

Documentation for
Teachers around
Hassan Khan's
The Portrait
is an Address

07.09.2016 - 06.11.2016



This document is aimed at teachers: it is not meant for students' use. It does not replace the visit, nor is it a record that documents the exhibition. It is a research tool to be used by the teachers to address the exhibition in relation to different knowledge backgrounds so that they can refer to it in the course of their practice. The Workbook exists to facilitate the teachers' use of the visit for work-in-class purposes and to inspire them to invent whatever their teaching practices require.

To book a group visit for your class, please write to:
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Table of Contents

I. Curator's statement _____ 5

II. Hassan Khan

Hassan Khan, *Nine things learned from Sharif El-Azma* _____ 7

A constant state of urgency, Hassan Khan in conversation with Edit Molnar 9

Maysa Fattouh, *Interview with Hassan Khan* _____ 13

III. Workbook

دفتر التمارين

From the parent's portrait to one's own
من صورة الوالد/الوالدة إلى الصورة الذاتية _____ 19

The portrait as part of a social fabric
الصورة الشخصية كجزء من النسيج الاجتماعي _____ 21

Ancestral stories and the verbal portrait
روايات الأجداد والصورة المحكيّة _____ 23

Popular portraits and the diluted subject
صور شائعة والذات المخفّفة _____ 25

Self-portrait and the construction of the subject
الصورة الذاتية وبنيان الذات _____ 26

The portrait as consumer goods
الصورة الذاتية كمنتج استهلاكي _____ 28

The monument as a portrait
الصرح كصورة شخصية _____ 30

IV. Additional Readings

Introduction _____ 33

Michel Foucault, *What is an author* _____ 35

Louis Marin, *The portrait and its name* _____ 41

Christopher Pinney, *A poison extracted from a cure* _____ 45

Amelia Jones, *Screening the subject* _____ 49

Jalal Toufic, *Reading, rewriting Poe's "The Oval Portrait" - In your dreams* 53

V. Biography _____ 57

I. Curators' Statement

Although Khan has a long and profound relationship with Beirut (starting with Akram Zaatari's *Transit Visa* project in 2001 running through several editions of Homeworks) the *Portrait is an Address* will be his first solo exhibition in any context in this city.

Furthermore, this show will be the first to solely explore one central aspect of Khan's practice in such depth. Recent critically acclaimed survey exhibitions have had a wider focus and were on a much larger scale of the artist work. This time, the idea is to dig into one significant direction within the wider constellation that his practice displays.

The portrait has played a pivotal role in Khan's work starting with *100 Portraits* in 2001 and is represented in various mediums (moving image, photographic image, text pieces). The exhibition aims to explore the primal relation between how we conceive of a self and its reproduction (not merely representation), or its construction through formal methods. It proposes the portrait (as genre, approach, and form) as being at all times an absolutely strategic and essential tool of establishing property (as it was first on medals for instance) and/or exhibiting power (in periods and practices as different as in ancient Egyptian statues or in classical European paintings), a tool to produce meaning and to shape societies visually as well as being an integral part of the collective imaginary (as in oral traditions, in literature or historical texts). In myths, visual portraits were established as a trace of mortality, to remember, to prevent disappearance; portraits have always been a vessel of memories against the viscidities of time.

The portrait deals with the complex relationship between visibility and truth. It remains one of the most intriguing elements in the emotional landscape of the human subject, whether as

mimesis or fabulation; whether through the power of words or by visual means. The visual portrait acknowledges the human face as a space where interiority may become readable, but also as a surface where the conditions of lived experience are marked. This contiguity between the face as screen and as trace, between selfhood and identification; between the recognizable and the unknowable is a space of possible reflection. This exhibition grapples with the possibility of intimacy, the gaps and losses that are necessary for us to make sense of what we see and what we know, the very possibility of making sense itself. It also simply allows the audience a chance to look at others and themselves in a direct, accessible and emotionally powerful fashion.

II. Hassan Khan

Nine lessons learned from Sharif el-Azma Hassan Khan

In his diverse work, Hassan Khan uses texts, images and installation to trace portraits. Retrospectively, Khan thinks that Nine Lessons from Sherif Al-Azma was in fact the portrait of a friend.

