Y. items.

Tourist brochures.

Stereo equipment.

Electrical equipment.

Medication.

Kitchenware.

Maps.

Non-fiction.

Cassettes.

Novelty items.

Photography equipment.

Picture-hanging equipment.

Art equipment.

Clothing.

Novels.

Listings magazines.

Invitations & flyers.

Accessories.

Weaponry.

Hats.

Pictures.

Craft materials.

Cards.

Homeware.

Games.

Photocopied material.

Cosmetics.

Souvenirs.

Printing materials.

Haberdashery.

Certificates.

Shoes.

Cleaning equipment.

Bags.

Uniform items.

Sports equipment.

Home-brewing equipment.

Outdoors equipment.

Vinyl records.

Miscellaneous.

Personal memorabilia.

Rubbish.

Firelighting equipment.

Hairdressing equipment.

Promotional items.  
Travel equipment.  
Hardware.  
Perfumery.  
Toiletries.  
First Aid items.  
Correspondence.  
Currency.  
Postage.  
Newspapers and magazines.  
Bedding.  
Car Hi-Fi equipment.  
Musical equipment.  
University books.  
Protective equipment.  
Gardening equipment.  
Plaques, trophies, medals.  
Receipts.  
Car engine bits.  
Antiques.  
Artwork.  
Professional development.  
Fitness equipment.  
Storage items.  
Pet equipment.  
Sewing equipment.  
Lists.  
Appointment cards.  
Food items.  
Membership cards.  
Registration cards.  
Children's books.  
Posters.

Crochet equipment.

**a.       categorising the categories**

*Household goods*: toys, cookware, clocks & watches, ironmongery, instruction manuals, recipe books, D.I.Y. items, stereo equipment, electrical equipment, medication, kitchenware, novels, pictures, homeware, haberdashery, cleaning equipment, sports equipment, home-brewing equipment, outdoors equipment, vinyl records, hardware, bedding, antiques, artwork, storage items. *Handmade items*: handmade items. *Personal items*: smoking paraphernalia, clocks & watches, souvenirs, personal memorabilia, perfumery, correspondence, receipts, CVs, lists, appointment cards, membership cards, registration cards. *Printed matter*: instruction manuals, academic guides, recipe books, maps, non-fiction books, novels, listings magazines, invitations and flyers, cards, certificates, porn, correspondence, newspapers and magazines, university books, receipts, CVs, lists, appointment cards, membership cards, registration cards, children's books, posters, tourist brochures, photocopied material. *Stationery*: stationery. *Entertainment items*: toys, cassettes, novels, craft materials, games, vinyl records, newspapers and magazines, children's books, novelty items. *Equipment*: photography equipment, picture-hanging equipment, art equipment, printing materials, cleaning equipment, sports equipment, outdoors equipment, firelighting equipment, hairdressing equipment, travel equipment, car hi-fi equipment, musical equipment, protective equipment, gardening equipment, fitness equipment, car engine bits, pet equipment, sewing equipment, crochet equipment. *Clothing items*: hats, uniform items. *Accessories*: bags. *Weaponry*: weaponry. *Cosmetics*: cosmetics. *Footwear*: shoes. *Miscellaneous items*: rubbish, promotional items, currency, plaques, trophies and medals. *Toiletries*: toiletries. *Health & safety items*: first aid items. *Financial items*: currency, receipts. *Postage items*: postage items. *Food items*: food items.

**b.       list of new categories:**

Household goods.

Handmade items.

Personal items.

Printed matter.

Stationery.  
Entertainment items.  
Equipment.  
Clothing items.  
Accessories.  
Weaponry.  
Cosmetics.  
Footwear.  
Miscellaneous items.  
Toiletries.  
Health & Safety items.  
Financial items.  
Postage items.  
Food items.

**c.       categorising the new categories:**

*Goods*: household goods, handmade items, personal items, printed matter, entertainment items, stationery, equipment, clothing items, accessories, weaponry, cosmetics, footwear, toiletries, miscellaneous items, toiletries, health & safety items, financial items, postage items, food items.

**d.       new new category:**

Goods.

And end here, with goods.

## Notes

*The Cremation Project* was shortlisted for the inaugural Fitzcarraldo Editions Novel Prize, 2018, and longlisted for the Dzanc Books Fiction Prize, 2018. An extract, 'This Is What She is Doing Now', was published online at UEA New Writing on 4 May 2019.

*The Cremation Project* is forthcoming in the USA with Inside the Castle, June 2021.

*Ada & Carter* was published in 2014 at *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*. Volume 12, Issue 1, Online: Taylor & Francis and *The Gold Room: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose, Vol. 1*, 2015, UK: CreateSpace.

Part Two

*Art in/to Writing in Kenneth Goldsmith's Fidget and  
Day*  
*critical commentary*

## Introduction

Part Two of this thesis considers the impact of art practice on creative writing and presents close readings of two texts by artist-turned-poet-turned-word-processor Kenneth Goldsmith: *Fidget* (2000), in which Goldsmith records all his movements in a day, and *Day* (2003), in which Goldsmith repurposes the contents of a copy of *The New York Times*, 1 Sept 2000.<sup>1</sup>

In privileging process and use of language as material rather than for its semantic meaning – ‘I feel meaning and content take care of themselves’ (Goldsmith, 2014a: 22) – Goldsmith’s approach affords a material investigation of the production of a literary text. This practice, which Goldsmith refers to as Uncreative Writing, advocates writing which takes a conceptual limit or constraint as its starting point – such as to record all one’s movements in a day – and uses methodologies more usually conversant with art practice, such as documentation, appropriation, and transcription, in the work’s realisation.<sup>2</sup> Goldsmith’s main point in devising the term Uncreative Writing is that he argues against the notion of genius, and for the notion that works of literary art are consciously constructed. Furthermore, in this era of Big data, ‘an updated notion of genius,’ he states, ‘would have to center around one’s mastery of information and its dissemination’ (Goldsmith, 2011a: 1). Uncreative Writing as a reinvestigation of creativity (Goldsmith, 2011b) presents interesting challenges to the traditional literary paradigm. Goldsmith’s texts, which pass ‘through the bottleneck of literary publication’, nevertheless, in their indifference to literary norms, present a ‘travesty [to] literary culture as we know it’ (Pound, 2015: 317).

In Chapter 1, I argue that Goldsmith’s (seemingly) non-subjective non-expressive approach in *Fidget* pulls me physically into the text, wherein the words perform an experiment in writing the body (Gallo, 2005). In contradiction to Scott Pound (2015),

<sup>1</sup> I make passing reference to *Soliloquy* (2001), the sister text to *Fidget*, in which Goldsmith records all his words spoken in a week, and *The Weather* (2005), *Traffic* (2007) and *Sports* (2008), Goldsmith’s *The American Trilogy* or *TAT*, which atomise the contents of *Day*, and continue his approach, since *Day*, of appropriation and transcription of quotidian media content.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper I will use the title case when referring to Uncreative Writing in order to emphasise its citation of a new genre of writing, a genre which sits within the expanded field of conceptual poetics (Bök, 2014). Kaufmann also uses the title case in his text *Reading Uncreative Writing: Conceptualism, Expression, and the Lyric* (2017).

Brain Reed (2016) and David Kaufmann (2017), who wish to hold Goldsmith technically to account regarding his starting constraint, I argue that slavish adherence to the constraint is not the limit of the aesthetic experiment, and indeed, as Marjorie Perloff maintains (2005, 2012, 2012a), Goldsmith undertakes a curatorial approach in finalising production of the text.

In Chapter 2, I argue that Goldsmith's painterly 'text-as-image' (Calvert, 2011) approach in *Day* adheres to an age-old tradition (Drucker, 2005) which promotes enjoyment of 'the "surface" of text, as an image in its own right' (Calvert, 2011: 309).

Throughout, I engage with the articles, interviews, videos and book chapters concerning Uncreative Writing, conceptual poetics and Goldsmith's texts by critics, scholars, poets and researchers. I also engage with Goldsmith's own ideological texts, essays, podcasts and interviews, as well as Sheila Calvert's articles regarding the materiality of language: 'Materia Prima, text-as-image' and 'Materia Secunda, text-as-image', both 2011. Goldsmith's primary interlocutor, Perloff, undertakes numerous interviews with Goldsmith, as well as close readings of *Fidget*, *Day*, *The Weather* and *Traffic*. A number of fellow poets have written critically on Goldsmith, including Craig Dworkin, Johanna Drucker, Robert Fitterman and Vanessa Place, Christian Bök and Darren Wershler.<sup>3</sup>

I have undertaken to close read *Fidget* and *Day* in that, just as Uncreative Writing represents a transitional moment for creative writing practice, which 'makes practitioners sit up and examine their terms' (Drucker, 2005: 139), so too, *Fidget* and *Day* are transitional texts for Goldsmith. *Fidget* marks a turn towards chapterised prose texts, as opposed to language and list-oriented poetry, as well as a turn to self and documentation as methodology. *Day* marks a further turn, away from self and instead towards the appropriation and transcription of readymade material. Furthermore, by eschewing the use of a personal pronoun and foregrounding action ahead of cognition in *Fidget* – the body moves, the brain documents – Goldsmith enacts a process wherein the 'dynamic attributes of language' (Calvert, 2011a: 139)

<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, several critics adopt appropriative techniques within their essays, in response to Goldsmith's practice. Caroline Bergvall (2005) undertakes an interview based on a questionnaire developed by Proust. Howard Britton and Simon Morris (2005) record a one-sided conversation, in homage to *Soliloquy*. In a footnote to her article 'Un-Visual and Conceptual', Johanna Drucker (2005) explains that 'The term "un-visual" rhymes deliberately with Kenny Goldsmith's term "un-creative." His work forms the subtext of this paper, as will be evident within a Perecian scheme' (Drucker, 2005: 139).

are harnessed ‘as a form of content’ (Calvert, 2011a: 139): words as event. *Day*, by contrast, with its transcription of columns of stocks and share numbers as list poems, of adverts laid out as concrete poems and surprising juxtapositions of texts, invokes exciting visual effects wherein text becomes a painterly medium: text as material.

In the following section I will introduce Kenneth Goldsmith and his approach to practice.

### Kenneth Goldsmith

Kenneth Goldsmith used to be an artist, then a poet, now he refers to himself as a word processor. ‘Language,’ he tells us, ‘is my artform [...]. The only thing I need to do before I die is to capture and transcribe all the varieties and amounts of available language around the world’ (Goldsmith, 2005a: 96). Goldsmith’s approach utilises documentation, appropriation, transcription and *détournement* to produce texts which use his bodily movements, his words spoken, and quotidian media content as readymade or found material.<sup>4</sup> Excited by conceptual art developments, and specifically Marcel Duchamp’s repurposing and recontextualising of a urinal as a work of art, Goldsmith is impatient about the fact of the literary world being behindhand in embracing conceptual practice into its mainstream culture. After all, he tells us:

While no one flinches today upon walking into a gallery and seeing a few lines drawn on a wall according to a recipe (Sol LeWitt) or entering a theater or gallery showing a film of a man sleeping for eight hours (Andy Warhol’s *Sleep*, 1963), parallel acts bound between the pages of a book and published as writing still raise many red flags and cries: “That’s not literature!” (Goldsmith, 2011a: 125/6).

Goldsmith, then, positions himself firmly in the avant-garde – from Duchamp and Tristan Tzara, through Sol Lewitt, John Cage, and Guy Debord, to Andy Warhol – as

<sup>4</sup> To *détourner* a cultural artifact is to take readymade content and reframe it within a different context, in order to defamiliarise the material; a methodology developed by the Situationists an avant-garde group led by Debord in the 1950s: ‘Their idea, not unlike that of Uncreative Writing, was not to reinvent life but to reframe it [...] A slight shift of perspective could lead to fresh takes on tired subject matter’ (Goldsmith, 2011a: 36).

well as tracing a line of literary influence from modernism, through concretism, language poetry and post-modernism to the post-literary; and like most avant-garde practitioners, he puts himself in the role of pioneer. In 1998, Goldsmith and fellow poets Christian Bök and Darren Wershler asked themselves what would an expressionless poetry look like, out of which conceptual and Uncreative Writing was born, a mode of literature more in dialogue with the visual arts than with conventional poetry or fiction. In ‘Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp’ (1971), discussing the genesis for his mixed-media work *The Large Glass* (1915-1923), Duchamp explains that he is less interested in the visuality of the piece than in the technicality of perspective. ‘Already I didn’t want to be preoccupied with visual language. Everything was becoming conceptual, that is, it depended on things other than the retina’ (Duchamp in Cabanne, 1979: 39).

Uncreative Writing leans towards facticity, and, ironically, the visual. The primary technique, Dworkin states, for both conceptual art and conceptual writing is a ‘tactic of reframing’ (Dworkin, 2011: xxv). Goldsmith’s texts, in the mould of moderns, such as Gertrude Stein’s *The Making of Americans*, Goldsmith claims, resist reading: ‘My books are impossible to read straight through’ (Goldsmith, 2007: 365). Nevertheless, pleasing to the eye on the page, such texts represent ‘language accumulated to the point where it becomes image’ (Schuster, 2005: 118).<sup>5</sup> Uncreative Writing, Goldsmith tells us, is always in response to technology and the fact now of information overload; part of an ‘expanded field of appropriation, uncreativity, sampling, and language management’ (Goldsmith, 2007: 366).

Despite wariness from literary scholars and fellow writers more at home with self-originated material, Goldsmith’s work, as mentioned, has been written about extensively by critics, scholars and fellow practitioners, including an edition of Canadian poetry journal *Open Letter* dedicated entirely to Goldsmith: ‘Kenneth Goldsmith and Conceptual Poetics’ (2005), edited by poets Lori Emerson and Barbara Cole, and a documentary by artist Simon Morris titled *sucking on words* (2007). In a presentation titled ‘Conceptual Poetics: Christian Bök and Kenneth Goldsmith’, at the Houston Museum of Contemporary Art, in 2014, Bök presents Goldsmith as a key proponent of ‘a global school of poetics whose research explores

<sup>5</sup> Dworkin, in his text *Reading the Illegible* (2003) and Perloff, in several of her essays, (2011, 2012, 2012a) elaborates further on this point, unpicking Goldsmith’s assertions of unreadability. I will say more on this in the *Day* chapter.

the limit cases of writing as a concept, doing so in order to trouble the romantic literary bastions of both creativity and authorship' (Bök, 2014). As mentioned, within all of these debates, Goldsmith himself is highly articulate. His work is literature because he says it is; and we must consider it through the lens of conceptual and avant-garde art practices. Carl Peters, in his essay, *The Medium Means Nothing*, clarifies:

Goldsmith is a derivative writer and the context for his work ought to be understood. There is a context for Goldsmith's boredom; this context includes Gertrude Stein and Marcel Duchamp. They are very boring writers. They are also the two single-most important creators of modern and post-modern art. I take Goldsmith's "being boring" as a refusal to be orthodox (Peters, 2005: 122).

In a Penn Sound podcast, in answer to the question, what relationship does your work have to the visual, Goldsmith says that there is a lot of radical writing in the art world, Fiona Banner's *Nam*, say, or Sean Lander's writings, but those writings do not infiltrate the literary world:

My project was to see what would happen if I could lift that practice out of the art world from where I came and those freedoms and put it into an economy of writing and could that have an impact and ten years into that I mean the answer is, very much so, yes (Goldsmith, 2014).

Poet friends, Goldsmith tells us, who have been instructed in creative writing, are not able to approach their practice with the same sense of freedom as he does. They have too much unlearning to do. 'I'm [...] interested in what happens when you work in a field for which you are not trained. You don't know the rules, so you can do new things' (Goldsmith, 2014a: 7).

They [Fitterman, Bök, Dworkin] know how to do it too well, whereas I don't come from this world so it's no big deal for me to say "this is writing". Of course it's writing, because in the art world after Duchamp everything is art [...]. The writing world has not come to grips with conceptual work. I mean the fact that we call this conceptual poetics, or appropriation. I'm doing something very radical in the writing world by appropriating. By God, they finished with appropriation 25 years ago in the art world [...]. By recontextualising I was able to have a lot more impact in this field than I was in the art field (Goldsmith, 2014).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This notion of not needing to unlearn literary craft is echoed by artist and writer Rosanna

Goldsmith's ambition, then, is to reinvigorate the field of creative writing. His chosen methodology, as well as continuing an avant-garde trajectory, is further predicated, he tells us, around the fact, now, of the internet and this era of Big Data. An ideology he sets out in his 2011 book of essays *Uncreative Writing*, as well as in online statements and in interviews.

In the following sections I engage with the critical literature and the three primary themes by which critics analyse Goldsmith's practice, namely: critical authorship, method and readability.

### Critical Authorship

The discourse regarding authorship and Goldsmith's practice engages with a multiplicity of factors. Firstly, Goldsmith's author statements: take what he says 'with a grain of salt' Perloff says (2012: 93); consider it rhetoric, Nikolai Duffy proposes (2016: 680). Secondly, notions of originality, which I will discuss in terms of iteration as proposed by Kaja Marczewska (2018), as well as framing the debate through the lens of Duchamp's practice of readymades. Thirdly, in *Fidget*, issues arise around authorial subjectivity, and the question of who is speaking. An evasion, Pound says, which '[aims] to freeze authorial subjectivity by automating composition, allowing the author, not just the artist, to live Warhol's dream: "I want to be a machine,"' (Pound, 2015: 315).<sup>7</sup> Fourth, a further complication relates to the fact that Goldsmith embeds layers of appropriation within each work, appropriating not just content but also method. I will discuss this in relation to Goldsmith's dialogic practice and Philippe Haensler's notion of style – an undeveloped area as yet, Haensler states, in the critique of conceptual poetics – within which Goldsmith is responding directly to 'a specific set of problems in post-structuralist literary theory and provides a key contribution towards (re)conceptualizing what literary style is' (Haensler, 2019: 1).

McLaughlin, a delegate at the AUTO—conference, at the RCA, 2019. Having trained as an artist, 'I didn't have any literary canon to move away from', she says, explaining her transition from art to writing (McLaughlin, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Pound quotes Warhol here, "I want to be a machine".

