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How to Read Artist Books

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in

Art History, Theory, and Criticism

by

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The Dissertation of Viona Deconinck is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

How to Read Artist Books

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Art History, Theory and Criticism

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Professor John C. Welchman

This dissertation explores how artist books are read with a focus on works published during the 1960s. The argument is based on how the three artists I foreground expanded on the format of the book to disrupt conventional notions of reading and perceiving. The dissertation studies artist books as artworks formatted as books and how these artist books modify, change, challenge or

enhance the perceptual experience of language and images. The premise is: What happens to art works when organized in the form of a book? This dissertation reflects on the effect of treating an artist book not as a book that has been developed into something more, but as a grouping of art works that have become something different. This way of looking at my case studies provides more insights into what images and text can achieve or create when put together and treated as one complete artwork.

The dissertation provides a reading of three artist books, beginning with *21 Etchings and Poems* (1960) by Peter Grippe, a portfolio that combines 42 artists working in a variety of styles in different periods, published in New York. The second art book I consider is *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (1961) by Raymond Queneau, first published in Paris by Gallimard. The book is made up of sonnets, but each page has been cut into fourteen strips, horizontally, so that each line of the sonnet is printed on its own piece of paper. The third and last chapter discusses *1¢ Life* (1964) by the Chinese American artist Walasse Ting, edited by Sam Francis and published in Bern, Switzerland. The work combines 62 lithographs by artists including Enrico Baj, Reinhoud d'Haese, Jim Dine, Kimber Smith, Bram Van Velde, Alfred Leslie, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol, alongside poems by the author.

INTRODUCTION

Although artist books are "the quintessential 20th century art form"[1] according to art historian Joanna Drucker, little research has been done on how they are read. The aim of this dissertation is to provide a reading of three books, *21 Etchings and Poems* (1960) by Peter Grippe, *Cent mille milliard de poèmes* (1961) by Raymond Queneau and *1 ¢ Life* (1964) by Walasse Ting. My argument is based on how these artists expanded on the format of the book to disrupt conventional notions of reading and perceiving. I think-through how artwork is placed into the format of a book and how that changes the way it is experienced. My premise here is: What happens to art works when situated or produced in the format of a book? This dissertation reflects on the effect of treating an artist book not as a book that has been developed into something more, but almost as a group of art works that have become something different. This way of looking at my case studies will provide more insights into what images and text can achieve or create when put together and treated as an artwork. In this introduction I will discuss the location of artist books, not only physically but also in relation to the art world. I consider how this influences their reading, by studying works that move beyond the regular book, starting with artists Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898); while the work of art historians Joanna Drucker and Stephane Klima will assist in the provision of historical contexts for the works. Thinking-through a series of theories and methodologies including reader theory, museum studies, and methods of readability will provide a theoretical framework for modes of reading artist books.

[1] Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York, NY: Granary Books, 1995), p. 1.

We tend to understand an artwork to be more unique than a book, not as reproducible. This assumption does not hold true in its most concrete form, as books are not less valuable than art works, but the value in literature is defined differently than in paintings or even etchings, as a book can be reproduced. The value of objects is not only based on their materiality but also on their presentation and use value. One does not go to the museum to read a book on the walls, and neither does one check a painting out of the library. The literal value of a book is not as quantifiable as a hefty price tag on a painting. In comparison to a book, the relationship between the artwork and its materials is has greater significance. The material is the art, while in the case of a mass-produced book, the material is a mere vehicle for the art. In looking at these artist books as singular artworks rather than a collection of artworks, it is important to note the difference between artworks and books, especially in how they are experienced by the viewer. This dissertation will differentiate between what is considered a regular book, consisting of words printed on pages, bound together in a cover, and artist books which manifest in a variety of different formats. Compared to a book, available to readers in multiple libraries and bookstores, an artwork is usually placed on a white wall (or pedestal) in a museum. The situation of the artwork on the wall has an immense effect on how it is experienced. It hangs alone even when surrounded by other works, it is placed far enough away from its surroundings to allow proper contemplation described by Swiss artist Rémy Zaugg (1943-2005) as a "place offering silence and security" allowing for "dialogue with the work [which] also requires time."[2]

As they occupy an interstitial location between book and artwork, artist books, however, are also physically placed in a different location than books and artworks. *21 Etchings and Poems,*

[2] Rémy Zaugg, 'The Enclosed Space', in *The Art Museum of My Dreams, or, A Place for the Work and the Human Being* ed. Hinrich Sachs and Eva Schmidt; with an essay by John C. Welchman [English edition] (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), p. 13.

for example, is only held in five libraries worldwide: Brown University Library, the Olin Library at Wesleyan University, the Library of Congress, Wayne State University, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro University Libraries.[3] One has to travel to these locations to access the book, there are no other bookshops or libraries where this particular work is available for anyone to buy. Access to books, in any regular sense, is not generally subject to obstacles. Usually the opposite situation prevails, as books are widely available and their success, measured by sales or readership, is based on this. However, to access *21 Etchings and Poems* (and most artist books) the reader must obtain special permission to read the book, either through a library card, or a special request usually in the form of an application. This usually requires the reader to have the status of "researcher" – i.e., a student, graduate student, visiting scholar or faculty member at a university – to justify the need to read this book. Books usually don't require permission to be read, but these books do.

Once one has found out where the book is stored, one needs to go through the practical steps of accessing the book. The obstacles and limitations as to who can access the book and how are very particular to the Special Collections as it is placed within a precarious position in between the library and the gallery, akin to a gallery space within a library. Objects in this collection include not only rare artist books but also old manuscripts or personal archives from people whose papers are considered "worthy" of being kept in a special collection. The works in a special collection are more akin to something one would expect to see in a museum, and they are treated as such. Usually, one is subject to a physical search upon entering the library, someone checking bags at the entrance, making sure no one is trying to bring in some library contraband or certain kinds of pen or marker. Once one has passed this first obstacle, the perspective reader has to check-in to access

[3] According to worldcat.org

the collections of the library, either by signing up for a library card or verifying their documents at an entrance desk. At this stage, the reader has only gained access to the library, not to the work itself. Usually there is another desk at the special collection or for reserved items where the reader has to check-in, show identification, present the call number of the book they are looking for, wait for the librarian to bring out the book, and sometimes with gloves and special instructions, and only then can the reader take the book to a seat—in a designated area—and start reading it. These obstacles are included in what is required to "read" *21 Etchings and Poems*, and this issue of accessibility complicates and questions the definition of what a book is, or if this work can even be considered a book at this point. The experience described here is more akin to that of a researcher accessing a valuable artwork, than a reader trying to read a book.

The artist book hangs in the balance between the artwork and the book not just physically but also theoretically. The museum, like the individual artist book, is a place where artworks are collected. Looking at the book as a collection of artwork requires reflection on what happens when artworks are placed together in combination or what happens to the artworks when they are put together as part of a series. In the case of artist books, the visual images are set in a particular sequence that is generally meant to be permanent. Of course, some museum collections are also meant to be permanent, as, for example, the Rothko Chapel in Houston, where the eight walls of a dedicated space support large paintings by Mark Rothko. Hung in an enclosed space where viewer can immerse themselves, the works were specifically accommodated by this collection in permanent ensemble that embraces the architecture, lighting, and other display conditions. Although these paintings are not placed in a sequence, as with works laid-out in many artist books, there is a connection between them; they are to be read and understood in relation to each other.

The experience is immersive, as the viewer is physically surrounded by these works. In what way might the reader of an artist book have an immersive experience of images?

If we consider artist books as small exhibitions, a reevaluation of the "museum" is surely required. A museum or exhibition allows viewers to encounter the individual artworks in any order they see fit, even if an itinerary is generally established, and sometimes required, by curatorial decision-making. Viewers can, nevertheless, walk around the space, pay close attention to one piece, gloss over another piece, and return to reinvestigate yet another piece. The cohesiveness implied in a museum is much less linear or prescribed than that of a book—which conventionally requires an ordered sequence of page numbers, even if the work is unbound. The connection readers make to the work in an exhibition is more personal as they can decide what to look at and pick the order as they not forced by the order of a book, where every page is supposed to mechanically run through the reader's hands at a consistent, overall pace. Another difference is the idea that people can walk around together in a museum and have whispered conversations, while reading is often a more solitary event, unless one is reading out loud to an audience. However, one can also say that the expectation of using hushed voices in a museum implies a sort of individual experience.

Now, looking at artist books as a type of museum requires a study into how museums are organized, experienced, and defined. As suggested in the first chapter of Kiersten Fourshé Latham and John E. Simmons' *Foundations of Museum Studies: Evolving Systems of Knowledge*, however, the museum itself is difficult to define, along with its goals and intentions. Latham and Simmons provide a wide range of possible definitions, as well as things to take into consideration when creating them—including definitions articulated by professional organizations, such as the International Council of Museum:

> A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study, and enjoyment.[4]

Or the definition from the United Kingdom's Museum Association:

> Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safe-guard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.[5]

If, in these official accounts, the museum is understood as an institution that makes works available to society, we can ask how they relate to the goals of a book and easy availability, which I will expand upon later. Even though aspects of these definitions are relevant to this study, they emphasize the administrative order of the museum as public institution. It would be interesting to look at books in this way: as outlined in my critical discussion of research in the field, considerable attention has been paid to the artist book serving as a democratic art form.

A more promising way of defining the museum is based on its function ("to collect, to conserve, to educate, to interpret, to exhibit, to research, to serve"[6]) and type ("art, art center, anthropology, aquarium, arboretum, botanical garden, children's, herbarium, history, historic house, natural history, science center, science and technology, planetarium, gallery, zoo"[7]). Eventually Latham and Simmons themselves come up with a working definition: "Museum: a system to build and permanently maintain an irreplaceable and meaningful physical resource and use it to transmit ideas and concepts to the public."[8] In fact, *1 ¢ Life* exemplifies these ideas in book form: it collects and conserves, has the ability to educate, be interpreted, be researched and

[4] Kiersten Fourshé Latham and John E. Simmons, *Foundations of Museum Studies: Evolving Systems of Knowledge* (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2014), p. 4.
[5] Latham and Simmons, p. 4.
[6] Latham and Simmons, p. 8.
[7] Latham and Simmons, p. 8.
[8] Latham and Simmons, p. 10.

can be (and has been) exhibited. Even though it might not be a system in itself, the book is a great resource to transmit ideas and concepts; and as a book it is part of a system, comprising the publishing industry, book sales and libraries. Examining the stakes of specific exhibitions, the chapter on "The Museum as Exhibition" in Edward P. Alexander's *Museums in Motion* (1979), claims that "An exhibit may be defined as a showing or display of materials for the purpose of communication with an audience, often the general public."[9] Although this again involves the idea of the public, there is a connection between books and the public. The experience of reading a book is not public in and of itself, but the way books are dispersed is public.

Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) offers an important theoretical evaluation of the museum in his study of the museum, "Valéry Proust Museum," setting his thoughts in relation to writings by Paul Valéry and Marcel Proust. Adorno pays particular attention to the idea that an artwork comes to its own only when placed out of context, when it is considered on its own: "For [Proust] it is only in the death of the work of art in the museum which brings it to life," he suggests. "When severed from the living order in which it functioned, according to him, its true spontaneity is released — its uniqueness, its 'name', that which makes the great works of culture more than culture."[10] The artwork has to be placed in the museum in order to become immortalized and valuable. The focus here is on the artwork itself, not its place in a wider culture. The white framing of the wall on which the work is placed focusses the attention on the work as existing in and of itself without depending on its surroundings or the history of its production. Artworks are valuable, then, even when apprehended outside of their cultural context; they are therefore more than their cultural context: they embody a whole culture without relying on their surroundings to validate or

[9] Edward P. Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums* (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1979), p. 175.
[10] Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), p. 182.

secure them. This is important because artist books exist as singular objects, not in a series but as a series, themselves. In comparison to the artist book, most published books do not require any attention to their surroundings. Readers can read most books by themselves, anywhere, and at any time, and the work will still be valuable.

However, this is not the only position on the museum referred to by Adorno. On the other side of the spectrum, he has placed Valéry who is in complete disagreement with Proust. According to Valéry, art exists in a specific space and putting it into a museum rips it from its meaning and content: "For Valéry art is lost when it has relinquished its place in the immediacy of life, in its functional context; for him the ultimate question is that of the possible use of the work of art."[11] Valéry does not believe in the intrinsic meaning of an artworks contending that they are unable to fulfil the expectations Proust placed on them. For Valéry, the museum is a place that lacks culture and is completely devoid of life. Almost perversely, works of art become neutralized in this space, as they are taken out of their contexts and can no longer perform their function. One could say that artist books bridge this disagreement between Proust and Valéry, because even if the work is to be contemplated by itself, it cannot use its functional context; it will always be a book. The function of the book is to be read and the artwork can never be lost in this way.

The books I discuss are taken out of the context of their production and have also found their own dedicated place within the museal space of Special Collections. The Special Collections form part of the collections of the library, but holdings are secluded from the rest of library and kept in a location akin to a museum. Special reading utensils are required to handle the books; you cannot bring in anything other than a laptop, and the items must be requested and then returned to the librarian after use. Artist books have somehow become more than a regular book, inasmuch

[11] Adorno, p. 180.

they are conserved in a museal space. The reason they are in a library and not a museum is, of course, that the books still need to be handled in order to be read. These artworks, as Proust wanted, are considered out of context in the special collections room, and, as Valéry hoped, are part of the library and reading environment.

Another point of comparison between the artwork and the book turns on questions of duration, as this also influences their mode of presentation as well as access to them. The artwork is often considered as something that can be taken in as a whole, directly, which is why artworks do not have to be taken home to be appreciated; the work has a direct impact on the viewer. This is not to say that an artwork lacks depth. Adorno sees the artwork as something in dialogue with its viewer or observer. His comparison between Valéry's Marcel Proust's reflection on the museum concludes that "the work is neither a reflection of the soul nor the embodiment of a Platonic Idea. It is not pure Being but rather a 'force field' between subject and object."[12] Similar to Wolfgang Iser's theory of reading, the experience of the work takes place between the reader and the text, or in this case, between the viewer and the work. "The impact this reality makes on [the reader]," Iser notes, "will depend largely on the extent to which he himself actively provides the unwritten part of the text, and yet in supplying all the missing links, he must think in terms of experiences different from his own; indeed, it is only by leaving behind the familiar world in his own experience that the reader can truly participate in the adventure the text offers him."[13] The question here is what happens when a work is put into the format of the book. In this case, the meaning of the text emerges not only through the interaction between the reader and the text, but also between the reader and the images.

[12] Adorno, p. 184.
[13] Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, MD, 1974), p. 282.

In *The Reading Process*, Iser differentiates between the author and the reader as follows: "The artistic refers to the text created by the author, and the aesthetic to the realization accomplished by the reader."[14] Defining these modes of production, Iser places the two factors side by side, rather than suggesting a hierarchical relation. Both parties have a role in the work, and although they depend on each other, the influence the author has on the text is limited, as the reader must also accomplish *something* engaged as part of the reading process. The reader creates alongside the text provided by the writer. In his investigation of the role of the reader, Iser uses the work of Roman Ingarden on the "intentional sentence correlatives in literature,"[15] a body of reflection suggesting that a book is more than just an assemblage of statements; and, further, that there is a relationship between its sentences, so that through the interaction of these sentences the literary work can say "something beyond what it actually says."[16] Iser's method of analysis of the text implies that creating meaning is something the text cannot do by itself. It requires the action of the reader to understand its deeper meanings: "[T]he literary text needs the reader's imagination, which gives shape to the interaction of correlatives foreshadowed in structure by the sequence of the sentences."[17] The role of the reader, then, is not just in understanding the words on the page, but also to comprehend more than is written—another italicization of how the reader has an active role in the shaping of the text.

However, even though Iser's focus is mainly on the reader, the text itself also clearly plays a significant role in reader response theory and the experience of a text. Iser explains this in the following way:

[14] Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. 274.
[15] Wolfgang Iser, 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach', *New Literary History*, 3.2 (1972), 279–99 (p. 279) <https://doi.org/10.2307/468316>.
[16] Iser, 'The Reading Process', p. 282.
[17] Iser, 'The Reading Process', p. 282.

> The written text imposes certain limits on its unwritten implications in order to prevent these from becoming too blurred and hazy, but at the same time these implications, worked out by the reader's imagination, set the given situation against a background which endows it with far greater significance than it might have seemed to possess on its own.[18]

In Iser's view, readers are constantly balancing the presence of the text against their own imagination, letting the text guide their imagination. Iser calls his entry of the reader into the text, the interaction between text and reader, an "enduring form of life"[19]; but "what constitutes this form is never named, let alone explained, in the text."[20] The text, in most cases, does not explicitly acknowledge this play between itself and the reader. But, in a certain sense, the publication of any book is an acknowledgment of its readers and their potential to actively participate in its meaning. Without this active participation, it becomes impossible for the reader fully to engage with the text. This engagement takes place when readers are allowed to use their imagination—when they have the space to create their own aesthetic interpretation of the text. Iser states that if a text could provide readers with a complete story without leaving them something to do, their "imagination would never enter the field, the result would be boredom, which inevitably arises when everything is laid out cut and dried before us."[21] For Iser, the reader cannot be provided with the full "story," the full events, without any form of interaction and co-production with the reader's imagination. As set-out by Ingarden, there must be something for the reader to glean from the text that is not already literally spelled out. This can be accomplished by way of a back and forth, according to which the text allows the reader to fill in certain gaps, while simultaneously guiding the reader.

This mode of reading allows each reader to create a personal reading. Readers have their own life and their own stories, which exert a great influence on the text, as indicated in what Iser

[18] Iser, 'The Reading Process', p. 281.
[19] Iser, 'The Reading Process', p. 281.
[20] Iser, 'The Reading Process', p. 281.
[21] Iser, 'The Reading Process', p. 280.

calls “the resultant impression of lifelikeness.”[22] Iser claims that readers must take on the story as their own and imprint on it their own reality:

> The impact this reality makes on him will depend largely on the extent to which he himself actively provides the unwritten part of the text, and yet in supplying all the missing links, he must think in terms of experiences different from his own; indeed, it is only by leaving behind the familiar world in his own experience that the reader can truly participate in the adventure the text offers him.[23]

For Iser, readers are asked to participate in the text not as their familiar selves, but as characters who are willing to open themselves to a relationship with an unfamiliar adventure offered by the text. Readers become part of the story by virtue of their willingness to be placed in unfamiliar situations. According to Iser, the reader takes on an especially active role in places where the text itself lacks direction.

For example, Iser comments on the role of the reader by way of blank spaces, what he terms “the unwritten aspects of apparently trivial scenes.”[24] When the author’s guard is down, the reader can fill in their own blanks, read in between the lines, in unexpected places. Iser discusses modern or avant-garde kinds of text that:

> are often so fragmentary that one's attention is almost exclusively occupied with the search for connections between the fragments; the object of this is not to complicate the "spectrum" of connections, so much as to make us aware of the nature of our own capacity for providing links. In such cases, the text refers back directly to our own preconceptions which are revealed by the act of interpretation that is a basic element of the reading process.[25]

Iser does not mention any specific works here, but, as just one example of an experimental novel that requires the reader to provide links, we might consider Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway.*[26] The

[22] Iser, ‘The Reading Process’, p. 296.
[23] Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. 282.
[24] Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. 276.
[25] Iser, ‘The Reading Process’, p. 185.
[26] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, ed. G. Patton Wright, The Definitive Collected Edition of the Novels of Virginia Woolf (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990).

reader of this 1925 novel is forced to piece together the story based on the fragmentary thoughts of the main character, Mrs Dalloway. Clearly, the role of the reader here is crucial in order to get a bearing on the text: without the reader making various connections and projections, the novel would be impossible to read.

Other writers also took on this challenge, including Italian writer Italo Calvino. In *If on a winter's night a traveler* the space of the reader is taken up by an actual reader who is already part of the book. The narrator starts out by describing and addressing the reader in the second person, describing the reader buying the book and then setting out to read it.

> You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade. Best to close the door; the TV is always on in the next room. Tell the others right away, "No, I don't want to watch TV!" Raise your voice – they won't hear you otherwise — "I'm reading! I don't want to be disturbed!" Maybe they haven't heard you, with all that racket; speak louder, yell: "I'm beginning to read Italo Calvino's new novel!" Or if you prefer, don't say anything; just hope they'll leave you alone.[27]

When reading this passage readers find themselves in an odd position. Their own actions and relations to reading are being mirrored back to them, but they are a little off. The reader might not be sitting in a place near a TV, and they might be alone. Here, the space of the reader is dominated by a character who both is and is not the reader. Calvino raises interesting questions about the role of the reader, expanding (and to some extent expounding) the theories offered by Iser. The story continues with the reader in the book, the main character, who will be referred to as "the Reader", realizing there has been a mistake:

> Wait a minute! Look at the page number. Damn! From page 32 you've gone back to page 17! What you thought was a stylistic subtlety on the author's part is simply a printers' mistake: they have inserted the same pages twice. […] Here is page 31 again, page 32… and then what comes next? Page 17 all over again,

[27] Italo Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, trans. William Weaver, (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1981), p. 3.

> a third time! What kind of book did they sell you anyway? They bound together all these copies of the same signature, not another page in the whole book is any good.[28]

As the Reader finds out, the book is bound incorrectly, so he goes out to find the rest of the book. The reader follows Calvino's Reader on a quest to find the actual book, *If on a winter's night a traveler*, or to find the rest of the story started in the first chapter in their copy of the book. While going on this quest, Calvino draws on the presence of his character, the Reader, who reads the novel alongside the rest of us readers. The "enduring form of life", or the gaps for the reader to allow their imagination to be part of the text, is difficult to find in this book, as the space of the reader is already taken up by the Reader. General readers must consider themselves pitted against the Reader: but how are they different, and in what sense are they the same? The difference is that the Reader is on a quest to find the book, while we readers already have the book, presumably bound in the order it is meant to be read. Readers are constantly reminded of the book they are reading, by creating a book that does not maintain a consistent storyline, the reader is reminded of how they are required to follow the thought process of the Reader, who in turn is a more active representation of the writer, Calvino, himself.

So far, my focus has been on the relationship between the author, text, and reader, and how these have already been broadened. But the engagement between these three positions has only been considered at a somewhat abstract level: there are other aspects of reading that need to be taken into consideration when engaging with a text. The first is the physical presence of the text, how its material presentation plays a role in the reading process. It is almost a given that the physical presence of the text plays only a minor role in Iser's study, whether the presence of the text on the page, the presence of the book, or the action of reading the book—all aspects Iser does

[28] Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, pp. 25–26.

not discuss. This dissertation will focus on books that go beyond seeing the text as a place for interaction between the reader and the author, concentrating instead on the book as a physical place where the attention of the reader meets the work of the author.

In order to discuss book formats beyond the regular format, it is important to study how this change came about. By the twentieth century books had become so widespread, accessible, and available that their functionalities related to modes of reading were easily overlooked: the book was often seen as a vehicle transporting the text to the reader. In this sense, the book form becomes almost invisible, as it is everywhere and always the same. Yet texts requiring more than a mere turning of the pages force the reader to consider the very act of "merely" turning pages. What happens when the reader is required to put in more work? If the most obvious work required when reading a book is vested in understanding the text, the presence and action concerning the book as an object fades completely into the background. However, as the book is a widely circulated object, questioning it has become part of the practice of many artists, including French poets Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898). To change the mode of reading, is to return attention to the action of reading, in their work, and their relation to the work reading requires. Both reimagine the method of reading although their methods are different: Apollinaire focusses on an instant reading while Mallarmé wants readers to defer the back-and-forth method of reading, by forcing them to move across or up and down the page by furnishing a new mode of legibility.

Apollinaire challenges and changes the labor of reading in his calligrams, poems in which the arrangement of the written words echoes themes within the poem. As Willard Bohn notes, they "accustom the eye to read a whole poem with a single glance, as an orchestra conductor reads the different ranks of notes in a score simultaneously, [or] as one sees the plastic and printed elements

of a poster all at once."[29] Apollinaire adds an extra point of view for the reader by manipulating the shape of the text itself. He tries to achieve the back and forth he wants from the text by providing different points of view: "Apollinaire began to imitate the Cubist painters who decomposed an object into its parts, seen from different angles, and regrouped them in two-dimensional patterns (simultanism)."[30] Instead of enabling readers to stage a back and forth with the text, he wants them to receive it simultaneously as they look at it. The connection made by Bohm to reading music—another aspect of Cubist iconography—adds to this, as there is an implication that music is instant too: when one reads the notes, one immediately understands it. The mediation or back and forth which Iser discusses is not present in Apollinaire's work.

Mallarmé had similar negative feelings towards the mechanical method of reading, especially in relation to newspapers:

> Let us have no more of those successive, incessant back and forth motions of our eyes, traveling form one line to the next and beginning all over again. Otherwise we will miss that ecstasy in which we become immortal for a brief hour, free of all reality, and raise our obsessions to the level of creation.[31]

This moving back and forth reminds one of a factory production line, constantly repeating the same motion. Emphasis on the difference between humanity and the machine becomes evident in the way humans cannot and do not function like machines. The moment when this movement, reminiscent of the machine, stops is described as "ecstasy." Unrelated to the motions of the machine, the reader is allowed to become human, or even more than human, immortal as Mallarmé ties reality to the motion of the machine. He opposes "the monotony of the unconscious […] to the

[29] Willard Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry, 1914-1928* (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 18.
[30] Willard Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry, 1914-1928* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 17.
[31] Stéphane Mallarmé, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Mary Ann Caws (New York, NY: New Directions Books, 1982), pp. 82–83.

freedom of the poems, to their differences in pace and tone."[32] He moves his text around the page to force the reader out of this mechanical back and forth and into a more active movement. By removing this back and forth, Mallarmé attempts to redeem the reader from obsessive, repetitive motion.

According to Charles Mauron, obsession "cannot create a work of art, for the simple reason that the obsession belongs to an inferior order of things."[33] Mallarmé's work invites movement, allowing him to underscore the importance of freedom in his poetry: "from this point, liberty has to be achieved in the direction of higher things."[34] ("Higher things" here referring to aesthetic sensitivity). Obsession is a place of fixation, a constant repetition of the same thing, that mirrors the constant, iterated back and forth of the machine.[35] Mallarmé tries to escape this repetitiveness by breaking away from the confines of normal lineation. Mauron views Mallarmé's move from obsession to creation as a passage along a graph the horizontal axis of which represents rationality and the vertical, emotion. Here the horizontal axis, "which is like a threshold of reason, separates the two affectivities, superior and inferior."[36] The reader must move around the page to stop the repetitive motion along the horizontal axis of reading.

The idea of moving away from obsession towards creation introduces the idea of putting in work. Whereas obsession fixates on one thing "dividing and multiplying the original fixity,"[37] Mallarmé encourages the reader to break free and thereby act freely, which here means moving outside of the mechanical back and forth. Mallarmé continues:

[32] Charles Mauron, *Introduction to the Psychoanalysis of Mallarmé* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press), p. 200.
[33] Mauron, p. 199.
[34] Mauron, p. 200.
[35] Mauron, p. 200.
[36] Mauron, p. 199.
[37] Mauron, p. 200.

> If we do not actively create in this way (as we would music on the keyboard, turning the pages of a score), we would do better to shut our eyes and dream. I am not asking for any servile obedience. For, on the contrary, each of us has within him the lighting-like initiative which can link the scattered notes together.[38]

Mallarmé wants readers to do more—to create while reading—and know they have the capacity. This idea of creation is echoed by Iser, who claimed that creation takes place in the blank spaces within a text. Obsessively focusing on the text, without allowing the mind to wander and come up with new interpretations, is something both Iser and Mallarmé warn against. While Iser believes such obsessive focus will simply bore the reader, Mallarmé assumes it will make the reader "miss that ecstasy in which we become immortal for a brief hour."[39] Mallarmé argues that this back-and-forth reading does a disservice to the reader, but also to language, as the reader has "the lighting-like initiative which can link the scattered notes together." The reader's mind is constantly at work creating new things, if the text permits, or invites, such deliberation.

By referring to the idea of music, Mallarmé points out that readers have the ability to supply the text with new meanings: in this example, melody, tone, rhythm. Putting these things together, instantly, readers add their own imagination to the text easily and flawlessly. If this level of involvement and creation can be expected in reading music sheets, Mallarmé's point is that reading can be a more nuanced process: instead of just mechanically reading and obsessing, reading becomes a mode of creation. It is interesting to note here that Mallarmé does not consider turning pages as an activity. In the realm of the book, turning the page is not the equivalent of taking action. The mechanical aspect of turning the page has not yet been theorized by Mallarmé. Like Iser, Mallarmé demands space—and trust—in readers, to be able to make their own creations in the text. Mallarmé ends the paragraph with:

[38] Mallarmé, pp. 82–83.
[39] Mallarmé, pp. 82–83.

> Thus, in reading, a lonely, quiet concert is given for our minds, and they in turn, less noisily, reach its meaning. All our mental faculties will be present in this symphonic exaltation; but, unlike music, they will be rarefied, for they partake of thought. Poetry, accompanied by the Idea, is perfect Music, and cannot be anything else. [40]

The difference between what sheet music creates and what Mallarmé's work creates is a poetical apprehension that gives rise to something even more abstract than music. The notes on the page do not translate into specific tones, they translate into thoughts.

In the 20th century, the advent of artist books introduced new methods of expanding the book beyond the page, and further beyond the experiments of Apollinaire and Mallarmé. In *The Century of Artist Books* Joanna Drucker defines the artist book as "the quintessential 20th century art form."[41] As this dissertation will elucidate, however, artist books, are as difficult to read as they are to define. Drucker observes that "A single definition of the term 'an artist's book' continues to be highly elusive in spite of its general currency and proliferation of work which goes by this name."[42] In *Artists Books: A Critical Survey of the Literature,* Stefan Klima outlines the three issues he claims are most influential to the definition and purpose of book arts. The first explores the difficulties around the definition of the artist book. Klima's study begins in 1973, as that was when "the term *artists books* first appeared, as the title on an exhibition of books."[43] Klima notes the ongoing debate about the definition of artist books, arguing that "as the debate progressed, the language become more and more confused, and overly verbose."[44] Using Clive Phillpot's analysis of the subject as an example, Klima emphasizes the ever-changing and difficult answers to this question. Of Phillpot he writes that as his "statements evolved over time; they also changed

[40] Mallarmé, pp. 82–83.
[41] Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, p. 1.
[42] Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, p. 1.
[43] Stefan Klima, *Artists Books: A Critical Survey of the Literature* (New York, NY: Granary Books, 1998), p. 7.
[44] Klima, p. 21.

radically, reflecting his shifting interests on the subject. And the shift moved from extraordinary enthusiasm and optimism to severe criticism and pessimism."[45] My project will not be concerned with definitions of the artist book but will focus on their readability.

Drucker sees the artist book as something that "has to be understood as a highly mutable form, one which cannot be definitively pinned down by formal characteristics (such as the inexpensive printing and small format […])."[46] This is true not only of the artist book but of the book in general as the artist book is hard to differentiate from the traditional form of the book. Drucker argues that:

> There is a single common central theme or attention to materiality as the basis of autonomous, self-sufficient repleteness so that artistic forms are considered to *be* and not to *represent.* The concept of being, in terms of an artistic object, generally depended upon a belief in the inherent characteristics of the material means of its production, but the semiotic notion of differential meaning can be located within the theoretical discussions as well, though in less clearly articulated terms.[47]

The book is the work in itself, it does not represent, as the material of the work is not the art. The question Drucker raises takes up not with the definition of what an artist book is, but of what a book might be—foregrounding its materiality.

The second issue addressed by Klima is how "the book [is] considered an object and its challenge to a new kind of reading" which he referred to as "the debate's implicit political acts."[48] Klima relates the artist book to Conceptual Art, defining two aspects of its role during the emergence and consolidation on the Conceptual movement in the 1960s and 70s. "At least two philosophical and aesthetic questions preoccupied the Conceptualists: the idea of art as its own

[45] Klima, p. 22.
[46] Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, p. 11.
[47] Johanna Drucker, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art,1909-1923* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 50.
[48] Klima, p. 7.

subject; and, the desire for a 'dematerialized' object, a term coined by Lippard."[49] Books played an important role in Conceptual Art because they can be seen as an overlooked object/subject and can provide a space outside of the gallery to exhibit art. Noting that Conceptualists desired to challenge the art establishment by understanding art as an "explicit political act,"[50] Klima suggested that for this purpose "the codex form proved ideal for the communication and dissemination of art as an idea."[51] Starting with Ed Ruscha, Klima also draws out the idea that artists could also be interested in making artist books that had "none of the nuances of the hand-made and crafted limited-edition book."[52] The idea of an artist book as a mass-produced object had the potential of being more democratic—Drucker refers to the "democratic multiple."[53] Since the emphasis of this dissertation is on the interaction between the reader and the texts, even mass-produced artist books could challenge the notion of reading—or seem to thwart it—because they are not like regular books. Drucker writes:

> Books, because they have the capacity to circulate freely, are independent of any specific institutional restraints (one finds them in friends' houses, motel rooms, railroad cars, school desks). They are low maintenance, relatively long-lived, free floating objects with the capacity to convey a great deal of information, and serve as a vehicle to communicate far beyond the limits of an individual life or contacts.[54]

This explanation of why books are used in activism provides insight into questions of definition. For Drucker, books, from one point of view, are: "low maintenance, relatively long-lived, free floating objects with the capacity to convey a great deal of information, and serve as a vehicle to communicate."[55] However, Drucker does not agree with this idea, as the production of artist books

[49] Klima, p. 41.
[50] Klima, p. 7.
[51] Klima, p. 41.
[52] Klima, p. 43.
[53] Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, p. 69.
[54] Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, p. 8.
[55] Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, p. 8.

is often not as streamlined as mass-produced books, as the independent publishers who produce *livres d'artiste*, art-oriented books cannot do so at the same cost as other book forms like the dime novels as they are not as easy or as cheap to print.[56]

In her study of artist books and literature as art, Drucker also looks to the work of Apollinaire, observing that "one of the bases for Apollinaire's new poetic language was its attention to both the sonic and assertive properties of language."[57] She draws out the idea of language, and how it is manipulated by artists. This dissertation will focus, however, on how these concerns are translated into the material form of literature—which is obviously more than a means to write down words, as language is in fact a medium in and of itself. I will explore what happens to the medium of the book, rather than to the medium of language, in relation to what the artists discussed are trying to achieve. Both Klima and Drucker provide insights into how the artist book developed, its points of origin and what questions it was posing and trying to answer. But neither of them addresses the question of how artists books should be read.

The difficulty with artist books is that, when discussed and analyzed, they are often separated into fragments, and thus often considered unreadable as a whole. Fragmentation makes it especially difficult for the reader to be able to reflect on the work as a whole after reading it, to define what the work was 'about' or 'what happened.' The focus on these concerns in artist books allows readers to reflect on what it means to evaluate books as being 'about' something—often a reductive method of reading. To look at the texts as a whole would, as French critic Roland Barthes argues, define one as a critic, discussing what the book is about. This distinction is notable, as the texts in themselves are physically readable. If one were to pick up any of the works within my case studies, one would be able to read the words on the page and look at the images. The question

[56] Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, p. 4.
[57] Drucker, *The Visible Word*, p. 73.

addressed in this dissertation pulls this notion further, considering how one can read this book as a whole. What can one deduce from reading the whole work?

Barthes distinguishes the critic from the reader, by defining "the critic as a reader who writes"[58] by dealing with theories around texts, looking at the way the reader/critic might creatively rewrite the text instead of just physically traversing or consuming the text.[59] This dissertation is more concerned with the act of splitting to which Barthes refers: "To write, however, is in a certain way to split up the world (the book) and to remake it."[60] It is an oversimplification to regard books as, primarily, being "about something." According to Barthes, the critic splits a book or text up and remakes it, creating a mode of understanding that does not require a linear or even a coherent understanding of the text. Studying the ways in which artist books provide a myriad of readings that are not easily summarized, this study also invites a further reflection on how to read a standard book.

This idea of the book as coherent whole was addressed in the work of Belgian literary critic George Poulet, who defined the book as more than just a book—as an embodiment of the mind of the author, "saving his identity from death."[61] Here the mind of the reader can be considered the mechanism that ties the work together. Poulet also uses 'the critic' to differentiate between different types of readers. The critic is "allowed to apprehend as its own what is happening in the consciousness of another being."[62] This requires an ability to establish what is happening in the mind of the author, and then reflecting on this by inhabiting, as it were, the thoughts of another.

[58] Roland Barthes, 'Reading', in *Criticism and Truth*, trans. by Katrine Pilcher Keuneman (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 91–94 (p. 91).
[59] The wording for this sentence is based on the definition [whose definition?] of ergodic literature, which studies the way the text is 'traversed'.
[60] Barthes, 'Reading', p. 91.
[61] Georges Poulet, 'Phenomenology of Reading', *New Literary History*, 1.1 (1969), 53–68 (p. 58) <https://doi.org/10.2307/468372>.
[62] Poulet, p. 60.

Poulet uses the imagery of a spider web, requiring a spider who is present in the center and has connected all the threads that lead to the place it is residing. It is the spider that imposes the structure on the space—and all routes, or readings, lead back to the creator/spinner of the text/web. Poulet here emphasizes that this is not only based on "the psychology of the author, but of going back, within the sphere of the work, from the objective elements systematically arranged, to a certain power of organization, inherent in the work itself, as if the latter showed itself to be an intentional consciousness determining its arrangement and solving its problems."[63] Each work is founded on an overarching structure and it is the role of the reader to draw this out, to navigate around spiderweb, and find the source.

To perceive an overall structure within the work, Poulet suggests that we, readers, "forget the object elements of the work," and to allow it to "elevate itself to the apprehension of a subjectivity without objectivity."[64] Readers can decide which parts of the text to include in their analysis. It does not take away from the text to introduce the critic's subjectivity. One has to create one's own image of the text to be able to allow it to make sense. Iser referred to the imagination of the reader that could fill in the blanks or "gaps." There has to be something outside of the objective events in the text allowing the reader to create a whole picture, a connecting structure, a spiderweb. This of course, does not imply that reading can exist outside the text. The subjective reading is attached to the text provided that the text is the focal point of the reading.

Barthes' theory of the death of the author, considers this method of interpretation as an easy way out. There is more to texts than what the author intended, and although Poulet does touch upon this, Barthes develops the implications of reader's role much further. Barthes' distinguishes between the critic and a regular reader; the former breaks up the texts to find new readings of the

[63] Poulet, p. 67.
[64] Poulet, p. 68.

work, while the 'pure reader' only reproduces the text as a type of pastiche. Inviting further reflection, the text requires the reader (or critic) to dig further than the text itself and this theoretical framework removes the author from the text to generate meaning. Through this removal it becomes even harder, as a reader, to find a way to study the text as a whole. Barthes further defines the critic as "nothing other than a commentator,"[65] someone "who made a personal contribution to the copied text only to render it intelligible."[66] The critic aims to rearrange and reflect on the work to make it readable, to "rearrange the elements of the work so as to give it a certain comprehensibility, that is to say a certain distance."[67] The distance referred to is congruent with the notion of a structure that can be imposed upon the work. Comprehensibility being another useful word, again implying a level of understanding referring to the book as a whole. Comprehensibility and intelligibility are possible alternatives but are lacking as they only refer to the first of the two questions this project aims to answer. The second question, related to the reading of images, does not correlate well with words such as comprehensibility or intelligibility, implying something that does not relate to how one understands images. For images do not require knowledge of a linguistic code to read them, and thus precipitate different models and experiences of comprehension and intelligibility. But as images are put into contact with the text in this dissertation, the notion of process is reintroduced. Reading implies a method or process that, if applied to the images, can render them unreadable.

Each of my chapters studies works engaging with a different kind of 'unreadability.' *21 Etchings and Poems* by Peter Grippe is considered unreadable as the poems are not typed, but handwritten, making it difficult to read.[68] While the writing in printed texts is neutralized through

[65] Barthes, 'Reading', p. 92.
[66] Barthes, 'Reading', p. 91.
[67] Barthes, 'Reading', p. 92.
[68] Peter Grippe, *21 Etchings and Poems* (New York, NY: Morris Gallery, 1960).

standard fonts and typefaces, burying the potentially illegible handwritten version in the past, here there are no fonts to rely on. The unreadability of *21 Etchings and Poems* might also have to do with our expectations as readers. We might associate a handwritten book with a diary or journal, not a work to be disseminated to the public. Here, the reader is introduced to the movements of the hands of the writers, as they physically record their thoughts on the page. The mechanics of producing a printed text no longer intervene between writer and reader, as there is no mediation by the printing machine, editor, or publisher. Without the work of unknown editors or printers, the relationship between the writer and the reader draws closer. Although it is possible that the writer has only chosen to publish their last draft, implying that some editing did take place, the impression of handwriting a poem is that it took painstaking effort and can't easily be edited or changed. The lack of translation into a neutralized writing format draws the reader and writer closer, as the procedure of bringing the work to publishable standards seems to have been erased.