This is not an homage. It is, I hope, something more ambiguous and more problematic than that. It is also a text that I believe to be necessary. This is an attempt at engaging with a personal history, at coming to terms with a friendship, at understanding a series of conceptual and formal insights. What follows are a series of lessons, and I do not shy away from calling them that, that I have found to be valuable in my life and practice. This is an acknowledgement of how understanding self and world can shift and develop over time in very productive as well as destructive ways. This is also an address and a polemic, a response to a context, to a scene, and to amnesia. This is a response to something that is sometimes ungrateful and lacking in self-awareness.

Most importantly, I am not interested in wronging someone I respect by turning him into something more, or less, than what he is.

Although, of course the mere act of writing about someone effects such a transformation.

This is actually in a sense more a self-reflexive piece. This is a text about my perspective, the how of my looking as much as anything about Sherif El-Azma himself. There is, of course, a lot here that is directly and inalienably related to Sherif El-Azma. Especially as a hypothetical antithesis, the antagonist of some Greek tragedy; it seems inescapable that he is, for one more time, to be instrumentalized as a demonstration of the arguments of others, and for this I have to apologize, profoundly. However,

the temptations of this maneuver (the neatness of the invisible trick that is implicit here), and the productive nature of this operation are all, one hopes, enough of an excuse.

Here is an attempt to engage Sherif El-Azma's logic, to understand something of that presence. It might be ironic however that part of my interest in writing about Sherif El-Azma is the very fact that he lends himself to a constant state of misunderstanding and misrepresentation.

It has now been roughly 17 years since we first met in Mohamed El Riffai's car on our way back from the American University in Cairo to Ard El-Golf in Heliopolis, the neighborhood where we spent our teenage years (with quite a few others who became friends for a period of time and then disappeared either due to death, travel or religious conversion). We rapidly discovered that we, like many others our age, also shared a severe interest in guitars, alcohol, drugs and girls.

It was Sherif El-Azma however (then I guess around 16) who immediately appeared to me as the most tremulous of these new associates. The one I immediately believed most absolutely, the one who seemed both most intense, quizzical, and at the same time, the most troubled. Since then, a long, sometimes difficult, friendship where I, an extremely suspicious and cautious person, have accepted actions that I normally would never have. It most definitely makes me wonder.

Quite fitting, of course, is that the manner of positing a self and other as a form of antagonism, this form of revealing conflict is in itself something I have learned from Sherif El-Azma. I believe it might just be possible that I, all these years ago, immediately, instinctually and in a self-serving fashion recognized how much it is possible to learn from Sherif El-Azma.

A Constant State of Urgency

Hassan Khan in conversation with Edit Molnàr

Arab Studies Journal vol. XVIII No. 1, Spring 2010

This conversation between curator Edit Molnar and Cairo-based artist Hassan Khan is a close reading of three of the artist's recent works. In it, they discuss the shifting position of the artist in the contemporary cultural landscape and "the phenomena of amnesia" that operates within cultural scenes. A consideration of the influence of personal histories leads to a conversation regarding the strategic application of mythological structures in talking about oneself in relation to how collectives operate through the subject. The pieces discussed include the black-and-white video RANT (2008), a text of the same title, and a book project entitled Nine Lessons Learned from Sherif El-Azma (2009). The piece uses a rather minimalist form of expression. The subject, an actress, is sitting in front of the camera, behind a table. Over the period of roughly six minutes she utters ten phrases. Her gestures and facial expressions are accompanied by a musical composition. The video is accompanied at a later stage by a text under the same title that was published in the journal e-flux (February 2009). Nine Lessons Learned from Sherif El-Azma (2009) is a book project that was published by Publishing House, a temporary publishing unit operating within the framework of the 2008-2009 PhotoCairo4: The Long Shortcut. The book is divided into nine chapters in which Khan elaborates on the lessons he learned, on both the artistic and human levels, from Sherif El-Azma, an artist, video-, and filmmaker who also happens to be one of his closest friends.