### **Author statements:**

Much of the critical literature opens by acknowledging the debate which purports that Goldsmith is a conman (Kaufmann, 2017), and his work a ‘trickster gambit’ (Nealon, 2013:124). Some of the denigration is perpetuated, disingenuously, Joshua Schuster (2005), Dworkin (2005) and Perloff (2012) propose, by Goldsmith himself. Pound proposes that ‘there is some gimmickry to [Goldsmith’s] claims’ (2015: 315), that he wishes to capture and transcribe all available language. Goldsmith’s further declaration that his work is boring and unreadable, Pound tells us, provokes critics to leap to defend, in fact, the readability of his work. This notion is reiterated elsewhere by Fitterman and Place (2009), Drucker (2005) and Duffy (2016): ‘How does one separate the serious investigation from the complete mischief, the lucid from the ludic. We seem left with a choice between the persona and the project, the audacious provocateur and the text itself’ (Pound, 2015: 316). Most critics, Pound concludes, turn to the texts. Indeed, in her introductory essay for *American Poetry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* Lisa Sewell, focusing on process, proposes that Goldsmith takes the ‘procedural and material emphases of experimental writing to its logical extreme, dealing not merely with found texts but with language itself as found object’ (Sewell, 2007: 12). Haensler, of course, suggests that Goldsmith’s statements of intention must be considered as part of Goldsmith’s praxis, and as such cannot be ignored. In a recent book of essays Kaufmann (2017) further sets out the contradictory nature, not just of Goldsmith’s practice, but also of the critical response, which proposes that Goldsmith is at once a conman, and a writer at the forefront of conceptual poetics. In contradiction to Haensler, as Perloff has done before him, Kaufmann proposes that reading Goldsmith through his own essays and manifestos about his work is a mistake. Echoing Pound, Kaufmann states that Goldsmith’s grand claims, that he wants to capture all language, that he is against expression and that his work is boring and unreadable, are simply noise around his practice which we should consider as cheerleader material. We should read his work on its own terms, as it manifests on the page, he says. Kaufmann’s core theory is that Uncreative Writing, despite claims by its exponents, is, in fact, ‘all about subjectivity and expression’ (Kaufmann, 2017: intro): ‘expression is not “the expression of something specific [...] It aims at marked *intensity*” [and] “approaches the trans-subjective” [...] the shadow of the subject (i.e. author) – its choices, its

decisions – still falls across the [work] and provides semblance enough for expression’ (Kaufmann, 2017: intro).<sup>8</sup> Kaufmann continues by citing poetry scholar Oren Izenberg’s argument that Uncreative Writing follows in the lineage of modernism – which of course Goldsmith makes explicit – which ‘has pursued an ontological investigation into what it means to be human and be social’ (Kaufmann, 2017: intro). Goldsmith’s practice, is, then, as Goldsmith tells us, and as scholarly readers can glean, dialogic with both the avant- garde and modernism. The confounding nature, then, of Goldsmith’s statements – his work is nutritionless, boring, unreadable, non-subjective, non-expressive – give a critic and a reader much to contend with. Here is an author who refuses to die (Shuster, 2005), who is author/hero/protagonist (Schwartzburg, 2005), who readers should ignore (Perloff, 2012, Kaufmann, 2017), and who the reader would be well to listen to (Duffy, 2016).

This author, certainly, proves difficult to ignore. As well as being the subject of numerous magazine interviews, University of Pennsylvania video seminars, and of the previously mentioned documentary *sucking on words* (Morris, 2007), Goldsmith outlines his Uncreative Writing ideology in online statements, in his book of essays *Uncreative Writing* (2011), in his essay ‘Why Conceptual Writing? Why Now?’ for the conceptual writing anthology *Against Expression* (2011), which Goldsmith edited with Dworkin, in his book of aphorisms *Theory* (2015) and a pedagogical text, *Wasting Time on the Internet* (2016), as well as on his cover texts – peri-texts as Molly Szwarczberg (2005) refers to them.<sup>9</sup> The inclusion within the 2005 issue of *Open Letter* dedicated to Goldsmith of his piece ‘Paragraphs on Conceptual Writing’ affirms the notion that removing Goldsmith from the critical equation regarding his own practice is neither easy nor necessary. Elaborating on his omnipresence, Schwartzburg refers to Goldsmith’s texts as tomes and proposes that ‘Goldsmith’s performance of his experiments is not just the story behind his works, it *is* the Work’ (Schwartzburg,

<sup>8</sup> I was only able to access Kaufmann’s text online in situ at the British Library. As I am not able currently to visit the British Library I will trust that this section of Kaufmann’s text did not have page numbers, and I have therefore written ‘intro’ to determine that the quote comes from the Introduction chapter.

<sup>9</sup> For this term peri-text, Schwartzburg is indebted to Gérard Genette’s influential study *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1997), within which he attributes all the textual and design matter regarding a publication, ‘the outermost peritext (the cover, the title page, and their appendages) and with the book’s material construction (selection of format, of paper, of typeface, and so forth)’ (Genette, 1997: 16) as publisher’s peritext.

2005: 25). In the peri-texts to the four works *No. 111*, *Fidget*, *Soliloquy*, and *Day*, the focus shifts away from the individual texts, Schwartzburg says, and onto the process, situating Goldsmith as the hero at the heart of an epic narrative wherein the first person blurb regarding the making of *Day* finally situates Goldsmith firmly at its centre:

“I am spending my 39th year practicing uncreativity. On Friday, September 1, 2000, I began retyping the day’s *New York Times*, word for word, letter for letter, from the upper left hand corner to the lower right hand corner, page by page” (Goldsmith, 2003: back cover).

Schwartzburg’s discourse leads into the authorial complexity regarding *Fidget*, which, as we shall see in the *Fidget* chapter, further complicates the discourse around notions of authorial subjectivity. Whilst dismissing Goldsmith’s claims that he is not interested in subjectivity, Pound proposes that Goldsmith’s is in fact a subjective practice wherein ‘the agency of the author always creeps in’ (Pound, 2015: 316), and – echoing Schwartzburg’s approach – suggests that indeed, the thing of interest and significance, is, in fact, Goldsmith’s approach: ‘The idea of the poet as word processor – is in fact the serious and important investigation of the stakes of media change for poetics. [At stake] is the sanctity of authorship, literacy, and reading’ (Pound, 2015: pp.316/317).

### **Originality:**

Regarding notions of originality, and the use of readymade material, a productive lens by which to consider Goldsmith’s practice is that of Duchamp and his repurposed urinal. Furthermore, Marczevska asks that we consider Goldsmith’s practice through the lens of iteration, a more complex and nuanced argument than straightforward appropriation, and refers to Goldsmith’s appropriative practice as writing as an: ‘act of repetition [which] complicates the boundaries between the copy and original to turn into a play of dissemination, that which, as Derrida explains, disturbs established models of authority and, hence, authorship’ (Marczevska, 2018: 364). *Day*, Marczevska explains, is an appropriation in both form – it borrows the size and formatting of Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project*, and content – the *détournement* of a

newspaper.<sup>10</sup> Originality, then, does not reside in the words of an Uncreative Writer:

Nearly a century ago, the art world put to rest conventional notions of originality [...] with the gestures of Marcel Duchamp's readymades, Francis Picabia's mechanical drawings, and Walter Benjamin's oft-quoted essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" [...]. Similarly, in music, sampling [...] has become commonplace' (Goldsmith, 2011a: 7).

Rather, it is in the idea, the concept and the context within which material is reframed, as well as in the choice and method of assembly of materials that the interest lies: the idea *is* the work Duffy (2016) states. I return to Duffy's argument later in the paper, and take issue with his insistence that the idea in isolation constitutes the work.

Accused by a fellow poet at a reading of not having written a word of the piece he read, Goldsmith's response is that the poet: 'couldn't have been more wrong. Each and every word was "written" by me: sometimes mediated by a machine, sometimes transcribed, and sometimes copied, but without my intervention, slight as it may be, these works would never have found their way into the world' (Goldsmith, 2007: 366).<sup>11</sup>

### **Subjectivity:**

Drucker's notion that where 'anti-subjective subjectivity and generative work intersect [...] the fingerprint of subjective identity sometimes shows all the more strongly for supposedly being filtered out' (Drucker, 2005: 141) is picked up by Haensler (2019) in his discussion around the notion of style. As we shall see repeatedly, attempts to separate form and content, authorship and approach, idea and execution, when analysing Goldsmith's work is almost impossible. Citing the recent critical debates by Kaufmann (2017), Marczewska (2018) and Laurent Milesi (2013 and 2015), Haensler asserts that to date notions of style have not been part of the critical debate regarding Uncreative Writing and proposes, therefore, a debate around notions of authorship

<sup>10</sup> All three Situational methodologies, *détournement*, the *dérive* and psychogeography, 'can be found in [Goldsmith's] rewritings of what is already published and already-occurred, but newly considered' Agnès Peller says, referring to *Day* and *TAT* (Peller, 2013: 69).

<sup>11</sup> Goldsmith includes *Day* in this statement. By "written" he refers to the fact of his having mechanically re-typed the words. This copy of the New York Times *détourné* as a novel is Goldsmith's original work. Context is the point. Just as Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) is no longer a urinal, so too Goldsmith's *Day* (2003) is no longer a newspaper.

predicated upon Roland Barthes' 1953 theory of "writing degree zero". The apparent non style of practitioners such as Goldsmith and Place, Haensler proposes, is itself of course a style, within which are embedded their theory and ideology.

Goldsmith states this explicitly in his 2009 *BOMB Magazine* interview, where he frames style in terms of taste: 'you can never remove the individual from art [...]. I have yet to encounter tasteless art. If there's one thing that the avant-garde has shown us, it's that regardless of form, non-expression is impossible' (Goldsmith, 2009).

### **Dialogic practice:**

Goldsmith's practice is, as he himself frequently expounds in conversation and interview (2003, 2011b, 2014a), in dialogue with artists – especially Warhol, Cage, Duchamp, Debord, LeWitt, and writers – James Joyce, Beckett, Stein, Georges Perec and Jorge Luis Borges. In his ideological texts 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Writing', 'Being Boring', and his 2006 *Goldsmith Sings Theory* series, Goldsmith engages with literary and cultural theorists, such as Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Jaques Derrida and Thodor Adorno as well as artists John Baldessari, LeWitt and Tzara.<sup>12</sup><sup>13</sup> These latter works blur the lines between creative and critical; they are auto-theoretical, Haensler suggests. He includes within this oeuvre Goldsmith's text *Theory*, which comprises 500 pages of musings, anecdotes and aphorisms, printed and packaged to resemble a block of photocopy paper, a text Haensler refers to as a 'non-book' (Haensler, 2019: 5). 'Against this backdrop' Haensler says:

it is easy to see that Goldsmith[']s engagement with post-structuralist writing practices is not (just) a matter of "having read" theory, of "applying" or "processing" it in the realm of poetry – if anything [Goldsmith's oeuvre] picking up where the post-structuralists left off, pertain[s] to and feed[s] off the inherent "poeticity" of theory as such (Haensler, 2019: 5).

The apparent non-style of Goldsmith's appropriated work, Haensler concludes, 'Far from being a mere by-product (of the inherited/shared preoccupation with questions of

<sup>12</sup> MP3 links are available on Kenneth Goldsmith's author page for the University of Pennsylvania, where he teaches; available at: <http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Goldsmith.php>.

<sup>13</sup> 'Being Boring', wherein Goldsmith discusses the process of making *Day* is a 'deliberate invocation of Tristan Tzara's "Dada Manifesto on Feeble Love and Bitter Love"' Duffy tells us (2016: 691).

authorship), the (missing) personal stylistic features of uncreative texts [...] directly respond,' he proposes, 'to a very specific set of problems (raised by [...]) post-structuralist literary theory' (Haensler, 2019: 5). In its iterative response it '“makes necessary a completely new set of questions” [namely] that of style' (Haensler, 2019: 5). In his discussion of the *Goldsmith Sings Theory* series Haensler points to the fact that Goldsmith's use of tune and careful selection of specific extracts is of course finely tuned, adding a further self-conscious layer to a highly self-conscious practice.<sup>14</sup> Haensler frames this iterative practice within Milesi's 'Derridean notion of the “countersignature”' (Haensler, 2019: 8), wherein Goldsmith's double-thinking, referred to by Kaufmann as his 'frequent claiming of kin' (Kaufmann in Haensler, 2019: 3), is enacted in double acts of appropriation. Goldsmith appropriates content: for instance, *Kenneth Goldsmith Sings Jacques Derrida* appropriates Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, and methodology: invoking artist Baldessari's 1972 video piece, *Baldessari Sings LeWitt*, wherein Baldessari recites LeWitt's 1967 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art'. And, as we can see, the lines of iteration are not simply within an individual work, but across works; 'an auto-theoretical dimension of uncreativity' (Haensler, 2019: 5), fundamental to which, Duffy tells us, is 'the centrality of the conceptual idea as structural principle' (Duffy, 2016: 680). In his review of *Against Expression*, Reed proposes further, that 'The conceptualists challenge readers to rethink what constitutes a literary text, how literature operates as an institution, and what role if any it plays in public life' (Reed, 2011: 5).

In the following section I will investigate Goldsmith's 'structures and devices' (Genette, 1983: 8) in terms of method.

## Method

'Goldsmith's appropriated books,' Voyce states, 'constitute limit cases in copying as a

<sup>14</sup> Again, Goldsmith is upfront about this: 'I trust self-consciousness and pretension – they're indicative that a position has been considered, distanced, objectivized, and, in some way, theorized. Things should be double thought' (Goldsmith, 2014a: 17).

viable aesthetic activity' (2011: 42), and there is significant consensus – Schwartzburg (2005), Drucker (2005), Pound (2015), Duffy (2016), and Marczewska (2018) – that with conceptual work, the idea is where the originality of the work resides, and that form and content cannot easily be separated. Where scholars divide is in their attempts to further categorise Goldsmith's self-named practice of Uncreative Writing. Duffy, in his article 'Reading the Unreadable: Kenneth Goldsmith, Conceptual Writing and the Art of Boredom' (2016), identifies a poetics of duration, noting that our attention, as reader and critic, should focus on Goldsmith's extension of Cage and Warhol's aesthetic practices of endurance, repetition and duration. Jason Christie, in his article for the 2005 *Open Letter* journal proposes a poetics of "plundergraphia", wherein Christie compares Goldsmith's methods of appropriation to that of music sampling. Plundergraphia, Christie cites, is distinct from found poetry, in that emphasis lies on the act of reframing, a political repurposing, as opposed to on the final product. Goldsmith's choice of artifact to transform is as important as what he produces. Christopher Schmidt, in an article in 2008, and then a sole-authored text in 2014, proposes that Goldsmith's artistry enacts a poetics of waste-management, in that Goldsmith repurposes vast swathes of text that would otherwise be confined to the recycling bin, or the ether. Pound (2015), proposes that the facticity of Uncreative Writing adheres to a poetics of information. Reed (2016), and Perloff (2011), both argue for a new form of lyric poetry they term conceptual lyricism. Taking his cue from Perloff's notion in her 2011 article, 'Towards a Conceptual Lyric: From Content to Context', that the conceptual poets display a sensitivity to language rather than to self-revelation, Reed furthers the argument, stating that, in fact, conceptual writing enacts an emergent form which is the 'logical next step' after the lyric tradition, and an adaptation of the mode to suit an age in which digital technologies have become part of everyday life' (Reed, 2016: 3). Perloff, in *New Media Poetics: contexts, technotexts and theories* (2006), argues for a categorisation of new media poetics proposing that Uncreative Writing and conceptual writing are the emergent forms within this new media age. Perloff further argues for the notion of differential poetics, and in *Differentials: poetry, poetics and pedagogy* (2006), Perloff sets out a new framework by which to approach conceptual writing. This work requires to be read differently, Perloff states. Work which merely seems to transplant existing texts into a new format, or work which has no protagonist or personal pronoun, requires that the reader pay attention differently, to 'rhythmic figure, sound structure, and visual

configuration' (Perloff, 2006: 226). With this in mind, in her Afterword for *Fidget*, Perloff (2012) informs the reader that *Fidget* was originally conceived across several media and distribution formats, and as such constitutes an example of differential poetics. Voyce (2011) asks that we focus on the notion of open source poetics, and suggests that the mindset of an appropriative tendency is not dissimilar to the current emerging forms of open source information and file-sharing platforms: 'One might speak of an open source poetics or commons-based poetics,' Voyce says, 'based on a decentralized and nonproprietary model of shared cultural codes, networks of dissemination, and collaborative authorship' (Voyce, 2011: 407). In his article for *Open Letter*, in contrast to Duffy's poetics of duration, and in contrast to those critics named above who propose that we focus on the idea as the work, Dworkin asks that we pay especial attention to the spatiality of the text on the page, a practice Dworkin refers to as interval poetics. 'Intervals not only have meaning, but they are, in some sense, what grounds meaning itself: "the spacing (pause, blank, punctuation, interval in general, etc.) which constitutes the origin of signification"' (Dworkin, 2005: 13).<sup>15</sup> Fellow poet Wershler, in a book chapter titled 'Conceptual Writing and Fanfiction' (2013), somewhat surprisingly asks that we consider Goldsmith's practice within the framework of fanfiction, proposing Uncreative Writing as a fanfiction for art practice. Finally, BRIAN COONEY undertakes to frame Goldsmith's appropriative works within the context of erasure poetry, arguing, similarly to Christie, that in choosing to transcribe in full the radio broadcast of an entire baseball game, as Goldsmith does in *Sports*, for instance, Goldsmith's practice is undeniably political. His uncreative transcripts represent 'radical erasures that fulfill a political purpose' (Cooney, 2014: 16).