The difficulty in deciphering the handwriting of the writer also brings the reader closer to the writer, creating direct contact between the reader and the writer. The mechanisms of printing make the hand of the writer invisible, so that printed books are beholden to a mechanical process that transfers the writing into the mind of the reader. With the re-introduction of authorial handwriting, the reader is encumbered in their reading process by authors themselves. Authors become more than a name on the bottom of the page; they also realize the way an "f" curls at the end of a word or small words like "and", "if", or "or" become recognizable. The text thus becomes readable through practice, by way of a meaningful effort that develops from familiarity with the writer's hand. Of course, the handwriting does not tell the reader anything about the author, other than if they had neat writing or not, but it does tell them more than a typeface can. It reveals the human behind the text and bears with it more of the naturalness of a person than Times New

Roman ever could.[69] If calligraphic text is not unreadable but generally a bit more difficult to read, it offers distinctive marks and traces, like the brushstrokes of a paintbrush. By emphasizing the hand of the author throughout the texts of *21 Etchings and Poems*, the reader is not limited or beholden to a subject-object relationship where writing has become alienated through the objectification of language.

A second layer of unreadability associated with *21 Etchings and Poems* is established by the fact that the texts in the book are written in multiple languages, creating an interpretative barrier to many readers. Reading in a foreign language can be challenging even when the reader has familiarity with it; but it becomes even more challenging when the handwriting also undermines understanding. If the reader is unfamiliar with the language, they cannot anticipate the word sequence, or identify puns and other linguistic plays or references, like a native speaker. Although most of the texts are in English, *21 Etchings and Poems* also contains three texts in French (by Christian Dotremont, Jacques-Henri Lévesque and André Verdet) and one in German (by Hans Sahl). The book thus requires the reader to be comfortable in these three languages in order to embark on the process of reading all of its pages. A reader who is unable to understand these three languages, creates an interesting situation. In *21 Etchings and Poems*, this barrier introduces an interesting moment of reflection on the meaning of language and its relation to the images. As the text is printed alongside images, how much of the text has to be understood so that this combination is "readable"? If the image elucidates parts of the text, or is to be read in combination with the text, does every word of the poem require a thorough understanding, especially considering that this work is written in multiple languages? This raises further questions about whether it is necessary

[69] Of course, there is the issue of the handwritten text not actually being hand copied every single time. The words are printed, but they are not printed as words: they are etched or copied as part of the collaboration. Instead of the writing being treated as writing, in this instance, it is being treated as part of the etching.

to understand all the vocabulary to read these poems or if the shape of the poem, the recognition of a few words, and the presence of the image are enough to give the reader an adequate opportunity to "read" the poem.

This question about how to read "foreign" poems can be reassessed in relation to the reading of the images. How much does one have to understand of the context or style of the images to be able to "read" or "understand" them? The obstacles to reading a foreign language, compared to those that might interfere with the interpretation of an image, are much easier to define; one has to know and understand the original language by way of learning or cultural immersion. Of course, learning a language requires a whole range of skills and practice, and proper comprehension is dependent on one's capacity to decipher and read the writing. Although there might seem to be a connection between being able to understand a language and being able to read and write it, this is not necessarily the case. There are often situations where one might be able to read a text but not speak the language or be able to speak a language but not to read the text. In both cases reading is bound up in different levels of familiarity with and facility in the requisite language.

As with language, there are signs in images that must be recognized, decoded and in some sense "read." WJT Mitchell points out that "images are not just a particular kind of sign, but something like an actor on the historical stage, a presence of character endowed with legendary status, a history that parallels and participates in the stories we tell ourselves about our own evolution from creatures 'made in the image' of a creator, to creatures who make themselves and their world in their own image."[70] Becoming familiar with the background knowledge of images, understanding them in relation to their history and context is similar to knowing a language. The images cannot be separated from the writing in an artist book. So, it becomes important to learn to

[70] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 9.

read images as if they were linguistic materials, or, in Mitchell's words, in terms of "the semantic syntactic, communicative power of images to encode messages, tell stories, express ideas and emotions, raise questions, and 'speak' to us."[71] What background knowledge do we need in order to understand this language of the image? One of the examples discussed by Mitchell to elucidate his point is a drawing of a crucified man. The image immediately implies a relation to Christianity, but its meaning in these terms is only available to those with the appropriate prior knowledge. How does one measure mastery of images in the way one can measure mastery of language, and is this comparison even useful? There are many theories about the universalism, or general legibility, of images, so that even if the Christian theological weight of the crucifixion were not clear to viewers, they would still be able to deduce that this portrays an image of a punished and suffering man. How much does the influence of the religious aspect matter here in the understanding of the image? According to Mitchell there is a universality to images; for him, they are "natural universal signs [which] reside in a realm of timeless spatiality and simultaneity."[72]

Confronting the reader with images that are "unreadable" because of the language the text is written in brings up questions about the readability of the images themselves. Mitchell's third "language of images" is verbal or "a system informed by images, literally in the graphic character of writing systems or 'visible language,' figuratively in the penetration of verbal languages and metalanguages by concerns for patterning, presentation, and representation."[73] Mitchell's inclusion of writing systems in the language of images is important in the complexifying readings I undertake of the artist books in my case studies, and what might seem like a barrier to readability is actually a key. If we understand the verbal images in the artist books as a part of the "patterning,

[71] 'Introduction', in *The Language of Images*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell, A Phoenix Book (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 1–9 (p. 3).
[72] Mitchell, 'Introduction', p. 3.
[73] Mitchell, 'Introduction', p. 3.

presentation, and representation" in the books, we can see how the "unreadability" of books actually proposes new ways of reading.

The last barrier to readability relates to the many artists included in the book. *21 Etchings and Poems* includes 42 artists, writing about a range of different things in an ensemble that was not assembled collaboratively. It is therefore very difficult to find something connecting these parts to form an intelligible or coherent reading. The collection reads like an encyclopedia or compendium, and accordingly does not seem to require a complete or cumulative reading. Foregrounding the 21 image/text combinations, the title itself does not refer to a unifying aspect, quantifying the work rather than qualifying it. However, this work is not extensive enough to count as a compendium, nor is it organized according to style or in chronological or alphabetical order. The work, therefore, leaves almost all the structuring, reflecting and reading to the reader.

My next case study, *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* by Raymond Queneau, consists of 10 sonnets that can be read in one hundred thousand million combinations.[74] The unreadable aspect is immediately obvious: it is impossible to ever read the whole collection or encounter every single combination, as it would take more than a lifetime. The work here is not unreadable, in the sense that the reader has to understand the language, but it is unreadable, as one cannot physically read the book. More than being physically unreadable, the work is also unreadable in another sense as there is no order to the text. The reader can read it in any combination, meaning that two readers are unlikely to read the same combination, so there can be no coherence when it comes to interpretation of the book. The format of the book generally implies a linearity; one goes from one page to another, aided by the numbers at the bottom or top of the page that ordain a consecutive navigation. But in *Cent mille milliards de poèmes*, the reader can never write about or refer to a

[74] Raymond Queneau, *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961).

specific sonnet, as there are no page numbers. There is no easy way even to refer to the sonnet one is discussing, as readers would have to copy out the poem in order to analyze it, transcribing it into a readable format. The individual strips of papers do not have numbers attached to them, so the reader cannot refer to them in this way. The strips of paper themselves are readable but not discussable unless copied into another medium. The very idea of turning the page is dismantled here as the book's readability implies a single movement which is expanded on to include a knitting needle (suggested by the writer in the introduction of the book). Forcing viewers to transcribe the text in order to talk about it makes viewers aware of their own work as they, in some sense, co-author a particular version of the sonnet.

I have drawn out some of the instances where works are considered unreadable in my project. Although I have referred to these works in terms of readability, other terms could also be used; I have, for example, introduced the notion of 'structure' as an alternative to 'readable,' although this seems to be of somewhat limited usefulness as 'unstructured' has very different connotations than 'unreadable.' Other vocabularies might include "comprehensibility," "intelligibility," or Barthes' notion of a "galaxy."

My final case study, *1 ¢ Life* by Walasse Ting,[75] is unreadable in ways that resemble *21 Etchings and Poems*—the main difference being that there is one author of the text and the title in this case provides insight into the book, as it focusses on the ramifications of capitalism. But even though Ting wrote the poetic texts that appear page by page himself, the precise connections between the writing and the images—by a variety of his artist friends and peers—remains again unclear. The author might unify the texts, allowing for an overall reading of the poems, but too much emphasis on this scene of authorship reduces the importance of the images. To read this

[75] Walasse Ting, *1 Cent* [is it "cent or "¢"? needs to be consistent throughout] *Life*, ed. by Sam Francis (Bern: E.W. Kornfeld, 1964).

work as a whole relying solely on the author will not, therefore, provide a complete or adequate reading. *1 ¢ Life* raises questions we have already formulated about how images are read alongside the text. But the collaborative aspect of this work is different from the collaboration in the Grippe work: it is not a collection of individual sub-collaborations as in *21 Etchings and Poems*, but an exercise in "matching" single-author texts, supposedly written independently of the images, with an array of differently conceived, formulated and designed images. The connection between images and text , as the chapter will explain, is based on Ting's stated aim to create a work "of its time."

The connections I discuss in chapter three are developed through readings based on structuralist theories, pointing to links, shared motifs, contextual overlays, and other dialogues between the images. In Barthes' terms, we can say that even though the author is "dead"— as he is not the determining factor for making the work a whole, he is also unavoidable. Ting's treatment of the English language distinguishes him as a clear and individual voice, even if this is not what draws the text together. The artist books invite the readers of regular books to consider and reassess their knowledge about the author. The more obvious obstacles to normative reading presented by and encountered in artist books invites a more complex reading of regular books.

Another way *1 ¢ Life* differs from the *21 Etchings and Poems* in terms of unreadability is that Ting's poetry is written in English by a non-native speaker: its grammar, syntax and very logic creates a new mode of language for *1 ¢ Life*. In a sense, conventional grammar is not needed to understand the language, presenting a situation that is superficially similar to the language issues in *21 Etchings and Poems*. Only Ting's book does not present a small number of poems written in another language, but a whole book of texts written in English largely ignoring conventional grammar and syntax. On the one hand, the reader does not need to understand the language

completely to be able to comprehend its meaning. The same can be said of the images; they need to be understood only on a certain level to make sense of them. On the other hand, language creates the same effect as the handwritten language in *21 Etchings and Poems*, where the presence of the writer is emphasized although not given individual characteristics.

This dissertation will discuss how each of my three case studies can be read using the theories and issues set out in this introduction. Each reading brings the book it foregrounds in relation with art movements during the 1960s and wider postwar period; produces "readings" and possible interpretations, and teases out key themes and debates the work engages with. As each book is so different in style and context, the goal of my study is to underscore how the reading artist books is a more complex and layered process than reading a regular book, requiring sustained inquiry into what it means to read and how reading is construed. Reading these books is, therefore, not limited to what has been formulated in this dissertation.

CHAPTER 1: PETER GRIPPE, *21 ETCHINGS AND POEMS*

The first chapter of this thesis will look at *21 Etchings and Poems* by Peter Grippe (1912-2002), a portfolio bringing together 42 artists working in a variety of styles in different periods. This chapter will provide a step-by-step analysis of the many layers found within this work and the obstacles they present. The work was published in New York, placing it in the New York School period which it in parts belongs to but not completely as the artists were not all part of that collective. It poses barriers in the shape of the size of the work, not only physically but also in terms of the number of people collected within it. The evaluation of the book will start with the physical pages and the readers' interaction with them, moving to how the reader interacts with the printed text, to methods of reading the text. It poses boundaries in terms of language, iconography, and just plain intelligibility. All of these problems create a text that halts the reader in their process. In reading this work, the reader, or in this case, viewer, becomes an active part of the work, rather than passively traversing the text, the reader has to repeatedly question and reconsider their role as reader. This work in particular, as a product of the post war climate engages with themes dealing with feeling of belonging and creating histories. Mythology, which is focused on by Roland Barthes, Serge Guilbaut and Carl Jung, forms the main method of entry into this work. By looking at ways of creating mythologies, how mythologies are integrated within the fabric of time through the naturalization of history, this portfolio serves as an example of the collective that is created through a myriad of experiences, eventually boiling down into a very unique and personal experience.

The book is unbound, giving it the impression of a series of individual works, and each page measures 19 11/16" × 16 7/8" and single sided. The reader is invited to peruse through the pages in a more liberal fashion that a standard book would allow, the reader can peruse the pages

in a way similar to a museum visitor. The pages can be spread across a table, reshuffled in order of significance, or moved around for a closer inspection. One becomes like a small child trying to awkwardly turn the pages of a book much larger than our hands can hold. The process of reading the book becomes a physical action performed by the reader that is no longer automatic and unthinking. The process of reading was brought to the foreground of the action, the vehicle for the content that is usually considered invisible is now an active part of the experience of reading. The reader becomes part of the creation of the work, because in order to read it they have to become physically part of the work, it becomes an area for collaboration between the artist and the viewer. This is especially prominent in Folio 15 by Ben Nicholson and Herbert Read, considerably the most tactile work in the book. It consists of a poem placed next to a drawing, the poem is placed horizontally on the page, rather than vertically. This encourages the reader to be more active in their physical role of reading the book especially as merely turning the page once does not fully allow the reader to be confident in their physical method of viewing the painting. If one must turn the sheet anti clockwise to read the poem, should one view the art from that angle too, or should one turn the page clockwise as if the two parts of the page are mirrored. This work has taken Mallarmé's goal of having the reader's eyes dart across the page a step further, as in this case the page can be moved itself, requiring a more active movement from the viewer.

The portfolio has not yet received the academic study it is due, at the time when the portfolio was published, the lack of scholarly attention to works with mixed media was not uncommon. In the introduction to the portfolio, the work of William Blake is mentioned, which, as an early precursor of the style of the portfolio, was also having problems establishing its style in academia in the 1960's potentially explaining why *21 Etchings and Poems* has not yet academically been analyzed. Jean Hagstrum, when studying Blake in 1964 mentions that: "With but few exceptions

contemporary commentators have deserted one of the earlier insights into Blake's art — that he "interwinds" painting and poetry so closely "that they cannot well be separated" and that in ordinary publication Blake's verses, lacking the support of design, sometimes sound like nonsense".[76] Bram Dijkstra, writing in 1969 also notices this lack of study of the mixed media when studying William Carlos William's link with painting: "Perhaps such reluctance is due to the fact that while the artistic mind, more often than not, is expansive and almost indiscriminately receptive to possibilities, the scholar's attitude is likely to be reductive and narrowly focused."[77] Although it has been over forty years since these critics made their point, the problem of how to address mixed media art pieces is still a prominent issue in today's criticism.

This portfolio in particular, although very rich in content has also not gained a lot of academic traction although it is mentioned frequently in academic work including in *Images and Imagery,* by Ernesto Virgulti;[78] Lucy White's *Printmaking as Therapy*;[79] John Elderfield in the *De Kooning Retrospective;*[80] in Russel Ferguson's anthology of O'Hara's work, I*n Memory of my Feelings;*[81] in Marjorie Devon's *Tamarind: Forty Years*,[82] Karen A. Bearor's *Irene Rice Pereira: Her Paintings and Philosophy*,[83] Mark Silverberg's *The New York School Poets and the Neo Avant*

[76] Jean H. Hagstrum, *William Blake, Poet and Painter: An Introduction to the Illuminated Verse* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 3.
[77] Bram Dijkstra, *Cubism, Stieglitz, and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), p. viii.
[78] *Images and Imagery: Frames, Borders, Limits: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Corrado Federici, Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons, and Ernesto Virgulti, Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature, vol. 74 (New York, NY: P. Lang, 2005), p. 94.
[79] Lucy Mueller White, *Printmaking as Therapy: Frameworks for Freedom* (Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002), p. 228.
[80] John Elderfield and Willem De Kooning, *De Kooning: A Retrospective*, ed. by David Frankel (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2011), p. 329.
[81] Russell Ferguson and Frank O'Hara, *In Memory of My Feelings: Frank O'Hara and American Art* (Los Angeles, CA: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999), p. 75.
[82] Marjorie Devon, *Tamarind: 40 Years* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), p. 32. Devon, p. 32.
[83] Karen A. Bearor, *Irene Rice Pereira: Her Paintings and Philosophy* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), p. 286.

Garde,[84] and in Marjorie Perloff's *Frank O'Hara: Poet among Painters*,[85] it is usually referred to only in relation to one specific work or print, and rarely discussed as a whole. However, this is not a definite reason for the lack of popularity of the work as there are other collaborations produced around the same time that have had more success; *Stones* by Frank O'Hara and Larry Rivers[86] and *Odes* by Frank O'Hara and Michael Goldberg.[87] True interdisciplinary academic work, although on the rise in recent years has not been completely integrated in the work of academics. This seems to suggest that one of the main issues in reading this particular work was the sheer number of artists who were brought together to create the work.

Although general connections can be made about the artists in *21 Etchings and Poems*, studying the artist-to-artist collaboration poses many obstacles, as there is no indication that the artists all worked together on the piece as a whole and it is difficult to pinpoint when exactly the etchings and poems were brought together. As the publisher's note says, the work was started in 1951, but published only in 1960, leaving a nine-year gap with little record on what was happening "behind the scenes." In the acknowledgements a number of works are listed that have been republished, including "Tenement" by Herbert Read, "To A Poor Old Woman" by William Carlos Williams or "The Hand that Signed the Paper Felled a City" by Dylan Thomas, proving that some works were published and written before the etchings were made, and not true collaborations. The same can be true for the paintings, for example, Franz Kline's etching, printed alongside a Frank O'Hara poem, is called "Elizabeth" and was made in 1954. The description on this earlier piece reads: "oil on canvas", but is identical to the etching. One clear connection is that most of the print

[84] Mark Silverberg, *The New York School Poets and the Neo-Avant-Garde: Between Radical Art and Radical Chic* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), p. 241.
[85] Marjorie Perloff, *Frank O'Hara, Poet among Painters*, University of Chicago Press ed (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 231.
[86] Frank O'Hara and Larry Rivers, *Stones*, 25th edn (West Islip, NY: Universal Limited Art, 2010).
[87] Frank O'Hara and Michael Goldberg, *Odes* (New York, NY: Poet's Press, 1969).

makers were taught by either Peter Grippe or William Stanley Hayter who are both also in the portfolio and known for their work in *Atelier 17*. However, student, master and protégée are put in the same book without differentiating between them in rank, experience, or skill. Looking at the book without knowing the influences and links between the artist, it would seem that they all existed parallel to each other or in some ways evolved from each other, like the pages in a book, due to the forced linearity of the book. The connections between the artists are reduced to a sequence that is meaningless, as they are arranged alphabetically. The lack of writing on the work also makes it difficult to evaluate how the work was assembled; and as the archival work involved to unveil their cooperation would span across at least 42 individual archives, this thesis will focus on methods of reading the collaborations.

In *21 Etchings and Poems*, image and text come together in many different ways—some of them straightforward, as in Folio 22 by Karl Schrag (1912-2000) and David Lougée where the image repeats the subject of the poem. The poem describes two people riding through landscape "Fiercely, lady, do we ride the winter landscape, thinking of spring,", shown in the surroundings of the poem. Around the edges of the page the winter landscape is outlined, described in the poem as "no rarest, only bare waste and the path destroyed" showing bare plants and mountain ranges. In the left bottom corner, the thoughts of the character, "you, locked in the thoughts of a burning season" are visualized in the etching, within the head of an outlined character, where the fields are not bare, but the spring harvest is growing. The connection between the writing and the image is clear, the writing adding to the image and the image in return illuminating the writing. Similarly, Folio 11 by Stanley William Hayter (1901-1988) and Jacques-Henri Lévesque (1922-1959) shows a clear connection between the works except that it is more conceptual. This work is one of the three written in French alongside the work by Dotremond and Verdet. The words of the poem are

etched differently to those in the other Folios so that the writing has a three-dimensional quality to it: the letters are outlined, completely removed from any natural writing style. The writing is similar to the style of the etchings, the arches in the drawing are alluded to in the poem, "Cette course et son destin forme le cycle de l'attente,"[88] both the drawings and the words describing a certain endlessness. A similar connection between image and text can be seen in Folio 17 by Helen Phillips (1913-1995) with André Verdet (1913-2004), coincidentally also being another French work in the collection. Phillips was married to William S Hayter, having met him in his Paris studio. She was interested in the arrangement of space and the connection between printing and sculpture, which can be seen from the way this work has a three-dimensional quality to it. These works introduce a comparison between a visual aspect of the etchings and how those can be put in comparison to the written part of the work. The writing is here placed within the same dimension of experience as the etching.

Sometimes the clear connection creates an extra layer of interpretation as in Folio 7 by Letterio Calapai (1902-1993) and William Carlos Williams (1883-1963).

> To a Poor Old Woman
> munching a plum on
> the street a paper bag
> of them in her hand
>
> They taste good to her
> They taste good
> to her. They taste
> good to her
>
> You can see it by
> the way she gives herself
> to the one half
> sucked out in her hand
>
> Comforted
> a solace of ripe plums

[88] The arch and their [singular and plural here don't agree] destination create the cycle of waiting.

seeming to fill the air
They taste good to her

In the poem, the comfort of eating a ripe plum, a fruit so rich in color and taste, becomes a moment of solace for the main character in this poem. The plum, which tastes good to her is not only offers comfort but is also an active force of positivity in her life. "They taste good to her" implies an action taken by the plums, they become the main active force. This is reflected in the image where the plum watches and takes over the woman kneeling on the ground, like a moon guarding her.

In these works, there is a combination between the work and the poem where the reader both sees the poem as they are reading it, the experience of "reading" the poem is duplicated. The experience of seeing comes before reading the words, both on a level of the first interaction with the work but also in our personal development, John Berger in *Ways of Seeing* purports that "seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak […] It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it."[89] Berger here describes the experience of reading these poems, the back and forth between what the reader reads and how they are looking at what they are reading. These combinations of methods of seeing are only a first step into the wide range of combinatory methods of reading that are present within the work.

To continue the study of reading within *21 Etchings and Poems* one has to consider how reading is interrupted when the handwriting is hard to read. As seen in the previous examples, the portfolio does not use a typeface for the writing, creating interesting connections between the writing and the etching but can also cause obstacles. In Folio 7 by Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) and Harold Rosenberg (1906-1978), the only thing that is clearly legible is the word

[89] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 7.

"REVENGE"[90] placed in the center of the work, while the poem by Rosenberg, written at the top. is unfortunately almost illegible. The painting by de Kooning is abstract and the text becomes abstract in its unreadability. The viewer can get an idea of what is going on, a few words "The cart rocks in the hollow night/ [illegible] with somnambulist tusks/ The clouds follow in slow delight the…" are legible at the beginning and every few lines another couple of words can be made out "from my storybook [illegible] I take my bow and twenty arrows…" but most of the writing is unintelligible. The focus when trying to read this poem is on trying to read the writing, rather than just reading the poem itself. The reader is interrupted by the text and is placed in a static position as they are unable to move forward in the reading. Their lack of closeness to Rosenberg and familiarity with his scripts keeps them from understanding. This work plays with the expectations of written language as the readable part of this poem is the painting, rather than a poem itself. The limitations of reading versus viewing are brought into question as the viewable, the etching, becomes the readable.

Using a machine to reproduce writing in standard books has turned it into an invisible medium. Fonts have become an invisible machine to transfer the writing into the mind of the reader. By re-introducing the handwriting of the author, the reader is encumbered in their reading process by the author themselves. The author becomes more than a name on the bottom of the page, they become humanized by the way the "f" curls at the end of a word, or the way small words like "and", "if", or "or" finally become recognizable as the reader slowly gets used to the handwriting. The text becomes readable through practice, a practice that implies a connection of

[90] An interesting thing to note is that in the technical information by MoMA, the author is usually placed alongside the title of the poem, like "Poem" for the Frank O'Hara poem in Folio 12, or "Omega" for the Reavey poem in Folio 16. In the case of this particular work however, there is not title of the poem, not the filler "Poem" if the work has no title, but also not the work "Revenge" which one might expect. Meaning that the word "Revenge" is considered part of the painting rather than the poem.

familiarity with the writer. The handwriting does not tell the reader anything about the author, other than if they had neat writing or not, but it does tell them more than the typeface can. It shows them the human behind the text and creates more of the naturalness of a person than Times New Roman.[91] The text here is not unreadable but merely a bit difficult to read, but it is elevated into something where the individual hand of the author is much clearer, almost like the brushstrokes of a paintbrush. This connection to writing and painting brings into questions the relationship between both.

Once the reader has been able to access the book, handled the pages, deciphered the writing on the pages, the book introduces yet another obstacle, clear from the previous examples, language. *21 Etchings and Poems* is written in multiple languages which can result in a barrier to many readers. In connection to the previous point, reading in a foreign language creates its own difficulties, but it becomes even harder when the handwriting deters understanding. If the reader is unfamiliar with the language, they cannot anticipate the word sequence in a way a native speaker can. Although many of the texts are in English, *21 Etchings and Poems* also contains texts in French (by Dotremont, Lévesque, Verdet) and German (by Sahl). The text requires the reader to be comfortable in these three languages in order to embark on the process of reading them. If the reader is unable to read these three languages, it is interesting to consider how they would approach such a text. Especially since most of them are in English, one would be able to understand most without requiring foreign language skills. This language barrier introduces an interesting moment of reflection on the meaning of language and its relation to the images and raises questions about whether it is necessary to understand all the vocabulary to read these poems or if the shape of the

[91] Of course, there is the issue of the handwritten text not actually being hand copied every single time, the words are being printed, but they are not being printed as words. They are etched or copied as part of the complete collaboration. Instead of the writing being treated as writing, in this instance, it is being treated as part of the etching.

poem, the recognition of a few words, and the presence of the print enough to give the reader an adequate opportunity to 'read' the poem.

This question of how to read these foreign poems can be converted to questions relating to the reading of the images. How much does one have to understand of the context of the images to be able to "read" or "understand" them? This back and forth between reading and viewing is brought to the foreground in the first folio of the work by Pierre Alechinsky (born 1927) and Christian Dotremont (1922-1979) as it plays with the expectations of reading and understanding. Both were affiliated with CoBrA, an artist's collective based in Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam. Both artists are interested in readability and what language means by working with asemic writing, which Peter Schwenger defines as works that "are done on a single piece of paper; and within that circumscribed space they are capable of complex implications about the nature of writing."[92] The complex implications he refers to are the "written words" these are not readable to the viewer but instead force them to consider "that what is before our eyes is not only about writing but about reading as well, that these are pages that are meant to be read."[93] The expectation of all writing to be read is questioned in asemic writing, as there is no "reading" in the most straightforward sense of the word possible. Alechinsky's use of asemic writing stems from surrealist André Breton's ideas about automatism, which focus on the act of writing rather than the writing itself. Alechinsky was particularly interested in what Katherine Conley describes as blurring "the distinctions between writing and painting by maintaining a sense of intimacy, of touch, characteristic of handwriting. He has said that the Western style of painting on an easel

[92] Peter Schwenger, 'Reading Asemic', in *Asemic*, The Art of Writing (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), pp. 137–50 (p. 137) <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctvthhd18.7>.
[93] Schwenger, p. 137.

resembles the pose of a fencer."[94] Alechinsky created paintings like writing to engage the reader's or viewer's confusion of what to make of what they are reading/seeing, described by Conley as "painted script as an exaggeration of writing."[95]

Dotremont on the other hand had another interpretation of asemic writing. He wrote *Logograms,* word-poems using asemic writing to make the reader think about the role of writing by providing "key to translation in the form of a minuscule inscription in ordinary writing"[96] to decipher his works. By providing this expectation of translation (so inherent to asemic writing) the reader becomes aware of the role of writing. By balancing the idea of being able to read but not wholly grasp it, the reader is more engaged in trying to work it out, and the work becomes a translation project or a puzzle. Without the key, the "reader" cannot take on the role of the reader. The balancing act of putting the reader in a position where they have the desire to read but not the ability to (without help), the reader becomes aware of their own practice. By creating this limbo for the reader, the reader is removed from the automatism of reading.[97]

Alechinsky and Dotremont have worked on many projects together, including the Linolog series from the 1970s, which also combined writing and etching. Their work in *21 Etchings and Poems* consists of a poem encased in an animal surrounded by squiggles. The lines surrounding the work remind the reader of writing, as is common in the work of Dotremont, but the work is unreadable. The markings do not come together in a way that is legible. The lines also don't follow the structure of writing, there is no vertical or horizontal consistency, the lines move all over the page. There are a couple of letters to be uncovered, an "H" near the bottom, and what looks like

[94] Katharine Conley, 'Pierre Alechinsky's Ghostly Palimpsests', in *Surrealist Ghostliness* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), pp. 179–200 (p. 183) <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1ddr900.13>.
[95] Conley, p. 184.
[96] Schwenger, pp. 143–44.
[97] Schwenger, p. 146.

"e's" near the top. There is some consistency in the?repeated patterns of lines in both vertical and horizontal positions. The lines could be interpreted as writing, although no clues are given as how to interpret it, in contrast to the *logograms*.

The animal is depicted with four legs and a face that is either upside down or inverted. On the side of the animal the poem is printed. The animal is walking on a white strip along the base, that looks like a branch suspending the animal a short distance from the ground. On the white strip the names of the artists are printed, slightly slanted, on the left side of the work. The animal is very human like and does not resemble an animal as it has no tail, and the face neither has a snout nor is round like that of a human. The only animal-like features are the legs, which appear quadrupedal and the little stripe markings along the edges might imply some kind of fur covering the animal. The animal becomes a diagram of an animal, a way to draw an animal that is taught to children, relating to some of the CoBrA goals, which were focused on creating works that might appear childlike referring to a type of unmediated art.[98]

Inside the animal is the following poem, handwritten by Dotremont:

> Est-ce qu'il neigeait? —Lorsqu'elle
> m'a passé le petit peu de neige, le soleil
> s'était cache pour que rien ne fonde de notre
> rencontre, pour que le feu entre nous s'al-
> lume sans secours à seule raison de notre
> chaleur, à seule raison défaut de notre silence,
> Et d'ailleurs…
> (Is it snowing? When she / has passed me the little bit of snow, the sun / was hidden to ensure our meeting doesn't happen, / because the fire between us li /

[98] Conley, p. 183.

> ghts without recourse as the only reason for our / warmth, the only imperfect part of our silence, / and on the other hand…)

The poem speaks to a relationship between two people, hindered by the natural elements of snow and warmth. Within the confines of the animal, the text seems to be protected from the snow around it, which falls upon it in shapes. The poem asks if the shapes, instead of writing are potentially snow. Like the writing around the animal, the meaning is as easy read as it is to keep snow in the sun. The poem expresses the difficulty of holding on to something, in this particular case, holding on to the meaning of the scribbles, or snow that surround the poem. The poem is purposefully obscure not providing any information freely. Neither the writing, the drawing, nor the animal allow for transparency.

These limits of readability based in language can be translated into how we read images. As with language, there are signs to be understood in images, as WJT Mitchell points out: "images are not just a particular kind of sign, but something like an actor on the historical stage, a presence of character endowed with legendary status, a history that parallels and participates in the stories we tell ourselves about our own evolution from creatures "made in the image" of a creator, to creatures who make themselves and their world in their own image."[99] Knowing the background knowledge of these images, understanding them in their history is similar to knowing a language. Knowing about asemic writing and the childlike CoBrA style allows for the reader to understand what is at stake here. But as the limits imposed by Alechinsky and Dotremont are not breached, the reader is still unable to fully grasp the meaning of the work, other than that they are more fully able to appreciate what they do not understand.

Another work that engages with similar questions to Alechinsky and Dotremont is Folio 20 by Attilio Salemme (1911-1955) with Morris Weisenthal (1918–2009). The Weistenthal poem had

[99] Mitchell, *Iconology*, p. 9.

been published in a collection called *Walls of the Labyrinth* in 1953 and refers to Tiresias, the blind prophet in the tragedies *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone* by Sophocles. This prophet can often see the truth, although he is ignored by the main characters who are trying to escape a destiny of their own creation. This piece, in its play with Greek mythology, invites the reader or viewer to consider what it is that they cannot see themselves in the work. The images surrounding the poem, which is placed in a tower, over what looks like a heap of figures on the bottom of the page; with a sun in the right corner, also alluded to in the poem. The shapes around the poem are simplistic and light, especially in comparison to other works in the book, and are in complete contrast to the heavy language of the poem. The drawings are almost like stick-figures, although more delicate and pretty. The stars that surround them make a dreamlike impression on the viewer, contrasting harshly with the writing. The sinister language is written in words that fit in well with the surrounding drawings.

The poem refers to making sense of things that are not clear to the viewer, the narrator of the poem has been taught to see the clear song of the birds and asks, “can the blind lead, being radical and saintly?” Being radical and saintly in the message of this poem is to be able to see things others cannot. Like a lighthouse, the narrator can be our light and staff and show us the way. All these images of seeing and showing, recounted by a blind narrator, encourage the reader to question the meaning of “seeing”. The way this poem answers the question of seeing is by introducing the idea of blindness. Pondering on the ways the blind can see, or in this particular case, Tiresias, is the comparison that Weisenthal and Salemme are making, one where we are all blind, or even more blind, than Tiresias—and thereby missing out, being undressed by terrors of truth. The idea of blindness is one that was already present in the work of Read, where the artist gives eyes to the blind, as a sort of pedagogical tool. The Salemme work features his distinct

anthropomorphic buildings, or lighthouses. The lighthouse points to the sun, mimicking the action performed by Tiresias in the poem: "I'm called the ideation in a shade who points at the sun he's made." On the bottom of the image is a pile of ladders, alongside a small man who seemed to have created a contraption to elevate himself, trying to reach the height of the tower.

The first critic to properly establish the boundaries between the image and text was Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* published in 1853.[100] Lessing's theory applies to poetry and painting but can easily be applied to poetry and etching. He argued that written art was the superior, as it had the ability to tell a story, while plastic art, paintings and statues, did not. This division, although challenged by many artists and art critics since, is still a main starting point for modern criticism: literature and poetry are temporal, while painting and sculpture are spatial. Obviously, this rather black and white distinction has now opened up into grayer differentiations, but there is still a clear separation, which is supported in this work as the words are not intermingled but clearly separate from the etchings, even if they are put in the middle of the etching. There are a few ways time (temporality) and materiality (spatiality) are treated in this portfolio in relation to the back and forth between the images and texts present in the work. Lessing's definition of temporality is played with in the way every page exists in two parts, one being the etching and the other one the poem. When looking at the page, the first thing that is 'read' is the painting, as it has a more immediate impact, conforming to Lessing's idea of the spatiality of the painting. Secondly, the poem is read, also following Lessing's ideal, and thirdly, the page is looked at as a whole, and the reader returns to the etching to find out if a greater understanding can be gathered, this reflex is similar to reading a sign next to a painting, with, as established by Berger, a priority of the visual. It is here that the reader breaks

[100] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

with Lessing as suddenly there is a temporality added to the painting and a spatiality added to the poem.

Folio 10 by Salvatore Grippe with Richard Wilbur, which combines the image and text in a style of a trompe d'oeil, offers an example where this layering plays an important role. The image surrounding the poem shows both a skull or a cave with a bat in the center, depending on what the viewer considers first. The poem also starts off with the mind, comparing it to a bat, "mind in its purest play is like some bat that beats about in caverns all alone." The move between the bat, the cave and the mind are recreated in the poem. The main difference here is while in the poem the "mind […] is like some bat", the image is more literal, placing a bat within the cavern of the mind, within the skull. This play with the comparison is alluded to at the end of the poem, asking: "And has this simile a like perfection?" The image offers up both a literary and a visual simile, like a fun game to remind the reader of how similar words and images are, and how temporality can be added to an image and spatiality to a poem.

Writing in the mid-1980s, Mitchell further complicates the text-image relation by pointing to the unnaturalness of words: "Thus, poetry, or verbal expression in general, sees its signs as arbitrary and conventions - that is, "unnatural" in contrast to the natural signs of images. Painting sees itself as uniquely fitted for the representation of the visible world, whereas poetry is primarily concerned with the invisible realm of ideas and feelings."[101] As poetry and painting exist in different realms of what is visible or tangible, Michell also maintains the ideas introduced by Lessing of the temporal and spatial aspect of texts versus the images. However, Mitchell also believes that there is no real difference between the image and the text as they can take over each other's roles: "Plainly, resemblance in any degree is no sufficient condition for representation. […]

[101] Mitchell, *Iconology*, p. 48.

Nor is resemblance necessary for reference; almost anything can stand for anything else. […] Denotation is the core of the representation and is independent of resemblance."[102] Here we see a structuralist reading of the work where the directness of the image is impossible, and the signs of the words are the same and the superiority of the image found in resemblance is not actually required for a reading by the viewer.

As Mitchell summarizes: "The idea has a double connection with the object it represents: it is a sign by resemblance, a picture painted on the mind by sensory experience; it is also a sign by causation, an effect of the object that imprinted it on the mind."[103] In Folio 5 by Fred Becker (1913-2004) with T Weiss (1916-2003), the combination focusses on multiple methods of signs and signposting, and how their combination creates an personal collaboration. "To Yeats In Rapallo" by T. Weiss is a poem about Rapallo, put alongside a drawing a Saint created using a map-like layout, referencing William Butler Yeats, the modernist Irish poet. There are connections to the outside world within this work, requiring prior knowledge of the reader. Yeats is not part of this work, neither are maps, saints etc. The fact that a saint is present also refers to a whole field of iconology. The poem implies that knowledge of Yeats, and his role in the shift in modernism he developed with Ezra Pound in Rapallo, is required. However, to appreciate the poem, only a limited knowledge of who Yeats is, is required. The poem refers to a type of presence, "It must have been there when you arrived; saints / are not such insubstantial things, surely not / the one called Sant'Ambrogio." The saint, described as bright and fresh, is conceived against the awkward visitor, foreign to the people of the region. The poem describes a visitor who sees himself as someone who has discovered a peasant heaven, bitter towards its inhabitants who are viewed as

[102] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 57.
[103] Mitchell, *Iconology*, p. 60.

peasants, who in turn see the visitor as awkward. Yeats's presence in the poem adds a layer for those who know, but this knowledge is not required.

Something similar is at stake in Folio 14 by Ezio Martinelli (1913-1980) with Horace Gregory's (1898-1982) "The Blue Waterfall" , their work contains levels of imagery that are not only present within the text itself but encompassing a time and context around it. The references to "Hokusai 1760-1849" invite the reader to become aware of Hokusai, a Japanese artist famous for his landscapes. However, the reader is not required to know this background information. The poem provides slight references to it, starting with a description of the work, ending with the presence of Hokusai himself. The poem reminds the reader of a painting they might have seen before, the etchings around it do the same. The combination of both brings Hokusai's work to mind like a distant memory. This idea of being slightly aware of the work but not completely mirrors the feeling one might have looking at a Japanese work from the Edo period. One can appreciate the beauty and skill without fully grasping the historical significance. This poem creates something that forms at the tip of the tongue of the viewer, who recognizes it, but is unable to give voice to it. The viewer can appreciate the work without fully understanding it. This feeling is echoed in the work as a whole, where it can be understood in levels, each requiring its own previous knowledge, but all equally valuable.

However, in order to engage more deeply with the work, a further understanding of the circumstances under which it was produced can provide more insight into how it should or could be read. The work was published in 1960 by the Morris Gallery, printed at the Andersen-Lamb, Brooklyn, New York and edited by Grippe. During the time the work was published, artists came together in New York to form a collective that became known as the New York School, the name was supposed to invoke the School of Paris which had long been the dominant art hub. The New

York School was created to collect and celebrate art from the "New World". The term "school" in their title is misleading, as compared to other art movements, they had no manifesto or rules, just what scholar Mark Ford defined as a "determination to be unprogrammatic."[104] The New York School, serving as only a vague umbrella term for the work being done in New York during the 1950's-60's, came after a period of great political turmoil. In his book *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, Serge Guilbaut defines its effects as follows: "For them [New York artists], as we have seen, the political situation had become hopeless in its complexity and absurdity (many who rejected the Marxist left ended up embracing what they had once detested and rallying to the liberal cause). The avant-garde retained traces of political consciousness but devoid of direction."[105] This lack of direction aids to the problem of defining the New York School and placing artwork within a movement at that time, this is only exacerbated in a work like *21 Etchings and Poems*, where there are limited ways of connecting the works in terms of geography, history, or style.