EM: In early 2009 you were working on a video, a book, and a shorter text, which share a similar intensity of expression and a certain emotional intensity. Each describes "hyper-expressive conditions. There is a strong autobiographical sensibility, a striking self-confessional tone through which you try to grasp basic strategies of the construction of self through a friendship (in the case of the book *Nine Lessons learned*

from Sherif El-Azma) with Sherif El-Azma, and through the struggle for a voice (i.e., in picturing the miseries of the author in the *RANT* text). Most interesting, however, is the emphasis these investigations place on the question of how individuals position themselves within a specific social group, or within a scene. What makes these various concerns so urgent, so real? Why now; what is this moment of need for selfexamination and confession as an author?

HK: I am at a point in my practice where the interest and the ability to engage with oneself and the conditions under which that self is born and operates are quite central. The relationship between subjectivity (maybe the author's or the artist's) and its socio-economic and cultural context is an integral part of this interest. However, my interest is no longer analytical (at least in the classical sense of a logical breakdown of a unity into its constitutive elements). I am not trying to explain away these "socio-economic and cultural contexts" and build causal relations between elements and their "result." In a sense, what I am searching for are "aesthetic facts," but more on that later. The emotional intensity, or "hyper-expressive conditions," you notice in all three pieces is neither accidental nor a mannerism but rather a part of my professional biography. Both texts are in some ways investigations into the very materiality of what an artist is. I find that attempting to understand what an artist is an integral part of the artist's work.

Urgency is a direct reflection of one understanding of what that engagement is. Again, it is not an urgency that has declared for itself a set of objectives that it then tries

to achieve. It is thus not an urgency that is decided upon prior to the work; it is one that is produced through the work. This engagement with one's conditions leads to a production of forms. Forms are the material of the artist's labor.

So what we have is an urgency that is produced through the labor invested in the work, i.e., an urgency that is a product of the engagement we are talking about. Simultaneously, and because this process I have just described is one in which results are suspended rather than predetermined, urgency is come upon, discovered. There is a slight yet crucial difference between what is produced and discovered; we are therefore dealing with a contradiction in which the same conditions produce two mutually exclusive statements.

EM: For me, this feeling of urgency was informed by a very simple fact: not just by your will to produce this urgency but also because these works were all created in a very short time span. It seems that the relevance of the issues discussed have a time element. Why now the discovery? If this is not a calculated urgency, were there any special accidents, events, or influences that turned your attention to the ontology of the artist?

HK: Maybe there is a connection between urgency and this turn to ontology, although I am not sure if this is a real turn to ontology. The ontological is present of course, but it is being used in itself as a decoy for something else. Maybe I am interested in emphasizing the very discussion around conditions and contexts in terms of the artist's experience. These conditions, are economic, social, political, and cultural. They are the constitutive elements of a context, the context is therefore significant, i.e., I am not interested in building a hermetic introverted metaphysical diagram. However, there is something potentially very interesting and productive if we are able to tackle these conditions in a way that takes into account the artist's perspective as a subject, in both

meanings of the word, the artist as the subject of our discussion and the artist as that which possesses subjectivity. How can we tackle this while avoiding empty and tired humanisms that posit the artist as an ethical arbitrator, or some kind of abstraction like mankind's consciousness? Can we avoid the self-serving liberalism rampant in art scenes where the artist is expected to play a part in the process of the liberalization of society, or yet again a romantic narcissism in which the artist becomes the prototype of the human spirit? What is important to note here is that these are all primarily questions of form.

To return to urgency, it is because I am an artist who has been consciously attempting to sidestep my own patterns and preferences, one's predilection to a predetermined form, I have found myself in the condition of a constant state of urgency-this is an urgency I do not claim or wish to "express" in my works, it is rather there behind the works. Practically it means that I tend to intensely focus on an approach for a period of time and therefore works from any one period seem connected. I am sure there is a connection between the word ontology and the fact that you detect some type of urgency- but maybe I need to think about that a bit more.

EM: The video work *RANT* (2008) functions through a direct, charged, and formally defined address from the subject to the audience, while *Nine Lessons Learned from Sherif El-Azma* (2009) is like an educational book in which you elaborate on the lessons you learned from one of your closest friends the artist and filmmaker Sherif El-Azma. There are numerous connections between *RANT* and *Nine Lessons*: the attempt to reread personal histories, a slight mythologization of oneself, the similarity of dealing with the protagonist (e.g., staging him/her, framing), changing the narrator from a single person to a representative of a group (a slightly authoritarian voice). What we experience here is a very strong artistic strategy, and these pieces are all manifestations of it.