There is considerable overlap in these positions, and equally a considerable amount of contradictory analysis. I will resist in this paper pursuing an argument that yokes Goldsmith's practice into that of media poetics, in that, as Goldsmith himself states: 'I'm very old-fashioned. For all my talk about the digital world, when it comes right down to it, I barely use the internet in my writing, other than as a way to gather materials' (Goldsmith, 2014a:19).<sup>16</sup> As stated earlier, Goldsmith nevertheless identifies the era of Big Data as the correct moment to reconsider creative writing practice – 'the

<sup>15</sup> The quote within Dworkin's quote here is cited by Dworkin as 'John Bullokar, *An English expositor* (London: John Legatt, 1616); Cage, *Silence*: 115-116 et passim' (Dworkin, 2005: 20).

<sup>16</sup> I further add that Goldsmith did not look to the internet to gather materials for either *Fidget* or *Day*.

digital environment [Goldsmith says] has completely changed the literary playing field, in terms of both content and authorship' (Goldsmith, 2011a: 124) – but he is not specifically a media poet. He produces print publications. None of his texts – at least since *Fidget* – are made using the computer as anything other than a tool. (His attempt at a media version of *Fidget*, the Applet, does not survive).<sup>17</sup> His methodologies – transcription and repurposing – are not specific to the media age. Pound summarises that 'Goldsmith's work assumes networked digital media as a cultural condition, but not a clean break with the literate apparatus of typing [...]. His texts take many forms [...], but in each case the book is the work's marquee' (2015: 318). I also challenge Wershler's idea that conceptual writing and fan fiction share common concerns: 'one useful way to think about conceptual writing' he says, 'is as fanfiction about conceptual art' (Wershler, 2013: 333). This idea is reductive – conceptual writing is its own practice – and disingenuous, given that Wershler is a fellow conceptualist. Uncreative Writing exhibits high literary aspirations, and is written in dialogue with avant-garde art and literary practice. 'Conceptual writing is located within literature and is ambivalent about wanting out. Fan fiction is located without literature and is ambivalent about wanting in,' Wershler states (2013: 337). Both statements are misguided. As Wershler states earlier in his article, conceptual writing is now, if not mainstream, then it is received within art and social establishments. Goldsmith read at The White House, in 2011 and 2014, and was Poet Laureate (2013) at MoMA, New York.<sup>18</sup> Fan fiction does not want in to the institution of literature. It lives happily within its own domain. Wershler's final lines reveal the nub of this piece, which, in its focus on ego, misses the point. 'If makers of conceptual writing and fanfiction really desire to generate differently from culture at large,' Wershler states, 'they'd need to produce writers who are not interested in being celebrity authors, but are willing to dissolve away into the shadows before the laurels can be handed out' (Wershler, 2013: 373). Interrogating notions of authorship is not a disavowal of authorship.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Perloff talks about the applet in her Afterword for *Fidget*: 'this latter electronic version [...] reconfigures the text of *Fidget* by substituting the computer for the human body' (2012: 99). The link she provides in her notes section, on page 105, to this electronic version, returns an error message.

<sup>18</sup> As these events make clear, and as Goldsmith is frequently forthright about, he wants to make an impact within the art and literary elite: 'Career is indeed Goldsmith's Balzacian preoccupation in *Soliloquy*' (Schmidt, 2008: 29).

<sup>19</sup> In his 2014 Speech at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Bök also makes quite a long – albeit good-natured – pronouncement concerning the fact that conceptual writing is in fact a Canadian movement, and yet Goldsmith is getting all the attention.

Each critic, then, attempts to contain or corral Goldsmith's practice within a framework understandable to them. Keen to prove how Goldsmith is wrong to undertake his practice in the name of literature, and/or how his project fails. Critics cite Goldsmith's ideological statements mostly in order to catch him out: he is not in fact a computer-driven writer (Schmidt, 2008), he is 'hiply retro' (Kaufmann, 2017: intro), and 'every inch the analogue dandy in his red cap' (Shore in Goldsmith, 2015a), he prints analogue books (Schwartzburg, 2005), and his ego is ever present (Schwartzburg, 2005).<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, critics contest his self-declared ahistorical approach. Watten (2011) considers Uncreative Writing against a backdrop of George Bush and 9/11. Similarly, Perloff (2005) introduces historical weight in her critique of *The Weather* by commenting on the fact that Baghdad forecasts creep in, as the text was produced during the Gulf War. Whilst accepting that this is coincidental, nevertheless Perloff proposes that 'The Baghdad threat is [...] the clinamen that gives the "classical narrative" of *The Weather* its piquancy' (2005: 88), which goes rather against the Situational trope – that the ordinary becomes extraordinary by being reframed. 'Like Warhol, Goldsmith chooses ephemeral, well-circulated, often banal texts as source material; periodicals, radio reports, and his own mundane chatter are some chosen objects of *détournement*' (Schmidt, 2008: 25).<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, Uncreative Writing, Watten insists, is lightweight by contrast to its precursors, *The New Sentence* and *Language Poetry* (Watten, 2011).<sup>22 23</sup>

The boldest negative assertion comes from Kaufmann. Goldsmith, Kaufmann proposes, is a 'fickle Conceptualist [...] happy to play fast and loose with his stated procedures in order to gain certain aesthetic effects' (Kaufmann, 2017: intro). Evidence, Schmidt proposes, that the machinic syntax of *Fidget* fails the task (Schmidt, 2008: 36): *Fidget*'s last chapter is the project's frustrated reminder, a

<sup>20</sup> I join the ranks, here, in my disavowal of the notion that Goldsmith is a media poet, in that, to my mind, as a literary writer, Goldsmith is producing literary chapterised texts, and this, of course, is where my interest in his practice lies.

<sup>21</sup> Italics are Schmidt's.

<sup>22</sup> *The New Sentence* is a text by Ron Silliman dated 1987, wherein he makes a case for the prose poem.

<sup>23</sup> Language Poetry was an 'avant-garde movement in American poetry and poetics since the 1970s', which 'draws on free verse and post-structuralism; of which Ron Silliman was a key figure' (Baldick, 2015: 196).

fulfillment of Lacan's notion that language indexes its own inadequacy to realize the body's desires. Language is itself a residue' (Schmidt, 2008: 36).

Goldsmith's approach demands, I propose, a focus on the formal properties of the words on the page, paying attention to spacing, layout and 'a heretofore unexplored repertoire of musical rhythms' (Bök, 2005: 68). In 'Towards a Conceptual Lyric: from content to context', Perloff (2011) rightly proposes that a conceptual piece is both visual and consonant with the notion of a poem as a sounded structure. 'In one sense,' Perloff says,

the poetry of Dworkin or Wolf or Rinne is perfectly traditional. It merely *seems* new because in the early twenty-first century, the equation of poetry with self-expression has become so normative. Perhaps, then, the copying exercises Kenneth Goldsmith talks about in his address to the White House workshop come at a moment when students badly need tools to *make* constructs more satisfying than their attempts to bare their unique souls (Perloff, 2011).

It is this discussion of textual experiments manifesting materially, rhythmically and visually, the curation of text and language and experiments of textual expressivity, that is of greatest interest to me – the technicalities of the works. Applying Benjamin's warning to 'Never trust what writers say about their work' (Benjamin in Perloff, 2012a: 149) to conceptual work 'makes little sense' Perloff tells us, 'given that, by definition, what the Conceptual artists *says* about the work is often equivalent to the work itself' (Perloff, 2012a:150).<sup>24</sup> In her book of essays *unoriginal genius: poetry by other means in the new century*, Perloff puts aside 'Goldsmith's insistence that his books are "unreadable"' (Perloff, 2012a:151), and undertakes a close reading and exegesis of *Traffic*. 'Goldsmith's "transcription" is hardly passive recycling' (Perloff, 2012a:161), she maintains. Goldsmith condenses timeframes in *Traffic*: 'The weekend, far from extended as it is in Godard's film, is here telescoped to fit into twenty hours. [...] At the same time, the "plot" ironically turns out to be a perfect

<sup>24</sup> The capitalisation of 'Conceptual' here, and the italicization of 'says' are Perloff's.

Aristotelian one with beginning, middle, and end” (Perloff, 2012a:161).<sup>25</sup><sup>26</sup> <sup>27</sup>

Similarly, ‘Goldsmith has drastically edited the [*Fidget*] tape so as to represent the movements of a hypermechanical body’ (Perloff, 2012a:165).

Goldsmith’s aesthetic premise, Perloff assures us, is born out of ‘its struggle with its immediate past’ (Perloff, 2012a:163). But ‘this emphatically [does] not mean that anything goes or that anyone can be an artist’ (Perloff, 2012a:164). On the contrary, Goldsmith, an artist trained at the Rhode Island School of Design, arrived in a period of conceptualism, minimalism and Language Art. His extension was to shift ‘to the verbal/musical realm, rethinking art issues from the outside’ (Perloff, 2012a:164). The time had come, at the end of the twentieth century ‘to do something else’ (Perloff, 2012a:164). Provocation is part of that “something else”.

Goldsmith’s works are, then, aesthetic constructions. One technique, rhythm, Dworkin proposes, overrides real time, and provides a dehierarchising effect. Spacing on the page, each utterance in *Soliloquy*, for instance, each movement in *Fidget* carries equal significance, and more importantly gives the texts a rhythm: ‘diegetic space and time are collapsed into the equal intervals of the textual period’ (Dworkin, 2005: 17), a process of temporal defamiliarisation which, Dworkin proposes, gives rise to linguistic investigation. I dispute this however, in that, as we shall see in my close reading of *Fidget*, some activities are given more or less dramatic space on the page. On page 11 walking is narrativised uninterruptedly across six lines: ‘Left foot hits ground. Eyes ahead. Body turns right. Right foot swings right. Left foot follows. Left foot steps. Begins at ball. Ends at heel. Step. Step. Right heel hits. Weight on ball. Left foot raises. Weight shifts right. Right foot leaves ground. Steps forward. Heel hits. Followed by ball. Knees bend. Right foot extends’ (Goldsmith, 2012: 11); in two words on page 17, ‘Walks straight’, and as a single word, ‘Walks’ on page 43,

<sup>25</sup> Goldsmith is explicit that *Traffic* is written dialogically with Godard’s film *Weekend* (1967): ‘Traffic is inspired by Godard’ (Goldsmith, 2014a: 13). In his back cover notes Dworkin affirms that ‘In both form and content, Kenneth Goldsmith’s *Traffic* recalls nothing so much as the extended tracking shot in Jean-Luc Godard’s 1967 film *Week-End* [sic]’ (Dworkin, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> The idea that Aristotle’s notion of plot connotes a text with a beginning, middle and end is further applied regarding *Fidget* by Dworkin in his back cover notes for *Traffic*: ‘An uneasy combination of farcical comedy and hopeless tragedy, *Traffic* is a drama of Aristotelian proportions. Goldsmith’s book unfolds like all classic narratives, tracing the beginning, middle and end of the action on a single day’ (Dworkin, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> With regard to my understanding of plot in Aristotelian terms I have been guided by Andrew Cowan’s explanations in his book *The Art of Writing Fiction* (2011), wherein he writes: ‘For Aristotle [...] plot must have ‘completeness’, by which he means that the beginning, middle and end must have a necessary and plausible connection and must form a self-contained whole’ (Cowan, 2011: 144).

page 53 and page 62. ‘*Day* also depends on the distorting effects of the interval, at both a molecular and molar level’, Dworkin states:

its acts of regulation defamiliarize the quotidian world, rendering its everyday language extraordinary and strange. At the micro-level, its distinctive feature arises from a peculiar textual democratization, reducing the newspaper’s patchwork carnival of fonts and typefaces to the book page’s uniform print-block of equal-weight twelve-point Times. Each word in *Day* is given equal weight, just as setting the kerning to zero gives each typeset character an equal spacing. “Spacing consists in putting a proper distance between words” (Dworkin, 2005: 18).<sup>28</sup>

Despite resistance within the literary field to conceptual writing and to work made using readymade language an overall consensus positions Goldsmith at the forefront of this movement which critically and rigorously asks questions of the nature of literary culture in the digital age (Dworkin, 2005, Reed, 2011, Aji, 2012, Pound, 2015). Pound neatly summarises Goldsmith’s practice as predicated on ‘the idea of capturing and repurposing used language [...] in texts that make a spectacle of their unreadability’ (Pound, 2015: 317).

In the following section I consider the debate regarding the readability of Goldsmith’s texts and Goldsmith’s call for a ‘thinkership’ as opposed to a readership.

## Readability

‘It’s the idea that counts, not the reading of it’ Goldsmith states, in his 2009 *BOMB* magazine interview. Aligning himself with Joyce and Stein, whose texts are a challenge to read, and who themselves did not necessarily expect their texts to be read in linear fashion, or in their entirety, Goldsmith, as we have seen earlier, makes swaggering claims that his works are unthinkable in reading terms, too boring, too big.

<sup>28</sup> The quote within Dworkin’s quote here is cited as ‘Philip Luckombe, *A Concise History of the Origin and Progress of Printing; with Practical Instructions to the Trade in General*. Compiled from Those Who Have Wrote on This Curious Art, 2nd edition, non-uniform title (London: Printed and Sold by W. Adlard and J. Browne, 1770): 396’ (Dworkin, 2005:20).

We know that he knows that this is of course not true. I found reading *Fidget* – a text without a protagonist – compelling. A newspaper – as transcribed in *Day* – is something many people engage with as a daily reading event, (albeit read in tranches, rather than linearly, or in full). Goldsmith merely draws attention to the fact that his texts, manifesting as novels, do not do what a reader might expect a novel to do. This is a contentious point, in that Goldsmith himself in a recent email to me says he refers to his texts as reference books (Goldsmith, 2019). However, I am not alone in approaching them within a literary framework, and thinking about them as fiction. In the 2007 documentary *sucking on words* Goldsmith describes the content of newspapers as ‘the most amazing stories in the world and I think better stories than any fiction writer could ever possibly construct’ (Morris, 2007). Furthermore, in his text *Uncreative Writing*, in a chapter titled ‘Why Appropriation?’ Goldsmith, in contemplating what size and shape to make *Day*, is explicit that his choice is determined by the fact of ‘wanting to represent the newspaper as a literary object’ (Goldsmith, 2011a: 119). In Perloff’s ‘Afterword’ in *Fidget*, she recounts how Goldsmith wrote to her that ‘From the outset the piece was a total work of fiction’ (Perloff, 2012: 91). Princenthal (1998) also makes reference to this declaration by Goldsmith. Moreover Goldsmith tells us how, when transitioning from art to writing, he read the modern canon:

the entire oeuvres of Joyce, Stein, Beckett, Pound, Cummings, and so forth. Joyce led me back to James, which led me to Zola, [...], and Zola led me to the everyday poetics of Boswell and Sterne. [...], I went deep into American experimental fiction—Gass, Markson, Gaddis—[as well as] the Beats: Kerouac’s more experimental stuff [...], Ginsberg, and Burroughs’s cut-ups. I found Gysin and Ballard, [as well as] punk writers like Dennis Cooper, Bob Flanagan, and Kathy Acker. (Goldsmith, 2014a: 5).

‘In terms of readability,’ Goldsmith continues, ‘I read all those so-called unreadable texts. [...] *Finnegans Wake* [...], *Ulysses* twice [and] James’s *The Golden Bowl* (Goldsmith, 2014a: 6).

In his interview with Dave Mandl in *Believer* magazine Goldsmith states that ‘The world is transformed: suddenly the newspaper is *détourned* into a novel’ (Goldsmith, 2011b). Goldsmith repeats his notion that *Day* is a reframing of the newspaper as a novel in his interview with Francisco Roman Guevara: ‘*Day* showed us that everyday,

the best novels are effortlessly being written daily. It's just a matter of reframing it as such' (Goldsmith, 2014a: 31). In *unoriginal genius* Perloff states that from *Soliloquy* (and in fact since *Fidget*) Goldsmith's 'texts are designed to look like normal "books"' (Perloff, 2012a: 149); that is, prose texts rather than poetry. Furthermore, Pound points out that framing Goldsmith's work as literary allows critics, as I do here, to approach the texts through a literary prism which puts forth specific formal analyses. Dworkin is able to 'proceed with a formal analysis of "the interval" and to demonstrate the textual dynamics of Goldsmith's concern with spacing' (Pound, 2015: 328). Schwartzburg takes the opportunity 'to view Goldsmith as the "protagonist" in an epic "novelistic system", allowing us to think about him, if not as an author, then at least as a character' (Pound, 2015: 328). Perloff is able 'to pursue a mimetic reading of *Traffic* "as a book about traffic," allowing us to witness "something surreal about this seemingly ordinary sequence of traffic reports"' (Pound, 2015: 328). Bök goes so far as to suggest that Goldsmith's works constitute acts of 'literary temerity' (Bök, 2005: 65), which confound reader expectation. Goldsmith, then, advocates for a 'thinkership' (Goldsmith, 2009), as opposed to a readership: an audience that engages with him intellectually with regard to these questions of authorship, originality, culture, art, and the nature and value of the everyday; writing as a site of intellect not sentiment. If we enjoy reading the text along the way then so much the better. In this rebuff of the reader Goldsmith asks us to consider the question, what else can literature do? And also, why must artists have all the fun? Why can't writers make play, experiment, expand the field?

In playful response to Barthes' notion that 'the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author' (Barthes, 1967: 6), *Uncreative Writing*, Milesi proposes, heralds instead the death of the reader. Lack of protagonist, storyline or originally conceived words are as nothing to the sheer volume of text, in *Day*, Milesi says, where adverts, jostled without delineation against editorial, demand that the reader experience the text visually as much as linguistically. Stein is critical to understanding Goldsmith's practice around this notion of unreadability, Duffy tells us:

Stein's densely repetitive and so-called unreadable works were never meant to be intellectually pored over but simply glanced at, scanned as works to delight the eye in a visual rather than intellectual sense. The real point of these texts [for Goldsmith] is not in their comprehension but in the irrefutable fact of the work,

the evidence of labour, on the page. Comprehension is only one way of reading (Duffy, 2016: 695).