The lack of direction, however, does not imply a lack of action, as Guilbaut noted: "they did not avoid the problems of the age but transformed them into something else: they transformed history into nature." [106] Guilbaut seems to use language derived from French literary theorist Roland Barthes' chapter on "Reading and deciphering myth", where he describes how myths, can neutralize language. By turning historical effects into facts, Barthes notes that "the myth-consumer takes the signification for a system of facts: myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system."[107] The notion of turning history into nature is creating something that exists

[104] Frank O'Hara and others, *The New York Poets: Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, James Schuyler: An Anthology*, ed. Mark Ford (Manchester: Carcanet, 2004), p. x.
[105] Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 113.
[106] Guilbaut, p. 113.
[107] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies.*, trans. Annette Lavers, Mythologies English Selections (London: J. Cape, 1972), p. 130 <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/102469649> [accessed 25 October 2021].

in the present as unmediated fact. Going back to the New York School their aim is to create a work that has taken history as a given and consider how to move forward.

In New York, mythology was seen as a way of breaking with cubism and moving art forward in a way that encourages collectivity. As cubism's status as devoid of lived experience posed problems in the 1940s, especially during the wartime period, when many artists congregated in New York having escaped persecution back home. It was brought to New York by French artist André Breton as part of the surrealist movement. Breton, according to art historian Stewart Buettner "juxtaposed elements of ancient mythology with myths arising from contemporary culture: the artificial man, interplanetary communication, Rimbaud, the superman, and the triumph of science."[108] Although referring to myths might seem counterintuitive to the automatism representative of another aspect of the surrealist movement, the goal was to find access to a universal human experience or what Breton would refer to as the "raw material of human thought processes."[109] In *View*, an art magazine published by Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, Breton, describes the "need for a New Myth" in 1942, starting with a fictional conversation between him and 18th century French writer Charles de Brosse. In this fictional story de Brosse has also left Europe for New York, fleeing the Italians. The two are arguing about religion, and the use of idols, Breton explains:

> My dear President, from this point of universal history at which we have now arrived (1942) it remains for the ignorant and credulous 'lower classes' to pay the expenses of military ventures. Nations, since nations still exist, are ruled periodically against each other. Nothing has changed to such a point that one must admit that their divinities, their fairly simple ideals — or more exactly, the degree of faith and exaltation they place in them, do not decide, to a considerable

[108] Stewart Buettner, *American Art Theory, 1945-1970*, Studies in Fine Arts. Art Theory, no. 1 (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981), p. 51.
[109] Buettner, p. 52.

> extent, the issue of battles, and hence the respective fates of philosophies, finally of everything we care about.[110]

Breton is writing about World War I and World War II, which caused many people to flee to the United States. What Breton conveys is the feeling of helplessness, as current divinities do not influence their day to day lives that are ravaged by war over which they have no control.

Further in the conversation, de Brosse denies the positivity of creating an entirely new myth, Breton explains using Max Ernst, about who the rest of the article is dedicated:

> You see, I cannot grant you that mythology is only the recital of the acts of the dead: I who speak to you have lived to see disengaged from the banal transcription of his deeds the life of my dearest friends, Max Ernst. Here the eye witness I could be yield voluntarily to the adept: I consider the work of Max Ernst pregnant with facts destined to be realized on the plane of reality; what is more, I believe that it prefigures the very order in which these facts are destined to appear. Have we not known for a long time that the ride of the sphinx says much more than it seems to say? And the labors of Hercules, and the Golden Fleece? If I held the pen of the great bards…[111]

What Breton points to here is something we see reflected in the theory around the use of myths at this time" the connection between the plane of reality and the use of mythology. Also as mentioned by Carl Jung, the importance of the mythological not just as an explanation for physical events, but also as a way to describe internal human experience. The reference here is not just to the specific stories of the myths but to a connection between what the myth and art are trying to grapple with, the questions it tries to answer.

The artists' focus was on their audiences, Guilbaut continues, "they wanted to articulate the disarray and anxiety of the postwar period and thus establish a dialogue with the public. Inspired by their work with the WPA, they tried to mobilize the communicative power of the fresco, but

[110] Andre Breton and others, 'The Legendary Life of Max Ernst, Preceded by a Brief Discussion on the Need for a New Myth', in *Surrealism and Painting* (Boston: MFA Publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2002), pp. 155–65 (p. 155).
[111] Andre Breton and others, p. 159.

with a difference."[112] A couple of the artists in *21 Etchings and Poems* had been part of the Works Progress Administration, or WPA including Fred Becker, Letterio Calapai and Louis Schanker, drawing a clear connection between the work created as part of the New Deal and after. As a result, the focus of the work did not emphasize the final product, but the process, in Guilbaut's words: "The new manner of painting emphasized the individual aspect of creation but at the same time laid bare the process, the mechanics of painting, and the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of describing the world."[113] In the format of an artist book it would also be easier to reach a broader public, allowing people to access the work in a way similar to a fresco but allowing more breadth in terms of content. The focus on establishing a dialogue is also crucial in relation to *21 Etchings and Poems*, which invites the reader to become a part of the work.

The focus on experiences and processes was reflected in the New York School's notion of creating a sense of presence and being there. American abstract expressionist Robert Motherwell (1915-1991), who was part of the New York School, described the focus on creation as follows: "One might say that the School of New York tries to find out what art is precisely through the process of making art. That is to say, one discovers, so to speak, rather than imposes a picture."[114] Rather than focusing on the final art piece, the process is emphasized, the creation of the art is put at the foreground of art creation, as expression or process of an action. Eric Smigel, in his paper on the New York School deduces that what Motherwell described is not only applicable to the art making but also to the creation of the artist, "the process of making art was synonymous with the process of self-discovery." [115] This in itself is not a revolutionary concepts, artists are known to

[112] Guilbaut, p. 196.
[113] Guilbaut, p. 197.
[114] Eric Smigel, 'Identity, Image, and the Heroic Myth of the New York School of Painting, Poetry, and Music', *Interdisciplinary Humanities*, 26.2 (2009), 6–20 (pp. 8–9).
[115] Smigel, pp. 8–9.

create sketches and practice before their final product, but the difference here lies in the embrace of the study, the embrace of the project. The artists discovered their art alongside their own discovery. Mark Silverberg's study of the New York School places the focus on collaborations that are aimed at "draw[ing] particular attention to the occasion, setting, and relationship behind its making and in so doing to emphasize the inevitably social nature of language and the relational nature of art."[116] By focusing on the process of the creation of art, the works are not only valuable for their final product, but allow reflection on the process of the art making. "As has been repeatedly noted," Silverberg continues, "New York School collaborations produce a desire to be there, to enter the conversation, scene or party out of which the work has seemingly grown."[117] The study of these works draws largely on the social and historical conditions of the work, rather than seeing the work as representative of something universal, it becomes personal. However, the process of art making does not end with the artists but continues in the interaction between the piece and the viewer.

Some artists in *21 Etchings and Poems* can be considered the very center of the New York School, like Frank O'Hara and Willem de Kooning. Others, including international artists such as Pierre Alechinsky and Dylan Thomas, were not part of the New York School. Their work deals with issues from their home countries, which were also trying to recuperate from world war but in very different ways. However, together all the collaborations result in a work that is a bid for collaborative internationalism, focusing on the inter-metropolitan experiment that uses the book form in order to illustrate certain kinds of international issues and ideas surrounding reading. The interest in collaboration was not only present in New York during the time but was an international

[116] *New York School Collaborations: The Color of Vowels*, ed. by Mark Silverberg, Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 7.
[117] Silverberg, *New York School Collaborations*, p. 7.

phenomenon defined by Akane Kawakami, who's focus is on western European collaborative art, as the "cross-fertilization between the arts writers and painters [who] came together as never before on the page/canvas, united in their pursuit of what they saw as the authentic nature, as opposed to the pragmatic one, of the sign."[118] The goal of artists was to create an experience, rather than a recreation or an experience.

Folio 21 by Louis Schanker (1903-1981) and Harold Norse (1916-2009) also dwells on the connection between abstract art and writing. Although the Schanker work brings to mind the calligraphic writing of Alechinsky, this is not the case here. Schanker's abstract work did not make recourse to writing, the connection was abstract movement. Shanker's work is abstract, inviting the viewer to reflect on what is being shown as a reflection of what is introduced in the poem. The poem, "Most Often in the Night" by Harold Norse comes from a collection of Norse poems and describes a subject who gets up in the night to look out the window, looking at tall and vacant structures echoing Nicholson's Tenements. The writing here also provides an insight on how to view the abstract images surrounding it. Buildings are "tall and vacant… moving in caves of want", the viewer creates a perception of what the viewer in the poem is seeing which is brought into life through a sensation created by the abstract drawing around the words. The words here give meaning to the abstract art, and again the art gives meaning to the words. The image takes over the writing, similarly the experience of what is seen by the viewer of the poem is reflected there, offering a constant reflection on what is being seen in the image and what the image is showing the viewer.

Folio 23, by Esteban Vicente (1903-2001) and Pieter Viereck (1916-2006), also incorporates an abstract image alongside a written poem, but in this case neither provide

[118] Akane Kawakami, 'Illegible Writing: Michaux, Masson, and Dotremont', *The Modern Language Review*, 106.2 (2011), 388–406 (p. 388) <https://doi.org/10.5699/modelangrevi.106.2.0388>.

information on the other. Vicente was part of the New York School, born in Spain and a good friend of Willem de Kooning, whose work is also part of the portfolio.[119] The overlapping color block clusters within this work are very much in the style of Vicente, although this is a monochrome version. The poem presented alongside it, "Nostalgia," was reprinted from a larger work, *The Persimmon Tree,* as outlined in the acknowledgements. The poem refers to the number 8 multiple times, first in terms of "eight thousand years", then "a mere eight flickers" and then "after eight cycles"; while throughout the poem makes mention of August, the 8th month of the year. The poem discusses the passing of time and the remembrance of things passed. In a study on Viereck's poetry, Marie Henault draws a connection between this poem and Christ, noting how everything has changed, and no one remembers him.[120] The connection between the painting and the poem is subtle and can be tied back to moments in the text that refer to images and references. The second stanza is set out as follows:

> After eight thousand years among the stars,
> A sudden wistfulness for August
> Tugged me like guilt through half a cosmos
> Back to a planet sweet as canebrake,
> where winds have plumes and plumes have throats,
> where pictures
> Like "blue" and "south" can break your heart with sweet suggestiveness.

The wandering subject is tugged back to a planet that is sweet and feathery and where everything is extremely tender. The flitting around the planets, the meaninglessness of time [not a sentence] The idea of suggestiveness connects this work to the abstract images around it, where the subject of the poem introduces themselves "'My name is…' and then I spoke the true and lost and terrifying word," as if naming things is, in itself, a destructive practice. Here the idea of abstract

[119] Berry-Hill Galleries., *Esteban Vicente: Then & Now: Work from the 1950s and 1990s.* (New York, N.Y.: Berry-Hill Galleries, Inc., 1998), p. 12 <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/102009562> [accessed 12 March 2021].
[120] Marie Henault, *Peter Viereck*, Twayne's United States Authors Series (Woodbridge, CT: Twayne Publishers, 1969), CXXXIII, p. 109 <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015013496172>.

art collides with that of abstract language. The name itself cannot be uttered or written down, just as the image cannot introduce a clear sign but has to revert to the realm of the abstract to truly convey its meaning.

Moving away from figuration took on different goals that included an internal mode of communication. In the 1940's abstract expressionism formed the basis of what later moved towards the more mythological and psychological. Moving on from obstacles in terms of readability of the font and orientation, this work also introduces levels of intelligibility that are based on the same premise of what abstract expressionism hopes to achieve which David and Cecile Shapiro define as follows:

> The tradition of art as communicator or as source of pleasure appeared to have been abandoned by an intensely individual school of painting, in which each artist had a distinct, immediately differentiable calligraphy. Yet all seemed to share certain assumptions: the need to expose the subconscious, the value of the exploitation of chance; the capacity of paint to serve as a vehicle for emotional expression; the certainty that the times mandates an entirely new way of painting implying an individually developed style in a vehemently personal art divorced from, and irreconcilable with, the past.[121]

The idea of moving inwards into the unconscious to create something universal had already been prominent in Europe during the Dada and other early twentieth century art movements under several different names. To attain this internal quality of experiences, artists, who can see the world in a much richer way, turned to music, believing that this art form could create an experience beyond the physical. The idea was that through this method of art making, the artist could reach the audience on a different level in a way that allowed them to connect more intuitively. Many projects sought to combine the characteristics of music with those of art. One example is by Bruno Corra (1892-1976) and his brother Arnaldo Ginna (1890-1982), who tried to create music by

[121] David Shapiro and Cecile Shapiro, *Abstract Expressionism: A Critical Record* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 1–2.

adding time to painting, or, creating films in the 1910's. Their chromatic music was created by adding colored lightbulbs to a type of piano, playing music which was then translated into light and could be recorded. Piet Mondriaan's work in the 1920's had a similar goal, using abstract forms to create musical pieces on a canvas.

Here it is useful to turn to the Folio 15 by Ben Nicholson with Herbert Read mentioned at the start of the chapter. The question of turning the page invites the reader to consider many physical aspects of reading, but the abstract nature of the art work also invites the viewer to consider the abstract nature of the writing and the effect thereof. The title of the poem "tenement" provides the viewer with a way to read the abstract art: the shapes can be seen as a row of apartment buildings in New York—with different constructions jutting out against the skyline, or balconies and windows protruding from the facades of the apartment buildings, depending on the angle of viewing the work. The question here is what the relationship is between the text and the image: in particular, is the abstract art supposed to receive a meaning from the poem? The text provides an extra layer for the abstract work, which can sometimes make a reader more comfortable with the abstract piece, providing a method of looking at the abstract work. In her work on Read Natalie Ferris focusses especially on how Read saw abstract art either as something that the viewer "got" or was otherwise experienced as meaningless. Quoting Read she wrote: "It is ultimately of pedagogical benefit, giving eyes to the blind, which will correct the bias of an exclusively linguistic mode of thought and in so doing correct the bias of a mechanized mode of life."[122] According to Ferris, the goal of Read is to expand the methods of reading, both in terms of linguistics and in terms of mechanism. This idea of the mechanism has already been discussed in relation to

[122] Natalie Ferris, '"Vocal Illyrian Avowals": Herbert Read and Abstract Poetry', *Word & Image*, 31.3 (2015), 362–73 (p. 363) <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2015.1057432>.

Mallarmé in the introduction. The way this work in particular interrupts the mechanical aspect of reading is that the book must be turned on its side to be able to read the work.

The portfolio engages with the abstract but develops it by placing writing alongside the painting and collecting it in a book form. The viewer requires a reflection, a stasis and envelopment in the place of not fully understanding the work but experiencing it. In *Notes on Abstract Art*, written between 1937 and 1948, Ben Nicholson observes that: "One of the main differences between a representational and an abstract painting is that the former can transport you to Greece by a representation of blue skies and seas, olive trees and marble columns, but in order that you may take part in this you will have to concentrate on the painting, whereas the abstract version by its free use of form and color will be able to give you the actual quality of Greece itself, and this will become a part of the light and space and life in the room – there is no need to concentrate it become a part of living."[123] The communicator, which abstract expressionism tries to abandon, is in the writing placed alongside the image, but does not negate this goal of aiming for an emotional expression. The readable part of the work does not explain the work, there is still a connection between the viewer and the work that is deeper than a surface level reading of the signs and signifies within the work.

Read's description of Nicholson's work is as follows: "It is true that we speak endlessly about form and composition, even 'fracture' and 'plasticity,' but never of the fusion of all these concrete and analyzable elements into an apprehension of the inner essence of things, an essence expressed in a visual language that is but a refinement of the symbolic means we all use when we

[123] Ben Nicholson, '"Typescript Entitled, 'Notes on "Abstract" Art' by Ben Nicholson", Ben Nicholson OM, [1937–48] – Tate Archive', Tate Archive, TGA 8717/3/1/7 <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-8717-3-1-7/typescript-entitled-notes-on-abstract-art-by-ben-nicholson> [accessed 3 September 2020].

wish to transfer a meaning into visible signs."[124] The inner essence of a work like this, although approachable, is unreachable. The symbolic reference can only go so far in an attempt to reach the inner essence. This obviously introduces a problem when speaking about these works: How does language go beyond the endless reiteration of the form and composition? The problem with trying to discuss the meaning or the ways of reading this art is that it negates the goal of these works. The limits of "transfer[ring] meaning into visible signs" are expanded when visible signs are limited to words only.

The ideas of mythology in relation to abstract work drew on the of psychoanalytic work of Carl Jung (1875-1961), Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. His research started as early as 1902 with his paper "On the Psychology and Pathology of So-called Occult Phenomena", although his main corpus on the subject was published from 1933 onwards. The move to Jungian psychology during the abstract expressionist movement allowed for artists in New York to maintain the community goal of their work from what they worked on as part of the WPA while allowing artists to move beyond the restrictions of social realism. In his paper on "Jung and Abstract Expressionism", Terree Grabenhorst-Randall describes the abstract expressionist as searching "for forms of expression that would break through individual boundaries of experience in order to create a universal humanistic art out of the collective life of human species. They sought to accomplish this by developing themes and an iconography that drew on mythology, on primitive art, and particularly on Jung's concept of the collective unconscious."[125] The abstract expressionists' inspiration came from a combination of Jung and, later, Breton and Surrealism,

[124] Herbert Edward Read, *Ben Nicholson: Paintings*, (London: Methuen, 1962), p. 2 <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b2809267>.

[125] Terree Grabenhorst-Randall, 'Jung and Abstract Expressionism', in *C.G. Jung and the Humanities*, ed. Karin Barnaby and Pellegrino D'Acierno; author??, *Toward a Hermeneutics of Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 185–205 (p. 185) <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv3hh569.24>.

which in Grabenhorst-Randall's words "transcend the traditional boundaries of rationality and logically discoverable reality. […] Automatism, both in writing and in painting, developed as an antithesis to external, rational, and conscious ways of recording reality."[126] The focus on abstract expressionism was to gain access to the collective unconscious, rather than one's personal subconscious.

The connection here between art, society, and the individual is based on reconnecting art to the "social fabric."[127] Although Jung claims that the fabric is already inherent within the artist when they create their work, Read sees the artist as part of the creator of the fabric. Rather than blindly groping for unconscious memories and images, Read considers that the work becomes part of the fabric of society, the translations binds people together: "For the essential nature of art is not given to it by a civilization or a religion, but is an indefeasible faculty of man himself—a certain disposition of sensation and intuition which impels him to shape things in proportion and rhythm, to endow his words and symbols with everlasting wonder and enchantment."[128] The sensation and intuition referred to arise from what Jung would refer to as the collective unconscious. Read in this instance points to Freud, rather than Jung in his writing, claiming that "the technique of the poet or the artist is in some way a means of breaking down the barriers between individual egos, uniting them all in some collective ego such as we found typical of the undifferentiated life of primitive people — a life in which the world of phantasy had not yet become the unreal world."[129] Again the anxiety of the times is present here in Read's words, the world of phantasy provides almost a place of refuge from the current world ravaged by war.

[126] Grabenhorst-Randall, p. 187.
[127] Herbert Read, *Art and Society*, (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. xiii <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x001095191>.
[128] Herbert Read, p. 71.
[129] Herbert Read, p. 196.

The focus creating an alternative world can be seen in of Folio 13 by Jacques Lipchitz (1891-1973) and Hans Sahl (1902-1993), the latter the only German work in the collection. The etching surrounds the poem in the shape of a man with his arm stretched out in front of him, trying to engulf the poem.

In den Steinen der Nacht glüht die Sonne von gestern,
In den Bäuchen der Toten Fische das Licht,
In mir sind Gesichter, die niemand gesichtet,
Ahnüng bin ich dem Weltgericht,

Körper dem Schwebenden, Zentaür ünd Nymphe,
Aüf den Wiesen des Himmels ein Halm,
In mir denken Berge, Wälder ünd Sümpfe,
Und das Meer, ünd die Schlacht, ünd Städte in Qüalm.

Und die Steine der Nacht, sie sollen mich wärmen,
Wenn der Seib erstarrf ist ünd erloschen das Licht,
Und die Welt, die ich liebte, in meinen Gedärmen
Dämmernd zü Ende denkt mein Gedicht

(In the stones of the night the sun from yesterday glows,
In the bellies of the dead fish the light,
In me there are faces that no one sees,
I am apt to the world judgment.

Body to the floating, centaur and nymph,
On the meadows of the sky a stalk,
In me mountains, forests and swamps think,
And the sea, and the battle, and cities in smoke.

And the stones of the night, they should warm me,
When the seif is solidified and the light goes out,
And the world that I loved, dawning in my intestines,
my poem thinks to the end.)

The poem makes references to water like Folio 19, referring to mythical creatures like the centaur and the nymph. The word “Nymphe” is emphasized by an arrow on the left side of the poem, pointing to word. The poem comes to an end and in itself considers its own end: “in meinen Gedärmen Dämmernd zü Ende denkt mein Gedicht”. The reference to the mythical world is not mirrored in the drawing of a man, which although printed on paper embodies the three-dimensional

quality of Lipchitz's sculptures. The face of the pictured man is hidden, like the face in the poem. The poem, although making references to mythical creatures also plays with ideas of representation.

Jung divides the unconscious into two parts, the personal and the collective. The personal unconscious is "is made up essentially of contents which have at one time been conscious but which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed, the contents of the collective unconscious have never been in consciousness, and therefore have never been individually acquired, but owe their existence exclusively to heredity."[130] Events, stories and images that are part of the collective unconscious were passed down through people without requiring an actual event to have created the memory. Jung uses examples of disparate groups using similar imagery without having previously connected. Jung points to other disciplines who have found similar patterns he calls archetypes:

> The concept of the archetype, which is an indispensable correlate of the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seems to be present always and everywhere.[131]

Here he points to research that has shown repetitive patterns across time and geography. His example is that of the sun phallus, a phenomenon first described to him by a patient and later referenced in an edited translation of a Greek text from the Mithraic cult.[132] Claiming that the coincidence laid bare a collective memory that exists in the collective unconscious, Jung defines it as follows: "This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which

[130] C. G. Jung and others, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 9 (Part 1): Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), para. 88.
[131] Jung and others, para. 89.
[132] C. G. Jung, *Volume 8 Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 8: Structure & Dynamics of the Psyche*, *Volume 8 Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 8* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), paras 318–319 <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400850952>.

give definite form to certain psychic contents."[133] The individual cannot invent these archetypes, they already exist within ones' mind but their recreation is always secondary or diminished. In this sense the myth becomes what Roland Barthes describe almost 20 years later in 1954-56: "myth in fact belongs to the province of a general science, coextensive with linguistics, which is semiology."[134] Mythology becomes part of the human conscious in a way that is measurable.

Myths, according to Jung are therefore not about explaining where thunder comes from, for example, Jung grapples with the human component of the interaction between person and myth or as Jung scholar Robert Segal notes: "The subject matter is not literal but symbolic: not the external world but the human mind. Myth originates and functions to satisfy the psychological need for contact with the unconscious."[135] The physical within the story speaks to a mental or emotional reaction of the people who tell the mythological stories. Returning to the notion of the gods, Segal explains that "For Jung, myth is no more about gods than about the physical world. It is about the human mind."[136] People are not able to "consciously invent gods. Humans can only project onto the world gods already in their minds." [137] The goal here becomes to uncover what is within our minds, because that internal memory is something that we can all relate to. An example of this is Folio 18 by André Racz (1916-1994) and Thomas Merton (1915-1968), featuring and image of Jesus on the Cross next to a poem about modern times, implying the timelessness of suffering and religion. The image of the crucifixion is placed in an interesting juxtaposition with the text that deals with the crucifixion is a modern context. The work therefore copies the experience of the reader, as the work itself too becomes yet another rendition of the crucifixion in a modern context.

[133] Jung and others, para. 90.
[134] Barthes, *Mythologies.*, p. 219.
[135] Robert A. Segal, 'Introduction', in *Jung on Mythology*, ed. Robert A. Segal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), II, 3–46 (p. 3) <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv10crg5b.3>.
[136] Segal, II, p. 6.
[137] Segal, II, p. 6.

Racz's work often contains many references to mythology, and Merton, a monk at the Abbey of Gethsemani, often addressed spirituality.[138] Baroness C de Heude, who is mentioned in the subtitle of the poem, was a catholic socialist activist, who started the Friendship house in New York, fighting for racial equality. The work is not just about Jesus who died for our sins; what Racz and Merton want to show is the work that is being done for those communities, how that work is being continued, in the same way Jesus cared about his communities, it is not about his actual presence.

Jung does not provide a method of reading myths, as the fluid relationship between the myth and the unconscious prevents people frombeing able to fully express them. There are archetypes, the crucifixion for example, the wider meaning of which, according to Segal, is not definite: "Insofar as the contents of the collective unconscious are archetypes, the definitive meaning of myths is the expression of archetypes. But because archetypes are innately unconscious, they can express themselves only obliquely, through symbols."[139] In case of the Racz/Merton work, the crucifixion evokes ideas of community and dying as a sacrifice; but it also does more.

Religious iconography lends itself well to these processes of mythmaking, as they are already created myths that are still able to connect to a collective unconscious today. The work inviting the clearest reflection on religion is Folio 6 by Ben Zion (1897-1987) and David Ignatow (1914-1997). The text describes the "faithful one", who is attacked within the poem, "praying, he moves among those holding knives, He has been cut and does not mind now." The image surrounding the poem contains three hands, clockwise from the top, the first one is covering the face of the person depicted in the etching. The hand reaches down from above as if from a larger

[138] Paul M. Pearson, 'Thomas Merton, Archivist: Preserving His Own Memory', *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 21.2 (2003), 47–62. Pearson.
[139] Segal, II, p. 9.

being, like God, or an adult shielding a child. The next hand is placed in the bottom right corner of the work holding a knife. The hand is not attached to a body but creeps in below the poem. The last hand is placed in the bottom left corner and is crudely drawn, with fingers that are intwined in the fabric of the toga. The image of hand among the toga-like clothes worn by the bearers of the hands places this poem in a Judeo-Christian biblical context, as reflected in the poem. Reflections of being persecuted for religious affiliations is a prescient concept in the post-war era, and the poem shows how this myth of persecution has turned into history and then again into nature.

However, using myth to refer to an unconscious connection between people does require a certain translation or interpretation of the myths. "To reach their intended audience," Segal continues, "myths must be translatable into a language the audience knows. Just as archetypes must be translated, however insufficiently, into myths, so myths must be translated, however insufficiently, into the language of those whose myths they are."[140] Here, myths pose a problem of translation, almost similar to the problem of translation posed within this work. To find the most straightforward connection between the myth and the archetype is impossible, only vague translations can be performed. The same is true for images and texts that provide different planes of translation and understanding. Combining both can allow an artist to move further into the realm of the untranslatable. This is in line with what Barthes called turning myth into nature. An example of this is Folio 9 by Peter Grippe (1912-2002) with Dylan Thomas (1914-1953) which includes an angel at the top of the page, providing a biblical framework for the people present in the hands on the bottom of the page. Adding the angel allows the reader to view the hands not only as the destructive hands of the king, mentioned in the poem as "The hand that signed the paper felled a city," but also God's hands who is said to keep his followers in his palm. The theme of the poem

[140] Segal, II, p. 11.

is the power of royalty, which in this case does more harm than good, but it also invokes images from the bible, in the lines "The hand that signed the treaty bred a fever, And famine grew, and locusts came" referring to when the Pharaoh of Egypt didn't follow the commands from God to let his people go, bringing famine and locusts into his world. The mention of the goose's quill—"A goose's quill has put an end to murder"—places this work into a later time period, moving centuries beyond the influence of the Pharaoh. The connection implies an unchanged nature of the role of the kings, a role which is found in God, and God has changed from a mythical being into nature.

Summarizing the influence of Jung on the abstract expressionists, and their use of mythology during the time period right before this portfolio was created, Grabenhorst-Randall wrote as follows:

> Myths, especially those of rebirth and renewal, transformation and rites of passage, were important themes used by these artists in their early works and, in some cases, in later works as well. Like Jung, these artists regarded myth as a vehicle to explore the symbolism of the human psyche and as a means of making contact with the collective unconscious. Like Jung, they also believed that the pragmatic identification of myth as a part of one's daily life would help answer fundamental questions that have always troubled humanity: Who are we? Where are we? How did we get here? For the abstract expressionists, the use of myth gave perspective and order to forces that were inexplicable and fearful.[141]

These themes, the connection with the myth and the creation of the myth, are clearly present in the work. *21 Etchings and Poems* is part of this myth making by using mythology and drawing on the collective unconscious so that the artists were able to compile a work that provides answers to the contemporary world. The connection worked both ways, as the collective unconscious was echoed to bring the readers together but an extra layer was added to create a new mythology.

[141] Grabenhorst-Randall, p. 188.

The New York art scene was able to bring together the complexity of the situation and create art that did not owe anything to the public, in Guilbaut's words "the new manner of painting emphasized the individual aspect of creation but at the same time laid bare the process, the mechanics of painting, and the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of describing the world."[142] As proposed by Breton, the works are not aiming to recall or represent antiquity, their goal is to invite "a sense of immediacy", a connection with the lived experience of the artists. According to Buettner "in bringing this idea to life, the artist sought to give primordial and mythic figures a sense of immediacy that had relevance to contemporary life."[143] The myths were considered a source of collective history to draw inspiration from with a goal to create new memories beyond that. In this work in particular, the collaborations make allusions to their mythical root while inviting further reflection on the role of the myth.

Returning to ideas of the collective subconscious in relation to mythology one has to consider art in relation to the society in which it was created. Herbert Read, who worked with Nicholson to create "Tenement", was an English art historian who wrote about art in relation to society, which according to him can be divided up into three aspects. The first is art that is based on usable objects, created through social customs: "functional and psychological needs select the forms and organize the ornament."[144] The second aspect in relation to society is ideological, "it gives expression to mystical ideas of a generally accepted nature, or is used in the service of the rites associated with such ideas."[145] The third aspect is more individualistic, where the artist

expresses their own emotion in order to represent. Here Jung comes to the foreground, by way of the idea that the artist retranslates experiences in order for the community to be able to connect with it.

Folio 19 by Kurt Roesch (1905-1984) with Alastair Reid (1926-2014) titled “underworld”, describes a mystical world found at the bottom of the ocean collecting drowned sailors. The sailors, using overturned boats continue living on the bottom of the ocean. Their existence is not human, as they lie unsleeping, weeping when the clock goes wild. The sailors have turned their boats into houses on the bottom of the ocean, thereby defying the natural laws of buoyancy and water pressure. Rather than experiencing this physically impossible feat as a natural improbability, the act is turned into a crime, a crime against nature and a crime that is not punishable by impossibility but by fright, the narrator is afraid of the bottom of the ocean, of the unknown. The ocean is therefore not a naturally scary place, the danger of drowning is not death itself but the experience of life on the bottom of the ocean. The underworld as a mythological place indicates the realm one enters after death, sometimes visited by heroes on their quests like Hercules and Aeneas. The poem refers to a physical underworld, here in relation to the bottom of the ocean. The presence of fish with terrifying teeth, a large crab at the bottom and seaweed floating around a dark space creates an ominous engraving, emphasizing the fear surrounding the underworld. The poem is as follows:

> Sailors will tumble an old boat head-over-heel
> for a turtle-turned house, and crazily cut a door
> in its plans. They take the underside deck for a floor,
> and poke two pottering chimney-pipes through the keel
> for their driftwood fires. They have hammock beds, and a hatch,
> and sea-gear – but never they know, as they lie unsleeping,
> their hull-home is haunted by waterless old wood, weeping
> when the clock goes wild, ringing bells at the turn of the watch.
>
> Because of the crime of changing a ship-shaped thing
> so suddenly into a lurching hunchbacked shelter,
> I’d be afraid, so afraid of the sea at evening,

> afraid of the portholes, to find fish goggling there,
> and a green strange undersea light beginning to filter
> in through some drowned man's seaweed-swirling hair.

The description evokes fear in the reader, which is exacerbated by the subject of the poem also claiming "I'd be afraid." The images around the poem are of the terrifying fish, "goggling there", implying that the poem, like the reader, is part of the work. Placing the underground in a real location, rather than a mythical one brings the mythical into the real world. The use of the mythical world as a source of inspiration was not unique to the examples found within *21 Etchings and Poems* but was part of a larger movement that used this source as a way of engaging with the contemporary world.

Harold Rosenberg was another artist interested in the idea of a new mythology who was part of the *21 Etchings and Poems* and wrote about it at the same time Breton's article published in *View*. A fictional dialogue about Breton written by Rosenberg took place in "A comfortable room" in "March, 1924" and featured a conversation between The Host and three left-wing intellectuals, Rem, Hem and Shem. The discussion starts with the Host inquiring of the other three what they "think of the piece of Breton's that Lionel Abel is translating for View?"[146] The piece they are referring to is the one mentioned earlier in relation to Max Ernst, another fictional conversation between Breton and President de Brosses, where Breton describes the role of the new myth as a way of coping with the world war, to create unity.

They discuss Breton's new myth, as "without beliefs, man cannot act"[147] and about halfway through the conversation, Hem lays out the fundamental aspect of the conversation:

> The higher law is the symbol of that total myth by which all societies are held together. Paul Fauconnet, a follower of Durkehim, has this to say in his *La Responsabilité:* "The principal condition of the existence of a given society is

[146] Harrold Rosenberg, 'Breton - A Dialogue', *View*, 2.2 (1942), p. 62.
[147] Rosenberg, p. 62.

> the vitality of the system of beliefs that guarantee the solidarity of its members; not of any beliefs which can create an indeterminate social unity, but precisely of that system of beliefs which is proper to it and from which it derives its idiosyncrasy. Any weakening of these beliefs is the beginning of a process of dissolution and death." What would happen if the anarchist's ideal prevailed and all myths disappeared, all heavens, all gods, all abstracts? Human society would fall apart into numberless disconnected cells, and life would be poorer, narrower, and more primitive than anything yet seen on earth.[148]

Paul Fauconnet studied the role of punishment in societies at the turn of the 19th century, focusing on the values attached to a society and how they influenced punishment and their effectiveness. Echoing Jung, societies, according to Fauconnet—and Rosenberg too—are based on the connection people have to each other. Although what Jung describes is a much more robust and internal connection rather than a vague set of societal beliefs, the role of myths is important as a way of keeping humanity together, finding connection between people, which after the World Wars would give people a way to recover.

Rosenberg, like the other artists in this book, aims to create a new mythology. The work itself, existing as a compilation of contradictions in terms of reading and translating uses mythology to create a common ground for readers to create a connection with our collective unconscious, creating a work to bring together the readers. The connection is not just the focus between the artists but also between the readers of this particular world, between people who live in the world today. The connections to other works, the references, the languages all in part refer back to the collective unconscious and work towards building a new world, a new mythology. Unfortunately Rosenberg's work in the portfolio is very difficult to read, with only the word "Revenge" being legible. However, in relation to the point he is making here, the illegibly is oddly fitting. As he is placed along these other great artists in this interesting text, the reader does not mind not being able to read the specifics of his work. The reader is introduced into a system where

[148] Rosenberg, p. 63.

they can acknowledge the presence of the author, and attempt to decipher his writing without feeling as if they have missed out on the experience. The fact that he is part of the work almost "in spirit" is enough for the reader to feel satisfied with his contribution. Rosenberg's addition hereby becomes almost mythical, only present in form but not in any practical sense.

The idea of using mythology as a way to make sense of the world is emphasized by English art critic Lawrence Alloway in his essay "The Biomorphic Forties," originally published in *Artform* in September 1965. Alloway noted that: "The unconscious, in its turn, is linked to mythology which, after a lively influence on the 20th century culture, reached a climax in the '40s, and nowhere more than in New York. The appeal of myths must have something to do with the data that it offered as a control mechanism by which all data, all experiences, could be handled."[149] Here Alloway echoes what has already been said by Breton, the dual nature of the myth. Providing a place where experience could be placed within a fictional world: "The inspiration for the painting might come from any source: myth, archaeology, anthropology. The artist then sought to transfer the particular of myth into universals with their meaning expressing something beyond the inspiration that gave rise to them."[150] Using the mythological not only provides a base to create something universal but it acts as a base that is in itself somewhat universal. Many of the people who are part of the audience for these works will know, or vaguely be aware of, the myths alluded to.

Folio 16 by Irene Rice Pereira (1902-1971) with George Reavey (1907-1976) is a great example of this as it combines multiple mystical and religious aspects to create a work that gives every type of reader a way to connect and allows places of disconnect, depending on their

[149] Lawrence Alloway, 'The Biomorphic '40s', in *Reading Abstract Expressionism*, ed. by Ellen G. Landau, Context and Critique (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 250–56 (p. 252) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt32bk1z.37> [accessed 14 May 2021].
[150] Buettner, p. 84.

relationship to religion and spirituality. Pereira was a relatively unknown female artist, who even though "she shared with Loren MacIver the honor of being the second woman, after Georgia O'Keeffe, to be given a retrospective at a major New York museum when, in 1953, the Whitney Museum of American Art showcased their works in a join exhibition";[151] and George Reavey was a surrealist.[152] They were briefly married around the time this work was published. Their wedding adds an extra layer to the work as "in final confirmation of their union, Reavey and Pereira prepared a handwritten certificate of "marriage" dated July 30, 1950, six weeks before their legal wedding. Their different scripts are recognizable, and, in two instances Pereira wrote the word *one,* beginning the word with O, the symbol for both gold and the sun, the most significant symbol in alchemical literature."[153] This O in this work not only has significant mystical connotations, it was also important to the Pereira-Reavey's themselves.

Much of Pereira's work focusses on the mystical realm, and this folio also alludes to Christian symbols such as the snake at the top bringing the text within the realm of Genesis, where Eve ate an apple from the tree of knowledge. The title "Omega", referring to the Greek letter 'o' meaning the last of a series, has an all-encompassing sense. The picture of the woman next to it implies a type of strength that can be garnered from this, referring to ancient Greek mythology and the occult.

O me-ga-lith. Oh,
Ominous nomen,
O-symbol of stone
Occult and stamen,
Out of the rocked womb
Outsprung and so old,
OM-phatic and oral
In my ordained orisons;
Or omen omnivorous

[151] Bearor, p. xvi.
[152] Bearor, p. 166.
[153] Bearor, p. 173.

Of mother original
Of stone convoluted in
Orgies, other Liliou
And lylypod Lilith,
O who so owl-wise,
So somnolently on
The moonstone orbit
Slumbering stand,
Orchid of stone
Occluded motionless
Lilian of bone and
organ of the ground,
O me-ga-lith. Oh!

The repetition of the letter "O" within the poem also alludes to "Om" a spiritual symbol from India. The references continue, mentioning Lilith, a demonic figure sometimes said to be Adam's wife before Eve, prominent in many ancient religions. The knowledge of these references is strongly dependent on the knowledge of the reader and their relationship to these texts, and readings can range from shock, comfort to confusion. Allusions to all these different types of religions says something about the connections between them but also about the power of their images. Even drawn together, a reader can still draw certain conclusions about them, their decontextualization along a recontextualization not limiting their interpretation but broadening it as translatable across fields. These images carry different meanings for every reader, although this is generally true for all texts, it is exacerbated in this work as it combines so many different types of texts, each introducing their own possibilities for understanding.

The final work in the portfolio is Folio 24 by Adja Yunkers (1900-1983) with Theodore Roethke (1908-1963), combining is a small drawing underneath a poem "Praise to the End!" labeled "Part One." The image at the bottom of the work is small, the edges are rough, a combination of white, grey and dark grey patches with black lines covering it, which look like the artist's handwriting below the page. Despite concluding the portfolio, the work is in itself the first part of a larger series. The poem here by Roethke actually comprises the first 16 lines from his

book *Praise to the End*: *"*they are a developmental sequence of fifteen long, experimental poems about childhood and the growth out of childhood into adolescence."[154] The poem ends on a moment of growth, inviting the reader be part of this growth, establishing a relationship between the works present in the portfolio and the further oeuvre of the artists.