HK: First I agree there are many connections and I begin by commenting on each one of them.

Personal histories are integral element of different works (from the early videos in the 1990s to 17 and in AUC of 2003). That is partially because they are raw material, evidence of the conditions of the artist, as well as constitutive elements of one's experience. When I abandoned the project of speaking about things roughly seven years ago, that interest in personal history gained a new significance. However, because I had spent roughly seven years prior being highly suspicious and critical of "narcissistic practices and the way they present personal histories," my engagement with that material has always been, I believe, framed through rigorous stylistic choices that ensure that some kind of transformation or translation from material into aesthetic fact or form is happening.

The mythologization of the author is a strategic choice that has calculated effects; it delivers the voice through an authoritarian shell that helps articulate the content in terms of mythical structures. As a discursive formation, the mythological allows us to investigate the highly charged extreme experiences of the subject without falling into the traps of narcissism or melodrama.

Framing the subject (rather than protagonist) is an integral element of all of the above; it is part of the process through which the transformation into an aesthetic fact is enacted, the mythologized voice can only be heard through a process of framing, a ritualized language that builds a protocol between the reader and the text. The text for me, in this case, can become the trace of the subject. It is thus something to be encountered: obstinate and hard because it acts like a discrete object and passionate because it is connected to the will of the subject.

The narrator, however, is not a representative of the group but rather a member of that group. The relationship is thus metonymic or indexical rather than symbolic. Paradoxically,

the authoritarian voice can actually be seen to be quite useful in demystifying the relationship between text and reader, i.e., useful in producing relationships based upon coming to terms with the labor of reading and the positions one encounters in that very act. Each element of the relationship by necessity possesses a stake in the terms of the contract. This is a tone that is maybe on one level an attempt at coming to terms with the implicit guilt that is structurally inherent to the act of producing a text. What is important here is both the fact that something implicit exists in the act or writing, and because of that we are immediately in a situation of secrets and revelations. Guilt is perhaps structural to the conditions of normalization themselves that the production of explanations is immediately a part of.

[...]

Interview with Hassan Khan Mayssa Fattouh

artterritoires.net, January 13 2011

*Artist, writer and musician, Hassan Khan's complex and accurate method of addressing contentious subjects inevitably leaves the audience dwelling on the impact of his works and challenged by the crucial questions he raises. Reading his booklet *Nine Lessons learned from Sherif Al Azma*, made me want to have an insight into his personal approach to the multi-dimensional concept of identity and other aspects of his art practice.*

[...]

Mayssa: From theory to practice, a couple of examples of your work come to my mind, mainly after having read your booklet *Nine Lessons Learned from Sherif El Azma* – which was the main trigger to this interview – I got particularly interested in how you discuss the self through the antagonist who's also in reality one of your best friends and fellow artist/film maker, could you explain more what lies behind the idea of the antagonist here.

Hassan: You will notice that Sherif is always referred to throughout the text as "Sherif El-Azma". In a sense I'm intentionally and consciously treating him as an object, an entity or a force that is not merely a person or a character.

This force is defined as "the antagonist". The antagonist is many things here; on one level he is the opposite of the protagonist, which in this case is "the self", even if he is its biggest ally. In trying to speak about a friendship I was interested in understanding how difference is an integral part of producing a relationship as well as an understanding of one's own self. On the other hand, these comments relate to the wider social sphere, where Sherif El-Azma acts as a lens that allows us to see the bloody mess

underneath everything, the mess that makes everything possible.

In the end the text plays with my persona as the writer. It's an attempt at reconstructing the process of thinking while producing a portrait of someone I know. It is also a self-portrait. The idea of discussing the antagonist, in this case Sherif, is useful because it puts him in an active role in a relation to things outside of him. So the antagonist isn't someone alone floating in the universe but rather a point that is always in relation to someone or something else, in this case that could be sometimes hostile or tense but it helps describe a relationship.

Mayssa: You've mentioned your project *17 and in AUC* in your book, would you consider the latter (*Nine Lessons Learned from Sherif El Azma*) a continuation of this project because of the approach of the self through the antagonist.

Hassan: I think *17 and in AUC* is a totally different type of project than *Nine Lessons Learned from Sherif El Azma*. *17 and in AUC* was a performative act that was both physical and durational, it took 14 days to utter.