This is a different type of reading, just as ‘contemporary poetry solicits “differential reading”, that is, close attention to “its actual language, syntax, use of white space, and hypographical elements”’ (Perloff, 2004: xxviii). Perloff refers to such writing as ‘verbal/visual’ (Perloff, 2004: xxx). ‘The point is not, as it was for the New Critics, to observe how textual details fit logically and inevitably within an unfolding larger plan. Instead, readers are invited to ask questions, to inquire in an open-ended fashion into why something is written one way and not another’ (Reed, 2016: 8).<sup>29</sup> Reed’s point here reiterates Dworkin’s statement in his essay ‘The Fate of Echo’ for the anthology *Against Expression*, wherein Dworkin, states, ‘The question remains not whether one of these works could have been done better, but whether it could possibly have been done differently’ (Dworkin, 2011: xxxix).

Certainly, of the many claims debunked by scholars and critics regarding Goldsmith’s work, his statements that his work is boring and unreadable are the most frequently contradicted (Bök, 2005, Dworkin, 2005, Drucker, 2005, Fitterman and Place, 2009, Perloff, 2012a, Aji, 2012, Pound, 2015, Duffy, 2016, Kaufmann, 2017). ‘Bookforum describes Goldsmith’s poetic project as “utterly intoxicating” (Jones). Eric Belgum describes *No. III* as a “pageturner”; Craig Dworkin notes that Goldsmith’s transcriptions often make for “terrific reading”; and, as Molly Schwartzburg observes, “[even] *Day* is surprisingly interesting” ‘ (Pound, 2015: 315). ?? AJI proposes that uncreative solutions are answers to unanswerable questions around creativity, and in their making throw out more questions and the solution is ‘always imaginary’ (Bök in Aji, 2012: 10). Goldsmith’s work, Duffy suggests, furthers our understanding both of the materiality of language and of the function of language. The idea for a conceptual piece, Duffy states, dictates its structure. The organizing principle of *Fidget* – chapters arranged temporally – is a poetics of duration predicated around notions of boredom. In contradiction to those writers who declare Goldsmith’s claims of being boring as disingenuous, Duffy

<sup>29</sup> New Criticism was an American literary criticism movement from the 1930s to the 1960s which concentrated on the ‘verbal complexities and ambiguities of short poems considered as self-sufficient objects without attention to their origins or effects’ (Baldick, 2015: 244).

suggests it might be expedient to take him at his word; that way, with lowered expectations, we experience the work on its own terms – leaving aside our usual expectations of story and character, psychology and emotion and in the process readers become participants in the work:

To read the work or treat it as an object worthy of traditional literary-critical study is to commodify as finished product what is to be understood as process. Only in this way will the full critical implications of Goldsmith's notions of boredom and uncreative writing be fully experienced (Duffy, 2016: 698).

## **Conclusions**

Goldsmith, then, writes dialogically with the avant-garde and modernism, and as such, context is critical to a thorough understanding of his works. Having said that, I defer to the contradictory nature of Goldsmith's practice and statements – as numerous highlighted by critics – and propose that his creative texts must be understood to be questioning both the notion of authorship and form, and aesthetic process must be allowed to unfold with room for manoeuvre within the process of making. Knowing the start point for the piece does not predicate the final piece. Authorial agency presides.<sup>30</sup>

In the next chapter I present a close reading of *Fidget*, further considering these notions of critical authorship, method and readability.

<sup>30</sup> A contemporary artist whose practice similarly troubles notions of authorship and originality, and the notion of the signature, is Gavin Turk.

## Fidget

*Fidget* is a 116 page paperback first printed in 2000 by Coach House Books, Toronto. Edited and designed by one of Goldsmith's key interlocutors, poet and scholar Darren Wershler-Henry, the book includes two epigraphs, one by Situationist Guy Debord, and another, a quotation from a letter written by American modernist poet Wallace Stevens to experimental poet William Carlos Williams in 1918. The book also includes an Afterword, "Vocable Scriptsigns": Differential Poetics on Kenneth Goldsmith's *Fidget*, by influential conceptual poetics scholar and critic Marjorie Perloff, and ends with Goldsmith's thanks to the individuals and institutions with whom Goldsmith realised the earlier, different outputs of *Fidget*: a performance at the Whitney Museum of American Art, an exhibition at Printed Matter, a mini limited edition version by Stadium Projects – all in 1998, and an electronic form as a Java applet. *Fidget* is a text, then, which performs through both content and form.<sup>31</sup>

The text, which documents on an hourly basis Goldsmith's movements within a thirteen hour period, from 10am to 11pm on June 16, 1997 (Bloomsday), marks a transition in Goldsmith's oeuvre. Inserting a body into what have to date been texts made up of object and language-oriented lists, *Fidget* – and the subsequent text, *Soliloquy*, all the words spoken by Goldsmith in the course of a week – puts Goldsmith firmly at the centre of his work and marks a turn to self, albeit in a fictional capacity (Goldsmith, 2012).<sup>32</sup> *Fidget* also marks a turn away from pure language into chapterised prose texts. This use of chapterisation suggests an analogy with prose fiction.<sup>33</sup> Having documented language through its aurality: *No. 105* (1992), *No. 109* (1993), *No. 110* (1993), and *No. 111* (1997); through strategies of word-association: *73 Poems* (1994); and through strategies of documentation and alphabetization: *6799* (2000), from *Fidget* onwards Goldsmith undertakes a narrative prose style. Obsession with language remains the driving concern, but language is allowed to do what it does within the parameters of the conceit, 'to fall where it may within that specified

<sup>31</sup> The close reading presented here is of *Fidget*'s sixth printing in 2012 by Coach House Books.

<sup>32</sup> The back cover notes to *Fidget*, drawn from Goldsmith's own words as transcribed by Perloff on page 91 of *Fidget*, tell us that 'Fidget is writer Kenneth Goldsmith's transcription of every movement made by his body during thirteen hours on Bloomsday (June 16), 1997' (*Fidget*, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> In an interview with Marjorie Perloff, Peter Nicholls insists on the prosody of Goldsmith's work: 'we've started talking about "poems" though many of the key texts of what's now called "conceptual writing" are actually exercises in prose' (Nicholls, 2015: 158).

context' (Goldsmith, 2003a), whether that is to document bodily movements, record his conversations, or transcribe media texts. This strategy, as I will discuss later in this chapter, rather than dryly fulfilling a concept, allows room for creative manoeuvre. As such, 'no word could be "wrong" or "boring" if I could justify it being there conceptually' (Goldsmith, 2003a).

In *Fidget*, Goldsmith wishes to textually manifest physical action, to produce a self through the language of captured movements. By loosening his control on how he curates the language, the result is, as we shall see, that the language turns on and controls him. Words on the page enact the event of this body in space.

Goldsmith is explicit in his dialogic approach, working through and, as he sees it, oftentimes past, his artistic heroes and precursors. The immediate nod, in *Fidget*, to James Joyce's *Ulysses* is the fact that the day on which Goldsmith undertakes his activity is 16 June, that is Bloomsday. A connection with Beckett is highlighted by Perloff in her 'Afterword'. The text, she says 'reads at first like a section from [...] *All Strange Away* [...] with its graphic account of the movements of an unspecified figure' (Perloff, 2012: 90). There is undoubted affinity, also, between the body of *Fidget* and the character of Watt who 'found it a help, from time to time, to be able to say, with some appearance of reason, Watt is a man, all the same, Watt is a man, or, Watt is in the street with thousands of fellow creatures within call' (Beckett, 2009a: 68). Yet *Fidget* is not, like *All Strange Away*, or *Watt*, an exercise in making things up. It is, rather, an example of *poésie vérité*, a documentary style activity, that conflates and confuses fact with fiction. Whilst it is Goldsmith's intention to record every movement his body makes in the assigned thirteen hours, he understands that this is an impossible feat. 'As I sit here writing this letter, my body is making thousands of movements; I am only able to observe one at a time,' he says. As such, *Fidget* was 'From the outset [...] a total work of fiction' (Goldsmith, 2012: 91).<sup>34</sup> 'Among the rules for *Fidget* was that I would never use the first person 'I' to describe movements. Thus every move was an observation of a body in space, not my body in space. There was to be no editorializing, no psychology, no emotion – just a body detached from a mind' (Goldsmith, 2012: 91).<sup>35</sup>

These rules lose sway in the making of the piece: he does in fact use "I" to

<sup>34</sup> Goldsmith is also in dialogue here with Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* paradox, in which it takes Shandy a year to narrate the events of a single day.

<sup>35</sup> Goldsmith's letter to Perloff which she cites in the Afterword.

describe movement – ‘I mean then a platformed body as does leave somewhat unsteadily’ (p. 72) – , he does at times editorialise – ‘But nonetheless it’s a small rubbing’ (p. 66). And this body produces both psychology and emotion in the nonsensical text and reversed sentences of the later chapters, wherein the body materially manifests its state of mind. Process, then, is part of the creativity of the text: ‘I’m a believer in process and realization. There’s something about going through an intense writing process and following it through to the end that opens up the linguistic possibilities of transcending the original notion’ (Goldsmith, 2003a: 6).

In the following section I consider Goldsmith’s further complication of notions of authorship in *Fidget* with regard to his ideas around subjectivity.

## Subjectivity

As set out in the introduction, ideas of critical authorship play out on various levels in Goldsmith’s texts. In *Fidget*, on the one hand, we have the question of authorial intention. On the other hand, Goldsmith plays with notions of subjectivity. In this turn to self, as we have identified in both *Fidget* and *Soliloquy*, questions regarding originality are redundant, because Goldsmith creates the text himself, rather than using readymade material, as he does in *Day* and subsequent texts. Goldsmith’s authorial intentions are intimated immediately in the epigraphs. The first is the quote from Situationist Guy Debord, that explains the meaning of *dérive*. The second is an enigmatic quote from Wallace Stevens which states that ‘to fidget with points of view leads always to new beginnings and incessant beginnings lead to sterility’ (Stevens, 2012). We are in for a journey, a Situational drift, which may lead us nowhere. Notably, the Perloff essay is an Afterword, sited at the back of the text, suggesting that it is important that the reader experience the text on its own terms first, in order that we will get lost within it. The intention of the *dérive* is for the person to drift without a map or instruction in order to disorient the individual, to reawaken their senses and inject a sense of excitement into familiar everyday lives, places and routines: ‘Debord claimed that our urban spaces are rich places – full of untold encounters, wondrous

architecture, complex human interaction – that we’ve grown too numb to experience’ (Goldsmith, 2012: 36). In asking the reader to experience this bodily narrative without (for the most part) a pronoun, Goldsmith offers up the body as a place to be experienced anew. Goldsmith’s disorientation begins with this two-word sentence: ‘Eyelids open’ (p. 8).<sup>36</sup> Without a pronoun the emphasis shifts to the reader, who asks the question, who is speaking? This disorientation extends to Goldsmith’s proclamations regarding the rules for the making of the text, as well as his thoughts around subjectivity. On the one hand, Goldsmith says – conflating the public with the personal – ‘all my works are autobiographical’ (Goldsmith, 2014a: 10). On the other hand, in the previously mentioned letter to Perloff, that she alludes to in the Afterword here, Goldsmith suggests that *Fidget* was from the outset a work of fiction (Goldsmith, 2012: 91). Further along in the 2014 interview with Francisco Roman Guevara, Goldsmith says: ‘I don’t disagree that poetry can express subjectivity – I just prefer it not to be exclusively my own. Authenticity is another form of artifice [...] I trust self-consciousness and pretension’ (Goldsmith, 2014a: 17). Further along, most fittingly, ‘Things should be double thought’ (Goldsmith, 2014a: 17).

Whilst reading I can’t help myself from enacting the actions – not all of which I understand, such as ‘Palm corkscrews’ on page 8. Halfway down the page a sensation creeps in: ‘Tips of fingers graze side of head. Hairs tickle tips as they pass’ (p. 8). Since the body under observation is also the body doing the observing, *Fidget* is an exercise in mind control, or of how to not be in control of your own body: ‘By its very nature every embodied spirit is doomed to suffer and enjoy in solitude sensations, feelings, insights, fancies; all these are private and, except through symbols and at second-hand, incommunicable’ (Huxley, 1954: 3).

This quote by Huxley, from his 1954 book *The Doors of Perception*, describes perfectly the tensions inherent within this project.<sup>37</sup> Despite an absence of named protagonist, and lack of pronoun, *Fidget* represents a state of vulnerability. In using himself as the body, but it not being “him”, in authoring his bodily movements, Goldsmith becomes both subject and object. Closed conceptual writing – writing that strongly predicates its framework – Fitterman and Place (2009) propose is thereby allegorical, and by default sentimental. The tighter the framework or conceit for the

<sup>36</sup> For the remainder of this chapter, when quoting from *Fidget*, I will simply cite page numbers.

<sup>37</sup> I accept, of course, that Goldsmith might not subscribe to the notion of an embodied spirit.

piece, the harder the reader probes for meaning. In a ‘post-Cartesian world, there is no splitting the baby: minds are bodies, bodies minds’ (Fitterman and Place, 2009: 38). Proof, Fitterman and Place suggest that ‘“I” do not exist. “I” am autobiography, text and context’ (Fitterman and Place, 2009: 38). Rejecting the terms objectivity and subjectivity as old-fashioned, Fitterman and Place propose the term Subject, which is, they tell us ‘the properly melancholic contemporary entity’ (Place, 2009: 38). As an example of psycho-linguistic subjectivity Fitterman and Place offer Christine Wertheim’s *+I’m+ S-pace*. I further propose *Fidget*.

By contrast, in his *Open Letter* contribution ‘*Fidget’s Body*’, RUBÉN GALLO (2005) undertakes to identify the dissembled selfhood associated with the choreographed body parts in *Fidget*, which he describes as an ‘experiment in writing the body’ (Gallo, 2005: 52). His analysis, divided as Body, Unconscious and Self-Analysis, undermines the notion of Goldsmith as the body. Nevertheless, Gallo looks to authorial intention and process as much as to the text to make meaning, reiterating Schwartzburg’s (2005) notion of author as protagonist, and/or hero. *Fidget* is an act of literal self-analysis – the unknown body observes itself, broken down into bit parts, body parts. A body newly discovering itself and wondering how and where and why its component parts are connected. This body performs its mental states via the words on the page. Here then, a nude (apparently), abject, fidgeting, nose-picking, anal-probing, urinating, masturbating body performs a stripped down narrative. Each act is mechanical and machinic, uncomplicated by internality or commentary. Alone, Gallo concludes, the body regresses into ‘primary narcissism’ (Gallo, 2005: 55). Using Benjamin’s notion of psychoanalysis as psychic photography, in that each process renders materially that which was previously unseen, Gallo proposes that *Fidget* uses photographic techniques to break down simple actions into multiple freeze-frames which ‘unveils an *organic unconscious* consisting of the myriad bodily movements’ (Gallo, 2005: 56).<sup>38</sup>

Gallo brings to light the technological processes involved in the making of *Fidget*. He explains how Goldsmith recorded his movements orally into a tape recorder and then transcribed them into the text which comprises the finished “transcript”. Goldsmith is ever present inside and outside of his narratives. Goldsmith applies his sculpture-

<sup>38</sup> With conceptual writing, the visual is frequently invoked as part of both the process and the outcome. I will discuss this further in the following chapter, in relation to *Day*.

making self to the physicality of the making of the text. As a conceptual writer he could of course leave the idea out there as a recipe, as an instructional piece in the style of a Fluxus Event-Score, but for Goldsmith the execution of the piece, the physical act as well as the cognitive and curatorial choices made in the act of execution, are integral to his process.<sup>39</sup> I will talk more about this in the following section, and in the chapter on *Day*. The body, then, is frequently present in Goldsmith's practice, whether within the text, or in his bringing our attention to the physicality of the making of the piece. *Fidget* is a literary trompe l'oeil, Gallo concludes, wherein the actions transcribed on the page dissemble: 'the serial processes of speaking, recording, replaying, transcribing and editing [which] are all hidden from view, concealed behind phrases that sound as simple as "Arm drops. Grasp. Right hand rests. Fingers bend. Fingers outstretch. Arc backwards"' (Gallo, 2005: 58).

With an especial focus on the physical nature of the text, on text as a bodily medium, Goldsmith is both embodied as subject of the narrative and is the disembodied narrator, using words to sculpt a figurative portrait of this unnamed man. Goldsmith's discombobulating narrative devices trouble the notion of who is speaking, what is a person, how do we relate mind to body and asks questions regarding authorial agency within narrative strategy. *Fidget* represents, then, a 'complex investigation of the relationship between bodily functions and literary devices' (Gallo, 2005: 52).

Art critic NANCY PRINCENTHAL – focusing on authorial intention – sets us up for the "failure" of this experiment (Gallo, 2005) by citing Goldsmith's confession 'that by late afternoon, the entire exercise had become so unexpectedly difficult and disturbing that he sought escape by any means, first in sleep, and after that in a fifth of Jack Daniels' (Princenthal, 1998: 3). Goldsmith's intentions of authorial objectivity and neutrality, are, Princenthal tells us 'overridden by the body' (Princenthal, 1998: 1). His intention to deliver 'a text entirely stripped of props – no attending objects' (Princenthal, 1998: 1), breaks down as early as chapter 1, she states: 'The long, arduous process of waking up can't be described, he discovers, without naming bed

<sup>39</sup> Fluxus was an avant-garde movement from the 1950s and 1960s; 'a laboratory of ideas and an arena for artistic experimentation in Europe, Asia and the United States' (The Fluxus Reader, 1998). A key output was the Event Score: 'taut little propositions, exercises or word-objects' (Doris, 1998: 99). Yoko Ono's book, *Grapefruit: A Book of Instruction and Drawings by Yoko Ono*, originally published in 1964, contains hundreds of such works. Examples include: 'FISH PIECE Take a tape of the voices of fish on the night of a full moon. Take it until dawn. 1964 spring' (Ono, 2000).

and floor. By 11:00 there is metaphor (when upped teeth “comb” lower lip), by 12:00 both cup and coffee’ (Princenthal, 1998: 1). Princenthal outlines the text’s unravelling, which ‘grows angrily staccato, silences itself (a nap?), and re-emerges in even testier, single word exhortations’ (Princenthal, 1998: 2). Ultimately, she declares, the text ‘is drunk’. As per Perloff’s Afterword, this is knowledge gained from Goldsmith’s own statements. This turn to self, Princenthal proposes, concedes a loss of control, and it is Goldsmith’s ‘good grace’ that allows this to manifest on the page, an acknowledgement, not least, that his body ‘spoke fiction’ (Princenthal, 1998: 3).