> PRAISE TO THE END! (part 1)
>
> It's dark in this wood, soft mocker.
> For whom have I swelled like a seed?
> What a bone-ache I have.
> Father of tensions, I'm down to my skin at last.
>
> It's a great day for the mice.
> Prickle-me, tickle-me, close stems.
> Bumpkin, he can dance alone.
> Ooh, ooh, I'm a duke of eels.
>
> Arch my back, pretty-bones, I'm dead at both ends.
> Softly softly, you'll wake the clams.
> I'll feed the ghost alone.
> Father, forgive my hands.
>
> The rings have gone from the pond.
> The river's alone with its water.
> All risings
> Fall.

The poem describes a worn-out subject, displayed in the woods emptied out by fatigue, nibbled on by mice, it seems to indicate that everything must come to an end. However, the poem is not actually the end, as it is the first part, it is the beginning of the end. The viewer is invited to further their knowledge of the works, but also to consider these works as glimpses of a larger structure. *21 Etchings and Poems* is here presented as a glimpse of what is going on in the art work as each piece is part of a larger structure far beyond what is represented in the work here.

[154] John Vernon, 'Theodore Roethke's "Praise to the End!" Poems', *The Iowa Review*, 2.4 (1971), 60–79 (p. 60) <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1279>.

In summary, *21 Etchings and Poems* requires the reader to become part of the work to be able to read it and experience it. True to the tradition of the New York School the work creates a feeling of being there, invites the reader become part of the work and be there. However, this invitation is not an easy one. The reader has to complete work to become part of the work. The portfolio becomes a place of creation for both the artists and the reader. By introducing obstacles for the understanding of the work, the reader has to become aware of their own reading process and as the reader becomes aware of their own role, their method of reading changes. Instead of turning the pages mindlessly, passively taking in information as Mallarmé despised, the reader is taken on a more physical and mental journey. Faced with images juxtaposed to texts in ways that don't allow for an easy breaking of the code of the work, the reader has to reconsider their point of view to complete their reading. By introducing questions of experience and understanding, these works invite the reader to become collaborators within the work. Adding layers of nuance and understanding or misunderstanding creates personalized experiences for the reader which cannot be defined or studied according to the basic reader response theories outlined in the introduction. Here the connection between the experience of reading these works and walking around the museum can provide a better insight into the works. The reader can view them at their own, individual pace, creating a truly individual experience. The authors of these poems are unable to take the authorial role that is expected in the book form, but are turned into painters and etchers who invite their viewers to reflect on what is offered to them, inviting them to be part of the work. By uncovering the different layers of the work according to the abilities of the individual reader, the creation of their reading will be different for each person who encounters the book. Their prior knowledge of the writers, their knowledge of foreign languages, even their affiliations to research institutions play key roles in how they interact with this work.

CHAPTER 2: RAYMOND QUENEAU, *CENT MILLE MILLIARD DE POÈMES*

My second case study is *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* by Raymond Queneau, first published in Paris in 1961 by Gallimard publishing house.[155] The UCSD library has two copies of this book, one in the original French and the version translated into English by John Crombie in 1983, both in the University of California San Diego Special Collections.[156] The book is made up of sonnets, but each page has been cut into fourteen strips, horizontally, so that each line of the sonnet is printed on its own piece of paper. Using knitting needles, as suggested by the author, the reader can weave the strips and pick their own combinations of lines to read.[157] For example, you can read the first line of the first poem, the second line you can pick from further down the book and the third line from another point and so on. For example, the first quatrain of the sonnet can be read as:

> Le roi de la pampa retourne sa chemise
> pour la mettre à sécher aux cornes des taureaux
> le cornédbîf en boîte empeste la remise
> et fermentent de même et les cuirs et les peaux
> The king of Pampa returns his shirt
> to put it to dry on the horns of the bull,
> the corned beef in the can is stinking up the larder
> and also fermenting the leather and the skins

But also as:

> Le roi de la pampa retourne sa chemise
> depuis que lord Elgin négligea ses naseaux
> le cornédbîf en boîte empeste la remise
> et fermentent de même et les cuirs et les peaux
>
> The king of pampa returns his shirt
> while Lord Elgin neglects his nostrils,

[155] Raymond Queneau, *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961).
[156] Raymond Queneau, *One Hundred Million Million Poems*, trans. John Crombie (Paris: Kickshaws, 1983).
[157] Queneau, *Cent Mille Milliards de Poèmes*, p. 'Mode d'emploi'.

the corned beef in the can is stinking up the larder
and also fermenting the leather and the skins

or:

Le roi de la pampa retourne sa chemise
pour la mettre à sécher aux cornes des taureaux
le cornédbîf en boîte empeste la remise
elle soufflait bien fort par dessus les côteaux

The king of Pampa returns his shirt
to put it to dry on the horns of the bull,
the corned beef in the can is stinking up the larder,
she was exhaling very hard over the hill.

The king of Pampa is the main character in these three combinations of the work, but he is not always the governing subject. This role can be taken by the marquise, who left at 5 o'clock "C'était à cinq o'clock que sortait la marquise," who dries his shirt on the horns of the bull or does this while Lord Elgin neglects his nostrils. The return of the canned corned beef creating a stench in the larder is almost a comforting image to return to as it is such a simple place of reference, a relatable moment. The combinations, of course, are basically endless, as different characters, actions and contexts come together in the different combinations of the poem. Reading the different possibilities creates a fluid text, with recurring characters becoming more familiar as one attempts to read through several variants. As there are no page numbers in the book it is impossible to know what page the reader is on, or which combination of lines have been used to create the sonnets. In comparison to a regular book, the reader has to put in a lot of their own work to create the poem, a process that Queneau describes as more than "purely aleatory."[158] Depending on how much effort the reader wants to put in, the poems can differ from each other in just one line or completely, making the reading activity into a version of authorial composition.

[158] Queneau, *One Hundred Million Million Poems*

As the reader goes through the texts, their own role becomes more and more prominent because the familiarity that is created between the reader and the text is unlike that of the reader of a standard book, for whom the return of certain characters is created by the author who refers to and develops those characters. Here the reader can choose who the main character is. Of course, this book is a collection of sonnets, so the main character is not like the main character in a novel but more abbreviated and abstract. This abstractness, and the work the reader puts in to make the combinations meaningful, works because it is in the form of a sonnet. A narrative becomes more absurdist if it combines as many different characters and events are able to prop up in the work of Queneau, but because it works in the short form structure of the sonnet the seemingly randomness of the combinations leaves the reader an acceptable amount of agency to create their own readings of the work. The leeway given to a sonnet is larger than that afforded to a novel or story, with more substantial additional reading than required for a narrative story—a where the text is often more straightforward—required to understand what is going on, provided by the reader is

Unlike the other texts I discuss, *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* does not set images alongside texts. The book is made up of text alone with no obvious visual component other than the unique formatting of the text, which can be considered both "visual" and tactile, as it is possesses a physical uniqueness and implicates a process of reading, qualifying it as an artist book. Further, the book itself looks so unlike a standard book that the reader is immediately drawn to the physical aspect of reading. The actions a reader has to take to activate the book are more pronounced than in *21 Etchings and Poems*. Here, the process of reading becomes almost like mapping, considering where the characters move to, how their story could change if read in combination with another line in the text. The reader is also constantly reminded of what combinations and narrative and other possibilities have not yet encountered. If the choice is to

focus on one character, like the King of Pampa, readers are constantly aware of the fact that they are only reading 1/10th of the whole text, and that potential of both the text and characters is almost infinite.

Cent mille milliards de poèmes starts with a "Mode d'emploi," a handbook of sorts, providing a method or instructions on how to read the sonnets. Introducing the reading method, Queneau refers to a source of inspiration in *Têtes folles*[159], a children's book by Walter Trier, a Czech-German illustrator, published in 1948 by Le Livre Universel. Like *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* this volume was also cut horizontally, but in this case each page consisted of only three strips, one containing the image of a head, one of a torso and the bottom third with images of legs. Children could pick and choose a head to add to a torso of their choosing, selecting various legs to create the full body of a person. This idea of creating a person out of three or more separate parts had been taken up by the Surrealists in the earlier 1920s who repurposed the "game" known as *cadavre exquis*: one participant would draw a head, fold the paper over so that nothing but a tiny fringe of the bottom part of the drawing would be visible, pass the sheet to the next person who would draw a torso connected to the "neck" indicators (without knowing what the head looked like); and the process would continue with the lower parts of the body and the legs and feet, in as many folds as there were players, to create their own versions of the game. Several *cadavre exquis* by Joan Miro, Max Morise, Man Ray and Yves Tanguy were published in the Surrealist-affiliated publication *Variétés* (Brussels, 1928-1930). As there were four artists working together, these bodies are divided up into face or head, torso, legs and feet. The combinations of artists gave rise to works in which, while each part has a recognizable—and different—style, the personage as whole produces an organic, surrealist effect.

[159] Walter Trier, *Tetes Folles* (Paris: Le Livre Universel, 1948).

Other artists were also examining the possible role of random combinations within their work, Dadaist poet Tristan Tzara for example, wrote how "To make a Dadaist Poem" in 1920:

> Take a newspaper.
> Take some scissors.
> Choose from this paper an article the length you want to make your poem.
> Cut out the article.
> Next carefully cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them all in a bag.
> Shake gently.
> Next take out each cutting one after the other.
> Copy conscientiously in the order in which they left the bag.
> The poem will resemble you.
> And there you are—an infinitely original author of charming sensibility, even though unappreciated by the vulgar herd. [160]

Here Tzara uses prewritten texts to create his own chance combinations, expanding the combination methods discussed so far into the realm of poetry beyond just images. The completed poem at the end is unchanging, the mode of creation, or in this case the method of combination takes place by the artist who combines the lines into a poem. Another chance combination focusing on words is "Jeux Surréalistes", a surrealist game, an example of which from 1926 by Andre Breton, Louis Aragon, Georges Sadoul, and Suzanne Muzzard comes with the following instructions:

> Vous vos asseyez autour d'une table. Chacun de vous écrit sans regarder sur son voisin une phrase hypothétique commençant par SI ou par QUAND d'une part, d'autre part une proposition au conditionnel ou au futur sans lien avec la phrase précédente. Puis les joueurs, sans choisir, ajustent deux à deux les résultats obtenus.[161]
>
> You sit around a table. Each one of you writes without looking at their neighbors a hypothetical phrase beginning with IF or with WHEN on one side, and on the other side a proposition in the conditional or future tense without a link with the previous sentence. Then the players, without choosing, place the results in pairs.

[160] Pericles Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*, Cambridge Introductions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 107 <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803055>.
[161] André Breton and others, 'Jeux Surrealistes', ed. by PG Van Hecke, *1929*, p. 7 <https://monoskop.org/File:Varietes_Le_Surrealisme_en_1929.pdf> [accessed 6 September 2021].

The difference here to the Queneau work, as with *le cadavre exquis*, is that the collaboration is between the artists, and the viewer is confronted by something that has already been composed. Unlike the *Têtes Folles* and *le cadavres exquis*, this work also involves placing sentences side by side and allowing chance to make the result meaningful. The cohesiveness between the two lines is only present in the proximity of the two writers in the moment of creation but is not consciously put together.

The results of the *Jeux Surréalistes* however, are beautiful combinations even if they were assembled through a process that doesn't allow the writers to respond directly and deliberately to the writing done by their collaborators:

> A.B. — Si la Marseillaise n'existait pas
> L.A. — Les prairies se croiseraient les jambes
> If the Marseillaise didn't exist
> The prairies would cross their legs
> L.A. — Si la nuit ne finissait plus
> G.S. — Il n'y aurait plus rien, plus rien, mais plus rien du tout
> If the night never ended
> There would be anything, anything, but nothing at all
> A.B. — Si la Révolution éclatait demain
> S.M. — Les somnambules se promèneraient plus que jamais sur le bords des toits.
> If the revolution starts tomorrow
> The sleepwalkers would never walk on the edges of the roof

However "random" these sentences are, there seems to be a general theme within them, a sort of sadness around patriotism—one can feel the reverberations of the war in these lines. This apparent coincidence might merely be a reflection of the artists' feelings at the time, which their physical and political proximity showcases. The Marseillaise, the night that never ends and the revolution, remind the reader of a country in turmoil, while crossing legs, nothing happening and sleep walkers leaving, shows the depressed or passive state of its citizens. These two lines, put together through chance, question the necessity of a writer consciously combining words and sentences to create meaning. One can easily come up with a reading of these lines that makes sense, as these are just

short two-line experiments. It would obviously be much harder for the combinations to make sense if they went on for fourteen lines, as with a sonnet. These types of poems, like Tzara's, and show how a lot of the work to make sense of the poems is done by the readers, putting into question the necessity of a writer.

Perhaps the most important difference between the work of Queneau and that of the Dadaists and Surrealist is that for the former, although it might appear random, there is a clear structure embedded in his method. To set up the combinations Queneau bestowed himself with specific rules his work had to follow that are outlined at the start of the book. The first is that the rhymes shouldn't be "trop banales" (too mundane); he also made sure he wrote at least forty different words for the quatrains and twenty different words for the tercets and if rhymes were repeated that they would not be able to appear in the same poem "pour éviter platitude et monotonie" (to avoid platitudes and monotony). The second rule is that there needed to be a continuity between all ten poems, to make sure that their rearrangement in some way still make sense, or in Queneau's words "eu le même charme" (have the same charm). So the work might have the impression of being closely related to Tzara's work, where they are brought together randomly from one source, but it contains a lot more structure and determination.

Another difference between *Cent mille milliard de poèmes* and the earlier works is that through the process of reading, the Queneau work does not end up as a coherent whole and the viewer can refer back to, but stays in, a constant state of recombination. The creation of the poem is partially and physically in the hands of the reader. Queneau's combinations, offer many more permutations than either the *Têtes Folles*, which only allows three permutations per "body" or *le cadavre exquis*, the Dadaist poem, and *Jeux Surrealistes*, which all result in just one final mode of visibility, one final combination. In *Cent Millie Milliards de Poèmes* the method of assemblage

allows “à tout un chacun de composer à volonté cent mille milliards de sonnets” (Everyone to create one hundred thousand million poems at will). Queneau provides the tools for the reader to create thousands upon thousands of poems, becoming a poet alongside him. Queneau work focusses on the role of readers, over the role of the creator, and their involvement in the work. In the end, however, the overwhelming number of combinations of the work, clearly signaled in the title, make it impossible to read. Queneau noted:

> En comptant 45s pour lire un sonnet et 15s pour changer les volets, à 8 heures par jour, 200 jours par an, on a pour plu d’un million de siècles de lecture, et en lisant toute la journée 365 jours par an, pour: 190 2558 751 années plus quelques plombes et broquilles (sans tenir compte des années bissextiles et autres détails).
>
> Counting 45 seconds to read a sonnet and 15 seconds to change the flaps, for 8 hours a day, 200 days of the year, we have reader materials for more than a million centuries, and reading the whole day, 356 days of the year would result in 190 2558 751 years give or take a little (without counting the leap years and other details).

It is physically impossible to finish reading the whole work within a single lifetime, begging the question: what does it mean to read the text? Readers are placed in a position where they are unable to read the work as a putative whole and completing a full reading of the work is simply impossible. Queneau takes the time to explain mathematically how it is impossible to read to make his point, rather than allowing the title to inform the reader. He does not invoke the idea of impossibility, he proves it using logic, showing his mathematical side and emphasizing his point.

Although the work contains a “mode d’emploi” to help the reader traverse the text, Queneau offers no suggestions about how to go about the process of composing and reading, what to focus on, which permutations might be worth reading or otherwise. In fact, Queneau mostly provides guidelines for himself, as mentioned, demonstrating to the reader the rules he set himself in creating the work. The rhymes were not allowed, to be “too banal,” and were supposed to fit together thematically so that the nearly infinite combinations would make interesting and plausible

sonnets. Except for the last sonnet, Queneau did not allow himself to make each line an independent clause and made sure that the move from the masculine to the feminine in every reconfiguration would always make sense grammatically. It is important to note these rules as they show how, although the work is vaguely similar to the Dadaist and Surrealist works presented here, it is doing something completely different. The amount of work and care it would have taken Queneau to make sure that the sentences were grammatically consistent, which is especially difficult in French, shows how Queneau was not interested in ideas of chance, but rather in ideas of reconfiguration.

The "mode d'emploi" ends with a quote by le comte de Lautréamont, nom de plume for French poet Isidore Lucien Ducasse (1846-1870): "La poésie doit être faite par tous, non par un." (Poetry must be created by everyone, not by one). Lautréamont was a 19th century poet who became popular among the surrealists, his work *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1868-1869) develops as a series of surreal-like events interspersed with references to readers—who are brought into in the text as integral components in gesture of intertextuality that encourages readers to co-create alongside the writer.[162] Lautréamont hereby actively invites the reader to make sense of the text which Queneau develops further by allowing the reader to take on the role as the effective creator of the poem.[163] As there are more options than one could read within one lifetime—and Queneau also did not read all the combinations—there is little overlap between what Queneau wrote and what the reader reads. However, the link to Lautréamont shows how this is also true for standard books, like the one by le comte, that also require reader engagement. Lautréamont was

[162] Comte de Lautréamont, *Maldoror (Les Chants de Maldoror): Together with a Translation of Lautréamont's Poésies*, trans. by Guy Wernham (New York, NY: New Directions Publishing, 1965).
[163] Joseph Tabbi, 'Hypertext Hotel Lautréamont', *SubStance*, 26.1 (1997), 34–55 <https://doi.org/10.2307/3684831>.

rediscovered by the surrealists; in a lecture given by André Breton on the definition of surrealism he notes that le comte

> whose thought has been of the very greatest help and encouragement to myself and my friends throughout the fifteen years during which we have succeeded in carrying a common activity, made the following remark, among many others which were to electrify us fifty years later: 'At the hour in which I write, new tremors are running through the intellectual atmosphere; it is only a matter of having the courage to face them. [164]

Although, Queneau's work shares some similarities with the surrealists, it does not incorporate their interest in the subconscious and chance. However, Queneau did start out as a surrealist, as witnessed by his first book *Le Chiendent* (1933), a story that combines Parisian daily life events with surreal happenings, as when one of the characters who starts out as a silhouette slowly becomes more solid, or a magical door that ends up being valuable only because of its sentimental associations.[165] Queneau's aim in writing this book was based on an interest in the difference between spoken and written language, which is especially prominent in French as for example the *passé simple*, a verb ending that indicates the past, is only used in literary writing and not everyday speech:

> Il me faut aussi constater que la manie que j'ai eue dès l'enfance d'apprendre des langues étrangères (sans y parvenir) m'a sans doute fait considérer très tôt le français parlé comme un langage différent (très différent) du français écrit (ce qui, d'ailleurs, forme l'objet de ce factum).[166]
>
> I also realized that the mania that I had, since childhood to learn foreign languages (without success) without a doubt made me consider very early that [spoken] French is like a different language (very different) from written French (which forms the subject of this piece).

[164] Andre Breton, *What Is Surrealism?: Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Rosemont, trans. Samuel Beckett and others (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978), p. 151.
[165] Raymond Queneau, *Le Chiendent* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965).
[166] Raymond Queneau, *Batons, Chiffres et Lettres* (Gallimard, 1965), pp. 11–12.

In noting the difference between these two languages, Queneau aimed at writing that was part of the reader's lived experience, therefore not creating a literary world but a world using the language of the real world. *Chiendent* combines references to common spoken phrases, which had never been used in literature before. His focus was again on languages and systems of language rather than content. While Queneau has clear roots in the surrealist movement, he ended up abandoning the movement explaining his reasoning in *Odile* as a *roman à clé*, published in 1937.[167] He was interested in a connection between art and the experience of life, but his focus was not on chance and the subconscious, rather he moved towards science, using mathematical and logical frameworks to organize writing, almost in complete opposition to what the surrealists were undertaking. In the words of scholar Chris Andrews, Queneau "has been regarded as a rigorous formalist reacting against the exaltation of chance and the subconscious,"[168] a clear move away from the surrealist focus on the subconscious.

While Queneau was writing *Cent Mille Milliards de Poèmes,* he had trouble finishing the project, until he received help from mathematician and chemist François Le Lionnais (1901-1984), who was also interested in art. Queneau describes not having "the strength to continue; the more I went along, the more difficult it was to do naturally. But when I ran into Le Lionnais, who is a friend of mine, he suggested that we start a sort of research group in experimental literature. That encouraged me to continue working on my sonnets."[169] This research group is what later became the OuLiPo and was started "on 24 November 1960, the date of their first meeting."[170] OuLiPo or Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle was a meeting or workshop among French academics and writers

[167] Charles Egert, 'Raymond Queneau's Utopian Dream Worlds', *Utopian Studies*, 16.2 (2005), 165–220 (p. 170).
[168] Chris Andrews, 'Surrealism and Pseudo-Initiation: Raymond Queneau's "Odile"', *The Modern Language Review*, 94.2 (1999), 377–94 (p. 377) <https://doi.org/10.2307/3737116>.
[169] Jean Lescure, 'Brief History of the Oulipo', in *Oulipo: A Primer of Potential Literature*, ed. by Warren F. Motte, French Literature Series, 1st Dalkey Archive ed (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998), pp. 32–39 (p. 32).
[170] Jèssica Pujol, 'Juggling with the Debris: Experimental Writing and Failure in La Fosse de Babel', *The Modern Language Review*, 113.1 (2018), 26–38 (p. 33).

who sought, as Queneau noted, to: "search for new forms and structures that may be used by writers in any way they see fit."[171] Ouvroir, is a difficult word to translate, meaning something like "workshop". As Duncan notes:

> *Ouvroir* implies a certain modesty in the group's aims, an anti-theoretical self-image which, as we will see in the next chapter, sets them apart from the structuralists. As Bénabou puts it, '[t]he notion of the *ouvroir* had been introduced precisely because it was a place of artisanal work. It wasn't about inventing grand theories, it wasn't about setting out to conquer something or other.[172]

The OuLiPo focused more on experiments with literature, rather than on creating an overarching purpose. Other examples of work created by this group are George Perec's *La Disparition* (1969), a book written without the letter "e"; Italo Calvino's *Se una 90ote d'inverno un viaggiatore* (1979), where the subjects of the story are endlessly in search of the right tale, taking the reader through many different texts to find the one they were looking for, each chapter starting a new story; Walter Abish's *Alphabetical Africa* (1974), where the writer adds one letter of the alphabet to each chapter, with which to start his words; and Queneau's *Exercice de style* (1947) where he describes the same scene in many different literary styles. The focus was on the constructs of literature and the rules around writing, rather than on the content. One of their more recent projects is *Haïku argentin* by Argentian writer Eduardo Berti (1964), which is a un "haïku de mots" avec un mésostiche" (an acrostic haiku). To write the haiku, one has to pick a word that is then not allowed to be part of the haiku, nor is any derivation of the word allowed. The example on the website is "banane" (banana). The poem should have this word as it's subject but not refer to it and follow the same structure as a haiku. The first line has to contain the first syllable "ba", the second the

[171] Lescure, pp. 2–3.
[172] Dennis Duncan, 'Introduction: The Secret of Lightness', in *The Oulipo and Modern Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 13.

second “na” and the third the third “ne”. The resulting poem should place the lines so the chosen word is shown vertically.

la **ba**lance frissonne un peu

sur son dos acéré la **na**ture morte

déploie un nouveau sourire jau**ne**[173]

(the scale shivers a bit /on his sharp back the still life / spreads a new yellow smile)

This work became part of the project in 2018 and their work can be found on oulipo.net. The OuLiPo is actually the longest lasting literary group and is still working on the connection between literature and science today.

Another work that came out of the OuLiPo, which engages with the characteristics of *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* is *La Fosse de Babel* a work that combines texts and images by writers André Balthazar, Italo Calvino, Julio Cortázar, artist Reinhoud d’Haese and poet Joyce Mansou and was published in 1972, eleven years after Queneau’s work. Described by Jessica Pujol, the book requires to reader to cut and paste different parts of a dialogue to create their own readable text:

> Thus, the colored phrases of the four adhesive papers need to be cut out and pasted among the lithographs according to the desires of the reader. The authors have constructed the constitutive elements of the text and the readers/receptors will need to arrange them in order to create their own version of the book.[174]

The authors provide the components of the text, but the readers create their own version in a physical and permanent way that can then not be reshuffled. In contrast to the surrealist works, the putting together of the work was entirely in the hands of the viewer or reader of the work with clear tools provided by the creators, not in chance collaborations between the artists—a clear shift

[173] Eduardo Berti, ‘Haïku argentin’, 2018 <https://oulipo.net/fr/node/6912> [accessed 8 April 2022].
[174] Pujol, p. 28.

of the focus to the authorial production of the reader. Thus accenting the role of the reader, the book is, as Pujol puts it, "a playful adventure: a book which would focus on its own process of formation, turning the reader's experience into a remaking or reordering of its textual and pictorial elements."[175] In *La Fosse de Babel* the reader takes on the role of creator, rather than the role of player in the Queneau work, the former requiring the reader to create a final version of the work, while the latter allows for endless recombination, none of them being permanent. Once the reader has rearranged *Fosse de Babel* in the order they want, the book will remain in that order. The potential within the Queneau work is endless, and unachievable, because the reader can never complete it, while the *Fosse de Babel* the reader has a lot of potential but will always result into one unique reading that cannot be recreated. Queneau's work is more ephemeral than *Fosse de Babel*, the only method to refer back to a poem read from *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* is by writing it down, or taking a photograph.

The focus of the OuLiPo on the connection between literature and science is not an accidental or random one, the group formed at a time where scientific discovery became of interest to the literary world and vice versa. For example. in novelist Charles Percy Snow's chapter "Two Cultures" from 1959, Snow laments the polarization between scientists and humanists. He uses a great anecdote to explain the divide:

> A good many times I have been present at gatherings of people who, by the standards of the traditional culture, are thought highly educated and who have with considerable gusto been expressing their incredulity at the illiteracy of scientists. Once or twice I have been provoked and asked the company how many of them could describe the Second Law of Thermodynamics. The response was cold: it was also negative. Yet I was asking something which is about the scientific equivalent of: *Have you read a work of Shakespeare's?*[176]

[175] Pujol, p. 27.
[176] C. P Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution.* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeersity Press, 1961), pp. 15–16.

According to Snow there is "no place where the cultures meet."[177] Later in the text he expounds on this, saying the problem is not limited to literature and science but that there's also a lack of connection between different fields within the sciences.

However, some action was taking place to bridge this gap, Dennis Duncan in his chapter on "Literary Machines: StructurElism versus StructurAlism," describes such a project, that combined science and literature using the New University Computer in Manchester to create a "love letter", under guidance of the English mathematician Alan Turing in 1952, using an algorithm by computer scientist Christopher Strachey. By dividing words in to specific categories, the program combined words to match a given sentence structure, Duncan notes, "and then goes on to produce its outpourings of affection by filling in the blanks with randomized words from the appropriate categories."[178] This procedure showed that as early as the 1950s "the possibilities of an algorithmic approach to natural language syntax were starting to be felt within the emerging discipline of cybernetics."[179] This, Duncan explains, later lead to structuralism, "a mode of literary criticism—a mode that, not unlike the 'Love Letters' algorithm, attempted to apply the methods of linguistics beyond the purely syntactic aspects of a text."[180] The connection between literature and cybernetics points to an interest in thinking about the structure of language, and how this can be recreated by mathematics, through a machine. American mathematician Norbert Wiener defined cybernetics as an "attempt to find the common elements in the functioning of automatic machines and of the human nervous system, and to develop a theory that will cover the entire field

[177] Snow, p. 17.
[178] Dennis Duncan, 'The Oulipo and Modern Thought', in *Literature Machines: StructurElism versus StructurAlism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 27–50 (p. 28) <https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780198831631.001.0001/oso-9780198831631-chapter-1> [accessed 5 February 2021].
[179] Duncan, 'The Oulipo and Modern Thought', p. 29.
[180] Duncan, 'The Oulipo and Modern Thought', p. 29.

of control and communication in machines and in living organisms."[181] The aim was to recreate methods of communication, so machines and humans would both have the ability to communicate, potentially with each other, thinking of Alan Turing's famous Turing Test. According to physicist V. G. Drozin, the interest in cybernetics, as the rise in discussion between science and art was caused due to the second industrial revolution, which took place when "the first workable computer was built"[182] in 1944.

Cybernetics generally looks at a system as a Blackbox, studying the inputs and the outputs, the scientist aims to recreate the process of the machine. The term was later defined by English psychiatrist W. Ross Ashby (1903-1972), in his book *An Introduction to Cybernetics*, published in 1956 and considered the first textbook on the subject. His definition goes as follows:

> Cybernetics […] is a "theory of machines", but it treats, not things but ways of behaving. It does not ask "what is this thing?" but "what does it do?" Thus it is very interest in such a statement as "this variable is undergoing a simple harmonic oscillation", and much less concerned with whether the variable is the position of a point on a wheel, or a potential in an electric circuit. It is thus essentially functional and behavioristic.[183]

This focus on the behavior of the machine lends well to the rethinking of human actions and how a machine could repeat them. Thinking of machines as creators rather than mechanisms opens a whole world of reconsideration not just for machines but humans as machines, and language, as seen in the work of the OuLiPians and the Structuralists as will be discussed in this dissertation.

As a further point of connection, *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* starts with a head text? quote by Turing: "Seule une machine peut apprécier un sonnet écrit par une autre machine" (only a machine can appreciate a sonnet written by another machine). This quote, which Queneau

[181] Norbert Wiener, 'Cybernetics', *Scientific American*, 179.5 (1948), 14–19 (p. 14).
[182] V. G. Drozin, 'Cybernetics', *The Science Teacher*, 36.8 (1969), 21–23 (p. 21).
[183] William Ross Ashby, *An Introduction to Cybernetics* (New York, NY: J. Wiley, 1956), p. 1 <http://archive.org/details/introductiontocy00ashb> [accessed 19 November 2021].

actually misquoted in translation, was that "a sonnet written by a machine will be better appreciated by another machine."[184] The quote as Duncan notes is actually Turing's response to a colleague, "Geoffrey Jefferson, who a couple of days earlier had publicly dismissed the creative potential of artificial intelligence."[185] The comment was made three years before the "love letter" project was completed, and encourages the reader to think about their place in relation to the work, with the physical machine-like structure of the book that can generate infinite combinations of the poems, the question as to how this poem should be read, like a machine by a machine, or does it involve enough human interaction to be considered made by a human to be read by a human?

At the same time as the Manchester University Computer was being set up for the "love letter" project, other similar projects were cropping up in France. French cyberneticist Albert Ducrocq was also working on a computer that "would also be capable of producing linguistic output,"[186] and he called a *poète électronique,* (electronic poet). This which novelist Boris Vian, friend of Queneau believed is "free from the burden of having a past of its own, an authorial subject, a set of experiences that it might want to express. Its method is simply combinatorics, and its materials are whatever vocabulary it has been fed to begin with."[187] This is in line with fellow OuLiPian Italo Calvino's thoughts on the role of the author:

> What Romantic terminology called genius or talent or inspiration or intuition is nothing other than finding the right road empirically, following one's nose, taking short cuts, whereas the machine would follow a systematic and conscientious route, being extremely rapid and multiple at the same time.[188]

[184] Duncan, 'The Oulipo and Modern Thought', p. 27.
[185] Duncan, 'The Oulipo and Modern Thought', p. 27.
[186] Duncan, 'The Oulipo and Modern Thought', p. 30.
[187] Duncan, 'The Oulipo and Modern Thought', p. 32.
[188] Italo Calvino, *The Uses of Literature: Essays*, trans. Patrick Creagh (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), p. 15.

The idea that a machine could simplify or unmask the process of an author was of great interest to both authors and scientists at the time. It also introduced questions about the role of the author, invoking Barthes' death of the author as mentioned in the introduction.

The interest in the structure of language which was inspired by the computer not only resulted in the projects by the OuLiPo but also engendered another literary movement: structuralism. Structuralism, a critical theory which applies certain rules to reading literary texts, became the dominant way of reading literature around the same time. There were two main branches of this, according to theorist Jonathan Culler, the first following the work of Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov, or Gérard Genettes, who's focus was on using linguistic structures as a basis for reading and understanding literary texts, however, they were accused, during the post-structuralist era, of "of formalism: of neglect the thematic content of a work in order to concentrate on its playful, parodic, or disruptive relation to literary forms, codes, and conventions."[189] According to Culler, the second group used psychoanalysis, Marxism, philosophy or anthropology, and "were accused not of formalism but of pre-emptive or biased reading: of neglecting the distinctive themes of a work in order to find its manifestations of a structure or system prescribed by their discipline. Both sorts of structuralists are engaged, for similar reasons in something other than traditional humanistic interpretation."[190] Their work used social sciences in an effort to understand language, rather than mathematical structures, although there is a clear connection between structuralism and the composition of "love letter" as the focus is what Culler terms, "not on the meaning of a work and its implications or value but on the structures that produce meaning."[191] Culler provides a working definition: "In simplest terms, structuralists take

[189] Jonathan D. Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 20.
[190] Culler, p. 21.
[191] Culler, p. 21.

linguistics as a model and attempt to develop "grammars"–systematic inventories of elements and their possibilities of combination—that would account for the form and meaning of literary works"[192] The emphasis of the structuralists is using linguistics as a systematic model to explain how meaning is generated in texts, the OuLiPo however, take a different approach, using machines and mathematics as a model instead.

The debate around OuLiPo versus structuralism is a challenging one. In 1963 Jacques Duchateau, OuLiPan artist wrote about the strained relationship between literature and machines, and the ways OuLiPo attempted to overcome them in an introduction to OuLiPo 'Communication sur L'OuLiPo':

> Les écrivains ont toujours utilisé des structures: certaines consciemment, d'autres inconsciemment; quelques-unes avec le sentiment qu'il s'agissait de simples évidences entérinées par le temps. D'un point de vue intuitif, l'évidence contrôlée par le temps est un critère. D'un point de vue structuraliste, disons, tout ce qui est évidence est suspect. Des formes assez générales, admises par tous, modelées par l'expérience, peuvent cacher des infra-formes. Une remise en question systématique est nécessaire pour les découvrir.
>
> (Writers have always used structures: some consciously, others unconsciously; some with the feeling that they are simple truths endorsed by their time. From an intuitive point of view, a truth determined by its time is a criterion. From, say, a structuralist point of view, all that is evident is suspect. Forms that are general, accepted by all, modeled by experience, can hide infraforms. A systematic questioning is necessary to discover them. Questioning which leads, in addition to this discovery of underlying forms, to the invention of new forms: exactly as previous ages invented the rules of the sonnet, the dramatic unities, the epistolary novel, the division of the novel into chapters, rhyme..., etc.)[193]

Here Duchateau is pointing to the structures that are inherent to writing and how they require questioning to be uncovered. The introduction of the writing using computational algorithms created a space for writing to be rethought. An important thing to note here is that Duchateau places the work of the OuLiPo alongside that of the structuralists, which, as Duncan points out, is

[192] Culler, p. 22.
[193] Cited and translated in Duncan, 'The Oulipo and Modern Thought', p. 36.

surprising as the relationship between the OuLiPo and the structuralists becomes a very strained one when they "begin to move beyond the linguistic and into the realms of moods and themes" this he sees as the moment "their relationship to structuralism will start to become problematic."[194] The OuLiPians work with structures but their methods are based on narratological structures rather than linguistic structures, rejecting the structuralist method.

For their mathematical basis, the OuLiPo gained inspiration from a French group of mathematicians assembled under the collective pseudonym Nicolas Bourbaki.[195] The group was introduced in 1939 as many mathematicians had perished during World War I. Due to a supposed lack of mathematical knowledge, Bourbaki affiliates aimed to put together a book containing all mathematical knowledge of the time for people to learn from which they published in 1939 as *Théorie des ensembles (Fascicule des résultats).* According to Queneau's friend, mathematician Jacques Roubaud, also a member of OuLiPo, Bourbaki provided a method to distinguish the OuLiPo from the Surrealists: "HYPOTHESIS: when the OuLiPo was conceived, Bourbaki provided a countermodel to the Surrealist group."[196] The connection between the two are as defined by Roubaud follows:

> Bourbaki worked with structures. A structure in Bourbaki's conception of mathematics is capable of producing an infinity of theorems, by deductions from its axioms. The OuLiPo works with *constraints.* A constraint is the oulipian equivalent of a bourbakist structure. A text written according to an oulipian constraint is the equivalent of a mathematical theorem. But the work of the

[194] Duncan, 'The Oulipo and Modern Thought', p. 38.

[195] The choice of the name is unclear, according to Paul R. Halmos, who wrote about the group for the journal *Scientific American* in 1957, here is his suggestion:
General Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki was quite a colorful character. In 1862, at the age of 46, he was offered a chance to become the King of Greece, but he declined the opportunity. He is remembered now mainly for the unkind way the fortunes of war treated him In 1871, after fleeing from France to Switzerland with a small remnant of his army, he was interned there and then tried to shoot himself. Apparently he missed, for he is reported to have lived to the venerable age of 83. There is said to be a statue of him in Nancy. This may establish a connection between him and the mathematicians who are using his name, for several of them were at various times associated with the University of Nancy.

[196] Jacques Roubaud, 'Bourbaki and the Oulipo', *Journal of Romance Studies*, 7.3 (2007), 123–32 (p. 127) <https://doi.org/10.3828/jrs.7.3.123>.

> OuLiPo is not the production of literary texts. What is intended is the invention, discovery and rediscovery of constraints capable of potentiality.[197]

Bourbaki created a guide for mathematics that would allow scholars to continue developing mathematical theorems. The idea was to create a foundation from which all mathematics could grow. While surrealism is based on the automatic, subconscious, moving art outside of the realm of rules and structure, Bourbaki served as an alternative structure as it is entirely based on what can be considered a mathematical grammar. The mathematical rules, rather than restricting mathematicians actually gave them foundations to develop mathematical formulas, this is the same for the OuLiPo who used rules to push boundaries of literature rather than restrict it.

In his article "Science and literature" (1967), Queneau explains his views on the incorporation of science in literature. As evidenced by Bourbaki, the concerns of mathematics and science were becoming more integrated with the literary world. Queneau addresses the

> the establishment of the social sciences *qua* sciences, as a consequence of which philosophers and "men of letters" are being drawn into the scientific sphere. Linguists, psychologists and sociologists can no longer remain ignorant of mathematics. Psychologists and ethnologists can no longer remain ignorant of biology. Criticism and literary history have followed suit.[198]

The examples he cites are works by Émile Zola (1840-1902) on how to raise children, and work by the nineteenth-century French mathematician and pioneer of modern algebra and group theory, Evariste Galois (1811-32). However, as Queneau points out, these writings do not point to a general interest between science and literature but rather to a number of coincidental links: "Strictly speaking, though, in most cases it would seem to depend on the individual writer's personal interest in the sciences rather than on a profound relationship."[199] Further examples

[197] Roubaud, pp. 127–28.
[198] Raymond Queneau, 'Science and Literature', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 28 September 1967, pp. 863–64 (p. 863).
[199] Queneau, 'Science and Literature', p. 863.

include Paul Valéry (1871-1945) and Charles Cros (1955-1935) who were writing about mathematics but this interest did not spread towards their other work more generally, for example, as Queneau points out, it was not present in their poetry.

Queneau does elucidate that there are inherent connections between science and literature, for an author has to be able to at least count to twelve for an alexandrine, "for a sonnet, up to fourteen, and for a sonnet in alexandrines up to 168. There is a readymade answer to the argument that few poets, these days, bother with writing sonnets and alexandrines: this is, that we can suggest that they do *something else.*"[200] However, the "something else" Queneau is referring to speaks to a move away from these structures that were considered to be archaic by the 1960's. The sonnet in general often goes through phases of popularity, even Shakespeare had to revive the sonnet and abandon its archaic form.[201] As in Shakespeare's time, the sonnet decreased in popularity during the 1960s; and like Shakespeare, Queneau aims to revive the form, this time incorporating science into the poetic structure. Describing the new ways science has shaped literature he brings up his own work as an example: "the so-called OuLiPo, which, since 1960, has been working towards the discovery of new or revived literary forms, this research being inspired by an interest in mathematics. Its aim could be described as the foundation of a new kind of rhetoric, a new rhetoric which, nowadays, could not be possible without mathematics."[202] *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* is a leading example of this new field of possibilities: it combines the sonnet structure and creates a game that incorporates mathematics. The sonnet is once again being reinvented by Queneau with a focus on its structure.

[200] Queneau, 'Science and Literature', p. 863.
[201] Emily Vasiliauskas, 'The Outmodedness of Shakespeare's Sonnets', *ELH*, 82.3 (2015), 759–87 (p. 760).
[202] Queneau, 'Science and Literature', p. 864.