The text was produced under certain conditions that were not related to the act of writing, they were related to a situation, an actual physical architecture and a relationship with an audience. Through that a text was produced and then transcribed. The text in this case has the act of remembering as its raw material. However, *Nine Lessons Learned from Sherif El Azma* is a much more writerly text, an essay. The impulse behind it is very measured, it's written in a semi-analytical contemplative fashion. In *17 and in AUC* there is analysis but everything

is pushed through a stream of consciousness, so the text itself possesses an identity outside the act of writing, while *Nine Lessons Learned from Sherif El Azma* is deeply connected to the act of writing itself. So they come from totally different positions, I think they're totally different types of texts.

Mayssa: Can you describe the antagonist position in *17 and in AUC* in comparison to *Nine Lessons Learned from Sherif El Azma*?

Hassan: I think the link is, ironically, the figure of the rebel, how that figure is, far from being innocent or admirable, deeply connected to certain social formations, a national and class history. In *Nine Lessons Learned from Sherif El Azma* I am constructing a relationship, by constructing an antagonist that I look at and describe and then deal with. The text builds a conduit through which to arrive to a sense of the self. In *17 and in AUC* I am trapped, in an architectural construction, in a very real form, in a physical fashion; I am framed- I have myself become the antagonist. I don't know how much you know about *17 and in AUC* or if you've seen the text?

Mayssa: I haven't read the actual text, only read about the performance.

Hassan: Ok, in *17 and in AUC* I can't see or hear the people outside the room. The audience is however able to see and hear me because the audio is broadcast through the speakers and the glass walls are one-way mirrored. Through this kind of construction the audience experiences a form of communication that is not part of their daily life. For example they're able to look at me straight in the eyes without me registering their presence, this is impossible in daily life. When you look into someone's eyes he or she also sees you; something crucial happens in that moment. This is not the case in *17 and in AUC*. Here I'm changing a very simple element in the rules of communication and by doing this I'm able to allow a portrait of the self that is

grounded in difference as well as recognition to become possible; a sort of parallel universe where the self becomes totally alien, because people are able to look at it but unable to witness the reciprocal recognition. I thus become totally external to them, which means that I become something that they can observe with great detachment. This is, in this case, I believe greatly productive. So I become the antagonist, even in a technical sense I become the antagonist. I become the figure of the antagonist behind the glass. That's useful for me as a subject-position in exploring my own memories, and it's useful for the audience watching this because it's a way of returning that look (I refuse to use the word gaze here) back at their own self without falling into the replication of a self-image based upon the generic hero. If this were 'standard' theatre for example, the act would have been heroic. The self would be on stage performing its heroism, presenting it to the audience to consume and make it theirs, and everybody can have their moment of a secretly unsatisfying and tired catharsis. We would have been in the hall of mirrors, of "self-image". However the architectural form, as well as this strategy of framing the antagonist, makes that type of relationship not possible anymore. We are thus in the space of production, the production of positions.

Mayssa: In many ways this performance is a form of mimesis, the hero is the group that reflects back its selfimage and by saying catharsis there appears to be a violent desire on your behalf to create awareness for the need of social change.

Hassan: Mimesis is present as a layer in the work of course. But I think it's rougher and rawer than a perfect mirror. What we have instead is projections, fantasies and disagreement. I remember on the fourteenth day when the piece was finally finished, coming out of this room and discovering a massive crowd. A sort of grotesque party (that hadn't been there before in previous days) a celebration that was totally misguided. But it thrilled me in a perverse

way. Even as it demonstrated how easy it is to recuperate everything. Beware utopia.

Mayssa: I would like to go back to the question of art production with a function of promoting an identity; I understand that you refuse to discuss art in a reductive form but can you say more about this specific subject?

Hassan: The function of promoting an identity is a very interesting question. After the Youth Salon in Cairo I traveled to Alexandria and spent a week with Bassam El Baroni looking at all the material we had gone through in the jury again. We looked at more than a thousand works of art over the period of one week for one more time; these works were submitted from all around Egypt by artists under the age of 30. We were trying to understand what the problems were, why there were so many works that we found to be uninteresting. One useful tool we came up with was to analyze the artwork by what it tells us about the artist's self identity, the artist portrait it proposes. What we noticed in a lot of works, especially those we were critical of, is that the work encodes the artist's self image and then demands that the audience decodes that image and communes with it through an easy form of pathos.