In the following section I will consider the aesthetic function of this (almost) pronoun free novel.

### Aesthetic Fix

A count of the chapters and the number of pages in each chapter reveals a dramatic climax at 18:00, two thirds of the way in, demonstrated on the page by a very short chapter of only one and a half pages, indicating that something – language – has broken down, has reached a climax. Indeed, in this chapter every entry except for one is a single word: the testy, staccato single word exhortations identified by Princenthal. Most chapters are around four to five pages. 17:00 is shorter, two and a half pages, pre-empting the climax. The longest chapter, 13:00, a third of the way in, is eight pages long, and is the chapter in which the body masturbates, a process which takes place over two of the eight pages.

10:00	11:00	12:00	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:00	18:00	19:00	20:00	21:00	22:00
4 pages	5 and a third pages	5 pages	8 pages	6 pages	5 pages	<b>5 pages</b>	2 and a half pages	<b>1 and a third pages</b>	4 and a third pages	3 pages	5 pages	4 pages
r i s i n g      a c t i o n								peak	descending action			

It is interesting to experience the conscious mind of the narrator and note what he chooses to focus on: ‘Blood in leg’ (p.10). Only now? ‘Belly falls. Belly rises. Belly falls’ focusing on his breathing. Clearly Goldsmith’s task, to document all bodily

movements is impossible. This is then a constructed narrative which attempts to render a body through its physical manifestation. A constructed fiction that is neatly framed as such, beginning with, at 10:00 ‘Eyelids open’ (p.8), and ending with, at 23:00 ‘Eyelids close’ (p.87).<sup>40</sup> Between 10am and 11am this body stretches – scratches its bum – picks its nose – gets out of bed and goes to the toilet. In *Species of Spaces* Georges Perec documents and demonstrates simultaneously, Drucker tells us. *Fidget*, however, is different, ‘since it uses the excuse of documentation for exhibitionist purposes’ (Drucker, 2005: 141).

In an interview with Perloff for *Jacket 21*, Goldsmith talks about *Fidget* as a piece of potential literature – but which he realised, preferring, perhaps, to speak aloud the somatic in order to realise its fictional potential. ‘*Fidget* [...] broke all its rules’, Goldsmith confesses. ‘Not out of formal necessity, but out of a need to escape the physical demands of the task. I needed to get drunk and once I let that in, it completely changed the parameters of the book’ (Goldsmith, 2003a: 2). Aesthetics, then, and authorial agency, trump authorial intention. Goldsmith’s is an aesthetic practice which commits to craft. Experimenting with the potentiality of language and form is a means to an end product – a literary artifact. This idea sits in opposition to Duffy’s notion that the idea is the work and that focus on the artifact is misconstrued. Princenthal, however, accepts this concession of process to practice as Goldsmith’s good grace that he conceded to fiction over pure documentation. More importantly, as mentioned, writing is a physical practice for Goldsmith; he needs to actualise the idea in order to feel he has done the project justice, and also to see what happens. He confirms this in his interview with Perloff in 2003: ‘I could have easily kept *Fidget* as potential literature by issuing the instruction ‘Record every move your body makes for a day.’ But if I hadn’t gone through the rigorous process of actualizing it, the writing would have been very different’ (Goldsmith, 2003a: 6). In the process the artistry occurs. Further along in the interview Goldsmith likens his process to the making of a pot, wherein his teacher ‘made us aware that the inside of the pot is just as important as the outside’ (Goldsmith, 2003a: 6). Goldsmith’s sculptural training informs his writing process.

Goldsmith’s intention with *Fidget*, Peller (2013) points out, is that rather than

<sup>40</sup> These first and last lines are not dissimilar to the first and last lines of the pronoun free *Ada & Carter* in Part One of this thesis.

employing Beckettian metaphor – a man on his back in a ditch representing humanity’s struggles: ‘With *Fidget*, I wished to simply describe the body itself, to formalize it, making it closer to the motion studies of Muybridge; the body as a site of non-symbolic, pure Movement’ (Goldsmith, 2015).<sup>41</sup>

Read alongside this intention, *Fidget* is not a failure at all. The body is allowed to lead the mind and where the body goes the mind/author/protagonist follows. This mind/body wanted to get drunk. Of course there is a slight disingenuousness to Goldsmith’s statement above, in that he fails to point out the fact that he as an author will then aestheticise the documented activity. Certainly, the verbal narrative is not uniform and therefore not machinic. In ‘11:00’ we wonder what he is doing. ‘Palm of hand receives’ (p.14). Receives what? Is he opening a door? Many of the sentences read as imperatives: ‘Forward. Forward. Forward’ (p.14). ‘Extracts testicles and penis’ (p.15) – from where? So he isn’t naked? ‘Eyes see face’ is not an action. There are many destabilising unfinished sentences: ‘Left hand grabs’ (p.15) – grabs what? ‘Left hand covers’ (p.15) – covers what? ‘Noise in ears’ (p.16) is not a movement. Does he continually speak into the tape recorder? On page 17 it says ‘Walks’ instead of ‘Step. Step. Step. Step. Step’ on page 16 and page 17. Is he doing exercises? On page 19, however, ‘Swallow’, like ‘Walks’ on page 17, are both rendered in a single word. Between 11am and 12 noon, this body opens a door (perhaps) – goes for a pee – looks at itself in the mirror (presumably) – cleans its teeth – washes its face – exercises (perhaps) and eats.

In ‘12:00’ non-bodily nouns accumulate. In the first hour, 10-11, we have ‘ceiling’ and ‘bed’. Between 11 and noon we have ‘floor’. Between noon and 1pm we have: ‘coffee’ x 6, ‘coffee cup’ x 7, ‘chair’ x 4, ‘milk’, ‘ground’, ‘cup’ x 14, ‘paper towels’, ‘table’ x 5, ‘coffee cup’ x 7, ‘chair arm’. Something about the action of drinking coffee compels Goldsmith to spell it out clearly. Whereas in the bathroom – 11am to noon – he didn’t say toothbrush or toilet or water or mirror or sink. We presume he’s in the bathroom as he urinates, and ‘eyes see face’ and his movements of hand and mouth indicate teeth brushing. On page 23 there is a tense switch ‘Coffee swallowed. Cup placed on table’ and that last not described in movements. ‘Veins on right side of neck bulge’ (p.24). Can he feel this? On page 25 ‘Hand rests on blade’? Side of hand? What is this hand doing? The hand moves back and forth, drops, spirals. Is he deciding to do

<sup>41</sup> No page numbers in *Theory* from which this quotation derives.

this in the conscious knowledge of then documenting the action? Pre-empting the action? He has the hand moving up and down various degrees – 90, 225, 180 – how does he know? This text then is not simply a list of actions. Numerous cognitive as well as aesthetic functions dictate the content. Between noon and 1pm, then, this body drinks coffee and moves its hands. At the top of page 31 the notation is to ‘Rise. Walk’; that appears easy, compared to the process as described in the first chapter on page 11: ‘Left foot steps. Begins at ball. Ends at heel. Step. Step. Right heel hits. Weight on ball. Left foot raises. Weight shifts right. Right foot leaves ground. Steps forward. Heel hits. Followed by ball. Knees bend. Right foot extends’ (p.11). This description of walking is similar in tone to the following passage in *Watt*:

Watt’s way of advancing due east, for example, was to turn his bust as far as possible towards the north and at the same time to fling out his right leg as far as possible towards the south, and then to turn his bust as far as possible towards the south, and at the same time to fling out his left leg as far as possible towards the north, and then again to turn his bust as far as possible towards the north and to fling out his right leg as far as possible towards the south, and then again to turn his bust as far as possible towards the south and to fling out his left leg as far as possible towards the north, and so on (Beckett, 2009a: 23/24).

Perhaps Beckett’s ‘and so on’ here gives Goldsmith permission to ‘Repeat’, however Beckett exhausts a movement more than Goldsmith. And now, simple commands: ‘Walk. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. Body turns. Left. Right. Left. Right. Body halts.’ (p.31). Two further episodes of walking on page 31 are similarly described, compared to the ‘Step. Step. Step’ of pages 16 and 17

In *Fidget*, then, creativity and intention, text and process, are intricately combined. The body gets bored, tired and drunk, rendering the conscious recording body insensible of the unconscious body and its actions; all of which, in Goldsmith’s final execution of editing the transcripts is delivered as a causal narrative. *Fidget* follows the classic structure of rising action to climax – ‘18:00’ – and *dénouement*, finishing with the ending mirroring the beginning. It is the process – ‘a movement-by-movement auto-narration, achieved with a mike worn around his neck, of his body’s progress through the waking hours of June 16, 1997’ (Princenthal, 1998: 1) – wherein the dramatic narrative occurs on the meta level of the text, and this, in turn, affects the nature of the

text.

In his contribution to *Open Letter*, Peters (2005) contextualises Goldsmith's genre of creativity within Duchamp's paradigm of indifference, wherein 'indifference is how we perceive the ephemeral' (Peters, 2005: 123). Peters ratifies the creativity inherent within *Fidget* as, on the one hand 'pure creation and being – the exchange of information from one reader perceiver to another', and, on the other hand, a conscious construction: 'I do not transcribe, I construct' (Robbe-Grillet in Peters, 2005: 123). Peters goes on to say, however, that Goldsmith's work is unreadable: 'Aesthetics is the same thing as anesthetic, something to put you to sleep' (Levine in Peters, 2005: 124). Peters suggests that Goldsmith's self-referentiality flattens the narrative to such an extent that no-one is listening. Peters ends with the line that Goldsmith's work successfully removes experience from the work of art. If he means removes the simulacrum of experience that we can consume as spectacle, then maybe, but I find the immersive nature of Goldsmith's texts highly absorbing and experiential. Peters has applied his analysis to the concept – to record all bodily movements in a day – rather than to the actual text, which, as Goldsmith admits, takes its own course, and as Perloff (2012) makes clear, is highly aestheticised. With *Fidget*, we are brought directly into the experience of the body in space. The experience provokes self-reflection, is entertaining, is surreal, is fun and thought provoking on the nature of what it means to be that body in space, and how the event of being is performed through language on the page.

The notion of Goldsmith as a fickle conceptualist is a consistent theme in the critical literature. I have already argued that much of the syntax is not machinic, and there is a clear adherence to the conscious rendering of a poetic text with variation of pace and tone, as identified in my table at the start of this section. And after all, Goldsmith makes use of metaphor: 'Horizontal stripes appear in a field' (p.39), and simile: 'Bluish ghostlike images of veins' (p. 39) to describe the effects of pressing his eyelids. Sensations of 'pain' (p.39) and 'throbbing pain' (p.39) are recorded alongside movements. In this section of *Fidget*, then, the emphasis is on sensation for visual effect, rather than on the unpicking of movements. Verbs are chosen for semantic meaning after all: eyes are stroked and massaged. Furthermore, the sentence 'Light forces eyes to move to right' (p39), is a supposition on the part of the conscious mind

that it is because of the light that the eyes move, rather than pure documentation.<sup>42</sup> In fact, Goldsmith's experiment in writing the body produces a highly readable text, which represents vulnerability as well as the significance of the physical matter of human beings.

Goldsmith's desire to 'leave words as source material' correlates for Schmidt as 'words as turd' (Schmidt, 2008: 36). '*Fidget*'s last chapter' Schmidt suggests, 'is the project's frustrated reminder [...] that language indexes its own inadequacy to realize the body's desires. Language is itself a residue' (Schmidt, 2008: 36). In my first reading of *Fidget* I had not read the metadata around it and did not know that the last chapter was the first chapter in reverse, or that Goldsmith got drunk – this isn't apparent from a straightforward reading of the words on the page. Whilst the last chapter makes for a confusing read, perhaps the supposed failure of language to reproduce the body is Goldsmith's point.

Indeed, Schmidt's focus on Goldsmith's use of the word anus, and the specificity with which Goldsmith describes anal activities ordinarily repressed or euphemised in literary texts, further highlights the conscious choices which have been made in this on- the-job-edit process, wherein Goldsmith chose to both document and edit simultaneously. In Goldsmith's writing the body from the inside out, Schmidt suggests that the text lacks affect, gesture, expression. I find the text highly affecting in its vulnerability, and that Goldsmith's expressive use of language creates a sculptural portrait of this body in space, wherein Goldsmith moulds a movement out of words, which asks us to observe our own body objectively. We become a moving sculpture:

Hands meet. Fingers intertwine. Thumbs stretch, barely touching one another. Head bows. Bridge of nose meets joined thumbs. Thumbs separate and apply pressure to sides of nose. Tips of thumbs rest on tear ducts. Right elbow flicks. Thumbs apply strong pressure to tear ducts (Goldsmith, 2012: 34).

The scrutiny of body parts and function draws attention to the fact of us as raw human material, with the capacity to cry and the necessity to breathe: 'Breathe in. Breathe out' (Goldsmith, 2012: 34).

<sup>42</sup> Of course I am writing against Goldsmith's stated intentions – as set out by Perloff (2012) and Princenthal (1998) – here, also.

Fitterman and Place's proposition that tightly conceived conceptual writing is allegorical writing, deems that it is therefore, necessarily, inconsistent. The texts contain 'elaborations, recursions, sub-metaphors, fictive conceits, projections, and guisings that combine and recombine both to create the allegorical whole, and to discursively threaten this wholeness' (Fitterman and Place, 2009: 15). Conceptual writing is, then, contradictory by nature. Goldsmith's praxis bears witness to this. Indeed, 'fictive conceits' are, happily, the end product of *Fidget*. Goldsmith frames the writing as a 'figural object to be narrated' (Fitterman and Place, 2009: 15) in that his very process is one of a figural object being narrated, wherein Goldsmith is both object – the thing being narrated, and subject – the person (author/narrator) doing the narrating, from which meaning arises. Fitterman and Place, similar to Gallo, invoke the notion of the constructed self: 'the self is an Imaginary construct, made of parts of one like an other so to be recognized as one by an other [...] Contingency/multiplicity is therefore the one true nature of universality' (Lacan in Fitterman and Place, 2009: 21). *Fidget* succeeds in materialising this fictive self; one which on this day constructs itself around peeing, pooing, masturbating, nose-picking, arse-scratching, stretching, burping, yawning and getting drunk. This articulation of a self may resonate with some, and not with others, and equally it is clear that self-construction reoccurs hour by hour and on a daily basis. Perhaps this constitutes the endless new beginnings alluded to in the second epigraph.

*Fidget* is, then, post-conceptual in that – as confessed by Goldsmith – it provoked interventionist editing, an aesthetic fix, which went beyond the source material; the tape recording of the final hour was unintelligible: 'He kept up the narration for as long as he could' (Princenthal, 1998:3).<sup>43</sup> At '18:00' the body in *Fidget* emerges from a nap, and pursues a drinking binge. As a non-sensical being, alienated, distorted, the text in '19:00', '20:00' and '21:00' is deviant in nature by comparison with the preceding chapters, which contain understandable words and sentences. Transcription at a later date when Goldsmith is sober 'proved nearly impossible' (Princenthal, 1998: 3). As such, Goldsmith took the aesthetic decision to reproduce in reverse the contents of the first chapter.

<sup>43</sup> Post-conceptual art arose in the 1970s with artists such as John Baldessari, Martha Rosler and Fluxus. A key example is Baldessari's *Throwing four balls in the air to get a square (best of 36 tries)* from 1973, wherein 'the artist attempts to do just that, photographing the results, and eventually selecting the best out of 36 tries, with 36 being the determining number as that is the standard number of shots on a roll of 35mm film' ('Post-conceptual art', 2019).

In '20:00' an "I" shows up. This "I" quits time, walks backwards through nuance, and becomes poetic: 'And the eyes from whence I came' (Goldsmith, 2012: 74). In the penultimate section, '21:00', the prose withholds capitalisation, punctuation and syntax, starting with 'eleven hours walking body moves arm swinging contra unison leg movements' (p.78) and ending with 'left hand moves out right hand gathers legs thrust body up' (p.82). In between these two sections of prose there is much counteraction between left hand and right hand – grabbing of left hand by right, and right hand by left, and ten counterclockwise movements, and three clockwise movements. *Fidget* is certainly illustrative of Dante's notion, invoked by Fitterman and Place – 'manturningsnaketurningman' (2009: 38) – within which the text performs itself: with the body having consumed a fifth of Jack Daniel's, the text itself, 'florid [...] obscene [...] incoherent [...] is drunk' (Princenthal, 1998: 3). The text, then, invites adjectives, invites judgement. This idea is in direct contrast to Schmidt's (2008) reading of *Fidget*, wherein he insists that words were left as source material.

In the following section I consider the readability of Goldsmith's self-conscious prose.

## Writing Degree Zero

Goldsmith's self-conscious prose is written, then, to be read. Aesthetic choices, as outlined above, have been made in order to produce a complete, dramatic work; a work that succumbs to fictionality as opposed to mere documentation.

*Fidget* is a text which requires much of the reader. We must pay close attention in order to work out what the body is doing. An absence of interiority makes the reader self-reflexive. The text provokes an internal discourse on states of being. What do I do when? How does it compare with what Goldsmith does? How are we all the same? How are we all different? Goldsmith probes himself to discover his bodily limits or parameters; the nature of his physical being in the world. The text is a tsunami of sensation in solitude. There is a tenderness and vulnerability here. There is also fun to be had for the reader, and suspense: what will this body do next? Navigating the irregularity of each chapter is like navigating a moving sculpture, with its constantly shifting syntax, prose style and language, wherein a movement such as walking is

described any number of ways, as we saw in the previous section regarding Goldsmith's varied renditions of the act of walking.