The connection between the sonnet and mathematical from might seem farfetched, as the scientist and the artist are often considered to be of different realms. However, Le Lionnais claims that both are more closely related than at first glance:

> Science is not concerned with the discovery or creation of beauty; it seeks only the truth. But science, for better or worse, is pursued by men — and the achievement of its ideals, as in all human activity— be it humble, moderate or great — cannot be attained in a climate completely devoid of emotion. The result is that, though science does not in any way aim to become an art, an art it inevitably is.[203]

Le Lionnais draws out the comparison between science as an art by looking at the way scientists look at the world and how this is very similar to the way artists experience it. He wrote about holding a glass and noting its transparency, how a cube of sugar will also become transparent when it has dissolved in water, in Le Lionnais' words "all such phenomena, common place for ordinary mortals appear extraordinary to scientists."[204] Le Lionnais here draws upon *Night Watch* (1642) by Rembrandt (1606-1669) which, like "a thousand other masterpieces convey the same feeling of mystery in everyday perceptions that lie at the root of so many scientific discoveries."[205] The comparison Le Lionnais makes is not so much based on science explaining parts of literature or art, but the links between the scientific process and those of art, which both depend on an interest in what the world looks like. Le Lionnais points to a focus on curiosity and an interest in play shared by the artist and the scientist: "There is a difference in intent and in degree but there is no basic difference between the child who plays with a teddy bear, the adventurer who plays with his life, the artist who plays with images and feelings, and the scientist who plays with ideas and knowledge."[206]

[203] François Le Lionnais, 'Science Is an Art', trans. by George Agoston and Pauline Bentley-Koffler, *Leonardo*, 2.1 (1969), 73–78 (p. 73).
[204] Le Lionnais, p. 73.
[205] Le Lionnais, p. 73.
[206] Le Lionnais, p. 75.

Le Lionnais' final point on the comparison, however, is that although the artist and the scientist work in the exact same realm, there are some differences between the two. The link Le Lionnais makes is not that they are the same thing but that they come from the same place:

> I wish, however, to point out that one should appreciate the contrast between science, the domain of the general, and art, the realm of the specific. […] From the psychological point of view, the scientist recognizes the generalities that he discovers, when he discovers or invents them, with the same relish and in a manner just as poignant as that of the artist under the emotional impact of the specific. That which is general can be as moving as that which is specific.[207]

Although Le Lionnais makes no reference to the OuLiPo in this paper, it echoes the delicate way OuLiPo balances science and art. By emphasizing the rules of literature, thinking about how sets are put together and how they provide another mode of access to storytelling (as opposed to narrative "content" per se) there seems to be an emphasis on the rules of writing. However, this is an oversimplification of what OuLiPo aims to do. By focusing on the rules of language both the author and the reader are encouraged to address literature a different way. The rules of writing do exist and OuLiPo incorporates them into its fabric, refusing their invisibility by bringing them to the foreground.

Although the structuralists and the OuLiPians were very interested in the positive effect of the post war industrial revolution and mathematical advancements, there was another group, who did not engage with the technological advancements in this positive and progressive way. French writer Alain Robbe-Grillet, describes a group who, although not working as a cohesive team, came together because of "their creative passion, their belief in the necessity of new forms, open and free; in other words, their refusal to accept the narrative conventions that the nineteenth century has given us and from which academic criticism claims to make immutable laws."[208] Their move

[207] Le Lionnais, p. 76.
[208] Alain Robbe-Grillet and Anna Otten, 'The French New Novel', *The Antioch Review*, 45.3 (1987), 262–65 (p. 236) <https://doi.org/10.2307/4611742>.

away from the literary modes of the previous century was not to incorporate science or linguistics, but to turn to psychology and the discoveries made within that field. The group wrote what is called the nouveau roman, the New Novel, moving away from the traditional novel which, "presented human beings, in their separate existences and the whole world surrounding them, as coherent and perfect totalities."[209] The characters in these traditional stories were constant, their thoughts easy to follow, their actions and consequences easy to trace throughout the story. However, after the wars and their significant impact on the mental health of the people, psychological studies showed that human experience of life is very different from this. "The New Novel," Robbe-Grillet explains,

> is closer to what we know today about man and his world, carefully describing discontinuous and fragile fragments, the misleading combinations of which seem always to be searching for possible meaning, which then sketches itself out, but at the same time escapes, crumbles, and soon takes a new shape, again provisional. The vague and slippery image that emerges out of the whole situation is located exactly opposite the world of Balzac, where people, plots, and settings convince the reader with their enormous, persistent, and reassuring qualities. [210]

The New Novel did not present clear stories but aimed at engaging with a text aiming to get closer at the human experience of life. Life in these books is no longer a clear succession of events that all make sense, where the reader has the appropriate thoughts and responses to these events. Instead they turn into a stream of conscious like story, telling git from the inside out. An example this is *Molloy,* the first book of a trilogy by Samuel Beckett, originally published in French in 1951, then translated to English by the author himself:

> Je suis dans la chambre de ma mère. C'est moi qui y vis maintenant. Je ne sais pas comment j'y suis arrivé. Dans une ambulance peut-être, un véhicule quelconque certainement. On m'a aidé. Seul je ne serais pas arrivé. Cet homme qui vient chaque semaine, c'est grâce à lui peut-être que je suis ici. Il dit que

[209] Robbe-Grillet and Otten, p. 264.
[210] Robbe-Grillet and Otten, p. 264.

> non. Il me donne un peu d'argent et enlève les feuilles. Tant de feuilles, tant d'argent. Oui, je travaille maintenant, un peu comme autre-fois, seulement je ne sais plus travailler. Cela n'a pas d'importance, paraît-il. Moi je voudrais maintenant parler des choses qui me restent, faire mes adieux, finir de mourir. Ils ne veulent pas.[211]
>
> I am in my mother's room. It is I who live there now. I don't know how I got here. Perhaps in an ambulance, certainly a vehicle of some kind. I was helped. I'd never have got there alone. There's this man who comes every week. Perhaps I got here thanks to him. He says not. He gives me money and takes away the pages. So many pages, so much money. Yes, I work now, a little like I used to, except that I don't know how to work anymore. That doesn't matter apparently. What I'd like now is to speak of the things that are left, say my goodbyes, finish dying. They don't want that.[212]

The main character in the book is not introduced nor is the scene explained. The reader only receives an insight into the confused musings of the main character who, in addition to the reader, is also confused about what is happening. This is the start of the first book and the text continues in this way for the rest of the trilogy, only allowing the reader insight into the thoughts of the reader without providing any external points of view into what is going on in the lives of the two main characters.

In "The New Novel" published in 1964, Edouard Morot-Sir describes the New Novel or nouveau roman as the anti-novel. He makes the connection to surrealism too, but in contrast to the OuLiPo, the New Novel did continue the move towards the unconscious. Morot-Sir describes the nouveau roman compares it to poetry, which was already experimenting with moving closer to reality, or our experience of reality:

> The problem is no longer merely to describe characters, what they do and how they do it, but rather to create with words a mental space and time and beyond the conventional space and time imposed on us by nature and society and to do so with words. Thus it is clearly evident that the novel is relating itself closely to the poem and, in a consequence, must be read like a poem. The reader's

[211] Samuel Beckett, *Molloy* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1971), p. 3.
[212] Samuel Beckett, *Molloy* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2007), p. 3.

> participation now must be so effective that it results in a veritable fusion between him and the novel; a reading must be a true hallucination.[213]

Thinking about the section from Molloy here, the reader is in a confused state, after reading the first few lines of the book, mirroring the uncertainty of the main character. The reader is not aware of the amount of time that has passed while the main character has these thoughts, the reader is places "in a mental space and time" [214] experiencing life alongside the main character. Consequently, the nouveau roman invites a certain involvement of the reader which this dissertation has not yet focused on. Here the reader is placed in charge of understanding the text, the involvement exceeds that of a regular book which merely invites the reader to imagine themselves as a fly on the wall if the book is written in third person, as a character if written in first or an addressee if written in the second person. In these texts however the reader occupies a place inside the mind of the main character with no access to any further information. To understand what is happening in the novel the reader is required to interpret for themselves, without being invited to do so alongside the main character. However, the reading here is based mainly on content, and this dissertation aims to focus on works that go beyond challenging the reader in terms of content, challenge the reader physically.

The nouveau roman is the novel breaking with of the perceptions of what can be considered a novel, in terms of content, which is why Morot-Sir first describes it as the anti-novel. The books exist in "a world without natural or social laws" where the reader is "escaping the mechanisms imposed on him by machines and administrations, had rediscovered the meaning of destiny even as he discovered the meaning of chance.[215] The authors of the nouveau roman do not embrace the

[213] Edouard Morot-Sir, 'The "New Novel"', *Yale French Studies*, 31, 1964, 166–74 (p. 168) <https://doi.org/10.2307/2929740>.
[214] Morot-Sir, p. 168.
[215] Morot-Sir, p. 171.

machine but aim to escape these superimposed mechanisms, rethinking the role of chance. This reintroduction of chance is important, as this is what Queneau was so severely against. Literature here once again returns to the surrealist interest in the role of the subconscious. However, as Morot-Sir says, the relationship between the nouveau roman and the developments of science are not as clear as they might seem, the sentiment within the works is often hidden by humor or irony, dwelling on something tragic. According to him, the nouveau roman did not condemn science and technical advancement, he describes it as an "acceptance of destiny. It is then necessary to oppose the former novels of freedom to the New Novels of fate. The New Novelist is beyond revolt which is useless to him; he has set himself up, consciously or not, in Art, which is one way of replying to the engineer's atom bomb."[216] The author does not revolt or incorporate the new technology but slowly accepts defeat. These themes of accepting destiny do not fit with Queneau's work which engages with the technological improvements in a positive way, incorporating it and using it to rethink literature, this is in quite a stark contrast to the nouveau roman authors tragic view of society and art.

Finally Morot-Sir stages a comparison between science and literature which although more pessimistic than Le Lionnais, who also compared to scientist to the artist, does carry a similar thought about the role of both in the way the reader understands the world: "I would risk this hypothesis as a point of departure for discussion: Art, and above all literature, is the rival of technology in the construction of the world. As the atom scientist tries to master the energy of elementary particles, so the writer tries to control the power of words." [217] Both entities try to aim for some type of control within their field, creating what Morot-Sir calls different universes, the one of the former being of "economic realities" and the latter of "leisure":

[216] Morot-Sir, p. 173.
[217] Morot-Sir, p. 173.

> Thus we can say that, each in his own way, the writer and the engineer tempt to lure us toward his universe. Still the writer finds himself in the paradoxical situation of giving birth to an imaginary world while, at the same time, revealing the most profound character of the human situation. [218]

In the struggle between science and literature, literature wins here according to Morot-Sir, like Le Lionnais he believes that art can connect with something more individual, which Morot-Sir sees as a general lesson about human nature.

Staging a comparison between the OuLiPo, structuralists and the nouveau roman provides a further elucidation of how machines and technology influence society and pinpoint the involvement and interest of the OuLiPo. For them the implication of the introduction of the machines suggests that the text, in some ways, is like a machine, or a generator of text. However, while the method of creation is based on a system or machine, the human hand also plays a considerable role in the creation. To elucidate this point, it is useful to look at what the book would look like if it were actually a machine. One way this can be done is through a website that can generate the poems, an example of this one by Magnus Bodin, a self-described experimentalist: https://x42.com/active/queneau.html. This website, created in 1997, opens with a different poem-combination from *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* every time the website is opened. The reader can click through different version of the poem using a button saying "new poem" but there are no other control parameters, i.e. changing a line or two at a time, and there is no button to return to the previous poem. The reader is totally distanced and separate from the mode of creation. Certain characteristics of the electronic version of the book are in line with the physical experience of reading the text. Once the reader has created their combination of lines it is almost impossible to refer back to it, like the website, which doesn't allow one to return to a previous combination of the poem. However, the electronic version removes a lot of agency from the reader as the computer

[218] Morot-Sir, p. 173.

generated combinations are more random. In the physical rendition a reader is physically more limited in their "random" choosing of a combination as it is not easy to fold the book open on a random poem as it involves holding down fourteen lines of ten strips of paper. It is also more interesting from a perspective of the reader to allow for certain lines to return, which one cannot do with the online versions.

The following poem is the first poem the reader reads when opening the book without introducing any of their own work to create a specific combination. This is the poem that requires the least input by the reader:

Le roi de la pampa retourne sa chemise Pour la mettre à sécher aux cornes des taureaux Le cornédbif en boite empeste la remise Et fermentent de même et les cuirs et les peaux	The king of the Pampas[219] returns his shirt To put it to dry on the horns of the bulls The canned corned beef stinks up the storage space as this is happening it also ferments the leather and the skins
Je me souviens encor de cette heure exeuquise Les gauchos dans la plaine agitaient leurs drapeaux Nous avions aussi froid que nus sur la banquise Lorsque pour nous distraire y plantions nos tréteaux	I still remember that exquisite hour The gauchos waving their flags on the plain We were as cold as naked on the floating ice To distract ourselves in the moment we planted our trestles
Du pôle à Rosario fait une belle trotte Aventures on eut qui s'y pique s'y frotte Lorsqu'on boit du maté l'on devient argentin	To walk from the pole to Rosario makes for a good hike Adventures we had, that burned while playing with fire. While we drink mate we become Argentinian
L'Amérique du Sud séduit les équivoques Exaltent l'espagnol les oreilles baroques Si la cloche se tait et son terlintintin	South America seduces ambiguities Spanish is being glorified by baroque ears If the clock and it's ringing are silent

The poem introduces some clear parameters right at the start. There is a location, Pampas, but also a smell, an interesting sensory experience that becomes part of the poem. The reader can easily imagine what this stinky cupboard or storage space smells like. As this stinking up is happening while the king hangs up his shirt, the narrator is recounting something that happened in their past, which takes place in South America, as the gauchos are waving their flags. In the next stanza there

[219] South America

is another mention of South America, which is clearly becoming an important location in this particular poem but therefore also in many of the other combinations.

Here it is important to note my personal movement through the text, I liked the idea of the can of corned beef so I left that one in while I moved towards the next poem. I also would keep the first line, which indicates a specific moment during which the poems take place, to create another constant between the poems, proving that the picking of the poems was not entirely done by chance. The method of reading was also very finnicky, even with the help of a knitting needle it was difficult to fold back the strips of paper to create the various combinations. I picked lines I liked and looked for new characters to introduce into both my reading of the poem and my dissertation. The goal of the close reading was to define how the different poems relate to each other and purposefully to find patterns. A reader could also, for example, choose to read the ten individual poems that form the basis of the work and never have the lines overlap. As those ten poems are the original ones written by Queneau, however the reader mixes up the lines, it becomes an interweaving and scrambling of only ten sonnets, thereby placing the focus on the book on what happens when the lines are moved around across sonnets.

The reader is in charge of creating a reading of the stanzas that makes sense. This aspect of the poem does not become clear until the reader has gone through several combinations: the reader has the burden of ensuring that the combinations make sense. Although this is also true of most poetry, it is more pronounced in this work because the reading that the reader came up with in one poem might not necessarily work for the next time it appears, for example, one of the lines describes parents bringing things to their baby's crib, which can either be considered a sweet moment of tenderness of a moment of passing along family trauma. The reconfiguration is more than just a physical rearranging of the lines but also includes a rearrangement of the reader's

thoughts. The reader becomes aware of how each line can contain a multitude of readings based on the lines around it, recognizing how the individual sentence don't carry the same meaning throughout the different permutations.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) discussed the fluidity of language seeing it as inconclusive because, according to him, language has no relation to what it is trying to express and is only relevant in a context, claiming that "correspondence between word and thing, visual layout and verbal referent, reduces meaning to the process of naming."[220] According to scholar Marjorie Perloff, Wittgenstein argues that "words are not to be viewed as pointers designating particular objects; their meaning depends on their function in the specific context of action we call the language game." [221] Wittgenstein believes words have no meaning in relation to the things they signify and can never wholly embody their meanings: there is no meaning that is constant throughout different types of conversations, for example, implying that meaning is unstable. Wittgenstein claims there are no constant words with pure meaning; there is no pure denotation, because, in everyday language, words depend too much on social constructions or a "specific context of action." Wittgenstein compares language to a game of chess: whatever object might be used as a "king," it will still be called a king and have the game characteristics of a king.[222] This does not only make the relationship between the shape of the chess pieces and their names unstable but also robs the word "king" of its meaning. What does it mean to be a king? Does it mean to be a ruler of a country or to be allowed to move one square in any direction? Obviously, it depends on the context, but where does that leave the definition of the word "king," that is so easily

[220] Marjorie Perloff, '"Grammar in Use": Wittgenstein / Gertrude Stein / Marinetti', *South Central Review*, 13.2/3 (1996), 35–62 (p. 98) <https://doi.org/10.2307/3190371>.
[221] Perloff, 'Grammar in Use', p. 98.
[222] Roy Harris, *Language, Saussure, and Wittgenstein: How to Play Games with Words*, Routledge History of Linguistic Thought Series (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1988), p. 25.

accepted? “Wittgenstein,” Perloff continues, “shows us language has no essence; it is a complex cultural construction, whose variables are articulated according to one’s particular intersection with it.”[223] Words do not have meaning in themselves, their signification depending almost wholly on their context. This idea is emphasized in the work by Queneau as the sentences change meaning depending on what they are placed in context with.

Warren Motte, the leading scholar of OuLiPo in the English language, would agree with Wittgenstein’s assertion, as in his view: “What Queneau puts on display in *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* is literary form in its purest, most naked state. For it is not about "The King of the Pampa who rolls up sleeves" or "The horse on the Parthenon who rears up on his frieze."”[224] Motte’s focus is on the trick within the work, a conceptual reading of what happens when texts are arranged in this way, rather than a focus on the content, Motte continues his explanation:

> No, it's about the shapes of things, and most particularly literary things. It is also a manifesto of sorts, and undoubtedly the seminal Oulipian text, staging in a theatrical manner the nascent Oulipian aesthetic more clearly than any other. It deftly interweaves the two main currents of Oulipian inquiry, 'analysis' and 'synthesis', that is, the rehabilitation of older (and sometimes ancient) literary forms on the one hand, and on the other the elaboration of new forms.[225]

As mentioned before, *Cent Mille Milliards de Poèmes*, interrogates the structure of the sonnet, similar to how Shakespeare revolutionized it. This book serves as a manifesto as the driving force of the OuLiPo by stripping the sonnet down to its bare bones, its structures become clear. The new form Motte refers to here is the interest in science and mathematics, which was at the foreground of OuLipian literature. However, as Motte suggests, there is not an erasure of the traditional through the introduction of modern mathematical forms that inspired OuLiPian’s inquiry. Rather

[223] Marjorie Perloff, ‘From Theory to Grammar: Wittgenstein and the Aesthetic of the Ordinary’, *New Literary History*, 25.4 (1994), 899–923 (p. 913) <https://doi.org/10.2307/469382>.
[224] Warren Motte, ‘Shapes of Things’, *L’Esprit Créateur*, 48.2 (2008), 5–17 (p. 10).
[225] Motte, p. 10.

there is an emphasis on the play or the dynamic between the two forms. This dynamic makes the work less serious, allowing more agency by the reader:

> In that manner, the text places tradition and innovation into an articulative dynamic such that each both interrogates and responds to the other. Its seriousness of purpose is couched in a tone that is ludic, as if to suggest that play—writerly play, readerly play—is an essential dimension of literary activity. That play, in turn, serves to foster a complicity between writer and reader that becomes a central clause in the textual contract. [226]

The reader, as the person who is recreating the poems, not just in terms of context but also in conceptualization of what a sonnet is and how it is arranged and read. Part of reading is a moment of play or interaction between the author and the writer. The play in this particular book has been turned into a physical action taken by the reader. Otherwise the play would be constrained to the imagination of the reader as they follow the reader through their story. The expectation of a serious reader who reads every single poem is hereby also removed, as the focus is on the play, the interaction between the reader and the book.

The reader's inability to read the whole work is deliberate here and points to the potential of the work, inherent to the OuLiPo movement. In Motte's words: "the notion of potential literature, [is] writing that ramifies far beyond the space of the page, into a space of possibility that we can barely imagine." [227] The unimaginable place ventured here is the time required to finish the entire work. A final notion of the text proposed by Motte points to the function of the form that far exceeds the role of the content: "Granted its impossible dimensions, it is legitimate to suppose that what we 'read' in *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* more than anything else, is literary form itself. In that light, this potential writing calls for potential reading—and indeed no other kind of reading make any real sense in this case."[228] What would a potential reading look like? Motte does not

[226] Motte, p. 10.
[227] Motte, p. 10.
[228] Motte, p. 11.

provide an answer, as it is not often required in the reading of a standard book to consider its potential. To understand how a book of this scope can be read it is useful to turn to the methods considered in cybertext, as mentioned at the start of this chapter, which go beyond what is possible within a standard book.

Cybertexts are texts that are in part defined by their structure, studied in *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* by Espen Aarseth. Aarseth points to the *I-Ching* as an example, a text that allowed people to use chance to answer questions "by manipulating three coins or forty-nine yarrow stalks according to a randomizing principle, the texts of two hexagrams are combined, producing one out of 1,096 possible texts."[229] The next example he references are Apollinaire's "calligrammes" as they don't offer the viewer a clear method of reading. The calligrammes are not written in a horizontal left to right method, inviting the reader to create their own method of reading. The same is true in the work of Stephane Mallarmé, who, by putting words on the page in seemingly random patterns, allows for words to become something wholly outside themselves. It allows them to have multiple meanings, some of which lay outside its own internal meaning. Other examples Aarseth points to include Ayn Rand *Night of January 16th* from 1936, which included viewer participation in deciding the verdict of a trial that had different endings depending on the verdict of the audience, Mac Saporta's *Composition No. 1,* a novel on a deck of cards that is "written in such a way that any combination will appear fluid."[230] These examples show how writers were able to move beyond the linear narrative, to a more fluid or multifaceted storyline.

Coined in 1992 by Bruce Boston, "Cybertext" is used mainly in relation to videogames, where there are always a large number of different stories and endings to engage, depending on

[229] Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 10.
[230] Aarseth, p. 10.

the choices of the players. The term refers to the "the mechanical organisation of the text, by positioning the intricacies of the medium as an integral part of the literary exchange."[231] A second characteristic of cybertext is also very important here, because in cybertext the reader is seen "as a more integrated figure than even reader-response theorists would claim. The performance of their reader takes place all in his head, while the user of cybertext also performs in an extra somatic sense." [232] By choosing the particular route or particular sonnet in the text, the reader becomes part of the creator of the work, which is not left entirely to the author. The reader also participates more actively within the reading of the work. As readers pick and choose their way through the book, they are reminded of the roads not taken, certain combinations not being made, a characteristic of ergodic literature, often found in videogames: "each decision will make some parts of the text more, and others less, accessible, and you may never know the exact results of your choices; that is, exactly what you missed."[233] Like a video game, the reader of *Cent Mille Milliards de Poèmes,* is aware of the different route the subject of the poem could have taken, to the desert, or through Argentina. This experience emphasizes the potential aspect of OuLiPo thinking, where the reader is constantly aware of the different routes the poem could go, but like the player, is unable to take every road, review every possible ending. Cybertext is not a literary genre but "a broad textual media category."[234] This media is not specific to video games only but became more pronounced in experiments with digital texts.

Although the term cybertext is a relatively new one, the idea behind it is not. The introduction of video games has created a space to think even more creatively about texts. Aarseth

[231] Aarseth, p. 1.
[232] Aarseth, p. 1.
[233] Aarseth, p. 3.
[234] Aarseth, p. 5.

laments some of the criticisms towards viewing the text of video games as different compared to regular texts:

> I have almost invariably been challenged on the same issues: that these texts (hypertexts, adventure games, etc.) aren't essentially different from other literary texts, because (1) all literature is to some extent indeterminate, nonlinear, and different for every reading, (2) the reader has to make choices in order to make sense of the text, and finally (3) a text cannot really be non-linear because the reader can read it one sequence at a time anyway.[235]

Video games might have to answer to these types of criticisms, non-linear literature, as in literature not set out in a normative, sequential form, has been around longer than either the computer or the work of Queneau, as Aarseth explains: "For instance, the wall in inscriptions in ancient Egypt were often connected two-dimensionally (on one wall) or three-dimensionally (from wall to wall and from room to room), and this layout allowed a nonlinear arrangement of the religious text in accordance with the symbolic architectural layout of the temple." [236] The experience of such nonlinear text requires much more input from the reader compared to a standard book. As in a video game, readers in ancient Egypt had to walk around a set of situated texts. The physical movement required in the *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* is much less pronounced, but still more than that associated with normative circumstances of reading.

As Aarseth point out, the invention of the computer changed a lot in the world of cybertext, "it soon became clear that a new textual technology had arrived, potentially more flexible and powerful than any preceding medium." [237] Not only in terms of creating texts, but also in ways of reading. In the 1970s, an AI was created that could read texts, modelled after the projects by Turing. In the USA, Theodore H Nelson coined the term *hypertext* around 1965, as "a strategy for organizing textual fragments in an intuitive and informal way, with "links" between related

[235] Aarseth, p. 2.
[236] Aarseth, p. 9.
[237] Aarseth, p. 10.

sections of a text or between related parts of different texts in the same retrieval system."[238] This resulted in a series of books where the reader is presented with a non-linear texts like Michael Joyce's *Afternoon: A Story* from 1990 that is in the form of a labyrinth. Aarseth laments that "literary theories take their object medium as a given, in spite of the blatant historical differences between, for instance, oral and written literature."[239] This is also the discussion at the heart of this dissertation. How does one study work that is so different from the "normal" book? Aarseth uses the term ergodic literature to elucidate how a reading might be completed which he defines as follows: "nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text."[240] Using the term "ergodic" is useful because it places an emphasis on the work of the reader, the non-trivial effort required to read or decode it. The non-trivial effort in this text is the putting together of the different lines of the sonnet.

Another question raised by posing the notion of ergodic literature in relation to Queneau's book is: What constitutes so-called nontrivial effort? Queneau emphasizes the action of the reader, thereby questioning the mechanical actions inherent to reading a book. "Trivial" is only defined in terms of what is considered non-trivial and something non-trivial is considered the norm, a sort of automatic assumption of relevance that comes naturally, especially in the simple perusal of books composed by standard methods of singular and consecutive design. What Aarseth misses here is the idea that the trivial is part of a sequence of actions that are only considered trivial from a specific point of view—which might involve many different actions that are not trivial at all, but just so automatic that they are easily deemed to be trivial. It involves many givens or habits, including but not limited to the understanding of the reading of a text, the ability to translate

[238] Aarseth, pp. 11–13.
[239] Aarseth, p. 15.
[240] Aarseth, p. 1.

physical words into mental images or thoughts, to have a book emerge from the thoughts of a writer, as well as the physical existence of bookstores and libraries, and the way the language is constructed. What is defined as non-trivial by Aarseth is only that which appears non-trivial in comparison to an unstated norm. Queneau confronts the apparently trivial action of reading a book by making it extremely difficult for the reader to navigate his work—to the extent that they need an extra tool. This reveals that reading does require effort, that the book does require some work; with the implication that we have let these processes become unstated or even trivial.

In the end, the book teaches the reader a lot about reading, by creating this machine that is difficult to maneuver and requiring the reader to bring in their own modes of interpretation and put in a lot of work to make sense of the text. However, this mode of reading reveals a lot about the standard books. Many things that are perceived givens while reading are actually merely exacerbated in *Cent mille milliard de poèmes* but are generally true for standard books. By creating a work that is difficult to read the reader reconsiders the amount of work they have to do for a regular book which they overlook. In the end, all that is presented to the reader is a scrambled version of the ten original poems. Reading them in this way shows what reading is like, where the reader is constantly thinking back about previous lines, delving into the text.

The reader has the choice to read the ten original sonnets, but in some ways, reading the descrambling is an experience more true to the actual reading experience. As the reader does not remember the stanzas line by line, they don't make linear connections. So in essence, all reading is in some way ergodic, except that it is not considered as such. The reader is constantly making connections across texts, coming up with combinations, thinking back of lines they enjoyed. The same way I kept referring back to the line of the smelly cupboard, and the same can be said if I was reading the ten poems in sequence and kept thinking back to it. The idea of linearity is only

imposed by the structure of the book but if the structure is taken away, the experience reflect the reading experience. French philosopher Henri Bergson wrote about this in 1910, when discussing the influence of space on the experience of time:

> We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnection and organization of elements, each one which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought. Such is the account of duration which would be given by a being who was ever the same and ever changing, and who had no idea of space. But familiar with the latter idea and indeed beset by it, we introduce it unwittingly into our feelings of pure succession we set our states of consciousness side by side in such a way as to perceive them simultaneously, no longer in one another, but alongside one another; in a word, we project time into space, we express duration in terms of extensity, and succession thus takes the form of a continuous line or a chain, thee parts of which touch without penetrating one another.[241]

Linearity is a forced impression placed on us through our experience of life but in actuality that is not how life is experienced and the same can be said for reading. Because the reader is always limited to linear texts in a physical sense, they imagine that their reading experience will be the same. However, Queneau's work shows explicitly that the real experience of reading is not limited by linearity.

[241] Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will, an Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. Frank Lubecki Pogson (New York: Harper, 1960), p. 101.

CHAPTER 3: WALASSE TING, *1 ¢ LIFE*

The third book I will discuss is *1¢ Life* by the Chinese-American artist Walasse Ting, edited by Sam Francis and published by Eberhard W. Kornfeld in Bern, Switzerland in 1964 in a limited edition of 2,100 copies (with 100 "special"). The work comprised 62 lithographs combining poems by the author with art works by a variety of artists associated with Abstract Expressionism, CoBrA and the emerging Pop Art movement, including some of the leading figures of the period; a number of reproductions, including advertisements and postcards; and poems unaccompanied by images. *1¢ Life* combines the poetic writing and visual art of Walasse Ting with contributions by a wide spectrum of artist-contemporaries including Enrico Baj, Reinhoud d'Haese, Jim Dine, Kimber Smith, Bram Van Velde, Alfred Leslie, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol. By placing it in the context of Pop Art, the main art movement at the time, this chapter will assess to what extent the artist book fulfilled the goal the author had set for it, which was to make it a product of its time, but also how it extends beyond this scope. By incorporating not only great artists but also prevalent themes of the period, the work creates an experience of the 1960s that goes beyond a mere collection of great artists.

In his own written reflection on *1 ¢ Life*, Ting describes the process as follows: "Two short fingers typing talking about World & Garbage, You & I, Egg & Earth."[242] His focus is not only on collecting art but also on life as he uncovers a certain artifice in his world that focusses only on money due to capitalist structures which surround him. Ting was born in 1929, in Wuxi, the Jiangsu province in China, and moved to Paris in 1952. In 1956 Ting travelled to New York at the height of the Abstract Expressionist movement where he met Sam Francis. In the US, Ting's work

[242] Walasse Ting, 'Near 1 Cent Life', *Art News*, 65.3 (1966), 39, 66–69 (p. 67).

had more success and it was his encounter with the art world of New York City in the later 1950s and early 1960s that gave rise to the idea to create *1 ¢ Life.* In Ting's words: "In Communist country must follow government like photograph, in capitalist country must follow rich men with stock. 51 poems, no money to publish, just dream, day and night, angel come to publish book."[243] The angel Ting refers to here is Sam Francis who later helps him publish *1 ¢ Life,* but his reflection on communism versus capitalism shows how neither of them relay the truth, being based on either a photograph or men with stock. What Ting describes here is a book that goes beyond the confines of capitalism, he is not a rich man but through this work he is trying to create a dream.

Ting sets out his goal for the work as follows: "The artist gets an idea and it results in 17 tons of paper which go into 2,100 books, each book a 9-pound baby with 27 painters as parents."[244] Positing the artists as parents and considering the work as more like a child than a product of their collaboration, accords to the work a measure of both dependence and independence, as with children who grow up and find their own way in the world. He continues his ambition as follows:

> A book like this in nineteenth century, 68 original lithographs by Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas, Renoir, Pissarro, Monet, Daumier…? What will man in 22nd century think of 1¢ Life? Some artists come Paris to make lithographs. In New York I carry zinc plates to their studios, we drink and laugh. Once upon a time.[245]

Ting's over-arching goal of creating a book that assembles the artists of his time, is coupled with an attempt to assess the value of an imaginary publication that would have combined the efforts of the leading avant-garde artists during the furious innovations of the later nineteenth century. This book is motivated, then, by the hope that in the next century a reader might look back on Ting's effort as an anthology bringing together the greatest artists of his time. In this sense Ting's

[243] Ting, 'Near 1 Cent Life', p. 67.
[244] Ting, 'Near 1 Cent Life', p. 39.
[245] Ting, 'Near 1 Cent Life', p. 67.

audience might be a reader in the next century who would have a greater appreciation for his work. Fortunately, this is the case, as *1¢ Life* has been examined in a number of 21st century exhibitions, for example at the Woodward Gallery[246] in New York in 2006, the de Young Museum[247] in San Francisco in 2014, and the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art[248] in Charlotte in 2021, and, of course, is now the subject of a PhD dissertation. Ting has achieved his goal. And, in hindsight, the publication did, indeed, combine many if not all of the significant artists of the second half of the 21st century.

This chapter will investigate a number of themes established by the book and how they relate to key issues, motifs and theories associated with the art of the 1960s. In fact, the work not only serves as an artist book, inviting the reader to consider its combinations of image and text, or merely a collection of the best artists of its time, it is also as a means by which the reader can follow Ting's reflections on and experience of the 1960's. Here the work echoes the goal of the New York School as laid out in chapter 1, where the work aimed at creating a sense of having witnessed these artists come together, a sense of being there as described by Robert Motherwell. The work is similar to *21 Etchings and Poems* in other ways, as the format of the large unbound book, available at the UCSD Special Collections, confronts the reader by its sheer size—in this case with dimensions of 16 by 11.5 inches and more than 150 pages that make it very heavy: in fact, *1¢ Life* is described as a "4kg unbound elephant folio"[249] by art historian John Seed.

[246] Walasse Ting and Sam Francis, 'One Cent Life' (presented at the Woodward Gallery, New York, NY, 2006) <https://woodwardgallery.net/exhibitions/one-cent-life/> [accessed 31 January 2022].
[247] '"A Book like Hundred Flower Garden": Walasse Ting's 1 ¢ Life' (presented at the de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA, 2014) <https://deyoung.famsf.org/exhibitions/book-hundred-flower-garden-walasse-tings-1-life> [accessed 31 January 2022].
[248] Anastasia James, Walasse Ting, and Sam Francis, '1 Cent Life' (presented at the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Charlotte, NC, 2021) <http://bechtler.org/Collection/One-cent-life> [accessed 31 January 2022].
[249] John Seed, 'DEAR Big SAM The Letters of Walasse Ting to Sam Francis Tell the Story of Their Friendship Over Time', *ARTS OF ASIA*, 48.5 (2018), 84–93 (p. 88).

The cover of the book consists of a paper sleeve displaying an image created by Machteld Appel, who was part of the CoBrA movement, a collective of artists from Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam, alongside her husband Karel Appel, Pierre Alechinsky and Asger Jorn, the work of each of whom also appears in the book. Machteld Appel is one of just three female artists represented in the book (the others are the American Joan Mitchell and the Austrian-born Kiki "OK" Kogelnik), but was not assigned a specific poem. Her contribution is a work showcasing Ting himself in the form of a collage that includes a photograph of the artist wearing a suit. Appel added a top hat, long sideburns, a red heart on his chest and a smoking matchstick placed like cigarette in his mouth; while appearing above the work is the title, *1¢ Life*. The work prepares the reader for what is to come: an extended collaborative collage generated by the artists and Ting where his poems are accompanied by art works. The heart on his chest introducing the theme of love, which at times is unrequited. The hard cover underneath the jacket by Appel contains a silkscreen reproduction of a green rose on a yellow background with green Ben Day dots by Roy Lichtenstein, one of the few reproductions in the book, with the title of the book appearing in blue letters on a pink ground above. The use of primary colors is a recurring theme in the book that uses limited colors including red, green, yellow, purple, and blue which were, for Ting, connected to his experience of Times Square: "color bright as neon light, not as expresso. I face the big red pizza and the green earthworms, and decide to make a book like hundred flower garden."[250] The colors also create an impression of consistency throughout the book.

The book consists of over 80 different folios folded together, each image, text, or image-text combination is disposed on the verso and recto of a page spread with a fold or gutter in the middle. This creates interesting combinations, as some of the works have other works folded in

[250] Ting, 'Near 1 Cent Life', p. 39.

between them so the reader has to take the book apart to see it as a whole or consider it as a series of "halves" set alongside and amid other word-image combinations. The first work in the book is a lithograph by Alan Davie, one of the only pieces that does not combine text and image, stretching across the first and second page. The "brush drawing" of the spread uses crude orange-red lines and dabs on a yellow background creating a vibrant underwater picture populated by multiple snakes, coiled together, with others popping their heads in from the sides. Around the snakes are small fish, some also with their heads jutting into the work along its edges. The largest snake, in the middle, is going after something in the bottom right corner of the spread, perhaps getting ready to grab a piece of food with its mouth.

The work serves as an introduction to the work and its attempt not just to combine the great artists of its time, but also to address the subconscious of society. Davie attests to this aspect of his work in an interview with Andre Patrizio and Bill Hare in 1992:

> Obviously one is unlocking all sorts of subconscious images — a really exciting process. Drawing is the most intuitive medium. I think the thing which triggered off my interest in brush drawing was seeing the prehistoric Egyptian pottery decoration in the British Museum — some wonderful designs in black brush. Drawing is one of the oldest, most primitive and dynamic forms of art.[251]

The idea of the subconscious Davie points to here derived from a sustained interest in the unconscious associated with surrealism and other movements in mid-twentieth century, including CoBrA, which Hal Foster defines as reacting against both functionalist and formalist ideas of art.[252] Like the CoBRa artists, Davie did not consider himself an abstract painter, but was interested in ideas of the "primitive" and exploring the spiritual and psychological underpinnings of art. Ting has combined a diverse array of source materials, styles and movement-based allusions (to

[251] Bill Hare, *Scottish Artists in an Age of Radical Change: From 1945 to 21st Century* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2019), sec. 2.
[252] Hal Foster, 'Creaturely Cobra', *October*, 141 (2012), 4–21 (p. 5).

Abstract Expressionism, CoBrA, Pop Art and other formations) in *1¢ Life* as if they were part of an obscurely cohesive program.

The first poem of the portfolio is situated on the back of the next folded sheet, written in capitals and unaccompanied by an artwork:

> WHAT IS SMALL BUSINESS
> NOBODY SMALL
> YOU LAUNCH STEAMSHIP
> I PUSH LOCOMOTIVE
> YOU TALK TO MOUNTAINS
> I LISTEN TO SEA
> YOU EMBRACE RAINBOW
> I KISS RAIN
> YOU COVER SUN WITH YOU FINGER
> I MOVE MOON WITH MY EYES
> THOUSAND FLOWERS
> BLOSSOM IN OUR BIG HEART
> THOUSAND YEARS

The poem sets up a dichotomy between the "I" who is assumed to be Ting, and "YOU", the reader of the work. The poem initially sets up the two subjects in a disjunctive relation, doing different things, certain guidelines are provided: "You launch steamship" and "I push locomotive." The instructions, although to some degree abstract, don't leave much space for agency as readers are told where they should stand in relation to the author and are given orders. These guidelines are not strict or clear but furnish, instead, abstract ways of communicating and thinking about nature and industry. However, the final lines of the poem seem to suggest that the difference between the reader and the author might actually not be significant: what is the difference, we might ask, between embracing rainbows and kissing rain? Finishing with a sentimental sign off, "THOUSAND FLOWERS / BLOSSOM IN OUR BIG HEART / THOUSAND YEARS" the poem seems to reflect a coming together of different identities. This focus on uniting different

people and voices shows how they are the same and pointing to basic truths about humanity—a recurring theme of the work.