We saw the artist as tormented and romantic, as the political activist, as a responsible and conscious member of society, a sensitive observer of the world, a concerned nationalist who is there to help present a vibrant and positive image of the nation, as trend setter and avant-garde hero, and the list goes on: a series of models of what the artist is. These models have a history, of course. A history that is locally sensitive even if a lot of the tropes are globally shared. These models become easy to pick, regardless of their histories. Artists pick a model that best suits their sensibility and they work through it only to be left with a work whose sole function is to notate this idea. It basically means that it's completely narcissistic; we end up with an image of the artist as a hero. We experience the artist's drama and recognize it,

and with that moment of recognition comes an easy form of satisfaction. I think I will interview Bassam El-Baroni to continue this trail.

Mayssa: I look forward to it. On the subject of audiences, from your description of *17 and in AUC* it feels like it occupies a big space in your work, how did your method come to this integration of the public in your process?

Hassan: My working method has developed quite organically over the years. In the early 90s, as an undergraduate university student, I became involved in many things some of which can possibly be seen in retrospect as a form of art practice. There wasn't much consciousness about putting it within the art context, it was experienced as a form of excitement and energy, and being young of course.

My interests intersected with some other highly inspiring people including Sherif El-Azma, Ahmed El Attar and Amr Hosny. There was also an attempt at finding a public driven by a curiosity, and confidence, about what kind of interaction would happen with the audience. This search led to the first instance (of many) of public conflict in 1995.

My very first public presentation of a work, was a collaborative piece called Lungfan produced with Amr Hosny and shown at the Cairo Atelier. We were immediately attacked by almost everyone present, accused of attempting to brainwash the audience, being agents of Israel, destructive elements of society, lost youth, the list goes on. That was my first encounter with a wider public. Over the next 5 years, I pursued with the same kind of energy but in a more formally conscious manner through the use of video. What I appreciate deeply to this very day is the lack of self-consciousness; there was something immediate and direct about the work, which I consider a quality.

Mayssa: How did this quality translate for the audience?

Hassan: In that instance you imagine that

there's an audience, but you're not trying to please that audience, you're trying to hit it with different things. By the early 2000s I had began working in journalism and was more consciously interested in building an engaged, sometimes surprising interaction with the audience. At that point of time, my work became more directly engaged with the social sphere, there was an attempt to build a conversation in those terms.

[...]

III. Workbook دفتر التمارين

انطلاقاً من ممارسات حسن خان الفنيّة التي تستخدم الصورة المتحرّكة والصورة الفوتوغرافيّة والنصوص لرسم صورة شخصيّة لأيّ كان، تعتمد هذه المجموعة من التمارين إلى استكشاف الأساليب المختلفة التي يمكن استخدامها لتتبع أثر وجود شخص ما. كما توفر هذه التمارين مساحة للتعرف على الصورة الشخصيّة ببعدها المادّي المحسوس وبالسرديّات التي يمكن أن تتطوي عليها.

Drawing on the practice of Hassan Khan who uses moving image, photographic image and text pieces to draw one's portrait, this set of exercises explores the different means that could be used to trace one's presence. It is also a way of getting acquainted with both the portrait in its physical dimension and the narratives it can contain.

1 From the parent's portrait to one's own من صورة الوالد/الوالدة إلى الصورة الذاتيّة

قام العديد من الفنّانين وصانعي الأفلام بتوثيق صور أمّهاتهم، سواء عن طريق الفوتوغرافيا أو الفيديو، في محاولات لفهم جانب من ذاتهم/تاريخهم الشخصي. يقدم حسن خان في معرض «الناس داءً دفين» عملاً هو عبارة عن صورة فوتوغرافية في إطار بعنوان «أمّي». المخرج اللبناني غسان سلهب كان قد أخرج فيلمًا عن والدته يروي فيه ظروف نشأته الذاتيّة عنوانه ١٩٥٨ (٢٠٠٩)، وكذلك المؤلّفة المسرحيّة والفنّانة اللبنانيّة لينا صانع التي صورت والدتها في أول عمل فيديو لها، «أبصرت منامًا، يا أمّي» (٢٠٠٦). لم يقتصر البحث عن العلاقة بين الصورة العائليّة وتصوّر الذات على هؤلاء بل شمل العديد من الكتّاب والكاتبات أمثال سيمون دو بوفوار التي كتبت في «مذكرات فتاة مطبوعة» (١٩٥٨) عن علاقتها بالأشخاص المحيطين بها كمكوّن لهويّتها.