For Peters, *Fidget* is an exercise in frustration. 'Writing against metaphor,' Peters suggests, is 'writing degree zero or the direct representation of the *event*' (Peters, 2005: 126). Whereas use of metaphor might ordinarily put distance between a thing and its attributes, in *Fidget*, movement *is* event.<sup>44</sup> As such, Peters concludes, 'lyric is gesture. There's nowhere else to go' (Peters, 2005: 126). *Fidget*, then, is writing as sculpture, and as such affords to be read differently. Reading *Fidget* is to 'visualize[...] the idea [and] the idea naturalizes cultural and received patterns and conventions of reading. *Fidget* is ready-made' (Peters, 2005: 126).

In Chapter 19:00 it is left to the reader to surmise what is happening, at which point Goldsmith requires us to use our imaginations. A literal reading of what is intended to be a literal project – documenting bodily movements – does not tell us that he is drunk. He reverts – after all – to metaphor: 'headless self', 'bladder falls', 'liquid elevator', or rather, to lyric. Non-bodily nouns creep in again: 'insulated socks', 'mac', 'metal grate', 'stone', 'chords', 'crap', 'crust', 'pocket', 'wallet'.

Peters' notion of a text which deconstructs itself as it constructs itself is echoed to an extent by Barrett Watten (2011), who considers the difficulties of invoking present-oriented artworks. The present, Watten states, is almost immediately the past, temporally, and as such the work can only ever be a representation of a present moment. The cultural references inherent within the work in fact temporalise and historically frame the piece.

In addition to the reference to Joyce and the Bloomian "day," works of conceptual art focusing on the interaction of body and text are evoked, from Vito Acconci's masturbation project (*Seedbed*, 1971) to Tehching Hsieh's chaining himself to Linda Montano for a year (*Rope Piece*, 1983–84). Related works from the Language school might include Ron Silliman's BART [...] or Steve Benson's performances *Blindspots* and *Reverse Order* (Watten, 2011: 147).

*Fidget*, Watten tells us, however, 'is a perfectly respectable example of the application of a predetermined procedure to writing' (Watten, 2011: 147). 'It is remarkable how self-conscious and literary, as opposed to existential and documentary, [it] is,' Watten suggests, 'compared to conceptual art, and how

<sup>44</sup> My italics.

referential, present-tense, and speech-based it is in comparison to Language writing (Watten, 2011: 147). Goldsmith is certainly writing to be read by an audience conversant with his self-acknowledged interlocutors. ‘The New comes with a degree of self-consciousness and an art-historical pedigree here; what is New must be seen as a relation between them,’ Watten (2011: 147), continues.

Goldsmith’s narrative drive is achieved through language, both its layout on the page and the specific use of shorter and longer sentences. Whilst not privileging story, Goldsmith’s dramatic concerns – how to engage the reader – are no different than those of any creative writer.

Goldsmith’s concerns, then, are language based. Indeed, we heard from the outset that language is his artform. In *Fidget* he exercises that drive, resulting in a material aesthetic, which affords a reading experience predicated on sensation, physicality and visuality, wherein emotion is rendered obliquely.

## Conclusions

Goldsmith’s attention to language, and language as sculpture here, puts materiality at the forefront of Goldsmith’s practice. We look for clues in layout, sentence length, typology of word use: we see the book as much as we read the book. Along with an interest in the seemingly banal, Goldsmith, along with modern experimentalists, understands that graphical coding – syntax and formatting, is part of the structure and tone of the piece, and part of its dramatic narrative and meaning:

Meaning is spatial as well as temporal: “One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten. Eleven. Twelve. [...] Twenty steps” (*Fidget*, 54). Stein presents several views of the same object – “A CARAFE” – “THAT IS A BLIND GLASS” – “A kind in glass” [...] Stein’s early Cubist writing foreshadows Goldsmith’s writing as concept – as performance (Peters, 2005: 125).

And in a search for meaning in a seemingly non-profound text, in language terms, critics heap meaning upon the text, finding Lacanian subtext (Gallo, 2005, Fitterman and Place, 2009, Schmidt, 2008 and 2014), and undertones of Shakespeare (Perloff, 2012) and Dante (Fitterman and Place, 2009).

For my part, it is the ‘material textuality’ (Watten, 2011: 147), the language

gymnastics required to render consciousness through physicality which renders for the reader a state of immersion, which I find both ambitious and engaging. Goldsmith's language of the body investigates the daily dance of societal construction, the battle of mind and body, wherein the body, required to push through tiredness or pain or even boredom, overtakes the conscious mind. This is exciting territory for the expanded field of the literary text, territory which, as Peters states, explores the sculptural potential of language as performance, and continues in the trajectory of the conceptual works of Acconci, André, Judd and Kosuth; work 'that comes out of writing and performance' (Peters, 2005: 124). Goldsmith's work 'is testament to the insight that art comes from other art' (Peters, 2005: 124). Goldsmith's *Fidget*, then, represents a transitional mediated space, which translates the pure means of conceptual practice via a language-oriented materiality; a space wherein words are events.

In the next chapter I present a close reading of *Day* considering the notions of critical authorship, method and readability.

## Day

*Day* is an 836 page large format paperback published in 2003 as a 750 copy edition by The Figures, the publishing arm of Geoffrey Young's gallery in Massachusetts. Acknowledgements on the colophon show that portions of the text have been previously published in various journals. Section C10 – a stocks and shares section – was published as a chapbook by Housepress in Canada in 2000. This is notable, in that the choice of extract emphasizes the pleasing visuality of *Day*; an aspect I will consider further on in this chapter.<sup>45</sup> The epigraph for the text is Truman Capote's comment regarding Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*: "that's not writing. That's typing", a signifier of the importance of process to this project, of the physicality of the act of writing, as well as a knowing preemptive counter to criticism of Goldsmith's act of appropriation. On the back cover is the oft-quoted statement by Goldsmith in which he details the conceit and process of the book's making, the epi-text wherein, as Schwartzburg points out, Goldsmith, the author, comes to the forefront as an "I":

I am spending my 39<sup>th</sup> year practicing uncreativity. On Friday, September 1, 2000, I began retyping the day's *New York Times*, word for word, letter for letter, from the upper left hand corner to the lower right hand corner, page by page (*Day*, 2003, back cover).

The text is a transcription of a newspaper, a Situational act of *détournement*, which continues the practice of disorientation and defamiliarisation of the everyday which he began in *Fidget*. With *Day*, Goldsmith begins a practice of appropriation, a turn which Marczewska (2018) refers to as the Iterative Turn. The self-documentation of *Fidget* required Goldsmith to produce the phraseology (and of course the words transcribed in *Soliloquy* are also Goldsmith's own). *Day*, and Goldsmith's subsequent texts to date are all works of appropriation, an homage to the repurposed urinal of Duchamp, to Warhol's appropriation of quotidian culture and to conceptual art practice. The core issue of critical authorship is fully tested here, regarding originality and ownership, and yet, as we will see, and as Goldsmith points out, his authorial choices – what to type and how to type it – create a unique work of art. 'In

<sup>45</sup> Watten agrees that 'the defamiliarization [sic] of the details of everyday life [here, allows] that every stock quotation may be a poem' (Watten, 2011: 149).

order for me to simply “appropriate” the newspaper and turn it into a work of literature [...] involved dozens of authorial decisions’ (Goldsmith, 2011a: 118). What’s at stake in conceptual texts is not character arcs, storylines, emotional or psycho-drama, but rather visuality and materiality. Aesthetic choices are enacted by the hero-author rather than the hero-protagonist. Goldsmith’s reenactment: ‘does not assume a repetition of the same, rather it complicates the boundaries between the copy and the original to turn into a play of dissemination [which] disturbs established models of authority, and hence authorship’ (Marczewska, 2018: 364). Using text as a medium, wherein adverts are juxtaposed with editorial, pages of stocks and shares manifest as visual poems, and pages of a Company Index manifest as a list poem, Goldsmith foregrounds the materiality of language (Calvert, 2011a), which energises the book.

In the following section I consider Goldsmith’s approach to notions of authorship and originality in *Day*.

### **Experimental Conviction**

Contemporary literary criticism must, Drucker states, acknowledge that form and function are inseparable. Notions of subject/object have shifted; literature is a production of relations. ‘The *idea* of literature’ she says, ‘is at least as important as works [enacted within a specific] historic cultural continuum’ and in digital times that production of relations ‘between languages, words, things, and words/ideas’ recognises that ‘there is no natural condition for language’ (Drucker, 2005: 137/8).<sup>46</sup>

Situating contemporary avant-garde practice as outside the market and institution represents a freedom, Marczewska suggests, that offers ‘a major potential to influence the very institution it contests’ (Marczewska, 2018: 36). In this debate around authorship, Marczewska argues against Reed’s (2016) notion of deskilling – within the context of the lyric – proposing rather that: ‘the change in creative *attitudes* [is not a] turn away from skill but *toward an alternative skill set* [...] deeply and self-

<sup>46</sup> Italics are Drucker’s own.

consciously rooted in literary and aesthetic histories’ (Marczewska, 2018: 43).<sup>47</sup> Marczewska’s new framework of writing at the Iterative Turn discusses ‘transcription in relation to theories of the *event* to present it as a form that should be considered as *an event of writing*’ (Marczewska, 2018: 339).<sup>48</sup> Just as Perloff (2004 and 2012) asks us to consider the different outputs of conceptual writing, and Goldsmith asks us to think differently about reading, so too Drucker and Marczewska ask that we think ‘differently about paradigms of authorship and originality [...] that [enable] this conceptual shift’ (Marczewska, 2018: 341), such that we understand Goldsmith when he tells us that a newspaper:

is really a great novel filled with stories of love, jealousy, murder, competition, sex, passion and so forth. It’s a fantastic thing: the daily newspaper, when translated, amounts to a 900 page book [...]. And it’s a book that’s written in every city and in every country, only to be instantly discarded in order to write a brand new one, full of fresh stories the next day (Goldsmith in Marczewska, 2018: 342/343).

Goldsmith’s foregrounding of process and specifically gesture ‘manifests a transition from postmodern to postproduction preoccupations and modes of appropriation’ (Marczewska, 2018: 343). As we have seen, Goldsmith’s appropriative tendency operates on several levels. Of the ‘dozens of paratextual decisions’ Goldsmith took, the size and shape of *Day* was dictated by his ‘knowing that I want it to be big, to reflect the massive size of the day’s newspaper’ but not coffee-table sized, he decided, which would ‘risk getting close to the paper’s original format’, and ‘run contrary to [his] wanting to represent the newspaper as a literary object’ (Goldsmith, 2011a: 119). Goldsmith goes back to his Urtext. ‘I ended up making it the exact size and bulk of the paperbound Harvard edition of *The Arcades Project*, Goldsmith confesses (Goldsmith, 2011a: 119). Equally, Goldsmith uses the pagination system of letters and numbers, and the same typeface. This practice of iteration inscribes Goldsmith’s practice within a very specific cultural framework, wherein *The Arcades Project* provides ‘a literary roadmap for appropriation, one that is picked up across the twentieth century by [avant-garde] writers such as Brion Gysin, William Burroughs, and Kathy Acker’

<sup>47</sup> My italics.

<sup>48</sup> My italics. Indeed, Watten, whilst he denounces conceptual writing’s inability to satisfactorily historicise itself, nevertheless allows that ‘the typing or re-typesetting of the entirety of the day’s edition [of a newspaper] is [...] an event’ (Watten, 2011: 148).

(Goldsmith, 2011a: 117).



**Figure 1: Day & The Arcades Project. Photo credit: A. Mason, 19 November 2019.**

The logic of Goldsmith’s practice of Uncreative Writing must be understood as an expression of authorship, Marczewska states. It is this notion of expressivity ‘rather than its transparent role in communication’ (Calvert, 2011a: 139), which I wish to foreground in this chapter. Goldsmith uses text as a medium, just as a painter uses paint. We are conscious of Goldsmith’s shaping hand as we read an advert which, in the absence of contextualising details – framing boxes, images or differing typeface sizes – presents on the page as a gorgeous concrete poem:

© 1999 PIAGET  
 PIAGET PIAGET  
 MISS PROTOCOLE 18  
 K WHITE GOLD  
 INTERCHANGEABLE BRACELET

GENEVE 1874  
 PIAGET (*Day*, p.  
 26)<sup>49</sup>

and an advert for school uniform, which manifests as a list piece:

BACK-TO-SCHOOL SALE  
 SALE 12.99  
 REG. 14.99 Arizona tie-dyed cotton tee. Juniors' sizes.  
 SALE  
 14.99  
 JUNIORS' TOPS  
 Reg. 19.99.  
 Energie®  
 Graphic tee.  
 SALE 29.99  
 SHIMMERY GLIDER  
 PANTS ... INSTANT  
 GLAM!  
 Tops on sale, too!  
 I.e. i.  
 Sale 29.99 ea. Reg. \$36  
 I.e. i. skin-print or shiny  
 glider pants. Juniors' sizes 1 - 13  
 Sale 19.99 Reg. 24.99 I.e. i.® glider top  
 Sale 12.99 Reg. 14.99. Screen-print tee.  
 SALE 24.99 SHIRT,  
 SWEATER, PANTS OR  
 JEANS  
 Sale 24.99 Reg. \$32  
 Wearfirst® zip-off  
 Microfiber pants.  
 Sale 24.99 Reg. 29.99  
 Anxious® burnout camp shirt.  
 Cotton/polyester. S-XL  
 Sale 24.99 Reg. 29.99  
 Arizona Jean Co. ®  
 Waffle-knit  
 Sweater. M-XL  
 Sale 24.99 Reg. 29.99  
 Muddy Blues denim  
 Utility jeans  
 LEVIS® RED TAB™ &  
 SILVERTAB® JEANS ON  
 SALE

<sup>49</sup> Here, and from this point on, within this chapter, all references for *Day* are written simply as the page number.

SALE 39.99 JEANS  
 Sale 39.99 Reg. \$54  
 Levi's® SilverTab®  
 straight-leg, super  
 Deconstructed jeans.  
 (Shown at left and on  
 figure at right.) Levi's®  
 26.99 JEANS  
 26.99. Levis® 505® Red Tab™ Rinsed  
 Jeans. Regular Fit.  
 SILVERTAB®  
 A LEVI'S BRAND  
 SILVERTAB®  
 A LEVI'S BRAND  
 JCPenny  
 VISA  
 MasterCard  
 Discover Novus  
 JCPenney®  
 (*Day*, pp. 75-79).

In his contribution to *Open Letter*, 'On Kenneth Goldsmith: The Avantgarde at a Standstill', Schuster explains how Goldsmith's process repeatedly works against itself and the forward trajectory ordinarily applied to the avant-garde. *Day*, he tells us, is an image at a standstill, wherein the focus resides in the maker, and '*ego [is] used as a medium*' (Schuster, 2005: 119).<sup>50</sup> The avant-garde in modern times is reactionary, Schuster states. Foregoing a forward trajectory it works in the realm of the lateral, and offers a literal approach. Goldsmith, in reaction to the fact of the internet and the fact of the infinite amount of data readily available at all times to users, uses boredom as a tool to ask us to inhabit the present. On this last point, Perloff concurs: 'What Goldsmith wants us to see is what the world we live in is actually like' (Perloff, 2015: 160). Goldsmith, equally, to finish his appropriation confession quotation, explains that, in fact, the Urtext for *Day* was a book called *One Day*, which was written in response to reader criticism that the 1928 Philadelphia Evening Bulletin was:

pandering too much to advertising at the cost of content. So the publisher decided to take one day's newspaper [omitting advertising copy] and turn it into a book to show how substantial its news really was. My book, [*Day*], of course, has no point

<sup>50</sup> Italics are Schuster's own.

to make. It just is (Goldsmith, 2014a: 13).

Indeed, Schuster proposes that ‘*Day* is one long quote. *The plot of a book, which unfolds over hundreds of pages, is that someone is opening a book*’ (Schuster, 2005: 113).<sup>51</sup> Goldsmith’s approach, Schuster proposes, is one of experimental conviction, which in its literal investigation of the lateral, in its concession to slowing things down, to boredom, in fact, constitutes a practice wherein ‘a different management of language’ investigates ‘what it is like to live in these textual environments’ (Schuster, 2005: 119). which I find creatively engaging and energising.

In the next section I will argue that it is this material approach wherein text is manipulated and sculpted on the page – these textual investigations of the quotidian – that creates the dramatic tension and interest within the piece. In *Day* ‘The materiality of language [can be considered] in terms of a kind of “event” [...] in which the raw materials of language (whether writing/typography/speech) are fully mobilized and enacted’ (Calvert, 2011a: 139).

### **An Aesthetic Act**

Goldsmith’s approach is to foreground process and, just as *The Weather*, *Traffic* and *Sports* constitute a trilogy, so too *Day* has (unpublished) sister texts – *Month*, a transcription of a copy of *Vogue* magazine, and *Week*, a transcription of an issue of *Newsweek*. ‘Why a trilogy,’ Aji asks and answers: ‘Maybe because the very iteration of the process shifts the focus from its products, to the process itself’ (Aji, 2014: 4). Britton’s statement – ‘in Goldsmith’s work there is a flattening of language at the level of meaning but there is a reinvigoration of language at the level of *jouissance*’ (Britton, 2005:157), reminds us of Goldsmith’s evident glee in this process-oriented work, and speaks to the enjoyment I feel in engaging with it.<sup>52</sup> Goldsmith’s process in making *Day* constitutes an expressive act, wherein his aesthetic choices as to how to

<sup>51</sup> Italics are Schuster’s own.

<sup>52</sup> Britton invokes here Kristeva’s notion of *jouissance* which involves ‘the whole of the body and the whole of physical space’ (Macey, 2001: 210).

undertake this act of transcription, and how to arrange the text on the page, evidence a subjective, creative practice. In its levelling of language *Day* ‘changes the fortunes of graphical code translated from newspaper source to new expression’ (Drucker, 2005: 140).

Goldsmith’s material approach, wherein words are objects, represents ‘an attack on language’ (Britton, 2005: 148).<sup>53</sup> As we saw in the making of *Fidget*, it is the processes involved in the act of making which provide the dramatic value.