In order to set the scene for my discussion of the rest of the publication, a closer look at the first spread combining images and text is required as it introduces many themes that will be discussed in relation to this work. It comprises pages 8 and 9 and hosts a work by Alfred Jensen with a poem titled in caps.: "NEW YORK CITY AND LITTLE CAMELLIA (DEDICATED TO MY MOTHER)" consisting of a drawing which takes up most of its area. The spread, folded down the middle, comprises 36 squares arranged in a six-by-six formation in green, blue, purple, orange yellow, and a combination of blue and purple. There seems to be a kind of code within the work as the colors repeat themselves in different patterns on each line of the grid. Rows three and four feature three black arrows pointing upwards, alternating with three white ones pointing down. The arrows indicate a consistent order for the colors. The black arrow is followed by colors in the order: green, blue, purple, orange, yellow, green; each white arrow points down to a blue/purple mix, orange, yellow, blue and purple. These orders are repeated or reversed based on the color and position of the arrow in the middle. The poem starts on the right of the artwork but continues on pages 10 to 11 without an accompanying image. It describes a virginal character referred to as "hymen" who performs certain actions such as plucking the flower, turning red, asking an undefined male "him" who is more beautiful, "me pretty? Or camellia pretty"? To the latter question, the man responds "not as beautiful as camellia"; to which the virgin retorts by turning red out of jealousy, saying "don't believe dead flower better live people." The reference here being to the virginity being taken, as the flower is dead or ruined, but the undefined "him" prefers the flower as he decides to carry Camellia, through New York City, while she, the flower, is dying after being plucked. The flower is ripped out of its natural habitat, "everywhere hero sandwich /

secondhand cinema / no butterfly come. Fire engine scream every five minutes / no green grass live." Removed from its "home," the flower cannot find peace, possibly attesting to Ting's experiences abroad, where he lived as a "starving artist" in Paris before moving to the New York (where, almost for the first time, he was able to earn something of a living). Famously he was discovered by Alechinsky, "sleeping on bare boards in a tiny attic room" in Paris, a prelude to the two artists becoming "lifelong friend[s]."[253]

The walk through Chinatown in the second stanza of the poem is particularly significant for our understanding of the socioeconomic background of the poem, Ting describes the "yellow face half-smile inside store," the "hundred year egg lost life," where "Confucius famous as chicken chow mein, genghis khan strong as hot ginger" shows how Ting's experience of China Town is not authentic to his experience of China, emphasized in his question at the end "where China?" These showy aspects of China Town are not significant to China itself, pointing to the homesickness felt by Ting and the change in the social standing of the Chinese-American community, members of which were redesignated during the early 1960's as "Asian-Americans." As Paul Spickard notes, "In the two decades that followed World War II, Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino Americans ...[began] to have common experiences that led them to form another panethnicity: Asian Americans."[254] This term became prominent during the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's. Bok-Lim C. Kim noted in the early 1970s that during this time, "exploring the changing nature and content of the black/white paradigm also offers insights into supremacist ideology as applied to non-Black races,"[255] including the Asian Americans.

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[253] 'Walasse Ting', *Gallery Delaive* <https://delaive.com/artists/walasse-ting/> [accessed 30 September 2021].
[254] Paul Spickard, 'Whither the Asian American Coalition?', *Pacific Historical Review*, 76.4 (2007), 585–604 (p. 588) <https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2007.76.4.585>.
[255] Janine Young Kim, 'Are Asians Black?: The Asian American Civil Rights Agenda and the Contemporary Significance of the Paradigm', in *Contemporary Asian America (Third Edition)*, ed. Min Zhou and Anthony C. Ocampo, [is this the same source, unclear?] A Multidisciplinary Reader (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), pp. 333–57 (p. 344) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18040wj.20> [accessed 24 January 2022].

In a study of Asian American literature, Erin Ninh assesses Pradee Lowe's *Father and Glorious Descendant* (1943), which was considered by the community a standout memoir and distributed in the armed forces.[256] However, in the years following its publication the book has been heavily criticized "as a prototype of the baleful Chinatown tour guide, guilty of serving up colorful-but-harmless customs of that community to the mainstream voyeur – while (in this case) rejecting them as ultimately inferior to Western modernism."[257] The critique levelled against Lowe's text can be applied to Ting's work as he engages with Chinatown in New York not as a tour guide but a critic, seeing through the voyeuristic aspects visited on the area. In marked contrast to Lowe, Ting posed questions about where China actually might be within this space, and its mythologies; as well as interrogating key issues about Asian-American identities and community awareness.

Further, a report published by the Japanese American Citizens league from 1971, pointed out that these communities were often excluded from "federally supported demonstration projects and research, education and vocational training, and social and rehabilitation programs."[258] The reasoning behind this was "that Asian-Americans are a successful 'model minority' and do not need such programs. National and local social welfare organizations and those in related fields also 'neglect' to include Asian-American concerns in their programs or representatives on their policy-making bodies, thereby depriving themselves and Asian-Americans of the opportunity to deal with urgent issues associated with institutional racism in this country."[259] According to Ellen

[256] Erin Ninh, 'Model Minority Narratives and the Asian American Family', in *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. Crystal Parikh and Daniel Y. Kim, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 114–28 (p. 115) <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316155011.011>.
[257] Ninh, p. 115.
[258] Bok-Lim C. Kim, 'Asian-Americans: No Model Minority', *Social Work*, 18.3 (1973), 44–53 (p. 44).
[259] Bok-Lim C. Kim, p. 44.

D. Wu, these model minorities were considered to even have "'out whited' the whites"[260] and this impression had significant ramifications in the cultural sector. For example, in her discussion of "Asian American Poetry," Josephine Park describes two crises that shaped the field: "the detention of Chinese immigrants on Angel Island from 1910 to 1940 and Japanese internment during the Pacific War."[261] Due to these two crises, Park shows that by reading Asian American poetry "we discover not only dejection but also fury, resolve, and hard-headed calculation."[262] These terms clearly resonate with Ting's own fury and resolve as the poems emerge from personal recollections and experiences.

Continuing the study of "NEW YORK CITY AND LITTLE CAMELLIA (DEDICATED TO MY MOTHER)," the dedication to Ting's mother is referred to directly on the last page of the poem:

> you my mother
>
> i your son
>
> i stand bridge
> i walk street
>
> hold camellia soft belly
>
> across luminous universe
>
> no wind blow stars
> no wind talk big voice
>
> soft

[260] Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, 'The Origins of the Model Minority', ed. by Madeline Y. Hsu and Ellen D. Wu, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 36.2 (2017), 99–101 (p. 99) <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerethnhist.36.2.0099>.
[261] Josephine Park, 'Asian American Poetry', in *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. Crystal Parikh and Daniel Y. Kim, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 101–13 (p. 101) <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316155011.010>.
[262] Park, p. 102.

back

I tell camellia
after I die
put in fire
 throw in toilet
pull chain
everything is o.k.

we cry

then we laugh.

Ting establishes himself in society, his mother's son, and as a person walking around the city and engaging with nature, but the character seems insignificant in the end. The emotional rollercoasters of death and sadness are both dramatized by the reference to flushing everything down the toilet and also emblematic of many of the poems within the work, which leads with discussion of painful events, but, perhaps wanting to stay "light," never fully unfold their darker implications. The sadness at the lack of authenticity in Chinatown is thus repeated, but also repressed with the line "everything is o.k. / we cry / then we laugh."

Clearly, Ting's writing style and his range of references to symbolic objects reflects his personal predispositions towards the world and his method of engagement with it. To reflect his engagement with the world, he adjusts his language, using limited punctuation and either fully capitalizes his lines or doesn't capitalize any words at all. In this regard, his work follows models established by Imagist poetry, to which poets Ezra Pound and Frank Stuart Flint assigned a number of characteristics:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no work that did not contribute to the presentation

> 3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.[263]

Pound and Flint wrote down these rules in 1913 to characterize the work of a group of poets called imagists, who included H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), William Carlos Williams, and T. E. Hume. Ting follows many of these guidelines in his work too: his writing does not use embellishment and he treats objects directly. The lines from the poem mentioned in the previous paragraph contain a clear rhythm at the start, four lines each starting with a subject pronoun, followed by two words, in the first two lines a possessive pronoun is followed by a family designation, the next two contain an intransitive verb followed by an outdoor urban location. Grammatically the last two lines require a preposition and an article, one stands *on* a bridge and walks *through* or *down* the street, but in terms of what is being conveyed the prepositions (on, through, down) are not necessary. The rhythm in the poem and the lack of prepositions create a very rhythmic text, the sentences of which are not bound by punctuation or using prepositions or pronouns, each line constitutes its own signifying domain. The result of this is that it becomes very difficult for the reader to place themselves within the text, reader theory assumes that there is a place in the text for the reader's imagination, which in a work like this might be difficult to generate. The reader has to identify with, and almost "become," Ting, or somehow assume his subject-position, to find an imaginatively projected reading. A key question emerges: Where is the reader located if the author has such a strong voice?

So far, my interpretation of the artist books in this dissertation has focused on the role of readers and how they interact with the work. *21 Etchings and Poems* seemed to suggest that readers are able to find their own meaning in the poems and to contour interaction with the text in relation

[263] *Imagist Poetry*, ed. by Peter Jones, Penguin Modern Classics, Repr (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 129.

to their own understanding and interpretations. There are overlaps between the two works, however, notably work by Pierre Alechinsky appears in both. Reflecting Ting's disposition, *1 ¢ Life* is much more playful; and the use of bright color and the way the pages are folded together makes it more animated and interactive. The Grippe work required effort from the reader to turn the large pages, but the Ting requires readers to assume more agency as they move the pages around to see the full images, and effort that is not necessary for *21 Etchings and Poems*. The works in the latter were printed in a way that they could each be hung individually on a wall or in a gallery without much altering their effect. In the Ting book some of the works are printed across different pages and can only be fully appreciated when those pages are placed side by side. Particular images cannot be subtracted from the whole while still preserving the overall appearance and effect of the series. Probably the most significant difference between the two works, however, turns on the omniscient, if manifold, even contradictory, "voice" of Ting, who is the author of all the texts creating a through-line that pulls everything together. In *Cent Mille Milliards de Poèmes* the role of the reader is even more pronounced, as readers are required actually to create the sonnets themselves, forging their own individual readings of a book that affords a huge number of line combinations and possible poems. So deliberated are the spaces established for readers to create their own versions, that one implication of *Cent Mille Milliards de Poèmes* points to a genre of artist book predicated on what amounts to reader co-authorship.

This is clearly not the case in *1¢ Life* as Ting has such a strong authorial voice that readers grapple not only with their reading of the text but also with their understanding of who Ting is. In "An Action Painting," a brief text written in 1961, A. F. Page describes Ting as follows:

> Ting is a man who thinks in terms of black and white, of contrasts and oppositions, of love and hate, life and death, good and evil, peace and violence.

> His painting is the physical release of passions generated by these conflicting forces, which Ting deliberately exploits.[264]

The contrasts and oppositions pointed to here are apparent in the poems of *1¢ Life*, which can turn, precipitously, from sweet and tender to horrifying and sad. The voice that connects the works in the book does not, however, come across as the advocate of a coherent philosophy or orientation. Readers cannot therefore be fully at ease with Ting as their guide, as he seems to delight in releasing conflicting forces, ideas and poetic images.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, Ting lays out his plan for the work as a collection of work of the very best artists of his time. To evaluate the extent to which he was successful in this, one must look at the prevalent art movement of his time, Pop Art which can be described as the most significant and clearly defined art movement of the 1960s. Lucy Lippard dates the beginnings of Pop to around 1958 in New York where it started out as an extension of Abstract Expressionism.[265] But she considers Pop Art to be "born twice: first in England and then again, independently in New York,"[266] stating that the second birth was more successful and attractive, as it attracted the attention of a burgeoning youth culture and was then adopted by an older generation. "The choice of a teenage culture as subject matter" Lippard argued, "contains an element of hostility towards contemporary values rather than complacency; it marks a new detachment from the accepted channels of art."[267] However, as Lippard points out, Pop Art was not nihilistic, and seldom focused on "optimism against all odds."[268] Ting's publication brought together artists of the Pop Art era and those associated with earlier developments (including Sam Francis and Robert Rauschenberg), while creating a work that in itself can be defined as an

[264] A. F. Page, 'An Action Painting', *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 40.1 (1961), 12–13 (p. 12) <https://doi.org/10.1086/DIA41505416>.
[265] Lucy R. Lippard, *Pop Art*, Praeger World of Art Series (New York, NY: Praeger, 1966), p. 22.
[266] Lippard, *Pop Art*, p. 9.
[267] Lippard, *Pop Art*, p. 10.
[268] Lippard, *Pop Art*, p. 10.

example of Pop Art. In a sense, he created the ultimate Pop Art work, combining the popular culture of his time and many of the most notable Pop Artists with stylistic and iconographic elements associated with the movement. Lippard notes: "its standards were not determined by regionalism so much as by a widespread decision to approach the contemporary world with a positive rather than a negative attitude."[269] Lippard summarizes her view as follows:

> There are so many misconceptions about what is or is not Pop Art that for the purpose of the following discussion I should say that I admit to only five hard-core Pop Artists in New York, and a few more on the West Coast and in England. They all employ more or less hard-edge, commercial techniques and colors to convey their unmistakably popular, representational images, but what they do stylistically with these characteristics is not necessarily similar. The New York five, in order of their commitment to these principles, are: Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Tom Wesselmann, James Rosenquist, and Claes Oldenburg.[270]

If we accept Lippard's view that there are only five "hard-core" Pop Artists in New York, *1¢ Life* clearly expands beyond the perceived center of the movement. But these five artists serve as a useful jumping-off point for the discussion of Ting's book—in which they are all featured—as they are considered the "Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas, Renoir, Pissarro, Monet, Daumier" [271] of Ting's time.

According to Lippard, Andy Warhol is the most committed Pop Art artist, and his Marilyn Monroe silkscreens and Campbell soup cans are primary emblems of the movement. According to Suzi Gablik in the foreword to *Pop Art Redefined*, his claim to this title lay in his renouncement of "all conventions by which art has previously been made."[272] In his work Warhol recreated popular objects from everyday use, which some art historians, including Arthur Danto interpreted as asking the following question: "How is it possible for something to be a work of art when

[269] Lippard, *Pop Art*, p. 9.
[270] Lippard, *Pop Art*, p. 69.
[271] Ting, 'Near 1 Cent Life', p. 67.
[272] *Pop Art Redefined*, ed. John Russell and Suzi Gablik, Books That Matter (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1969), p. 19.

something else, which resembles it to whatever degree of exactitude, is merely a thing, or an artifact, but not an artwork?"[273] Danto was referring here to Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* (1964), a work in which Warhol screen-printed brillo soap pad packaging on wooden boxes. However, as Mattick points out, the differences between *Brillo* the artwork and actual Brillo Boxes are pretty clear, especially in their material constitution:

> But you don't have to peer too closely to see the differences: they are made of wood, not cardboard; they are silk-screened, not printed; they are somewhat larger than the cartons in stores. Furthermore, as Danto himself pointed out in 1964, imagining someone displaying real soap pad cartons in an art gallery, "we cannot readily separate the Brillo cartons from the gallery they are in."[274]

According to Mattick, Warhol was not as interested in the question "What is art?" as earlier critics suggested, and his use of repurposing of everyday objects was not intended to question the difference between those objects and the category or definition of "art." Mattick saw Pop Art instead as movement that dealt more with labels: the focus of Warhol's art was not on the difference between art and commodity but about how, in the end, both are very much the same thing. Warhol's work appears in *1¢ Life* in one spread, on pages 112 and 113, and features six mouths, two overlapping. According to the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Warhol used "the same source image as [he] did for his Marilyn Monroe paintings and screen prints. Here, he isolated the detail of the movie star's mouth, presenting it at once as a disembodied symbol and a reproducible commodity."[275] The mouths of American actress Marilyn Monroe (1926-1962) are printed in three colors, one each in blue, yellow and red, and three in black. The images vary in

[273] Arthur C. Danto, 'Andy Warhol's Brillo Box', *Artforum*, September 1993, p. 129 <https://www.artforum.com/print/199307/andy-warhol-s-brillo-box-33853> [accessed 4 January 2022].
[274] Paul Mattick, 'The Andy Warhol of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Andy Warhol', *Critical Inquiry*, 24.4 (1998), 965–87 (p. 967).
[275] 'Andy Warhol. Marilyn Monroe I Love Your Kiss Forever Forever (Double Page Headpiece, Pages 112 and 113) from 1¢ Life. 1964 | MoMA', *The Museum of Modern Art* <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/32098> [accessed 25 January 2022].

quality: the blue and black versions at the top of both pages are much clearer that the bottom four. Underneath the mouths is a poem "JADE WHITE BUTTERFLY," that starts with the line "I laugh," immediately bringing the poem into relation with Warhol's lithograph of Monroe's mouths. The lips in the poem however, might also refer to Camellia, who is mentioned in the first stanza "alone kiss small camellia," Monroe lips referring the kiss. However the kiss bestowed on Camellia is recreated in six overlapping pairs of Monroe's lips, as if the significance of the individual lips is erased alongside the identity of the person kissed. If Warhol's lips reveal an obsession with Monroe, with sex, with kissing, the tender juxtaposition with Camellia reminds the reader of the strained connection between these two representations of women.

"JADE WHITE BUTTERFLY" continues: "if somebody know / we go together / flower fresh not always here / man not always here / morning become evening under my body." While these lines seem to give rise to a sense of pleasure and enjoyment, reflected in the smiles above, the poem is not a particularly happy one. Monroe's open-lipped, possibly smiling, mouths also become more blurred, or strained, as they multiply though the image. The ending of the poem makes the themes of transience and sadness more explicit: "Why not live ten thousand years / i not cry / I laugh/ blowing dust away / blowing whole world mournful away / one life too short / one day too long." The last lines seem almost to refer to Monroe, her life, her laugh, her role in popular culture, and her image as sexual icon, which became more strained and tragic as Monroe died of an overdose some two years before *1¢ Life* was published. Living forever has its drawbacks, the reproductions created to maintain an objectified form of the original living person has created a version removed from their living counterpart. This brings to mind Hannah Arendt's discussion of the science-driven modern impulse to "escape the human condition" in *On The Human Condition* (1958):

> For some time now, a great many scientific endeavors have been directed toward making life also "artificial," toward cutting the last tie through which even man belongs among the children of nature. It is the same desire to escape from imprisonment to the earth that is manifest in the attempt to create life in the test tube, in the desire to mix frozen germ plasm from people of demonstrated ability under the microscope to produce superior human being and to alter their size, shape and function; and the wish to escape the human condition, I suspect, also underlies the hope to extend man's life-span far beyond the hundred-year limit.[276]

The human condition has moved away from the natural, embracing the artificial superior human being. The poems in *1 ¢ Life* seem to underscore this move away from death and ideas about living forever; but they set such aspirations in contexts that have more negative connotations. Living forever, Ting seems to suggest, simply makes days too long. But the book itself, by commemorating the art of his time, seeks for something eternal. And Monroe, of course, did not live forever but succumbed to the pressures of her own celebrity status well before what Arendt noted was the "hundred-year limit" of the human lifespan.

The second artist at the center of the Pop Art movement according to Lippard is Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997), whose paintings were often based on comic book characters and narratives. As art historian Jonathan Benthall points out however, this subject-matter was merely "a decoy, the real significance of his painting being in their shapes and textures and colors and lines."[277] Benthall encourages the viewer to look beyond the comic strip but at the composition as if they were a work by Piet Mondrian, for example, with a focus on the composition. Art historian Bradford Collins describes it as follows:

> In *Girl with Ball,* Lichtenstein realized a modernist brand of pop, a marriage of Mondrian and advertising; the painting could be subtitled *Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue.* Unlike the commercial artist who wished to suggest the appearance of three-dimensional forms in space, Lichtenstein sought a radically two-dimensional effect. [….] creating what Greenberg elsewhere praised as the

[276] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 2.
[277] Jonathan Benthall, 'Art as Programming: Reflexions on Roy Lichtenstein', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 3.2 (1968), 107–14 (p. 111).

> fuliginous flatness toward which he thought modernist art aspired in its will to withdraw into itself and away from a tarnished world.[278]

As Collins points out, Lichtenstein's work cannot be reduced to color-led composition alone, the work also draws into itself, the connection to the world, like with the Warhol, becomes an objectified reproduction. Lichtenstein's work is present twice *1¢ Life*, once on the front cover, and again in a two page spread near the Warhol work on pages 118-119, in Lichtenstein's signature technique using Ben-Day dots.[279] Unlike most of the lithographs in the book, Lichtenstein's spread presents two separate images divided by the fold in the center. On the left is *Girl*, an image of the eponymous female figure showing a smiling face, blonde hair, blue eyes and hands with manicured red-painted nails; on the right is a blue-based monochrome of the top of a spray can, held and activated by the manicured fingers of an otherwise absent female figure, which is titled in the right margin "FRESHAIR1$25¢ by ROY". The woman is pointing purposefully to the left side of the left page and her eyes are focused away from the work. The spray can on the page next on the right is wholly disconnected from her. She is both part of the work and not part of the work, introducing a theme of disconnect between women and the readers, or potentially more specifically Ting himself, in the book as a whole. The page aims to bring together parts that are resolutely unwilling to engage, but their placement on the page encourages a connection between them which is based on composition, as mentioned by Jonathan Benthal, but also drawn into itself as Collins describes.

The poem at the bottom which runs under both pages, thus holding them together, is titled "Around the U.S.A." and describes a trip in 1959 by "millions and millions of old ladies go to stock market buy firecrackers," who go to the casino, toilet, hotel, cemetery, night club, museums,

[278] Bradford R. Collins, 'Modern Romance: Lichtenstein's Comic Book Paintings', *American Art*, 17.2 (2003), 61–85 (pp. 66–67).
[279] Anthony E. Grudin, *Warhol's Working Class: Pop Art and Egalitarianism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 21 <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsd/detail.action?docID=4890628> [accessed 11 January 2022].

etc. Near the end of the poem, the author urges the women to "please marry paper husbands, put perfume in your bodies, let all blood go out, you will never be angry crying made, it is great to live, with artificial flowers, kleenex, toys." Here women are reduced by Ting to two dimensional cut-outs who marry paper husbands and exchange their blood for perfume, thereby become ideals of consumerism, losing their humanity, echoed in the lines "it is great to live / with artificial flowers," a move away from the natural and what might be "real" that recurs throughout the text. Ting's repeated references to industrial processes and products was also characteristic of Lichtenstein and other Pop artists, in an interview with R. G Swenson Lichtenstein noted that:

> We like to think of industrialization as being despicable. I don't really know what to make of it. There's something terribly brittle about it. I suppose I would still prefer to sit under a tree with a picnic basket rather than under a gas pump, but signs and comic strips are interesting as subject matter. There are certain things that are usable, forceful and vital about commercial art. We're using those things — but we're not really advocating stupidity, international teenagers and terrorism.[280]

This aversion to the industrial, while incorporating it into their work is echoed in Ting's use of the artificial within his work. He is interested in the industrial but also weary of it. The women in "Around the U.S.A." go from enjoying themselves to losing their humanity. But there is another side to these issues as Benthal points out: "The strip-cartoon and advertising images are simply more real to him [Lichtenstein] than are the traditional images of high culture."[281] In a world saturated with the artificial, what is the point of maintaining distinctions between the real and the artificial? Benthall points out that although Lichtenstein would prefer the tree to the gas pump, "he would quite unironically prefer the gas-pump as subject- matter for a painting."[282] In terms of the book, the idea of the artificial as subject matter, and ways not only artists but also people engage

[280] Interview with G.R. Swenson Russell and Gablik, p. 92. [source, details?]
[281] Benthall, p. 110.
[282] Benthall, p. 110.

with it is, a crucial theme of the work, as already elucidated through Ting's walk through Chinatown. This idea of a dissonance created between commitment to the artificial but the disconnect this creates to the real thing remains consistent throughout the work.

To continue the evaluation of the work as containing the greatest of his time according to Lippard, Ting includes Tom Wesselmann (1931–2004), whose work is present in two spreads in *1¢ Life* (pages 64-65 and 72-73), one titled "sun in stomach" the other "stomach sunk in whiskey." The first is a still life in the Pop Art style, with a box of crackers, a dinner-style pepper shaker, an orange and other fruit presented on a pedestal bowl, all set on a table with a checkered tablecloth; featuring bright colors and household products, although it has an unfinished appearance in the upper right corner. The image on the left of the spread contains three colors; an orange and white checked box of crackers with a blue label, a blue salt shaker, a whole orange fruit, all placed behind a plate in the bottom left cover. On the left of the two pages a raised plate of apples is more crudely drawn, as if unfinished. These appositions are manifestations of what Gene R Swenson in an interview with Wesselmann called "a juxtaposing of different representations"[283]—on which Wesselmann elaborated as follows:

> A painted pack of cigarettes next to a painted apple wasn't enough for me. They were both the same kind of thing. But if one is from a cigarette ad and the other a painted apple, they are two different qualities of materials, images from art history or advertising — trade on each other. This kind of relationship establish a momentum through the pictures— all the elements are in some way very intense. Therefore throughout the picture all the elements compete with each other.[284]

Wesselmann juxtaposes art and advertising to create images that compete with each other, introducing a "momentum" that mirrors some of the movement Mallarmé sought, as elucidated in

[283] Russell and Gablik, p. 120.
[284] G.R Swenson Russell and Gablik, p. 120.

the introduction. Instead of a focal point for the composition of the work, Wesselmann works with juxtapositions and implied movement. "Juxtaposing […] different representations" is clearly a strategy taken on in many parts and aspects of the book, the page and spread sequencing of which places different styles next to each other. Underneath is a short poem by Ting, placed below the left part of the work, on page 64: "SUN IN STOMACH / NEW MOON IN EYES / I WANT A HAMBURGER / LOAN ME TWO DOLLARS." This work is set up in juxtaposition with the next one, where the "sun in the stomach" refers to food for consumption, which later, when turning to the nude Wesselmann is so famous for, becomes "stomach sunk in whiskey."

The second Wesselmann work has many similarities to the first in that it takes up most of the two pages, features images placed side by side and uses the same basic colors. A naked, blonde, white woman lies on an orange bed covered with a striped yellow and red blanket with her head resting on a white pillow. Above her on the wall there are four unevenly spaced white stars on a blue background above a red dresser set with vase containing red, yellow, blue and pink flowers. Wesselmann is best known for his Great American Nude series, which, according to art historian David McCarthy, reconfigures "the Western tradition of the reclining female nude in an intimate, domestic space, seeking to update and localize it."[285] The nudes in the European female nude tradition, for example *The Nude Maja* (1797) by Francisco Goya (1746-1828), *La Grande Odalisque* (1814) by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), *Olympia* (1863) and *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863) by Édouard Manet (1832-1883) and *The Large Bathers* (1884–1887) by Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) are almost uniformly modest: the women, though naked, are generally pale and hairless, and their poses coy or restrained. The women Wesselmann portrays

[285] David McCarthy, 'Tom Wesselmann and the Americanization of the Nude, 1961-1963', *Smithsonian Studies in American Art*, 4.3/4 (1990), 103–27 (p. 103).

are also hairless but significantly less modest, with spread legs and vulvas flaunted rather than discretely hidden.

Wesselmann presents the female body as a commercialized commodity, McCarthy points to his emphasis on a "sprawling, splay-legged, open armed mass of sexual availability"[286] in contrast to the tradition of European nudes which tend to be "demurely polite, primly self-contained" [287] and less "served up" and sexually available. Wesselmann's work was enabled by, a general shift in sexual politics in the United States in the 1960s, "shaped by the liberalizing of obscenity laws […] the astonishing success of *Playboy* and other men's magazines, the lingering popularity of pinups, the legalization of oral contraceptives, and the use of sex in advertising."[288] McCarthy underscores that "for Wesselmann there was ample cultural evidence for presenting the Americanized nude as a highly commercialized, objectified, and sexualized female being, in short, as a secular muse for the affluent society."[289] Wesselmann situated his nude female figures in Americanized contexts, signaled by elements of the US flag and other commercial or popular cultural references. The flag is especially significant, and the four stars in the second Wesselmann image, present in other works such as *Great American Nude*, 47 (1963), furnish short-hand variants of the star-spangled banner. In *Great American Nude #5* (1961) the US flag is present in complete form, along with four separate stars below it (with parts of two others) and a single star near the top right corner.

As in the other Wesselmann work, the upper right corner seems unfinished: out the window one can see colored pencil lines, a blue sky over an orange landscape, while the orange curtains seem strangely incomplete compared to the rest of the work. By contracts, the left side, where the

[286] McCarthy, p. 104.
[287] McCarthy, p. 104.
[288] McCarthy, p. 103.
[289] McCarthy, p. 103.

woman is placed against the wall, seems more finished and complete. The accompanying poem is again very short: "STOMACH SUNK IN WHISKY / PEE INSIDE PANTS / I SAW A LITTLE STAR / WHERE IS MY BABY TONIGHT." The author of the poem, Ting, is thinking of his "baby," the woman in the work who is placed across the bed. The subject is not there with the woman but thinking about her. The distance between the subject of the work and the subject of the poem indicates a detachment between the viewer and Wesselmann's nude. The objectified woman becomes unavailable to the reader, in the way many of the women in this work are. Ting hereby poses another obstacle for the reader, not in terms of format but of content, where the reader is reminded by the works that they are an outsider looking in. Placing these two poems next to each other, or juxtaposing them, points to certain negative connotations of the objectified woman, as the stomach ends up being sunk in whiskey, which is a nice initial feeling but will result in a hangover, implying that objectifying women will also result in a negative feeling.

The fourth artist in Lippard's list of consequential Pop figures is James Rosenquist, whose work, in his own words, is founded on the relations between "a combination of fragments of things."[290] He suggests, that:

> the fragments or objects or real things are caustic to one another, and the title is also caustic to the fragments […] The images are expendable, and the images are in the painting and therefore the painting is also expendable. I only hope for a colorful shoe-horn to get the person off, to turn him on to his own feelings.[291]

In *1 ¢ Life* Rosenquist's work, occupying a two-page spread, is centered on a rendering of a box of Oxydol laundry detergent. The box is only partially recognizable, but a domestic worker would know the brand immediately. The work is surrounded by notes and scribbles, that are difficult to read, providing information on the sketch using words such as "floor" with an arrow pointing to

[290] Gene Swenson, 'Social Realism in Blue: An Interview with James Rosenquist', *Studio International (London)*, 175.897 (1968), 76–83 (p. 110).
[291] Swenson, 'Social Realism in Blue: An Interview with James Rosenquist', p. 110.

the bottom of the page, and the word "rabbit" next to what might be an abstract rendition of a rabbit whose fur has been stripped, ready for cooking. The work is an annotated study for Rosenquist's important painting *Nomad* (1963) in the Albright-Knox Gallery.[292] The inclusion of the study in *1 ¢ Life* points to how Rosenquist's work attempts to venture beyond the page.

Nomad is a three-dimensional piece, which can only part of the book as a study or series of notes, at the three dimensional work cannot fit between its pages. The study includes many of the parts that end up in the final piece, the package of Oxydol, the light bulb, the picnic table and the guts, which in the final work have taken the shape of pasta with olives and meatballs. According to Emily Braun, in her paper "Sex, Lies, and History" the use of "Franco-American spaghetti" was based on an "industrial age aura [that] served as his Proustian madeleine"[293]—an observation secured by Rosenquist himself in an interview with Gene Swanson, where he notes that he "felt it as a remembrance of things."[294] His collages are made up of cuttings from the magazine, *Life,* and was the source of his inspiration, providing a reflection on life based on the experience of life. For example bringing in the spaghetti that reminds the reader of food they ate as a child, is placed below the metal sheets, Braun describes this composition as follows:

> the shock of the brilliant-orange spaghetti at the base of the picture reverberates as an allusion to the spilled guts or brains of an automobile disaster. […] But trauma is soon assuaged when we realize that the content is all manufactured anyway: the engine is mass-produced, the love is celluloid, and the food is canned. Like all extensions of man, these technologies increase work efficiency, while inuring us to over-stimulation and simulated experience.[295]

[292] James Rosenquist, *Nomad | Albright-Knox*, 1963, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York <https://www.albrightknox.org/artworks/k196325-nomad> [accessed 26 January 2022].
[293] Emily Braun, 'Sex, Lies, and History', *Modernism/Modernity*, 10.4 (2003), 729–56 (p. 729) <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2003.0074>.
[294] Gene Swenson, 'What Is Pop Art? Part II: Stephen Durkee, Jasper Johns, James Rosenquist, Tom Wesselmann', *Art News*, 62.10 (1964), 41, 62-64 (p. 64).
[295] Braun, p. 735.

Here again a real event is turned into something artificial, mass produced, the tender memory of the good has turned into a traumatic experience that, like Chinatown of Ting, has become artificial and mass produced. Braun concludes her analysis by observing that "Rosenquist's *Nomad*, an epic on the itinerant culture of commodity capitalism, depicts life lived from one "NEW" purchase to another. Fast food and picnic tables cater to the temporary quality of modern existence, and home sweet home can be recreated wherever the billfold opens."[296] The word "New" is emphasized in both *Nomad* and its study in *1 ¢ Life*, although in the final version it is foregrounded. Several elements are not present in the study, including the metal rectangles and the truncated ballet dancing legs (although the pink "guts" mirror the pink of the tights).

The most notable part of the final work is the bag hung from the top right of the work, spilling paint. This is also present in the sketch, although it is not entirely recognizable unless compared to the finished work. The bag is drawn, first as a combination of colors, and again underneath like a pile of intestines. At the bottom of the page are the pieces of wood that are placed on the floor in front of the work in the final piece, with the note "to floor", indicating the paint dripping on the floor. Rosenquist has extended the surface of the painting both forward, outside of the two dimensional form, but also downward outside of the vertical dimension. As the lithograph is a sketch for another work, the reader has to go beyond the expectation of seeing it as a finished project. Like *Nomad* the reader is invited to think beyond the page. The poem by Ting that accompanies the work comprises just four lines:

> Happily and long into the night we drink
> Till all are wrong
> There is no retiring
> How can a man bite his navel?

[296] Braun, p. 742.

The last line alludes to a Japanese proverb: “It's no good trying to bite off your navel” which is roughly the equivalent saying to “don't cut off your nose to spite your face” in English, referring to an overreaction to a certain situation. The line suggests that the subject of the poem should be happy with the situation they are in, although it also indicates a happiness found by drinking that eventually turns into an unretiring, never-ending sadness. There is a collage-like disconnect between the poem and the image, where the text fits I alongside the sketch as an extra dimension rather than an explanation or a cohesive resolution. Rosenquist’s imagery is a series of fragments clipped from the “itinerant culture of commodity capitalism.” [297] There is no true happiness to be found within the capitalist system, but in some ways Ting is reminding us not to complain.

The fifth artist mentioned by Lippard is the Swedish-born Claes Oldenburg (1929–), known for larger-than-life sculptures of everyday objects such as *Floor Cake* (1962), a five by nine feet slice of cake made of canvas filled with foam rubber and cardboard boxes, and *Floor Cone* (1962) a four by eleven feet carrot. In *1 ¢ Life* his work is spread across pages 136 and 137, and, like Lichtenstein’s contribution, also features two separate images, one on each page, the poem below once more connecting both parts. The image on the left is a black on white image of a woman with flowing curls, while the right side features a slice of cake articulated in yellow, pink and blue colors. The woman’s curls on the left seem to have imitated the layers of the cake on the right or vice versa. The woman’s presence is reduced to being similar to a slice of cake. The list-like poem underneath is titled “All kinds of love”:

> Parent love children as summer garden hold area
> Husband love wife as long distance call
> Husband love mistress as rainbow in pocket
> Girl love man as open dream
> Grandmother think all infant made of sugar
> ….
> Doctor love everybody sick

[297] Braun, p. 742.

Buddha love everybody empty stomach
..
Hollywood movie star love to become famous one move
A fast horse love chasing wind
Globe love revolving
Sun love eat ice
…
Mountain love stand up
Ocean love swim
Flying moth loves flame
…
Father love piss shit
Shit love green grass
Green grass love cow
Cow love milk
Milk love baby
Baby love father
Father still love piss shit

The reference to the "empty stomach" echoes the poems accompanying the Wesselmann works, recalling recurring themes of hunger and eating, hamburgers and whiskey. There is also another nod to Marylin Monroe, the "Hollywood movie star," whose repeated reference in the portfolio echoes the effect she had on the 1960s. The connection between a woman's hair and cake, in relation to the topic of the poem invite a reflection on the stereotypical postwar position of women in society, often according a status akin to a beautiful cake, something to be looked at and devoured. Oldenburg, pointed to a more formal set of issues: "I think what I'm interested in are conditions and, for example, the relation of hardness to softness—conditions which express my experience of nature. I think objects are more or less chosen as excuses or tangible things that I can hang my expression of what it feels like to be alive on."[298] Making the connection between women and cake is therefore not one that places them in the same realm, rather, Oldenburg aims at emphasizing their difference. This back and forth Oldenburg calls the move from "hardness to

[298] Jeanne Siegel, *Artwords: Discourse on the 60s and 70s*, Studies in the Fine Arts. The Avant-Garde; No. 47 (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 183.

softness," is similar to what has been identified as the back and forth between tender and crude moments in Ting's work, where the "baby love father" a very tender line, but "father still love piss shit," immediately reverses that moment of tenderness.

By including the five artists Lippard considered to make up the core of US Pop Art, Ting accomplishes his primary goal of creating an artistic masterpiece collecting work by the greatest artists of his time; but he goes much further, embodying the experience of his life that is more than just a cluster of motifs set out by the leading artists of the 1960s. The book succeeds at going beyond collecting the greats of its time, which would be the goal of gallery exhibition. Due to the personal nature of reading, and interacting with a book, the reader is invited to consider not only the work of these great artists but themes in reflection to their own lives. Ting guides the reader, allowing moments of reflection and dialogue to consider their position in life and the general sentiment of the 1960s. Through the interactive physical manipulation of the pages, the reader becomes immersed in the story, both physically and literally.

The folded nature of *1¢ Life* creating interesting combinations for the reader and encouraging them to unravel certain parts of the book to get the full effect of the work. For example, Sam Francis's abstract work printed on pages 15 and 26, is folded in two and contains within its folds ten single pages with works by James Rosenquist, Pierre Alechinsky and Alan Davie alongside poems by Ting. To unfold and view the complete Francis work one has to remove the folded page from between the spread and turn it over, not an easy feat as the library frowns on disassembling the book and researchers run the risk of messing up the folds and not being able to put the work back together. The work is a typical Sam Francis abstraction in two halves, with writing along the edges: "uncle sam love Marilyn" at the top of page 15 and some partly illegible letters and words running down the side of the same page, starting with "xoxoxox." Although

occupying two pages the work does not feel coherent, the left side of the page consisting of two half red circles divided by black and blue splatters, which extend into the second half, or page 26 that contains a large red mark across the middle of the page, surrounded by yellow circles. The reader is encouraged to take the book apart and consider the works together, as their connection is not accidental but also not the way it is supposed to be read, books are not meant to be pulled apart. However, the fact that Ting did print them on the same page means that the reader is allowed to place them side by side and get an insight almost find out a secret physical connection between two disparate works.

Every few pages a Sam Francis work appears, on page 78, *Cloud Rock*, like the previous Francis work, is spread across two pages, enfolding an Alechinsky image paired with a poem "dedicated to alechinsky, january 1962" by Ting. The poem, "Défense d'Uriner" ("No Urinating"), compares the cost of a new suit to the price of a prostitute. Like other works, the Francis lithograph on page 78 consists of primary colors, red, blue, green and yellow along with various "splashes." Here, however, writing is added in the margins: "Ting tong," "Bullshit," "cloud," and "rock" are legible. The second half of the work on page 83 is placed opposite the poem: "I BECOME GREEN GRASS SOON (dedicated to Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Goya, Van Gogh, Beethoven.)" Here the goal of the work is again repeated, in an broader sense, where Ting not only refers to the great artists of the previous century but to the greatest artists ever. The green grass invokes the saying about the grass always being greener elsewhere, Ting hoping to become the greener grass. This is in very different to the rather derogatory language placed along the first poem. The image shows two partial circles, the bottom one a half crescent that takes up just half the space of the page; to the top right we see a quarter of another circle. The circles are like planets, drifting apart, an appearance that mirrors the poem: "eight thousand miles clouds and moon. I throw my blood into

ocean reed blood-love floating under sunshine under moonlight." As the poem continues on the next two pages the reader falls rhythmically into step with what to expect from Francis, whose images punctuate the publication, though a decreasing number of works are contained within each fold.