Several artists and filmmakers have recorded moving and still images of their own mothers, in an attempt to grasp a part of their own self/history. In *The Portrait is an Address*, Hassan Khan presents a framed photograph entitled *My Mother*. Lebanese filmmaker Ghassan Salhab filmed his own mother in 1958 (2009), a film that draws the context in which the director was born; Lebanese playwright and artist Lina Saneh also filmed her own mother in her first video, *I had a dream, mom* (2006). This connection between the family portrait and one's own has also been explored by writers: in *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* (1958), Simone de Beauvoir constructs her identity through her relationship with the people surrounding her.

2 The portrait as part of a social fabric

الصورة الشخصية كجزء من النسيج الاجتماعي



Hassan Khan, *My Mother*, 2013

حسن خان، أمي، ٢٠١٣

يطرح هذا القسم موضوع استخدام الصورة الشخصية لأحد الوالدين كمدخل إلى الهوية والذات.

- اجمعوا بعضاً من الصور العائلية (صورة فوتوغرافية، فيديو، رسومات ولوحات) وبعض الأشياء التي تذكركم بأفراد العائلة. لندرس هذه العناصر: ما هو الرابط الذي تمثله هذه الأشياء مع من تمثلهم؟ هل يذكركم بعضها بأنفسكم؟ أعيدوا ترتيب هذه الأشياء أو بعضها لصنع صورة شخصية لكم (يمكنكم استخدام الأدوات الرقمية أو المادية، مثل الكولاج، التحرير، الرسم ..)

- اصنعوا صوراً شخصية لأفراد عائلتكم باستخدام أحد هذه الوسائط أو التقنيات أو بعضها: الصور (الثابتة أو المتحركة)، الرسومات، التلوين، النمذجة، الكولاج، إلخ.. كيف يعكس استخدام هذه التقنيات صفات محددة تخص موضوعكم؟ تخصكم؟

This section aims at using a parent's portrait as a window to one's own identity or personal characteristics.

A. Gather existing portraits of your family (photographs, videos, paintings, drawings) and collect some objects that remind you of them. Study these elements: how do you relate to them? Do some of them remind you of yourself? Combine and use some of those elements to make a portrait of yourself (using both digital and physical tools: collage, editing, drawing...)

B. Make portraits of different members of your family using one or several mediums and techniques: images (still or moving), drawing, painting, modeling, collage etc. How do the techniques you used reveal the specific characteristics of each of your subject? Of yourself?

ثمّة لحظات تصبح فيها الصورة الشخصية منطلقاً لحبكة أو لقصة متخيلة: عندما ننظر إلى صورة شخص لا نعرفه، قد نبدأ بالتخمين، من يكون هذا الشخص، كيف هي حياته، كيف يمضي وقته. بذلك تصبح مقصورة الصور الفورية أو واجهة العرض في استوديو التصوير مكاناً للقائه لا حصر لها. وتبدو قراءة الصورة الشخصية مرتبطة إلى حد بعيد بما نعرفه عن الشخص موضوع الصورة أو بما نستقيه من محيطنا الاجتماعي. وعلى عكس الحقائق التي تحوّل الصورة الشخصية إلى رواية برهانية تخدم الدليل والإثبات (كما في رواية الاختين بابين والصور الشهيرة التي رافقت سيرتهما الإجرامية) تبقى الصور الغير المنشورة بآباً مشرعاً على قراءات محتملة.

In several instances, the portrait becomes the starting point of a fantasy story: looking at a stranger's portrait, one would start imagining who they are, what they have been through and how they spend their time. In this way, a photo booth or the display cabinet of a photo studio becomes the place for countless encounters. The reading of a portrait seems to be very related to what we know about the subject's background and to our own social context. Contrary to way the faits-divers try to turn a portrait into evidence to a story (The Papin Sisters story and the famous portraits accompanying it), an unpublished image remains open to various readings.