Goldsmith’s recontextualisation of a newspaper, is, Britton proposes, ‘grand irony’ (Britton, 2005: 148) in that Goldsmith plays with language on three levels: one, he strips it of meaning, by removing it from its original context; two, he places it into a new context; and, three, in this process, words become objects. This proximity between poetry and the unconscious, Britton tells us, represents language as plaything. This is language enjoyed for the pleasure of its look and sound, without considering semantics or context. ‘We infiltrate a jouissance into language’, Britton says, ‘when actually language has been drained of its meaning in the newspaper report that [Goldsmith] rewrites’ (Britton, 2005: 149).<sup>54</sup>

Pages and pages of stocks and shares in sections C7-C17, pages 238-430, with numbers, text and symbols, present as nonsensical code and read like nonsense poetry. It also presents, visually, like Op art. Patterns present themselves in the text, which cause interference with the visuality of the text. On page 241, for instance, company names, represented by an amalgamation of letters, all beginning with A cause our eye to snake down the page as these letter configurations jump out above the rows of numbers: ‘AlimrFn’, ‘Allstate’, ‘Allst’, ‘Alftel’, ‘AlpineGr’, ‘Alstorn’, ‘Arnbac’F’, ‘ArnbacF’, ‘Ameast’, ‘AMCOL’, ‘Amdocs’, ‘AmdocsTr’, ‘AnyUs’, ‘AmHes’, ‘AAmeren’, ‘ArnrFMI’, ‘AmOnInc’, ‘AmWest’, ‘AmAxle’ (p. 241). The disorienting zig zag effect which these letter configurations effect is just visible in the photograph in figure 2 below. The poor quality reproduction does not allow, however, for the visual movement which manifests as optical illusion in actuality.

<sup>53</sup> This article – a one-sided conversation, with only Britton’s answers to Simon Morris’s questions on the page, in homage to *Soliloquy* – utilises, we are told, the academic methodology for transcription, the dot within brackets to signify gaps in the conversation. This results in a disrupted text. Britton and Morris (2005), then, in their dialogic approach, also enact, here, an attack on language.

<sup>54</sup> *Jouissance* is understood here in Lacanian terms, wherein language as object relates to a site of pleasure which extends beyond the functionality of the word or sentence. It is a pleasure which exceeds the bounds of semiotics.

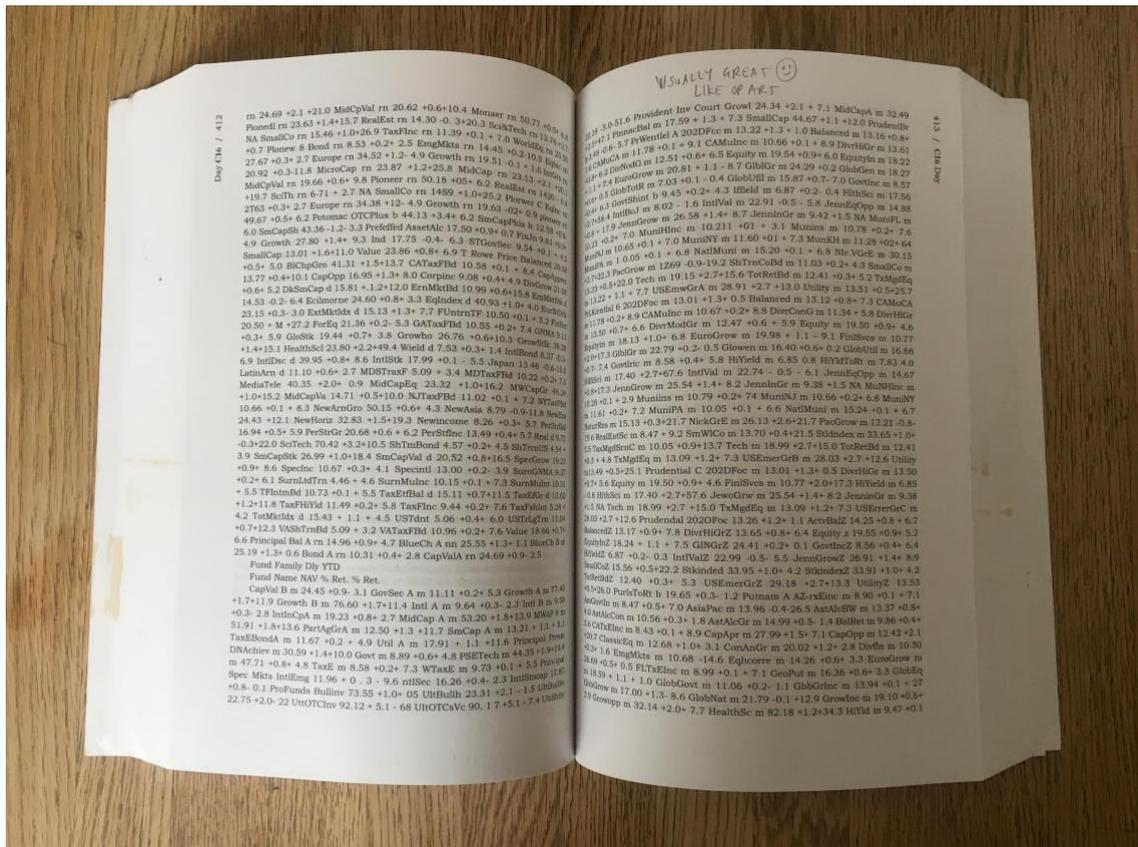


Figure 2: pages 412-413 Day. Photo credit: A. Mason, 19 November, 2019.

Goldsmith’s disorienting approach is a rejection of a formal aesthetic. According to Robert McKee’s definition of the Structure Spectrum, *Day* represents an Antiplot – wherein ‘the only rule is to break the rules’ (McKee, 1999: 54) – and adheres to McKee’s notion of an Inconsistent Reality: ‘INCONSISTENT REALITIES are settings that mix modes of interactions so that the story’s episodes jump inconsistently from one “reality” to another to create a sense of absurdity’ (McKee, 1999: 54).<sup>55</sup>

It is certainly the absurd incoherence of what would ordinarily represent a consistent and trustworthy feature of everyday life that I find most pleasing about *Day*. ‘What this institution cannot bear (.) is for anyone to tamper with language’ (Britton, 2005: 153).<sup>64</sup> Howard Britton ascribes Goldsmith’s act of removing the frame – the original context – as a political act which highlights the oppression of the constructed framework, an act of liberation which creates a subjective space which is generative and emergent:

<sup>55</sup> Notably, Godard’s *Weekend* – a reference point for *Traffic* – also represents an Antiplot.

newspaper is one of his mediums [...] or one of his materials (.) and because the newspaper is (.) is replete with meaning (.) but it's also a very powerful tool in its own right (.) uhh (.) to (.) to keep us structured and to maintain the political realm (1.0) Kenny Goldsmith's work doesn't disrupt (.) doesn't counter the politics (.) what he does is he creates a subjective space which is far more subversive (1.0) far more radical than opposing politics with politics (.) or (.) um (.) meaning with new meanings (.) of one master discourse with another (.) he is more interested in evacuating meaning and draining meaning away from situations (.) to create a space for something else to emerge (.) that I call the subjective I think (.) the subjective space is the (.) the space that one finds outside the dominant discourses (.) (Britton, 2005: 154).<sup>56</sup>

Goldsmith has created a space wherein he appreciates words for their size, shape, weight and materiality. Words are objects, and 'are something to suck on that one feels heavy and cool and sculpted on ones [sic] tongue (.) and which mean nothing (Britton, 2005: 158). This nothing represents a 'neutral graphical coding [wherein] The levelling effect of the processing in *Day* shows the dramatic change of fortunes of graphical code translated from newspaper source to new expression' (Drucker, 2005: 140). Foreshadowing an argument by Duffy, that the idea is the work, Drucker proposes, rather, that this standard formula that conceptual art equates to the idea and execution as the work should be reconsidered. Instead Drucker insists that we decouple the two activities, emphasising that 'ideation [is itself] an act', which 'focuses attention on instantiation' (Drucker, 2005: 140). Goldsmith's thinking around the making of *Day* produces an epic-sized manuscript which defies any notion of conceptual work as immaterial. 'The strength of such a conceptual gesture,' Drucker states, 'is that by stripping away the usual conventions of composition, it exposes facts (or acts) of language, providing a very different access to their expressive force' (Drucker, 2005: 140). The sheer scale of the resultant text and the exhaustiveness of the making of *Day* – a year and a half of manual labour on Goldsmith's part – serve to:

monumentalize the conceptual act and give it bulk and heft. Material properties [which] support his conceptual undertaking, perhaps making it appear to be more than it would be in another, more modest mode of execution. But of course, that wouldn't be the same work (Drucker, 2005:140).

<sup>56</sup> The '(.)' here is an example of the academic methodology for transcription used by Britton and Morris.

Echoing Britton, Drucker says that by erasing the textual framing of the original newspaper, with its headlines and ‘display-sized fonts’: ‘The argument made by *Day* isn’t chiefly about graphicality and knowledge, though it serves as a dramatic, incidental demonstration of the significance (signifying power) of this relation’ (Drucker, 2005: 143). It is the deliberateness of the unvisuality of *Day*, alongside the uncreative content, Drucker proposes, which ‘registers anew, not as a category of aesthetic activity, but as an aesthetic act’ (Drucker, 2005: 143). Information – in the example cited below, all the Manhattan authorized dealers for American Telecommunications – performs as a list poem, almost breathless in its urgency to communicate, with repetitions, and the musical interjections of a ‘RING’ (p. 64) and several ‘Beep’s (p. 65):

130 Church St.  
 Beep America, 1132 Broadway  
 Between 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> St.  
 Cellular Plus, 993B 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. & 37<sup>th</sup> St. Cellular  
 Plus, 5 John St.  
 Celnet, 774 9<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
 E Wireless, 355 E. 86<sup>th</sup> St E  
 Wireless, 40 Water St. E  
 Wireless, 189 E. 79<sup>th</sup> St.  
 E Wireless, 339 Park Ave. S. E  
 Wireless, 1235 1<sup>st</sup> Ave.  
 E Wireless, 892 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.  
 E Wireless, 2058 Broadway E  
 Wireless, 88 Fulton St.  
 E Wireless, 1636 Third Ave. E  
 Wireless, 2 Columbus Ave. E  
 Wireless, 1350 Broadway  
 STAPLES  
 E Wireless, 514 Columbus Ave.  
 E Wireless, 2459 Broadway  
 InTouch, 61 Lexington Ave.  
 InTouch, 768 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.  
 InTouch, 2265 Broadway  
 InTouch, 342 Madison Ave.  
 InTouch, 271 Amsterdam Ave.  
 Kobe Wireless, 28 E. 33<sup>rd</sup> St.  
 Kobe Wireless, 115 W. 116<sup>th</sup> St Lisa  
 Page, 2 W. 32<sup>nd</sup> St.  
 Mobile City, 299 Broadway

PCC, 14 Maiden Lane PCC, 9  
 Penn Plaza  
 PCC, 41 E. 14<sup>th</sup> St. PCC,  
 471 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. PCC, 716  
 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. PCC, 244  
 W72<sup>nd</sup> St. PCC, 220 3<sup>rd</sup>  
 Ave. PC RICHARD  
 TRS WIRELESS® 1-  
 800-RING (7464)  
 Merit  
 Tomorrow's World, Manhattan Mall  
 33<sup>rd</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>  
 Wireless Concepts, 489 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave Wireless  
 Concepts, 870 Lexington Ave.  
 Wireless Concepts, 1219 Lexington Ave.  
 Wireless Express, 117 E. 41<sup>st</sup> St.  
 Wireless Express, 11 W 46<sup>th</sup> St.  
 BRONX  
 Best Buy, 1015 Southern Blvd. Broadway  
 Wireless, 5561 Broadway  
 E2 Communications, 2396 Arthur Ave.  
 Lisa Page, 2255 Grand Concourse  
 Soundtown, 311 E. Fordham Rd.  
 BROOKLYN  
 American Telecommunications 893  
 Flatbush Ave.  
 HESS  
 SEARS  
 At participating locations  
 CIRCUIT CITY  
 American Telecommunications  
 1573 Flatbush Ave.  
 Beep America, 8510 18<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
 Beep America, 1344 Coney Island Ave.  
 Beep America, 198 Avenue U  
 Beep America, 2811 Ocean Ave.  
 Beep America, 8210 Flatlands Ave.  
 Beep America, 90 7<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
 Park Slope Beep America, 952 Kings Hwy.  
 CellularWorld & Beepers 2374 Nostrand Ave.  
 Celnet, 471 86<sup>th</sup> St.  
 Celnet, 5100 Kings Plaza Mail  
 Celnet, 8604 Bay Pkwy.  
 Compu-Cell, 1815 Avenue M Kobe  
 Wireless, 375 Flatbush Ave.  
 QUEENS AVP Wireless, 85-02 Queens Blvd.  
 Bradlees  
 STRAUSS DISCOUNT  
 AUTO

Beep America, 96- 14 Queens Blvd.  
 Beep America, 118- 13 Queens Blvd.  
 Beep America, 25- 75 Francis Lewis Blvd.  
 Cellular Plus, 41 -28 Main St.  
 Cellular Plus, 153- 14 Northern Blvd.  
 Cellular Plus, 211 – 14 Northern Blvd.  
 Celnet, 66-26 Metropolitan Ave.  
 Celnet, 90- 15 Queens Blvd.  
 Lisa Page, 36-32 Main St., Flushing  
 Main Connection, 69-42 Main St., Flushing  
 PCC, 22-39 31 St., Astoria  
 Smartel Wireless  
 150- 151 Northern Blvd., Flushing  
 Tower Electronics, 60-92 Myrtle Ave.  
 Wireless Basement  
 35-15B Junction Blvd.  
 J&R COMPUTER WORLD  
 Wireless Express, 80-05 Jamaica Ave.  
 Woodhaven  
 Wireless Nation  
 36-03 Greenpoint Ave., LIC  
 Wireless Nation, 35-01 Queens Blvd,  
 LIC  
 Wireless Resources  
 103-52 Lefferts Blvd.  
 Wireless Resources, 100-03 Atlantic Ave.  
 STATEN ISLAND  
 Absolute Wireless, 4193 Hylan Blvd.  
 Audio Pro, 1825 Forest Ave.,  
 Central Cellular, 3843 Richmond Ave  
 Central Cellular, 2001 Victory Blvd  
 Central Cellular, 1250 Hylan Blvd  
 (pp. 63-66).<sup>57</sup>

Citing writers pursuing graphical coding, notably Perec, and the avant-garde, as well as artists such as Baldessari, Lawrence Weiner, and Carl André, who create strikingly graphical text-based works, Drucker states that the materiality of the piece is the piece, as opposed to simply the idea and its execution. A self-conscious attention to the conditions of production is necessarily predicated on the realisation that production *is* creation:

[And] [s]uch recognition emphasizes artifice – that is, the made-ness – inherent in the creation of a work [...], the work remains a visual, graphically coded object [whose] spaces can be described within a materially grounded form of inquiry, in

<sup>57</sup> This extract is a faithful transcription of the text as it stands in my copy of *Day*, including the anomalies and irregularities of punctuation as they occur: a transcription of a transcription.

a methodology of textual studies informed by media studies where each object is inevitably an embodied expression of its own ideological assumptions (Drucker, 2005: 135).<sup>58</sup>

The ‘literary’ as a category of cultural expression is a moving target of opportunity, Drucker proposes, within which conceptual writing builds firmly on previous avant-garde practice such as Perec’s *Species of Spaces*, and enforces discourse amongst practitioners. In writing architecturally Perec looks to the page as space: ‘I inhabit my sheet of paper’ (Perec, 2008: 11). Space, Drucker tells us, ‘is the literal condition, the physical situation, of text on a page in a book’ (Drucker, 2005: 130). Perec’s practice is one of noticing, and his topology one of relations, she says, reminiscent of eminent 18<sup>th</sup> century mathematician Euler’s geometry of position, which is about ‘connections, juxtaposition, sequence, break, order, rupture, and all the many ways spaces and zones relate’ (Drucker, 2005: 130). In contrast to Schuster (2005), Drucker proposes that relations are constitutive not static and as such approaching text as graphical coding affords a positioning within cultural discourse, which predisposes us to reading differently. ‘Writing is a site’ she says (Drucker, 2005, 130). Just as Perec’s structure in *Species of Spaces* makes explicit his thinking, so too Goldsmith’s levelling strategies in *Day*.<sup>59</sup>

Despite a century of literary innovation, traditional literary forms – story and character led prose fiction – remain intact, Drucker states. Nevertheless, conceptual work, in its aesthetic self-consciousness, still has the power to draw attention to itself. Critical approaches, however, have been wrong-headed in the insistence on attending to form, language and voice whilst ignoring graphical coding. The avant-garde, she tells us, undertook ‘A full burst of interest in mass culture [which] explodes the pages [...] filling it with display fonts and found commercial material’ (Drucker, 2005: 132). In a footnote, which echoes Goldsmith’s statement that his fellow conceptual writers had more unlearning to do than him, Drucker tells us that:

We got accustomed to various habits of reading and thinking about what literature should be, and that all came from our training, mainly school learning. The audaciousness of Goldsmith’s project arises seemingly out of ego and self-

<sup>58</sup> My italics.

<sup>59</sup> Whilst Oulipians also start their works with a given conceit and constraint(s), their methods are constraint driven as opposed to conceptual, and the resultant texts frequently adhere to the literary norms of character and story led literature.

consciousness, but its force of [...] expression defines an edge where literariness appears to break down (Drucker, 2005: 143).

Goldsmith's destabilising approach then, which restates the visuality of language, of text as image, has historic precedent reaching back to 'medieval manuscripts and early printed books, spatial and concrete forms of poetry, novels, artists' books, zines, and typography' (Kendall et al, 2013: 2), and extends the discourse regarding 'conventional conceptions of reading, writing [and] publishing' (Kendall, et al, 2013: 6).

In the following section I propose that Goldsmith's *jouissance* in undertaking his boring act of uncreativity delivers a highly readable artifact, it is simply differently readable.