On pages 91 and 95, however, the reader once again comes across a work that follows the same structure as the Francis work; a folio that is enfolds other works. As it has the same style and prompts a similar method of reading as the artist's previous works, the viewer is tricked into thinking it is another Francis piece as Francis work so far has been split up, and this work fits perfectly in the sequence, as it is only divided by one work by Joan Mitchell. The first page (91) features something that looks like a blue duck, on "water" of yellow green and red dots, surrounded by green grass while the sun slowly descends into the water. The accompanying poem (on page 90) reads as follows: "IF I LOVE GOD / I CAN LOVE MY MOTHER / WHO SAY CANNOT? / IF I LOVE MOTHER / I CAN LOVE WOMAN / AND SLEEP ON HER BED / IF I CAN / SLEEP WITH WOMAN / I LOVE MOTHER / AND IF I LOVE MOTHER / MY WOMAN / IS GOD" The text sets up a number of conditions—if I do this, then I can do that—which results in Ting proving that his woman, is God. The poem is a logic puzzle the reader has to solve, but the riddle is meaningless, the connection between mother and making love to a woman being very unclear. The second page (94) of the painting shows a crudely drawn sun with the same primary colors, dark blue, red white green light blue, while the poem next to it on page 95 is an ode to the sun: "SUN , I LOVE YOU, FIRST SECOND I BORN' which ends: "UNIVERSE / MOVE SUN, SUN CARRY EARTH, EARTH LOVE MEN." However, against all expectation, this image is actually rendered by Ting, as attested by the table of contents. Looking for patterns within the work readers might "recognize" a Sam Francis, only to be surprised, should they check, that it is

actually a work by the author. By creating this trap, Ting keeps readers guessing, trying to find patterns within the work although such quests are mostly futile, as Ting sets further traps and leads us down culs-de-sac of references. The sense of possible deception and frustration engendered here parallels the feelings of fruitlessness and despair expounded in Ting's poems.

Continuing on after the trick by Ting, the number of pages set between Francis' works is reduced so that, on pages 104-105, the work *Pink Venus Kiki* is placed across one folded page that the reader does not have to pull apart to see the work as a whole. Underneath the work is Ting's "BLACK STONE" dedicated to Francis. Despite its unpromising title, this poem ends by sounding a comparatively positive note: "WHO SAY NO BEAUTY IN THIS WORLD / WHO SAY NO TRUTH ON EARTH." Ting seems to inform readers here that they are now back on good footing with the work, no longer being tricked or misled by its complex and deceptive format. Although readers are constantly engaged throughout the book, this is one of the rare occasions, other than at the beginning, where Ting directly addresses his readers. This allows the reader some space to be part of the book, which is rare. While Ting usually leads the reading by being the main voice in the text, in this particular instance the reader is acknowledged as experiencing the work and being tricked by it.

This idea of tricks and games is present throughout the work not only in the format of the folio but also in the content on the pages. Works by American abstract painter Alfred Jensen (1903-1981), especially on pages 88 and 89 (paired with Ting's poem "I meet my sweetheart and my godfather") afford other significant examples that play with the reader and the image-text format. The poem is placed to the right of a work made up of rectangles in yellow, orange, purple (mottled with red) and blue, on a green background with black (vertical and horizontal) and white (diagonal) stripes around it. There seems to be a pattern here in which combinations of blocks are related in

different colors. The rectangles are marked with letters, so the green blocks have a “g” on them, the yellow a “y”, the red an “r” (although it looks more like orange) and the blue a “b”; the mixed red and purple rectangles are marked with what looks like a “V”. The poem describes a big government hero leading the subject of the poem through the street:

A BIG GOVERNMENT HERO SAY
FROM HERE YOUNG MAN
FIRST TO LEFT
SECOND TURN RIGHT
PASS THREE SMALL STREET
SECOND LEFT
ACROSS THIRD DARK STREET

There seems to be a code hidden in the text, which might correspond to something in the painting. There are guidelines provided: “FIRST TO LEFT / SECOND TURN RIGHT / ACROSS THIRD DARK STREET” but it is unclear where the viewer is supposed to start on the “board.” The reader wants to play the game and find their place in the work but there are not enough clues. The game here seems to reflect a certain weariness towards the government, that guides the reader in the form of a hero but does not provide a useful way of covering the board. It is as if the reader is purposefully not allowed to enter into the game, and deliberately left guessing, outside the hidden parameters of the game.

Another example of a game is on pages 140-141 which also feature patterns present in one of two works by Robert Indiana. Here the pattern is reminiscent of Andy Warhol’s dance diagrams, except that the “diagram” is impossible to follow and the color codes do not make any obvious sense. There are no foot outlines in this diagram, just arrows in four colors, green, black, red and yellow, with four yellow, red, and black arrows but only one green one (seeming out of place and pointing towards the number 3). The numbers two and four?, spelled backwards, are placed at opposite ends of the diagonal that crosses the work. The text inscribed over the work reads: “take

good care of self long journey ahead keep strength good ideas love in heart / hatred bury in deep earth spread self like giant to four winds." The four winds are associated with four arrows, like those on weather maps, indicating a movement that seems to resolve outward like a centripetal force. There might be a pattern or coded reference here; but the viewer is simply witness to a game played out between Indiana and Ting that they cannot play themselves. The words reminding the reader to worry about themselves and take care of themselves, inviting them to disconnect from Ting.

This idea of playing the games in the portfolio are especially present in the Öyvind Fahlströhm (1928-1976) work (pages 120-121), for example, consists of what looks like a game in which, again, only some of the clues are visible. We see a "board" divided into small rectangles that are either black or contain letters and drawings with accented colors in red, blue or yellow. Underneath is a poem in which the letters of certain words are marked with open red frames, matching the colors above the work. The poem, "My dear white skeleton" describes the death of a friend: "my friend is white skeleton / pink peach flowers too white." The first three letters of "fri"end are marked, and also appear on the game board, next to an image of a tilted rectangle with three legs. The first letters of "whi"te and "pi"nk are also marked on the poem and relocated to associated rectangles on the game board: "whi" is placed next to an image containing the same images from "fri", repeated three times diagonally across the page over round objects, like plants, placed on the ground with roots protruding from them, while "pi" is placed next to a black and white cylinder in one image, and next to a little blob held up by a red fan-like array in two other images. The text-assisted images and board-like format imply that there is a puzzle for the reader to uncover; but unfortunately the puzzle seems unsolvable, rendering the connection between text and image impenetrable and the poem itself laments the sudden death of a friend, a recurring

theme: “Suddenly die / like sharp knife / cut everything off fast /dead only feel dark / make live people see death / why everything old fast easy die / where life?” The playfulness of the game becomes somber, the black squares no longer reminding the reader of uncovered tiles in a game but dark patches of sadness. The ending discusses the impact of alcohol, another motif that ricochets through the publication (in the poems accompanying Rosenquist and Wesselmann, for example): “moon shine on dead bones / ashamed myself / quick take new dress spend all money / buy wine / live / for somebody.” The connection between the two suggesting an inability to process, the game cannot be played, similar to the death of a friend cannot be understood. Again the subject turns to alcohol, as mentioned before, Ting has a tendency to flit between the tender and the crude, juxtaposing the games and death, he creates feelings and instances that are hard to unite unless alcohol is available to take the edge off. Again Ting incorporates the truth of lived experience into his work.

In his paper “The Game-as-Art Form: Historic Roots and Recent Trends” Michael J Thomas attributed Fahlström’s interest in games to his wider philosophy of art: he “saw human existence as a constant pressing up against and testing of rigidity of reality. There is a tension,” he continues, “between our need as human beings for freedom and variation and the imposed inflexibility of reality. Fahlström’s work symbolically encourages us to test the rigid appearance of reality by inviting us to manipulate his paintings.”[299] Some of his works—*World Trade Monopoly (B. Large)* (1970), based on the popular board game Monopoly; or *Eddie (Sylvie's brother) in the Desert (Variable Collage)* (1966), which could be rearranged for different narratives using movable paper cutouts—contained parts with magnets attached so viewers could move things around. Fahlström’s promotion of interaction between viewer and art work is

[299] Michael J. Thomas, ‘The Game-as-Art Form: Historic Roots and Recent Trends’, *Leonardo*, 21.4 (1988), 421–23 (p. 422) <https://doi.org/10.2307/1578705>.

exemplified in the book form. In *1 ¢ Life*, as in Fahlström's games-related "Variables," readers become immersed within the work and are allowed the implicit agency to move things around. The rules inherent to games are mirrored here, as reading a book also requires the reader to follow certain rules. According to Thomas, the "game-as-art form is a distinctly modern art form"[300] that combines "the movement of kinetic art, the non-visuality of conceptual art, the dynamic and real-time aspect of performance art and the process orientation of systems art."[301]

Thomas attributes the introduction of boardgames to avant-garde art to the influence of the Dada-affiliated artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), who became a noted chess player later in life, and whose "objects seem to present a puzzle to be resolved." [302] According to Thomas, the introduction of games into art started with Dada notions of what can be considered anti-art:

> The Dadaist notion of anti-art changes the interaction with art into a more dialectical situation. The anti-artist presents his or her work as a 'move', cast not as an artistic statement but as a question: "is this art?" The viewer then makes a move either by accepting the object as art or by setting forth his or her opinion on the extent to which it is art. Such a situation lends itself to a two-party discourse on the nature of art, reminiscent of two players interacting in a game format.[303]

Thomas describes the question of Fahlström's work being considered "art" not as a question of the "artness" of the object but a change in how the viewer, or in this case the player, view it. This interaction between the player and the piece of art in itself becomes a boardgame, so that the player has to accept the rules of the art piece. The questions around how Pop Art is constituted, can also be transposed to ask what makes a board game an art work, the same way artist books invite the reader to reconsider reading, the art-work-as-boardgame allows the artist to experiment with modes of interaction with viewers. As with artist books, there is a lack of what Thomas calls "an

[300] Thomas, p. 432.
[301] Thomas, p. 432.
[302] Thomas, p. 422.
[303] Thomas, p. 422.

articulated aesthetic that takes into account all the aspects of the game as art."[304] The artist book is often considered only as art or as a book, as mentioned in the introduction. The limitations which according to Thomas are placed on the study of games as art, are also placed on the study of artist books, that don't allow for a full evaluation of their different components and how they play out together.

1 ¢ Life also refers to older more established variants of play, including the play between words and images investigated by French artist Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), discussed in the introduction, whose shaped texts reinforce the subject of the work, making the reading more instantaneous. Apollinaire's *Il Pleut,* for example, is written in slanted vertical lines so it looks like the words are physically pouring, like rain, down the page.[305] Apollinaire scholar Willard Bohn defines "visual poetry" succinctly "as poetry meant to be seen,"[306] emphasizing that this type of poetry cannot merely be read but has to be viewed for a full experience to emerge—a quality present in some of the poems and images of *1¢ Life*. One of the important aspects of Bohn's theory of visual poetry turns on it's the "illusion of unmediated experience" modelled on the promise of cinema: "Not only was the word subordinated to the image; the way in which images were linked together was new and exciting. Audiences were attracted by the illusion of unmediated experience but also by the novelty of cinematic logic and sequence."[307] Ideas about immediacy were prominent in the emergence of twentieth century experimental writing: many art forms attempted to emulate immediate or singular experiences, including Imagism, Abstract Expressionism and visual and "concrete" poetry (Fahlström, we should note, published a "Manifesto for Concrete

[304] Thomas, p. 423.
[305] Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Il Pleut', *SIC*, December 1916, p. 62 <https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822003862461> [accessed 19 November 2019].
[306] Willard Bohn, *Apollinaire, Visual Poetry, and Art Criticism* (London: Bucknell University Press, 1993), p. 2.
[307] Bohn, *Apollinaire, Visual Poetry, and Art Criticism*, p. 2.

Poetry" in 1954). However, Bohn does not claim that visual poetry achieved this goal: "But though the visual configuration could be apprehended instantly, the lines of poetry still had to be deciphered one by one. If anything, the process of reading was more time-consuming than before."[308] Perhaps this can be considered as a failure of the calligram; but the situation can also be rephrased: even if it takes more time physically to read a book, its effect might still be more direct or intense.

An example of these calligram style works is on page 14, featururing a poem titled 'Mad thought in barber chair' in the shape of an umbrella, with the title written in a larger, bold face that also serves as its curved handle. The cover of the umbrella is made up of a series of numbered thoughts or propositions:

> One-ten year old girl skin spring one and hardly meet beauty of everybody …
> Three men always asking gold hair high breast wild buttocks three greatest misfortunes
> Three months hot summer …
> Four o'clock in the morning …
> Five attributes of human being form perception consciousness actions dan knowledge …
> Six roots of sensation

Most lines start with a number, slowly moving from one to ten, but ending with "thousand long hairs on barber shop floor, 1,00000000000000000 birds fly away." The repetition of the numbers, and the recurring themes of people going about their days sound like the recurring thoughts someone might have waiting in a barber chair. The connection between the umbrella and the barber shop, like that between hair and the umbrella, is not as straightforward as the calligram implies. A connection could be made between hair and the umbrella, in terms of shape, and covering, but it is a strained one. Instead, the poem plays on connections between different things rather than one dominant analogy. A seemingly random connection between the shape of the poem and the poem itself is also found on pages 19 which is written in the shape of the number seven, this is also the

[308] Bohn, *Apollinaire, Visual Poetry, and Art Criticism*, p. 67.

shape Ting used for the image on the previous page. The continuation between the shapes implies a code, which through reading, could be potentially decoded, however, it is unclear what the game really is. Maybe the reader, constantly looking for patterns, is only imagining certain patterns, and we are transported - as the poem on the next page puts it in Gertrude Steinian terms: "I am in a dream / a dream / a dream," not something that inherently requires solving.

The portfolio contains three other calligrammes, first "International Cuisine" on page 58, alongside a work by Kimber Smith, the text is in the shape of a bottle and contains a series of horrible images: "violent / uproar death brawl fight eat rotten flesh / of pretty prostitute chew white skeleton / soldier bones." The work is titled "international cuisine" as if describing these gross images are supposed to be food, it is not as clear as the content of the bottle is made up of rotten flesh. This furnishes example of how Ting plays with the expectation of the reader. The implication being that this work is more in line with food for thought rather than food for consumption. The second on page 59 a poem is written in the shape of a knife, also alongside very violent imagery: The knife poem, "kiss black coffin […] shot by bachelor's penis […] black with brawl […] be careful in your room and don't sleep too long." The connection between the knife and the threatening nature of the poem is a very straightforward one. Finally on page 142, "A baby is born" is written in the shape of half a circle, almost like a pregnant belly. The poem first describes a man wanting to return to the womb and then the role of a woman during pregnancy. The structure of each of these three works aligns with the calligram tradition in that they provide for the simultaneous imaging of what the work goes on to expound.

So far, this chapter has focused on the goal of Ting to create a collection of work that includes the greats of his time and how he deploys old and newer methods of engaging the reader with the texts. Now this dissertation will turn to an evaluation of the themes that are laid out at the

start of this chapter as they echo the themes with which the Warhol, Lichtenstein, Wesselmann, Rosenquist and Olderburg dealt in their work. The representation and roles of women, for example, are a leading theme of *1 ¢ Life*, as also for the wider Pop Art movement. Lippard's discussion of "Household Images in Art" in *From the Center: feminist essays on women's art* provides a useful orientation, claiming that the work of female artists often negotiates a way for them to remove or diminish themselves or reconsider their lives, usually played out in association a reconfiguration of domestic space, "because it's what they know best, because they can't escape it. Lippard provides an alternative definition for Pop Art, based on how, during the 1960's, "male artists moved into woman's domain and pillaged with impunity. The result was Pop Art, the most popular American art movement ever."[309] Lippard draws on the particular way male artists took over ideas and practices associated with an often-debased domestic life usually attributed to women:

> If the first major Pop artists had been women, the movement might never have gotten out of the kitchen. Then it would have struck these same critics who welcomed and eulogized Pop Art as just women making more genre art. But since it was primarily men who were painting and sculpting the ironing boards, dishwashers, appliances, food and soap ads, or soup cans, the choice of imagery was considered a breakthrough.[310]

Using images from the domestic life of women was considered a breakthrough for male artists, as they would have been considered "merely feminine"[311] if only taken up by women.

As Cécile Whiting noted, this issue is written into the way that Pop art is often described, which often asserted or assumed that female art was less significant than the male equivalent:

> An implicit dismissal of the woman's domain can be detected in many of the adjectives critics sleeted to characterize the motifs represented in Pop art: banal, commonplace, vulgar. Even the efforts to defend Pop art as "art" reveal a certain anxiety, a certain desire to step around its subject matter, filled as it was with

[309] Lucy R. Lippard, *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*, Dutton Paperback Original ; D427 (New York, NY: Dutton, 1976), p. 56.
[310] Lippard, *From the Center*, p. 56.
[311] Lippard, *From the Center*, p. 56.

> objects considered of minor importance and value owing to their strong association with women.[312]

Although women play a significant role in Pop Art, Kalliopi Minioudaki claims in her article "Pop's Ladies and Bad Girls: Axell, Pauline Boty and Rosalyn Drexler," that "the accepted story of Pop Art, as in many modernist tales, is one of male subjects and female objects."[313] The conventionally assigned role of women was played out in the domestic sphere, rather than allowing that women might be active agents and participants not just in their lives but in the lives and contexts around them. Women play a decisive role in *1 ¢ Life*: they appear as family members, mothers, daughters, sisters, but also as sex symbols, conquests to be conquered, a lover to be embraced. Often flowers are used to describe romantic relations, alluding on the idea of losing one's virginity as losing one's flower. But there is a tender aspect to the work too, glimpsed in between the different relations to women activated in his poetry by Ting—who seems to have been explicitly, perhaps awkwardly, looking for love, or something permanent, a quest underscored by the pervasive theme of loss and the loneliness that Ting wants to avoid. Although they play an important role in terms of content, they do not as artists, as there are only three out of the thirty artists are women.

On pages 142-142, accompanying a Sam Francis work, the poem "A baby is born" is written in the shape of half a circle, almost like a pregnant belly, showing women in a different light, reflecting on their roles as mothers. The work by Francis is a combination of splatters around a circular something, worked up in only two colors, red and blue. There is a line of writing vertically on the right side: "round breast of Jayne Mansfield xxoxoxo", implying that the reference

[312] Cécile Whiting, *A Taste for Pop: Pop Art, Gender, and Consumer Culture*, Cambridge Studies in American Visual Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 2.
[313] Kalliopi Minioudaki, 'Pop's Ladies and Bad Girls: Axell, Pauline Boty and Rosalyn Drexler', *Oxford Art Journal*, 30.3 (2007), 402–30 (p. 404).

is to breasts, rather than a pregnant belly. Jayne Mansfield was a Hollywood actress who "after 1956, […] temporarily took Monroe's place as Fox's newest queen of Sweaterdom."[314] The poem describes "an intelligent man" who wants to "return to the mother womb" and later turns to a "white face woman bowels tied in knots with anxiety" who goes through "nine month's gestation" resulting in "one little man walk street." The half circle that is not a perfect half dome (as it slants down at the bottom like a pregnant belly) is emblematic of half the circle of life, as "suddenly a big bomb explode up head" of the little man, and "he cry". The violent destruction of the bomb stops life in its tracks; while the pregnancy, craved by the man at the start is futile after the child is born as he dies almost immediately. The only safe place, in a sense, is within the womb. Thinking of the imagery of eating and stomachs, the emphasis on the belly here points to a recurring theme of *1 ¢ Life*—the desire to become part of the mother or part of a woman again.

Another mode of engagement with women focuses not on their traditional family-dominated roles, but rather on sexuality and "conquest". On pages 56 and 57 a work by Canadian artist Jean-Paul Riopelle (1923–2002) is set next to a poem titled "Hundred Flower Garden for Natalie," referring to Ting's wife, Natalie R. Lipton (b. New York, 1934) who he married in 1962. For a book that generally so colorful and bright, this page, despite the expectations proffered by the title seems exceptionally bleak. The poem is placed at the far right of the page and tells the story of a man waiting for a girl to come to him, to get the honey from his garden. The descriptions imply a colorful garden full of flowers and bees; and the protagonist compares the girl to the sun, flowers, and hearts. Even though there is a hint of sadness in the poem, the rain stops, and the clouds pass and it ends with a feeling of hope, where the author is trying to convince the girl to

[314] Matthew Solomon, 'Reflexivity and Metaperformance: Marilyn Monroe, Jayne Mansfield, and Kim Novak', in *Larger Than Life*, ed. by Barton R. Palmer, Movie Stars of the 1950s (Rutgers University Press, 2010), pp. 107–29 (p. 110) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hhxt7.9> [accessed 5 January 2022].

join him, “PLEASE, YOU COME”. The image next to the poem, however, is dark: there are no flowers, no roses, no bees. Pierre Schneider and Paul Mankin describe Riopelle’s work as follows, allowing for a connection between the image and the poem:

> One will also recognize an almost instinctive science which, one knows not how, manages to link the thousands of touches of color taken up by the brush from the pot, or quirted from the tube, smashed on the canvas, then smeared by the knife into a flawless tapestry—exactly as the leaves with their precise contours arrange themselves to form an uninterrupted tide of the foliage. Riopelle is generosity itself: literally, he does not measure.[315]

Schneider and Mankin see Riopelle’s work as reflecting foliage, linking it to the poem. The image is chaotic; the overlapping lines, splotches, and brushstrokes avoid any focal point around which viewers might orientate themselves. Looking at the work while trying to figure out the subject, readers might feel, as in the poem, that they are waiting for someone to come join them.

The print is set up as a series of frames, the dark blotches on the outside of the work frame the lines inside it, and in turn divide up the plane into separate fields. There is no coherence in and around the separate frames it defines. Some of the framed fields are filled in with brushstrokes, others with splotches. “Although he shared with his New York colleagues a North American sense of dimension, of sweeping gesture, and velocity,” according to Lesie Luebbers,

> Riopelle felt little sympathy for the arguments of abstraction/figuration, that he believed motivated their work. His own, he has asserted, never derives from the appearance of objects, but drives toward a visible understanding of nature’s focus, particularly as experienced in the Canadian wilderness. For Riopelle’s purpose, nature could be neither idealized nor intellectualized; it had to be engaged directly at the frontier of survival. The issue of abstraction/figuration was beside the point.[316]

[315] Pierre Schneider and Paul Mankin, ‘Jean-Paul Riopelle’, *Yale French Studies*, 19/20, 1957, 85–93 (p. 85) <https://doi.org/10.2307/2930426>.
[316] Leslie Luebbers, ‘Jean-Paul Riopelle: Prints & The Legend’, *The Print Collector’s Newsletter*, 22.6 (1992), 199–202 (p. 199).

If one keeps the title "hundred flower garden" in mind, the abstract work could represent a flower garden, with flowers growing in random patterns across the page, being blown by the wind that can almost be felt through the soft broad brushstrokes. The juxtaposition between poem and print allows the properties of the print to oscillate between comforting and confusing the reader. The reader might be able to find the flower garden mentioned in the poem, but the connection is not entirely convincing, as there is no color in the work, which is unusual for Riopelle. An absence of color creates further dissonance between the poem referring to a flower garden and the dark work accompanying it. Further, the recurring theme of flowers dying could be a reference to a dead flower garden, as all the flowers in the poem (as in the first poem of the publication, "Camellia") have died.

In thinking about the representation of women during the late 1960s, Mel Ramos's (1935-2018) approach is very different from the those discussed hitherto as he tries to memorialize seemingly insignificant social events, like media pictures of events that have already passed, thereby placing the women in a commemorative space they have not yet occupied within this work. In the foreword to *The Girls of Mel Ramos* Elizabeth Claridge observes that:

> His painting is primarily about art and only incidentally about the social world. It is a celebration on the one hand of the means of painting and on the other of extant images. 'The whole point about my world,' he says, 'is that art grows out of art. That is central, no matter whether it is high art, low art, popular art or what. Comic books, girlie magazines, magazine ads, billboards are all art to me.'[317]

Ramos was interested in such representations of women in popular culture and his work on page 152 resembles a movie poster. "Señorita Rio" shows a woman with a smoking gun, wearing a strapless gold dress with very pointy boobs and classic, pin-up style blue hair. She looks sexy and

[317] Mel Ramos, *The Girls of Mel Ramos*, ed. by Elizabeth Claridge (Chicago, IL: Playboy Press, 1975), p. 15.

cool, but her face does not fit this image, the woman's eyes are unfocused and seem to gaze into the distance; she wears a grimace on her face, as if she is either unaware of her position or does not understand what is going on. The poem that accompanies the image, "America," explains the woman's appearance:

> brain made by IBM&FBI
> stomach supported by A&P
> and Horn&Hardart
> Love supported by Time&Life
> tongue supported by
> American Telephone&Telegraph
> soul made by 7up
> skin start with Max Factor
> heart red as U.S. Steel.

The implication here is that the woman, like the image, and like the world beyond, is artificial and processed (thinking about the artificial flower, the artificial meat of a hamburger in the Wesselmann work). Her unnatural facial expression echoes the artifice of America , reflected in this woman's face. The last lines of the poem take an even darker turn: after describing "red american as pumpkin, black american as horse, yellow american as sunflower, white american as fat woman" the poem ends with the following lines: "fat woman cut pumpkin / put sunflower in corner/ push horse in dark / pumpkin dead / sunflower dead / horse angry / fat woman afraid horse make love." Many different actions and characteristics are attributed to the woman without her being able to take ownership of them or having any agency in her representation. The poem falls apart as everything dies and the woman seems pushed to suicide "she stay alone / with / a / gun." This sad ending to the poem illustrates something of the limits put upon women in society, as they are objectified and artificial, but their ability to die removes them from the artifice. In opposition to what was described by Arendt, the goal here is not to live forever because eventually there is life behind the characters as they are able to die.

The second Mel Ramos is displayed on the right side (p. 159) of a folded page, with a poem on the left. Again, the work reminds the viewer of a movie poster, with a girl in a tiger-skin bikini posing in front of a yellow star and leaning on the words "TIGER GIRL." Like the previous work the girl's face is vacant, there is no lust or longing in her eyes as she looks out of the page distractedly. The viewer is not invited into the work, as the woman seems annoyed at the attention, as if she's trying to pretend the viewer is not there, echoing the woman in the Lichtenstein work who purposely looks off screen to distance herself from the viewer. The poem next to her mimics the shape of the yellow star, the words running along the ten "lines" that make up its five points:

> SHE WHITE SKIN SHINING LIKE
> PLASTIC TABLECLOTH STUCK TO MY SEX
> ARMS WHITE AS PORCELAIN TOILET
> LIPS SENSITIVE AS ELECTRICITY
> BREASTS SOFT TOOTHPASTE
> BELLY HOT ENGINE BUTTOCKS ROUND CAR
> TIRES SHE MAKES MY BODY SHAKING
> MY PANTS HOT SWEET SOUR CREAM
> I TURN ON LIGHT FIND SHINY
> PHOTOGRAPH IN MY HAND

The distance we have observed between the viewer and the image is recreated in the poem, hinting that its subject is masturbating to a pin-up photograph: "she makes my body shaking, my pants hot sweet sour cream." Masturbation, of course, is usually a solitary action in which one person engages only with themselves, supported by an image that provides the erotic charge. The engagement of the "viewer" is completely one-sided and there is no interaction between the subject and the viewer. The same is in some sense true of the reader of the *1 ¢ Life*, who in reading reacts to the work in a certain way without the work having an opportunity to respond.

The study of sexuality in the work is especially clear on pages 40-41: 'ORANGE NAKED WOMAN' is paired with a collage-like lithograph, "Noir Orange Heart" by Kiki (OK) Kogelnik. The two-page image features what appear to be two rockets, one black (shaped like a pen nib) that

falls back towards an earth covered in colored circles, the other blasting into orbit with the sun in the background and part of what might be another planet or moon in the lower right corner. The central fuselage of a larger, red rocket accommodates the poem printed on a red and yellow background. In addition to investigating certain aspects of female domesticity, Kogelnik's work often developed allusions to the first space age of the 1960s. The artist specifically distinguished her interests from the iconography of commodities associated with the practice of Warhol and other Pop artists in terms that point to these concerns: "I'm not involved with Coca-Cola," she noted, "I'm involved in the technical beauty of rockets, people flying in space and people becoming robots. When you come here from Europe it is so fascinating … like a dream of our time. The new ideas are here, the materials are here, why not use them?"[318] The image engages with the poem in that its subject hopes to sexually engage with the orange naked woman of the title, who cannot love them and instead makes the subject "go through space million miles an hour". We glimpse here another manifestation of themes—the unapproachable woman, unrequited love—that recur in the book, as, with a different emphasis, in the Wesselmann images. Frustratingly, for the reader, Ting does not seem able to establish or develop these notions without recourse to what is, in some sense, "vulgar" or stereotypically reductive—something that arises in part, perhaps, from the author's unstoppably restless energy and staccato phrasing.

Ting overlays questions of sexuality with imagery about prostitution and red-light districts, such as Times Square in New York and the rue Saint Denis in Paris, a street known for its brothels and sex shops. Ting would have been aware of this street and doubtless have walked along it during his time in Paris. Beginning on page 49, the poem "Dans la rue Saint, Denis" is the longest in the book, stretching across three consecutive double-page spreads. The first page of the poem features

[318] Kogelnik's one-person exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford in 2015 was titled "Fly Me to the Moon," after a work she made in 1963.

part of a work by Ting that also occupies page 48, in the form of a loosely articulated naked woman on whose leg a note is scribbled: “pomme de terre 250F” (potatoes, 250F) which would have been an exorbitant amount of money to pay for potatoes. There are other notes, pointing out different parts of the woman’s body with prices alongside them. On the left of the figure is a hand-written inscription: “Darling, I not love you (sweet heart).” The short first stanza of the poem accompanying the lithograph by Ting starts as follows:

> DANS LA RUE SAINT DENIS,
> narrow street wide world all come make love dans la rue st denis
> all kind of flowers grow outside hotels narrow door mile long street
> both sides Sébastopol both sides heart inside out call out cry
> against lonely

Here we encounter once more the idea of women as flowers and sex as a way to combat loneliness, that is developed on the ensuing pages. Again, Ting makes the comparison between flowers and women, and how they cure loneliness. Sébastopol, referring to the eponymous Boulevard, is a shopping and restaurant street that runs parallel to the Rue St. Denis. Ting compares the Boulevard to St. Denis as they both allow transactions, although the transaction of the latter is based on human experiences and not just the trading of goods.

The poem continues pages 50-51, alongside an image of a brasserie advertisement with the words “supple & resisting.” The poem sets the scene for the Rue St. Denis, “where night birds song no one sleep all day long all night make bad cry joy.” The poem continues the next page alongside a work by Robert Indiana, red lips on a yellow background with a reversed question mark set in-between them; underneath is the question to which the mark is presumably related: “sex anyone.” The poem on the right (page 53) becomes more melancholic: “hope never lost” . . . “no flower fuller than st. denis flower no flower more fragrant”. Sex workers are seen as bringing value into his life, providing something Ting misses. The poem also accepts this street as being

part of everyday life, where everyone can find solace: “world tired but in arms of flower last night I fresh like new born.” The final page of the poem contains a work by the lyrical abstract painter Kimber Smith, one of no fewer than six contributions made by the artist to *1¢ Life*. His work takes the imagery hitherto paired with the poem in a completely new direction. A black oval set in the middle of the page is crossed by three half circles at the top half in grey, with the oval itself seemingly supported by the same grey. The somber colors seem to echo the somberness of the poem, in which the subject laments and seeks to fill the void left by a separation from his family.

The poem seems, finally, to confront the effects of missing family and missing personal connections. Ting uses language like “breathe in love yes look in eyes semen spurting no look / in all eternity same as this / kiss last breath with last stroke as juice flow in stream / like giant Niagara.” The language is hypersexual but also refers to needs beyond the sexual, like love and being found: “lost is found and found is lost wreckage float from st denis / sewer.” Here again Ting shows how easily he moves from the crude to the tender, showing how places like rue st. Denis are valuable. This part of the book clearly relates to biographical experiences during his troubled and impoverished Paris sojourn. In a sense the work is not only a collection of great artists of his time but also a series of postcards and flashbacks of the great locations of his time: New York which plays a key supporting role, as we have seen, and Rue St. Denis which gives texture and substance to Paris's seedy side, pointing to a lived experience of the city witnessed by a poor, lonely immigrant. It also, as mentioned earlier, degrades human relationships to something that can be bought and sold, prostitution serving as a stand in for real human connection.

Another reference to love and human relations as a transaction is found on pages 38, a spread with images derived from American advertisements along with the poem, “Girl next door”. This page consists of two parts: the first is made up of black and white newspaper clippings from

ads for “Genuine Human hair” wigs with “free birth month ring with order”; TV advertisements: “Increase your t-viewing pleasure ColorV, filter screen, see everyone on your television in ‘thrilling’ color”; a book on “How to win and hold a husband, Girls! Win the man you love and win him forever”; and a series of wedding or engagement rings. Clearly targeted at women, the images offer to summarize the commodities and other objects that women supposedly “wanted” in the 1960s—color televisions, great hair, husbands, and jewelry. Underneath the advertisements on the left side of the spread, the poem describes the girl (or in the terms it establishes, “cookie next door”) as “beautiful as ice cream, television brain, pink cocoon body, every inch fashion, skin sexy as modern glass.” The description reminds one of the poem accompanying Mel Ramos’ lithograph of the women of America: "brain made by IBM&FBI / stomach supported by A&P / and Horn&Hardart / Love supported by Time&Life.”

The poem continues describing “thousands and one dates come from telephone adding machine, thousand and one men lost.” Instead of pursuing the woman, Ting, or the narrator, suggests, despondently, even cynically: “next time your pass windows meet girl next door, don’t make date, don’t listen what she talk, what she thinking, she never understand, why you smile under her window?” Ting warns that the love confessed to ‘the girl next door’ will not be requited; and like the Mel Ramos figures, the girls referred to do not seem to understand the world around them. Romantic gestures are lost, deflected or dispassionately absorbed: “old man send stocks she glued on wall, bachelor send blue flowers she painted gold, middle age man send gold ring she put in teeth, young man send love letter she hang in bathroom.” If the poem seems to evince frustration with, even a kind of fear or loathing, of the girl next door, it may also suggest the possibility that it is not just the girl who does not understand, but that the predictable and cliché-ridden advertisements do not understand women any more than men do, or Ting does. At stake here, as

with the Mel Ramos imagery, is the staging of a disconnect between people based on false conjugations of commercial seduction meted out through a nest of fake representations—as pointed to by Guy Debord in *The Society of Spectacle* (1967): "In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation."[319] Ting's often candid and sometimes alluring reflections on love and desire in *1¢ Life* might converge, in the end, on a confession of sorts that in modern society it has become impossible for men and women to understand each other.

The theme of the loneliness that inevitably arises from this disarticulation is most directly addressed on pages 62-63 in the poem "So many lonely," set on the left of the spread with a work by Karel Appel on the right. The first "stanza" of the poem reads:

> SO MANY LONELY
> women make love locomotive airplane hatch egg
> grasshopper jump for money
> old virgin afraid spring come
> prostitutes strike
> spring flower autumn moon long nonsense
> last year flower old this year spring not come
> man go where?

Women in this poem are self-sufficient, looking for the men but not requiring them, the old virgin is afraid of spring, as this indicates a season for the possibility of a new love she is unwilling to engage, the prostitutes strike, refusing to service the men who depend on them more than they do. These men on the other hand, are lonely without the prostitutes or virgins in spring:

> All lonely man's wise become sorrowful:
> All lonely man's thought become melancholy
> All lonely man's love silent
> All universe lone as lonely man

[319] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit, MI: Black & Red, 2010), para. 1.

Unlike the women, the men are immobilized by loneliness, their wisdom becoming sorrowful, their thoughts melancholy, their loves silent. In the end, the poem refers back to the subject, probably Ting himself, "I ask, I ask self, where bed," referring to a home coming, a place where he might not be lonely. The Karel Appel image alongside it, rendered in the expressive, child-like style, foregrounding primary colors (red, light and dark blue, yellow) associated with and defended by the CoBrA group, appears to underscore or open-up the circumstances and experiences set out in the poem. The yellow background, for example, picks up on the loss of "creative imagination": "Bury all creative imagination in yellow earth / Vomit all human love in yellow earth / Eat cold chrysanthemum." A large part of the page is taken up by the face of a bald man with a moustache, who is adjacent to a little stick figure that could also be a crude drawing of the sun, placed in the upper corner of the work like a child. There is a skull with a blue background hovering next to the large face. At the bottom is an animal rendered in polka dots, as seen in Appel's other works including at the bottom of *Child, church, animal* (1950), or *Circus Series: Jumping Dog* (1978). The image, although colorful does not provide an antithesis to the poem: the man's face looks haunting, and the skull like face is a constant reminder of loneliness.

Ting's poetry offers other examples of loneliness as in the first stanza of the poem "A Dream" (which continues on the following page)—in the spread, pages 144-45, set with a work by Jim Dine—in which the subject gets rejected by their love interest:

> GREEN IN THE MORNING, BIG GIRL DON'T CRY
> green sky drop green rain
> I open green umbrella under green water
> I wait a green eyed girl
> She not come
> I don't know

In this case, the color focus of the poem, on green, is not mirrored in the Dine images that occupy all but the bottom fraction of page 145. Instead, Dine has deployed two expanses of black with

what seems to be a shower head on the right (p. 145), with diverging diagonal lines probably indicating the trajectory of the water flow, and a lamp suspended from a slender wire on the left (p. 144), the latter emitting three bands of color, blue, yellow and pink—with the overlaps creating slivers of green and yellow. The green of the poem could refer to the jealousy the subject feels at being rejected, seeing green everywhere almost sets him up for disappointment. The next pages 146-167 contain only a poem, written in a green font in the shape of a rhombus:

SMALL SALAD
A PRETTY
FLOWER
GROWS ON
HORSE DUNG
A BEAUTIFUL GIRL
IN A FLOWER FACE
SHE SMILE TO ME
I KISS HER

While these lines indicate a relatively rare moment of fulfillment and a consummating kiss, the growth of the girl, conceived as a "small salad" or "pretty flower," is from "horse dung," one of the many paradoxes—that something beautiful can literally come out of shit—abounding in the book. The imagery on the previous pages seems to be far removed from the subject in the poem: perhaps it signals the emergence of light from the darkness, or the affirmative, life-giving flow of water. Both of Dine's motifs were part of the iconographic repertoire of the 1960s, figured, for example, in David Hockey's lightly sexualized images of LA showers or in the shining lamps of Phillip Guston, often associated with scenes of introspection that feature the artist himself. The apparent dissociation between poem and image here, and the prevalence of the black backgrounds, seem at odds with the more explicitly directed word-image couplings and regimen of bright colors used elsewhere in *1¢ Life*.

As we have seen with "My Dear White Skeleton" the poem alongside the Öyvind Fahlströhm work, and other poems, ideas, experiences, and intimations of death are prevalent in the work, as it deals with real human experiences. This is most explicit on pages 12-13 in a poem titled "Why Die" that is accompanied by an etching titled "after Callot" on the reference page. The image reprises one of his best-known works, *La Pendaison* (The Hanging), the 11th plate in Jaques Callot's series, *Les Misères et les Malheurs de la Guerre* (The Miseries and Misfortunes of War) (1633) which served as an anti-war manifesto during the Thirty Years' War. There are some slight differences between the original and the work recreated here, which contains only one tree (not in the shade) and only one ladder that is a copy of the ladder placed on the left. Printed in red lettering, the poem underneath the work poses the question "why die?" in the context of the nuclear age by referring to the atom bomb: "one atom bomb red blossoming in blue sky / pretty mushroom / rise." While the poem lists many things that are dying, none of them are people. Ting invokes a menagerie of animals, grasshoppers, white elephants, black tigers, yellow horses, ants, cockroaches, while the other animals stand around crying; the peacock, fish, and bee accompanied by more abstract figures like the "sun black, morning back, heart black"; and other references to the natural world, such as "sugarcane." Ting often uses animals to diffuse sadness, projecting grief in the animal world allows him to keep his distance. The implication seems to be that the situation is worse than in Callot's time, three times worse, as the image is tripled. Callot's fight against war and cruelty has failed, and the modern world has doubled—or tripled—down on real and potential death and destruction.

The title of the poem on page 66 immediately introduces another tragic theme: "He who must die," and again uses an animal to describe the event. Above the poem is an image by Kimber Smith, whose work has already appeared four times in *1¢ Life*, but in this case is more dynamic,

compared to the other more static works, and takes the form of a structure made out of four triangles each pointing up, down, left, or right with a spiral in the middle and is surrounded by dynamic curves, perhaps in emulation of a flower-like design. Like many of the other poems in this work it questions death: “Nobody know death”, and observes how everybody must die, “even bull”. “Bull” here refers a comparison made by the main character who compares his brother to a bull: “My brother is big bull / everybody brother have brother even when not have / man animal snake start fish tree blade of grass / my brother body black eyes black.” The brother is a boxer, or maybe a wrestler: “my brother skin glisten black shine dazzle eyes / stand in the middle bullring many man woman child surround / come watch he die.” His brother, as predicted at the start of the poem dies: “how man scream joy delight fall black brother bull blood pool / spread in bullring sand / man say bull kill man but man kill bull/ bull not fear man free / man heart lie love blood and death / Evil cheer evil.” Ting uses the bullfight to describe the death of the brother to mediate the event. Rather than dealing with the death directly he creates an alternative death of a bull that is less painful. Again, the text avoids dealing with difficult issues directly, or letting them seep in. Where before Ting would end the poems on a different note to distract the reader, he here changes the focus of the poems to not have to address the sadness of human life and loss.

Only pages 110-111 deal with death directly, posing emergency, existential, questions: “only 24 hours to live what can I do, what I want, what I? I? I?” The poem is punctuated by time indications introducing various actions undertaken by the protagonist during a countdown to what might be the end of his life:

> 23 hours and 59 minutes I running sidewalk tear all girl’s dress off to show beautiful meat
>
> 23 minutes I peeped center times square

> 29 minutes I walk into bank take all green money throw all street and hope nobody pay attention not even look

In the 22nd hour the subject kills a pig and throws it in the fire: it is "ready" about 20 minutes later and then completely devoured. The character then searches for the green haired girl, takes the subway, walks around streets and avenues. Around the 13th hour the protagonist wants to connect with people but is unable, asking: "why I still afraid, I only few hours to live." In the last hour all the actions begin with "I," except in the last seconds in which a series of thanks are expressed: for "my father and mother give this body / […] the government give me money spend, / […] dentist fix teeth / […] police take care of my life / […] all my friend who bought me a cup of hot coffee". The last seconds go like this: "half second my heart still warm, quarter second why I cannot see anything I see only dark I see only dark." As the book is a work of its time, and with Ting as the main subject, it bears witness to events from Ting's life, the heir apparent of his time on earth. Of course, if the book contains the whole of his lived experience, it must also confront and come to terms with his death even if it is hypothetical, as he questions "what can I do, what I want, what I?" By introducing these questions Ting provides a place for the reader to consider their own death alongside that of Ting, which has unfortunately by now, already taken place.

In "Our Attitude Toward Death" Sigmund Freud described how although death is "natural, undeniably and unavoidable,"[320] people pretend that it is otherwise, even going so far as being unable to imagine our own death: "whenever we attempt to do so we can perceive that we are in fact still present as spectators."[321] In the case of Ting however, his ending does not include a role for himself as spectator: "I see only dark / I see only dark." Ting's hypothetical experience of his own death includes himself actually dying but the placement of the poem in the text does not let

[320] Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey (Richmond: Hogarth Press, 1957), XIV, p. 289.
[321] Freud, XIV, p. 289.

the reader dwell on it. Freud notes that when a person has died "we adopt a special attitude — something almost like admiration for someone who has accomplished a very difficult task."[322] This is reprised in the book as the death is fictional, hypothetical, but does take place in the end as Ting has died, which in a sense was necessary for him to achieve his goal, the book cannot be an object of its time, a past time, if the author and the artists are still alive. Obviously, some of the artists are still alive, like Wesselmann and Alechinsky, but the book serves as an icon of the 1960s, which have now, like Ting, passed on.

The role of his hypothetical death in the book also echoes Freud's larger thought that death in literature is a way to compensate for our inability to deal with and talk about death in our lives; for in literature there are still "people who know how to die."[323] The reason death can be dealt with in literature is that it provides an alternative for our own death, "for it is really too sad that in life it should be as it is in chess, where one false move may force us to resign the game, but with the difference that we can start no second game, no return-match."[324] The accumulated references to death here, accentuated by an unraveling of time that records the hours, minutes and eventually seconds before death itself, create an effect that Freud identified with the uncanny: "we find the plurality of lives which we need. We die with the hero with whom we have identified ourselves; yet we survive him, and are ready to die again just as safely with another hero."[325] Ting provides the reader with thought experiments, but keeps them at bay by opening up other lines of inquiry, including detours into the absurd such "walking into a bank and take all green money throw all street and / hope nobody pay attention not even look." But he also focusses on the capitalist

[322] Freud, XIV, p. 290.
[323] Freud, XIV, p. 291.
[324] Freud, XIV, p. 291.
[325] Freud, XIV, p. 291.

structure in which the dying subject lives and the way they are required to deal with that, which points to the last theme within the work: capitalism and the system of commodities that drives it.

The title of the work, *1¢ Life*, clearly points to the preoccupation of Ting with the economic and social system of capitalism: the ascription of value and the calibration of desire. As Todd Gitlin suggests, the 1960's under "Kennedy was skimpy with jobs, health, and antipoverty action. Central economic planning was necessary, but the new frontier was inching, if anything, towards an "elitist" brand of national planning under corporate aegis."[326] The focus was on making the rich richer and corporate expansion, not on creating a better life for the common man. The title of the poem is alluded to on page 35 in a seven-stanza poem titled: "TEN CENTS A DAY". Following its initial observation, "I only have ten fingers make ten cents a day", which correlates financial capacity and outgoings with the body's physical digits, the expenditure of the day is laid out:

> 2
>
> SPEND 5 CENTS TO BUY A RAINBOW FOR MY MOTHER USE FOR BELT
> SPEND 2 CENTS BUY RAIN WASH MY BODY
> SPEND 1 CENT BUY DEW MAKE EARLY MORNING TEA
> SPEND 1 CENT BUY SPRING PUT MY BODY
> I STILL HAVE 1 CENT IN MY POCKET
> I WANT TO BUY
> A SWEET SMILE INSIDE WATERMELON
> A NINE-HEAD BIRD
> A SKYSCRAPER WITH TWO WINGS
> A PURPLE CHRYSENTHEMUM WITH LITTLE GIRL FACE IN MIDDLE
> A DREAM INSIDE YOUR FIST
>
> 3
>
> WHY THE WORLD NOT SALE FOR 1 CENT?
>
> 4
>
> 1 CENT
> NEVER ENOUGH PAY RENT
> NEVER ENOUGH BUY WATER WASH FACE

[326] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York, NY: Random House, 2013), p. 130.

NO MONEY BUY CHAIR
DO I MUST KEEP WALKING ON SIDEWALK

[…]

7

1 CENT LIFE I THROW AWAY SIDEWALK
MANY FOOLISH LOVE GO FROM MY PCOKET
DO I ADMIRE
ROTTEN TOMATO AND SECOND HAND DRESSES

The poem describes how a "1 cent life" is not enough: it is expendable and can be discarded on the sidewalk. Given the impossibility of ascribing value to things like rainbows or a sweet smile inside a watermelon, both the monetary amounts and their referents seem to be arbitrary, even meaningless. The poem is paired with a work by Alfred Leslie that features two women covered in fruit-like objects that could be the rotten tomatoes and paper-like scraps of red, yellow, and blue with edges that suggest they have been torn from a source and are therefore secondhand. The page continues from pages 30-31 and features the same women, this repetition underscores the creative effects of the book's design and layout, for if the poem in the middle is removed four women would appear side-by-side as a spread.

In *The Society of Spectacle* (originally published in 1967 and translated into English in 1970) Guy Debord describes the spectacle "not [as] a collection of images, but as a social relation among people, mediated by images."[327] His view of society is that it has become entirely interlinked with the images where "everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation,"[328] images in a way have fragmented reality, in that there is no unifying whole that is not interspersed with images. Thinking about how images and life are interlinked in relation to Ting, and the goal he set for himself in creating a work in and of his time, shows the problems

[327] Debord, para. 4.
[328] Debord, para. 1.

with the idea of collecting the great artists of his time in a book that at the same time also serves as a vehicle to preserve himself. As the images of Warhol, Oldenburg, Wesselmann, Dine, Ramos, etc., provide a snapshot of art in the second half of the 1960s, they also irrevocably deal with the experience of living during that time, as it is impossible to distinguish between the two. Therefore the voice of Ting plays such a large role in the text, as a work of and by that time requires a reflection of its own mode of production and presence in the world.

However, *1 ¢ Life* actually goes beyond what Ting hopes for at the start of the work. Imagining a work comprised of paintings by Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas, Renoir, Pissarro, Monet, Daumier, the reader would be aware of the disconnect between these works, how the book is merely a collection of paintings almost like a portable gallery. These individual paintings were not intended to be seen together in any kind of order, and their placing them together would turn them into something else. As this dissertation has already posited, bringing together artworks in a linear book form changes the way they are read. They become part of each other, connections are drawn between them that focus on how they build on each other in a more linear way than a gallery exhibition on the work might imply. By placing the greats of his time in a book Ting had to reconsider the implication of the book format, and he did this by introducing his own voice and experiences. Throughout the text he focuses on artistic themes that are then immediately reflected in his own work.

With money at the center of the piece, referred to in the title, and taken up in many subsequent forms and allusions, it is important to think about the monetary implications in the work. In "The commodity as spectacle" in Debord describes the role of money in society as follows:

> The spectacle is the other side of money: it is the general abstract equivalent of all commodities. Money dominated society as the representation of general

> equivalence, namely, of the exchangeability of different goods whose sum could not be compared. The spectacle is the developed modern complement of money where the totality of the commodity world appears as a whole, as a general equivalence for what the entire society can be and can do. The spectacle is the money which one only looks at, because in the spectacle the totality of use is already exchanged for the totality of abstract representation. The spectacle is not only the servant of pseudo-use, it is already in itself the pseudo-use of life.[329]

Debord points out the disconnect created in the world because of money, which can be used to compare anything to anything, in the simplest terms the price of a basket of strawberries, meaning the labor that was put into growing and packaging the strawberries can in some way be equated to the number of hours spent instructing students if the basket is bought by a teacher. Money, like images, fragments the world, creating abstract exchanges so experiences can be put in relation to each other and turned into a money exchange. Thinking of this in relation to *1 ¢ Life* it is clear that in a capitalist world, experiences can be boiled down to exchanges. What is a one cent life? How much is life worth if it can be equated to one cent? My suggestion is that Ting, in creating this vibrant book shows a life measured out in monetary terms is not worth much, but as an artifact of life in the 1960s is invaluable in a way that cannot be conveyed in money. Echoed in the themes he focusses on, play, love, loneliness, death and money, the reader encounters something of "what the entire society can be and can do" but is shown by forth-rights and meanders that it cannot be captured in dollars and cents—but only perhaps in dolors and scents.

[329] Debord, para. 49.

Figure 1: Pierre Alechinsky with Christian Dotremont In-text plate (folio 4) from *21 Etchings and Poems* 1952, published 1960

Figure 2: Franz Kline with Frank O'Hara In-text plate (folio 12) from 21 Etchings and Poems 1960

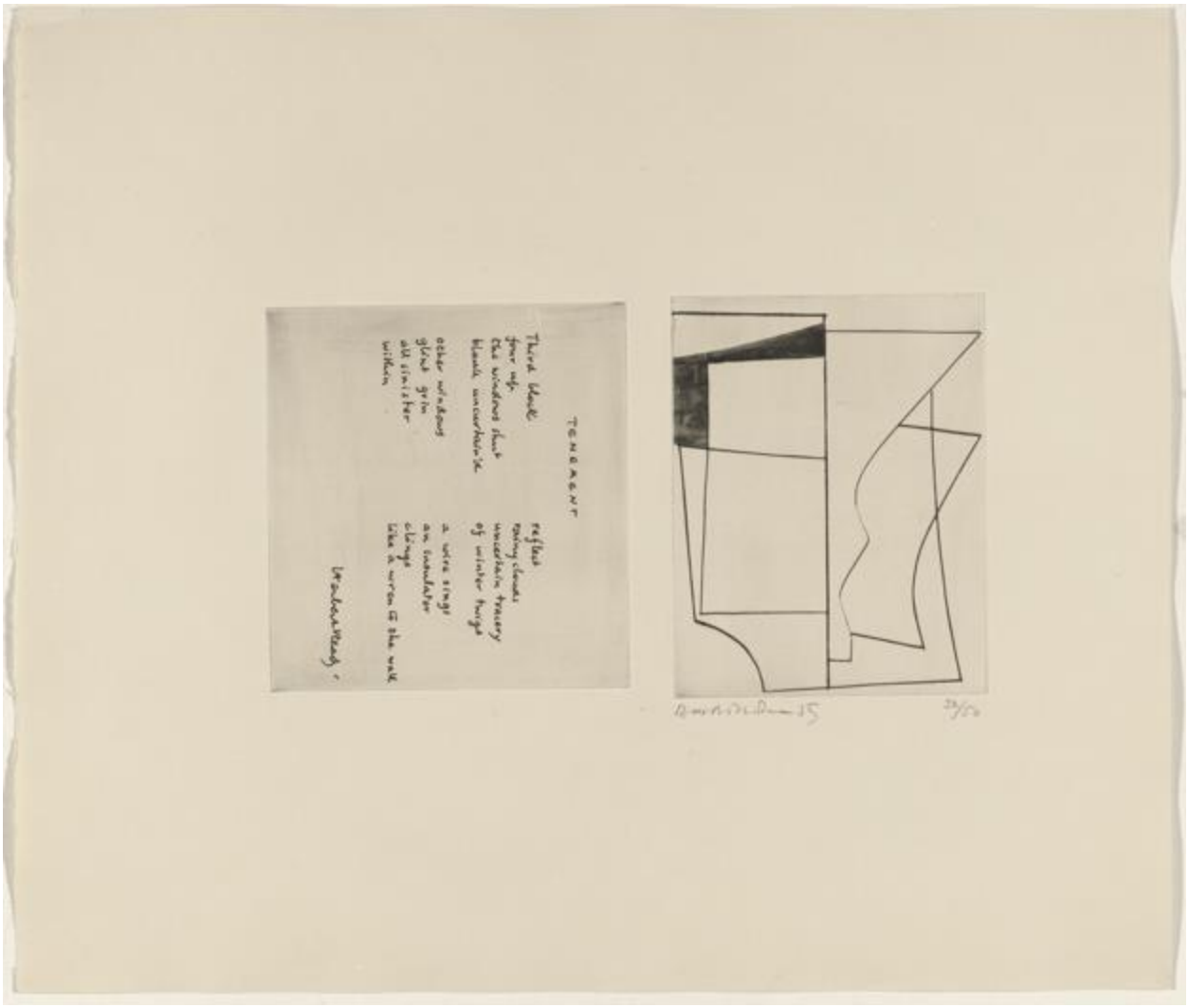

Figure 3: Ben Nicholson with Herbert Read In-text plate (folio 15) from 21 Etchings and Poems 1960

Figure 4: Willem de Kooning with Harold Rosenberg Revenge (in-text plate, folio 8) from 21 Etchings and Poems 1960© 2022 The Willem de Kooning Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Figure 5: Alfred Jensen Hommage to Black Prince (double page plate, pages 8 and 9) from *1¢ Life* 1964

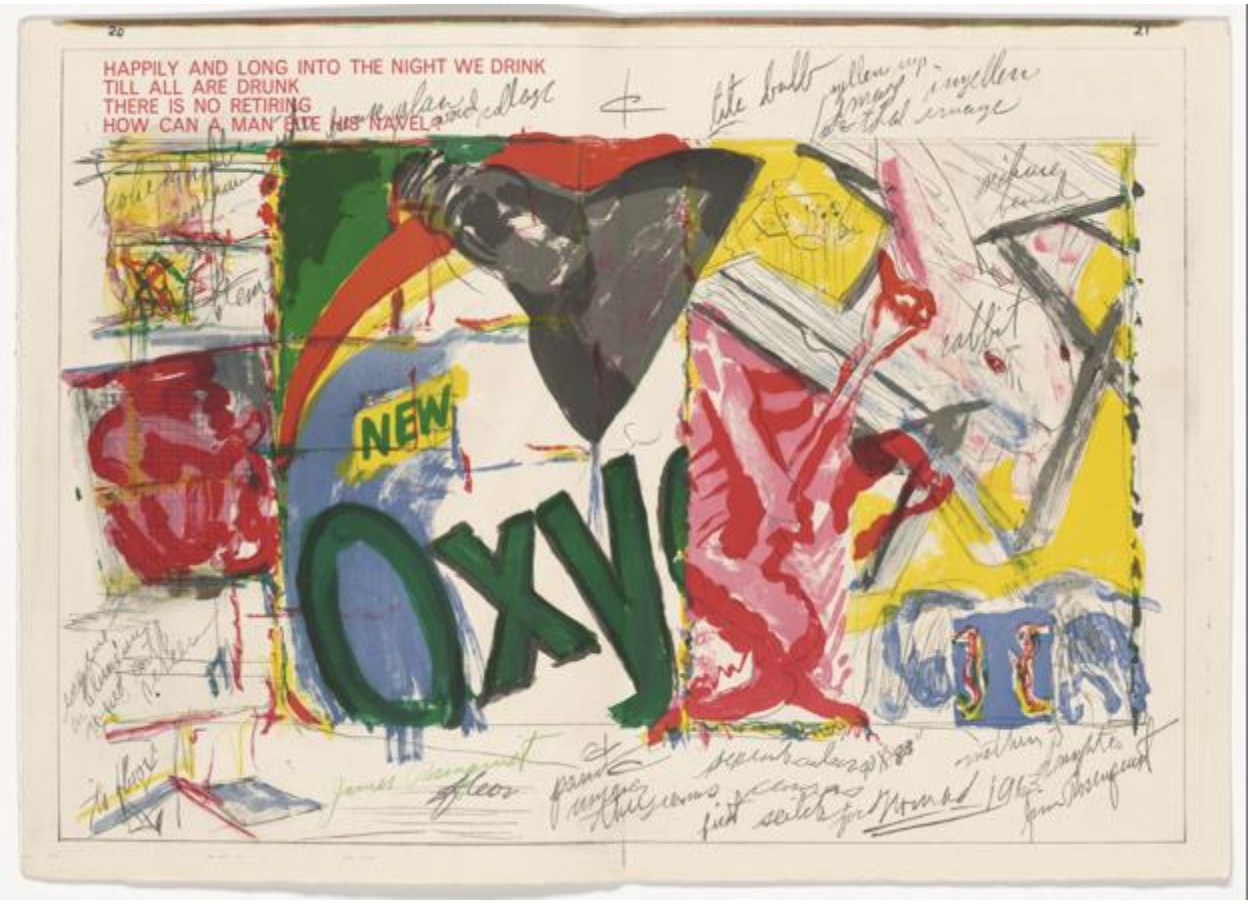

Figure 6: James Rosenquist Double page plate (pages 20 and 21) from *1¢ Life* 1964

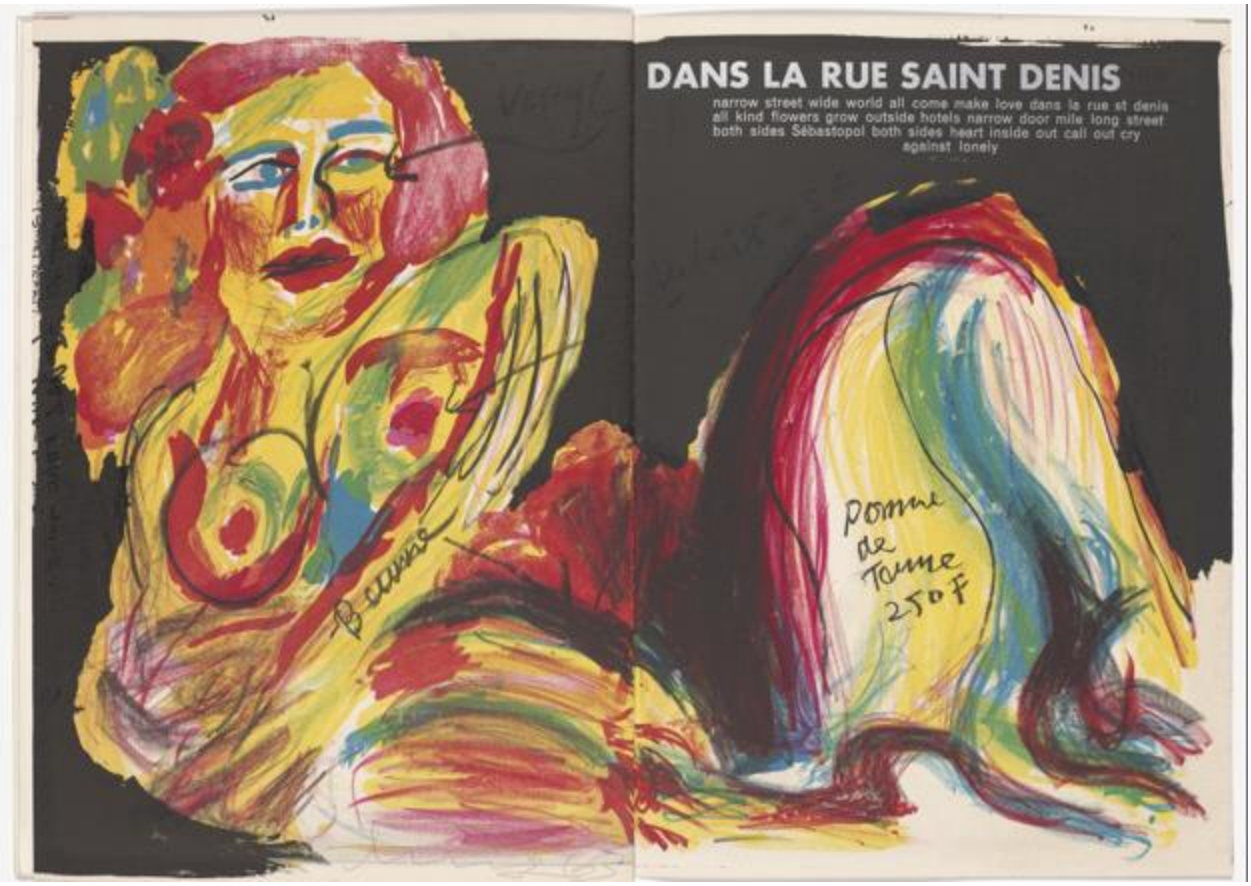

Figure 7: Walasse Ting Double page in-text plate (pages 48 and 49) from *1¢ Life* 1963, published 1964

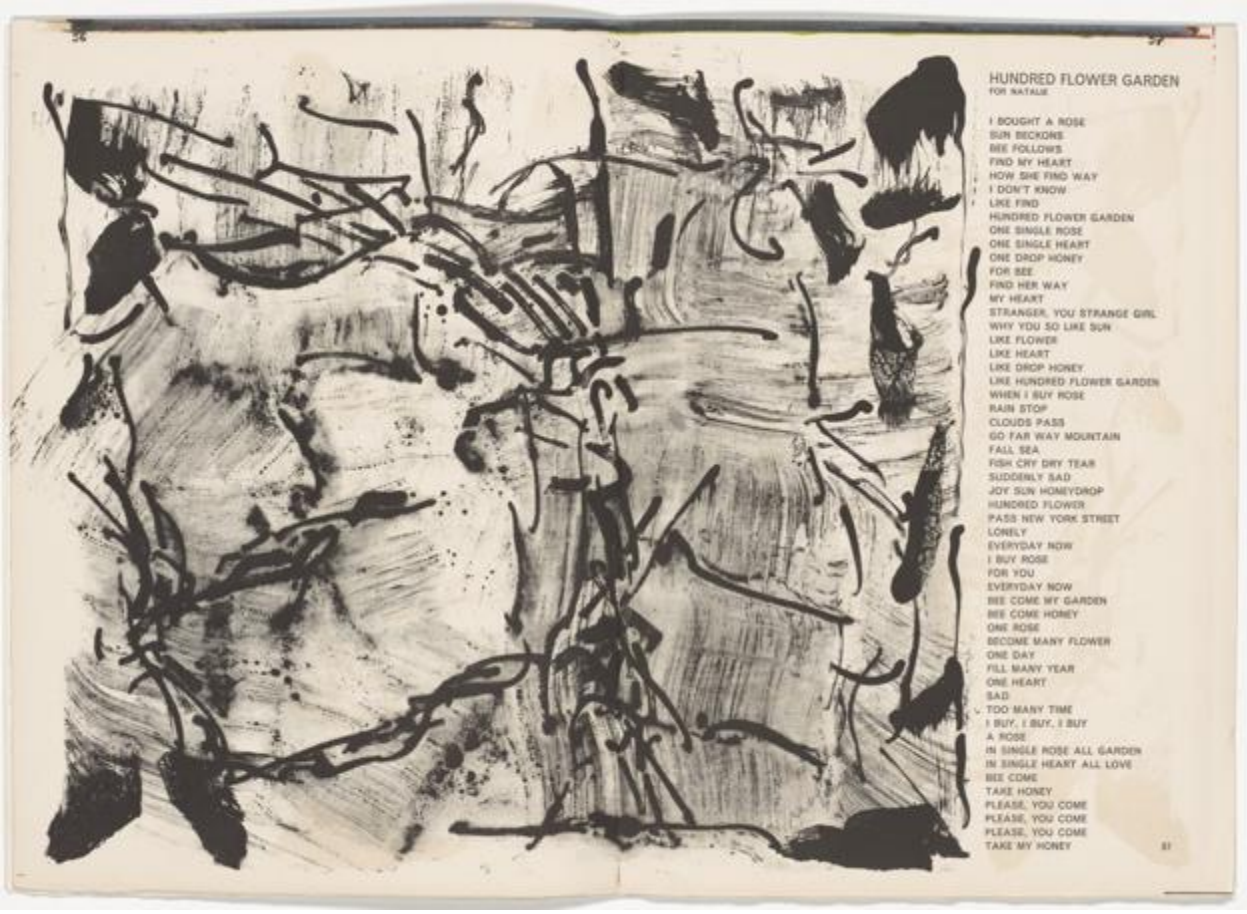

Figure 8: Jean-Paul Riopelle Double page in-text plate (pages 56 and 57) from 1¢ *Life* 1964

Figure 9: Karel Appel Plate (page 63) from *1¢ Life* 1964

Figure 10: Tom Wesselmann Double page headpiece (pages 72 and 73) from *1¢ Life* 1964

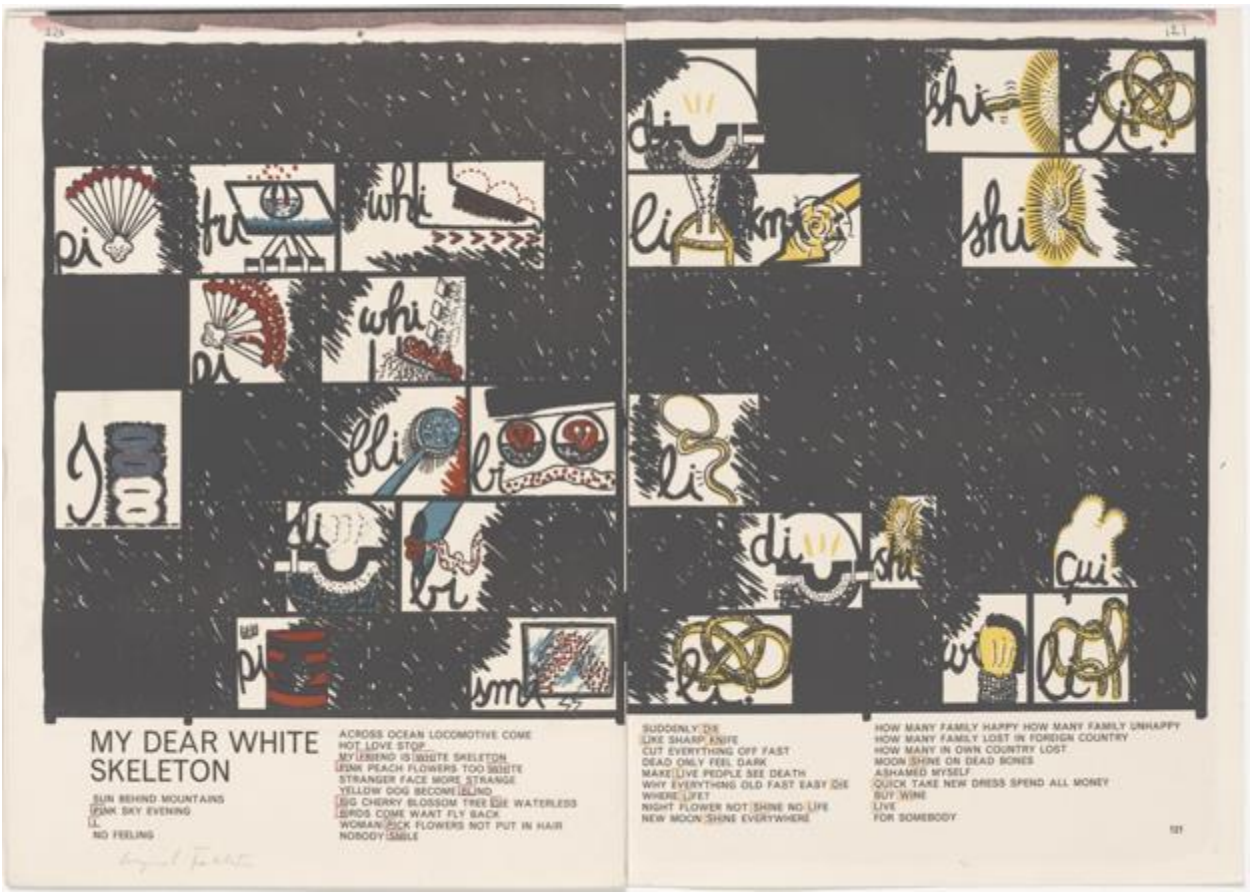

Figure 11: Öyvind Fahlström Double page headpiece (pages 120 and 121) from *1¢ Life* 1964

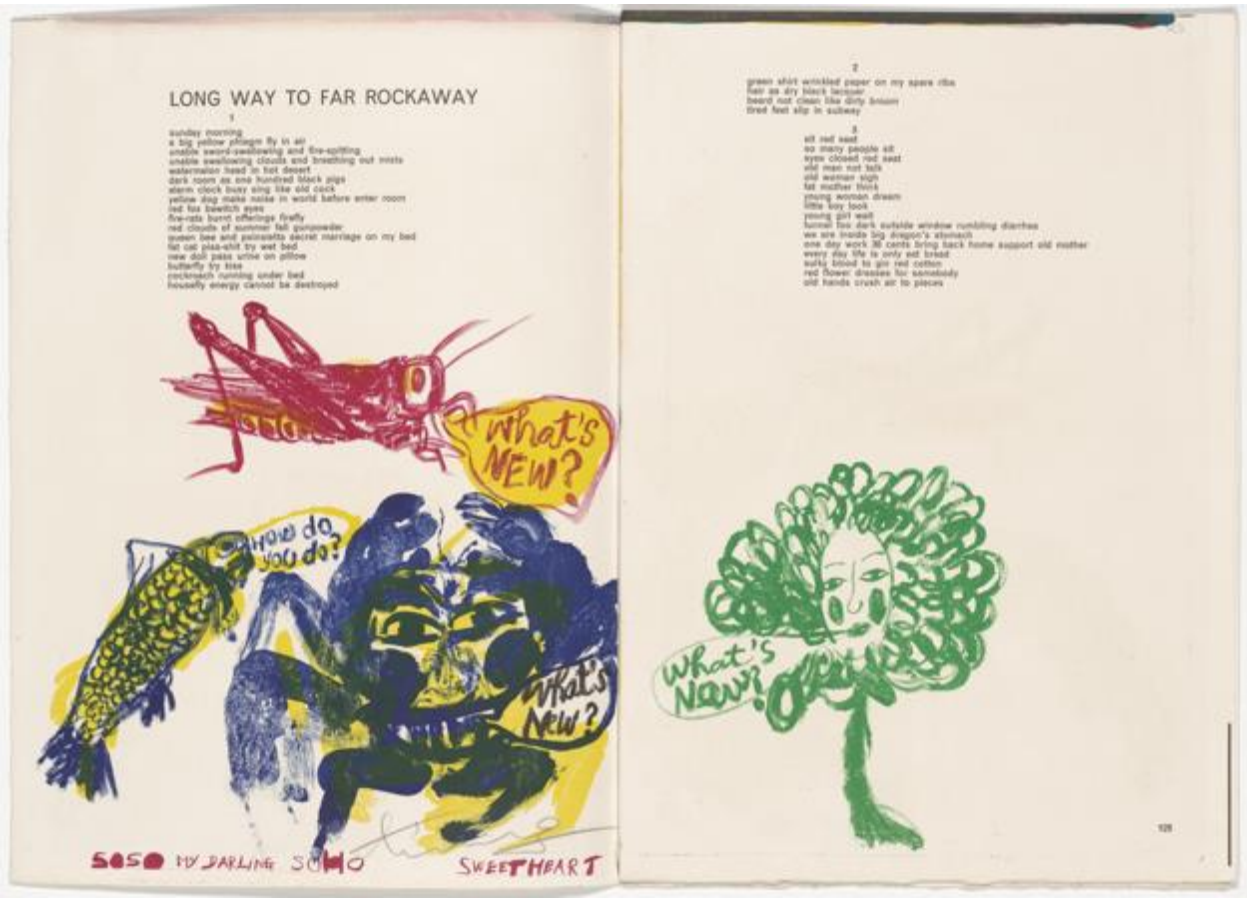

Figure 12: Walasse Ting Double page in-text plate (pages 124 and 125) from 1¢ Life 1964

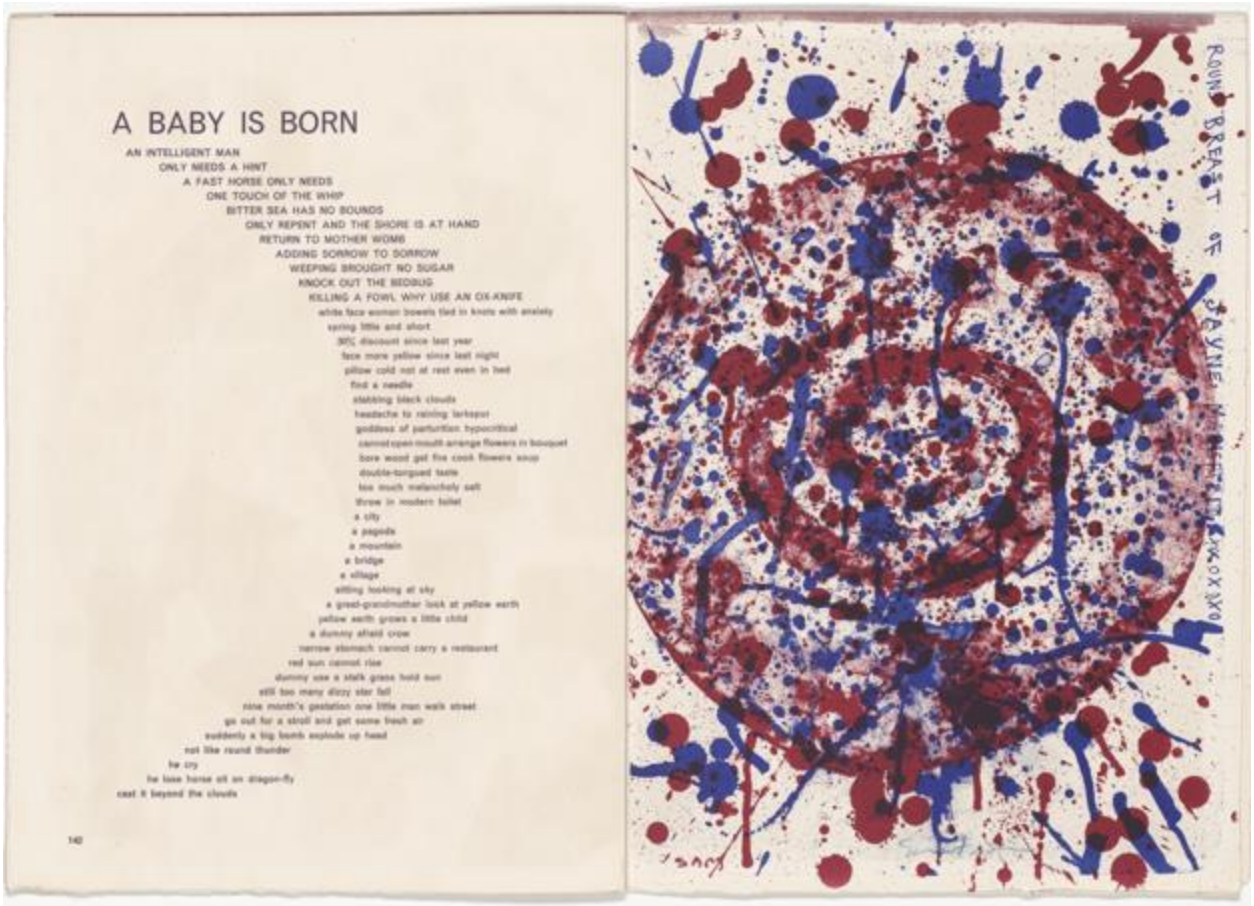

Figure 13: Sam Francis Round Breast of Jayne Mansfield (plate, page 143) from *1¢ Life* 1964

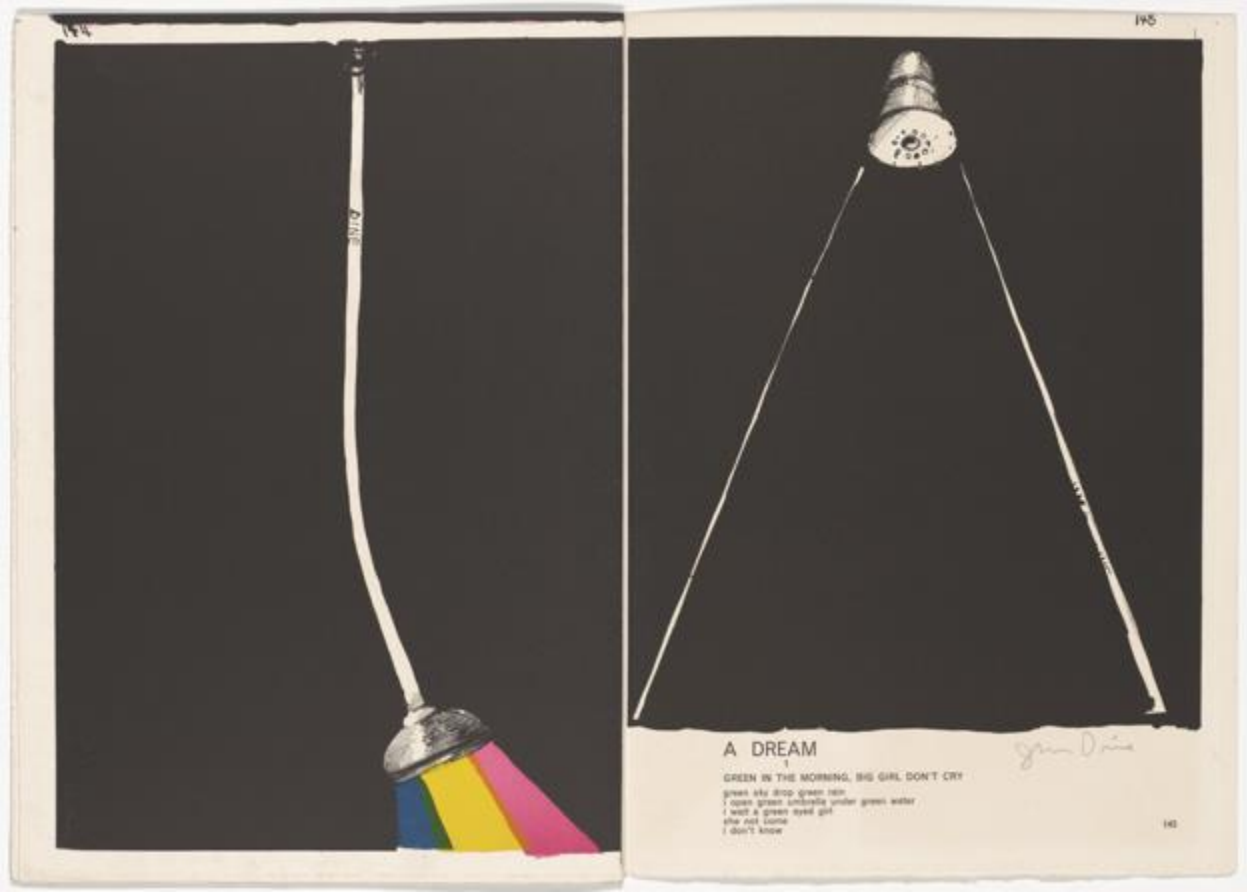

Figure 14: Jim Dine Double page headpiece (pages 144 and 145) from 1¢ Life 1964

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