### **The Death of the Reader**

*Day* is a weighty tome: 1,360g to be precise. Undertaking a comparison with copies of epic narratives, I discover that my copy of James Joyce's *Ulysses* weighs in at 597g; a lightweight almost. My copy of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* comes in at 734g; a middleweight. My copy of Leo Tolstoy's *War & Peace*, at 965g, is the heavier end of middleweight. My copy of Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* joins *Day* in the heavyweight category, but slips in just under *Day*'s weight, at 1,309g. *Day* is an oversize publication, longer and deeper even than *The Making of Americans*, measuring 25.5cm by 16.5cm by 4.25cm.

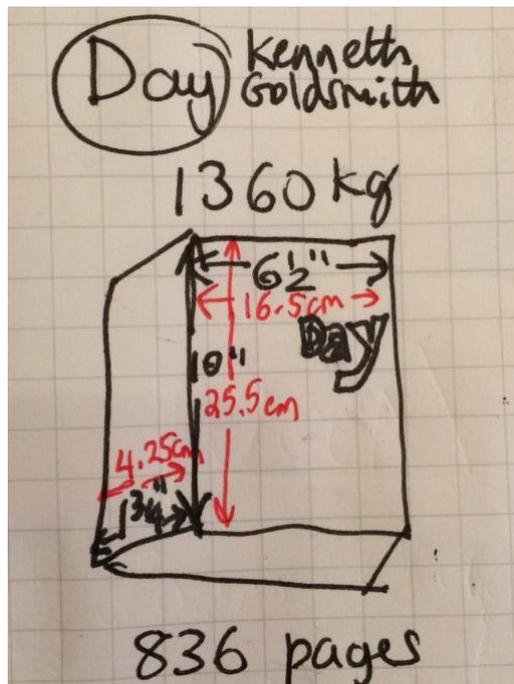


Figure 3: weighing and measuring *Day*. Photo credit: A. Mason, 7 December, 2017. NB. I wrote 1360kg instead of 1360g.

On 17 August 2017, almost a year after receiving *Day*, I set myself the task of reading it, a process which took a total of nine and a half hours across four days. I enjoyed regional news items, international news items, weather reports, lists of temperatures, film reviews, sports news, film listings, and advertisements manifesting variously as strangely prosaic stories, gorgeous list poems and visually exciting concrete prose. As questions arose, I recorded them in pencil as marginalia; questions for Goldsmith regarding the physical act of making the book, decisions regarding its layout, and the issue of typos.<sup>60</sup> Having read *Day*, I put these questions to Goldsmith in an email.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> The question of typos was answered vicariously in a ModPoPenn online lecture, *Mike Magee, Tracie Morris, and Kenny Goldsmith on forms of conceptual writing* (2014), wherein a student called in to ask Goldsmith about the presence of typos in *Soliloquy*, to which Goldsmith answered that of course they were accidental, and that the fact of the typos proved that his editor had not read the book ahead of it going to print, which of course, for Goldsmith, feeds his notion of the unreadability of his texts (Goldsmith, 2014).

<sup>61</sup> In the email dated Jan 13, 2018 Goldsmith responded as follows:

Q: How many days did it take to type *Day*?

Goldsmith: A year and a half about. Q: How many hours per day?

Goldsmith: Usually 8 hours a day.

Q: Did you have a routine or schedule?

Goldsmith: Yes, I treated it like a job.

Q: Did you stand or sit to type?

Goldsmith: Sit.

Q: Do you still have the actual copy of *The New York Times* that you copied?

Goldsmith: Somewhere in my archives, buried.

Q: Did you annotate it?

Considering Goldsmith's claims of the unreadability of *Day* – a curious claim as I noted earlier, as it implies that newspapers themselves are unreadable, which is both true and not, in that they are 'read' in all kinds of ways, including visual scanning and skimming, and avoiding the 'boring' bits, e.g. stock market listings, small ads and the like – Marczewska reiterates the notion that his statements are a reminder that what he wants is intellectual engagement. Aji further states that Goldsmith's claims of unoriginality, uncreativity, and the production of boring texts are mere provocations which belie in fact a critical investigation of our quotidian engagement with media texts. 'What is one to do,' she asks, 'with a poet who declares that he is "spending his 39<sup>th</sup> year practising uncreativity"' (Aji, 2014: 3). One thing, Marczewska notes, would be to actually read the work. Of the numerous misreadings and misinterpretations of his work, Marczewska tells us, the most injurious is that critics J. Mark Smith and Steve McCafferey both mistakenly presumed the transcribed paper to have been Sept 1, 2001, not Sept 1, 2000. Marczewska does also however take up Dworkin's citation of Benjamin's notion not to trust what the writer says about his own work.<sup>62</sup> Marczewska allows that Goldsmith's statements are themselves an act of subversion within a subversive practice, and indeed pure reading results in 'striking results' in the 'salient structures of its narrative'. As such, Marczewska suggests: 'Reading *Day* [...] rather than just thinking about it, puts Goldsmith's assertions about his methodology into question and offers an insight into the nature of authorship that transcription as an authorial practice facilitates' (Marczewska, 2018: 350).

Like me, Marczewska enjoyed reading *Day*. As a reading experience it defies the critique which proposes that it is one amorphous block of text. It is easy to follow, and the transcription, with all the content in the same typeface and point size foregrounds the meta data that we would possibly ignore when reading a newspaper: 'headings, information about the volume and issue, advertisements, blurbs, barcode numbers, pictures' copyright information' (Marczewska, 2018: 356).

Divided into six sections, *Day* uses the letters A-F to separate the sections, compared to *Fidget*, *Soliloquy*, *The Weather* and *Traffic*, which all use temporal strategies to chapterise. *Day* begins with: 'All the News that's Fit to Print' and ends

Goldsmith: No. I just simply retyped it without any flourishes.

<sup>62</sup> I too had to put aside Goldsmith's assertions, and realise that *Day* was entirely readable in 2017 when I undertook my close reading, in that Goldsmith's statements are eminently more available than the actual text of *Day*. The British Library holds a single copy. Goldsmith kindly gifted me with a copy when I met him in 2016.

with ‘Sale ends 9/4/00’, by which time, of course, we’ve missed it. In between is a considerable amount of pedestrian prose. Sections A1 and A2 lead with politics and sport.<sup>63</sup> A3 gives over the first half of the section to a story about the children of Aum sect leader Shoko Asahara.

In transcribing marginal content Goldsmith turns unreadability into a potentiality of reading. In revealing ‘usually unheeded everyday details in close-up, *Day* [...] overexpose[s] them as textual events, that can be recast, remodeled, retranscribed, re-mediated so as to inflect their portent’ (Aji, 2014: 7).

Goldsmith does not entirely defamiliarise the content, however. Careful not to interrupt the flow of an article – Goldsmith does not for instance interrupt an article with caption info, but adds it after – Goldsmith completes each article, and respects page breaks, as they exist in the paper. Nevertheless, Goldsmith’s flattening approach highlights that in fact the newspaper is a ‘collage through which reading is channeled, and ideologically sorted’ (Aji, 2014: 4). *Détourned* by Goldsmith, ‘however, the newspaper begins to crack at the seams, so that the method of this collage can be questioned, and the cracks seen for the voluntary cuts they are’ (Aji, 2014: 4). Cuts, Aji states, that ‘impair reading [and] analyzing’ to such an extent that they ‘break up discourse’ (Aji, 2014: 4). Goldsmith’s supposed boring text in its apparent simplicity nevertheless delivers imagistic delight and playful irony:

A great gift idea!  
British Begin Human Testing of H.I.V. Vaccine (p.25)

Goldsmith methodically progresses ‘through the pages of the paper, article by article, page by page, heavily invested in the content rather than rejecting it’ Marczewska proposes (2018: 360). Goldsmith does not wish to rupture language.<sup>64</sup> His main point is the reframing of a quotidian artifact into literature. Beyond that, he does in fact want it to be enjoyed for the great novelistic material that it is (Goldsmith, 2007). My

<sup>63</sup> Section A1 does not announce itself as A1. Only on arriving at A2 do we realise that the previous section was A1. Already, in a seemingly highly organised approach we are discombobulated. A typo?

<sup>64</sup> ‘What is notable is the capaciousness of the narrative of this periodization: it took the entire twentieth century to produce the pulverization of language, which ends with the Language school as embodiment of every form of radical particularity. In response, Goldsmith proposes strategies of citation, iteration, nonauthorial production, and their resulting defamiliarization as a site for “re-imagining our normative relationship to language”—the precise program of the preceding but now antedated avant-garde, enacted not by pulverizing language “into ever smaller bits” but by taking “language as a whole”—by means of downloading, copying, vocalizing it’ (Watten, 2011: 143).

attention is caught by an interview with artist Eric Fischl in which the interviewer fishes for personal anecdote. Finally, out it spills: ‘ “My mother was a ferocious alcoholic who ultimately killed herself,” Mr. Fischl says’ (p.159). Mr. Fischl goes on to talk about his process in making the painting *Bad Boy*. ‘ “Painting unlocks the unconscious; it’s a process of free association”’ (p. 159), not unlike this artwork, *Day*, in which I am fully immersed, alive to the possibilities of its treasure trove of content, which excites in both form and content. On page 165 I read that former New York mayor, Rudy Giuliani, is in the process of divorce, and that his wife is due to appear in *The Vagina Monologues* which ‘includes monologues on topics like orgasm and childbirth’ (p.165).

Reading *Day* against an actual copy of the original newspaper Marczewska also finds several omissions and typos on Goldsmith’s part – a humanising factor that reminds us of the fallibility and subjectivity of the author: ‘*Day* emerges as a manifestation of Goldsmith’s experience of that singular copy of the paper. Read as such, *Day* becomes synonymous with subjectivity and the singularity of an act of repetition, [...] with difference’ (Marczewska, 2018: 363).

Critical responses to Goldsmith’s claim of being boring, range from ‘beautiful’, to ‘intoxicating’ to ‘unique’ to ‘exquisite and formidable’ (Duffy, 2016: 684). Goldsmith’s texts, Duffy states, establish a relationship not of writer and reader but of writer and writer, a different type of reading and readership. Indeed, Goldsmith is an artist’s artist; a writer’s writer, writing in dialogue with both his heroes and his peers. The thing of most boring interest, Duffy suggests, is that reading as well as the making process becomes an iterative process, a process which allows the reader to participate in the newspaper’s reiteration: ‘Goldsmith translates the conceptual idea into the tangible form of a book not necessarily to give us the opportunity to pick something up and read it but in order to give us the raw materials to do it all over again’ (Duffy, 2016: 686).

Reading Goldsmith’s work is an unboring boring act, that is, one we enter into voluntarily, as opposed to the boring boringness of an obligatory task (Goldsmith, 2007). The activity of making *Day* was a private performance, and represents a process of duration both in its making and its engagement. Whereas the organizing principle of concrete poets, with whom Goldsmith very loosely associates himself in lineage terms, was spatial, the organising principle for Goldsmith is the experience of time, a poetics of duration (Duffy, 2016: 695). Not unlike certain of Andy Warhol’s

works – *Empire*, (1964), an eight hour film which presents a static image of the Empire State Building, and *Sleep* (1964), a six hour film of a man sleeping – the impossibility of taking in these works at a single viewing or reading promotes the audience as the real heroes, Duffy argues. Goldsmith’s work, then, is a call to arms, both for practitioners and readers.

### **Conclusions**

For all Goldsmith’s rhetoric, *Day* is an expressive work wherein Goldsmith’s ‘elision of the subjectivity of the author’ (Jiménez-Munro, n.d.a: 141) uses text as a medium by which to execute his artistic vision. Goldsmith’s repurposing and politicising of language, his challenge to cultural orthodoxies (Christie, 2005), is executed with a level of *jouissance* (Britton, 2005), which makes the texts engaging on both a verbal and visual level. Goldsmith’s claims to unoriginality, to uncreativity, to boring texts are mere provocations, Aji (2014) reminds us, which in fact belie a critical investigation of our quotidian engagement with media texts; a criticality achieved by Goldsmith’s foregrounding of the ‘materiality of language [...] rather than its transparent role in communication’ (Calvert, 2011a: 139). *Day* is the work of an artist executing a text with painterly sensibility, to realize a work which ‘explores the potential of the act of reading as art’ (Briers, n.d.: 25)

## Conclusion

Goldsmith approach, this act of author-centric ‘authorial self-presentation’ (Reed, 2016: 8), is all about attitude and permissions, imprinted as a result of his training in visual art, which was interdisciplinary, and promoted fluidity and experimentation.

Whilst Goldsmith works dialogically (for the most part) with avant-garde and modernist writers:

None of my books are original; they’re all based on historic precedents. [...] Cummings for *73 Poems*; *Soliloquy* jumps off from Warhol’s *a*; *Fidget* responds to Beckett; *The Weather* is a tribute to Cage’s *Lecture on the Weather*; *Traffic* is inspired by Godard; *Capital* is a rewriting of Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* for New York in the twentieth century. *Day* is in dialogue with an obscure book called *One Day*, which reprints every word of a 1928 single day’s issue of *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* except for the advertising (Goldsmith, 2014a: 13),

ultimately, the manipulation of language achieved via this constraint-driven approach finds coherence when read through an art-informed lens. Most critics, having embraced the specific concept which triggered the work, approach the text in a spirit of wanting to catch Goldsmith out. He cannot, it seems, be allowed to have his cake and eat it. If he is going to state a rule by which he will make the piece, then surely he must adhere to his own rules. But one thing we know for sure about Goldsmith is that he gleefully breaks the rules. The fact of his having been trained as an artist, where ‘one learns about all types of experimental music, film, performance, and literature, which one feels free to incorporate into one’s practice’ gave him permission ‘to totally ignore rules’ (Goldsmith, 2014a: 7). Indeed, as Guevara points out, and also Kaufmann, in calling Goldsmith a fickle conceptualist, Goldsmith certainly feels free to ‘take bits and pieces from wherever you want and make them your own’ (Goldsmith, 2014a: 7), and does just that with Sol LeWitt’s ‘Paragraphs on Conceptual Art’. Goldsmith, Guevara tells us, besides substituting the word writing for art throughout his text ‘Paragraphs on Conceptual Writing’, ‘strategically omitted parts of LeWitt’s essay that engaged art in a way that [...] could not be translated to conceptual writing’ (Guevara in Goldsmith, 2014a: 7).

Indeed, as Goldsmith points out, he has had a much easier time in making his texts compared to his fellow conceptual poets, who, having been trained in the writing

field, ‘had to work much harder to unlearn [the rules]’ (Goldsmith, 2014a: 7). An artist training, then, is useful in both the making and the reading of conceptual writing, as it promotes a certain flexibility which allows for a text written, almost, by a body rather than by a consciousness. Goldsmith, of course, sets us up to be picky readers, in making so many profound statements about his works, and making public his own rules. Of course, the question of which material Goldsmith chooses to appropriate and process says something by way of commentary. The voice of the author takes centre stage, and it is Goldsmith’s thoughts and actions within this cultural act that we ask questions about. Why has he done this like this? Ultimately, it is the technicality of Goldsmith’s work that is of interest to me, method, process, approach, rather than the story within it. The event of the piece is in the actions taken with the words, using words as action and words as event (Watten, 2011).

In Rachel Cusk’s novel *Kudos* (2018) a literary critic and poet, interviewing the protagonist, confesses his disappointment with the many authors he interviews who professed to, as he saw it, not being in control of their material. These authors ‘have no overarching plan’ the critic states, and claim: ‘not even to know what was going to happen in the book they were currently writing, as though their work were the result not of careful thought or artistic competence or merely hard work, but of divine inspiration or worse, imagination’ (Cusk, 2018: 185). For his own part, the critic tells us, he: ‘wouldn’t start a piece of writing without knowing precisely where it was going to lead any more than he would leave his house without knowing what his destination was or without his keys and wallet (Cusk, 2018: 185).

Goldsmith structurally defines his projects from the outset. However, in the making of the piece – as we have seen, particularly with *Fidget* – there is room for manoeuvre for artistry, for aesthetic choice, for the maker to make. The conceit provides a structural framework. The act of making – the process and shaping – constitutes the craft of this creative act. We know that the physical act of making is hugely important for Goldsmith. After the idea, it is the act of making that is consuming for him. Goldsmith undertakes immersive processes and produces immersive works: ‘My works unfold over the course of many years. I only need one good idea every five or ten years. Most of my time is spent realizing that one idea, exploring it in a very deep way’ (Goldsmith, 2014a: 38).

He continues to be, then, an artist, only now he is sculpting with words: *Fidget*, and painting using vast sections of text as his medium: *Day*. The plethora

of critical approaches applied to Goldsmith's texts demonstrate the inherent tensions and difficulties in presenting art-informed writing within the literary domain. Conversely, the multi-faceted responses highlight the fact that for the practitioner, art-informed writing practice is a fertile zone within which to test the nature and boundaries of language, prose text and the novel form. Goldsmith's practice creates a space within the literary for material expression, and for new sites of literary production. As detailed earlier, Goldsmith does not reject literary culture, rather, by incorporating all that the moderns mean to him, their 'range and flavors of difficulties' (Goldsmith, 2014a: 6), and by undertaking an art-informed conceptual approach, Goldsmith extends the trajectory, in order to expand the field of literature and creative writing.

In creating literary work, then, that does not adhere to traditional literary paradigms one must find new ways by which to appraise one's work. As such, I have devised three critical questions which can be applied to non-traditional work, in order to test whether the work is both ambitious and engaging. These questions are: who is speaking – which relates to voice, authorship and focalisation (Genette, 1983); what is it about – content determines form, and form determines content; and most importantly, where are the tensions – which takes account of how to engage the reader.

Most importantly, it is this question of attitude; of giving oneself permission to experiment with form and process, which I find to be the transformative nature of art-making as a mindset and methodology, and which promotes a writing practice I refer to as writing-making. When a text is understood as language to be managed materially, it becomes a work of art. Materially produced texts lend themselves to performativity: language becomes a medium wherein the text performs the material expressively. This focus on the material nature of the text, on the expressivity of language as a medium, and on the notion of the body as object, and the object as subject, positions my work at the interface between literature, fine art and performance and I intend to pursue these intersecting avenues as a practitioner and researcher going forwards.

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