Papin sisters, before and after they were arrested for the murder of their employer's wife and daughter in 1933

الأختان بابين قبل وبعد توقيفهما بتهمة قتل زوجة صاحب عملهما وابنته في عام ١٩٣٣

يعمد الفنّان أكرم زعتري إلى تحريّ البعد الاجتماعيّ في التصوير الفوتوغرافي من خلال عمله الخاص باستوديو هاشم المدني في صيدا. يقول: «يتركز القسم الأكبر من عملي المتعلق باستوديوهات التصوير على سؤال كيف تصبح هذه الاستوديوهات مسرحاً يمثل على خشبته الناس. كثيراً يتقمّص هؤلاء أموراً أو مواقف لا أثر لها في حياتهم الخاصة - ومنها بالأخصّ مواقف تعبّر عن المكانة الاجتماعية» (زعتري في أشيثا نغيش، «انعكاس في الماء: مقابلة مع أكرم زعتري»، أرت إنفو، ٢٦ تشرين الثاني ٢٠١٣).

In his work on photographer's Hashem El-Madani photo studio in Saida, Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari sets to explore the social dimension of photography: "Most of my work regarding studio photography is about this – how these studios become theatres in which people act. Many times they act out things that they miss or don't have in life – particularly social status" (Zaatari in Ashitha Nagesh, 'Reflection in Water: Interview with Akram Zaatari', Artinfo, 26 November 2013). Read more about Zaatari's reflection on this work [here](#).



Akram Zaatari, Anonymous. Studio Shehrazade, Saida, Lebanon, early 1970s. Hashem el Madani, 2007

أكرم زعتري، «مغفل. استوديو شهرزاد، صيدا، لبنان، مطلع السبعينات»، هاشم المدني،

٢٠٠٧



Akram Zaatari, Reesh. Studio Shehrazade, Saida, Lebanon, late 1960s. Hashem el Madani, 2007

أكرم زعتري، «ريش. استوديو شهرزاد، صيدا، لبنان، أواخر الستينات»، هاشم المدني،

٢٠٠٧

- (هذا التمرين مخصّص للمجموعات من ٣ أو ٤)
ابحثوا صورة لشخص لا تعرفونه: في استوديو تصوير قديم، في ألبوم للصور، على الإنترنت إلخ.. تخيلوا من يكون هذا الشخص واكتبوا قصته: أين يسكن، ماذا يعمل، ما نوع سلوكه الاجتماعي إلخ. اعرضوا الصورة على مجموعتكم واطلبوا منهم أن يكتب كل منهم قصة مختلفة لهذا الشخص من وجهة نظرهم. قارنوا القصص (تعريف الشخصية، حبكة القصة..). كيف تنعكس سيرتكم الذاتية في روايتكم للصورة ولصاحبها؟ كيف تؤثر المعايير والمقاييس الاجتماعية في عناصرها ومسارها؟

- تصفّحوا الإنترنت أو ألبوم الصور واختاروا صورة شخصية تعجبكم. ألقوا قصة حول هذه الشخصية. مثلوا الشخصية كما تتخيلونها. اطلبوا من أصدقائكم وصف أدائكم: هل كنتم تؤدّون شخصية ما؟ تقلّدون شخصاً بعينه؟ تتقمّصونه؟ تصفونهم؟

A. [this exercise is to be made by groups of 3 to 4] Find a photograph of a person you don't know: in an old photo studio, a photo album, on the Internet, etc. Imagine who this person is and write their story: where they live, what they do, what kind of social behavior they have etc. Show the same picture to your group and ask them to write their own story. Compare the stories (identity, plotline, etc). How does your own story affect your reading of the image? How do social parameters and criteria affect it?

B. Browse the Internet or photo albums and select a portrait that interests you. Build around it a story. Play the role you imagined. Ask your friends to describe your performance: were you acting like someone? Imitating them? Impersonating them? Describing them?

4 Popular portraits and the diluted subject

«فابيولا»، عمل للفنان البلجيكي فرانسيس أليس يجمع اللوحات التي تمثل القديسة فابيولا والتي تنتشر نسخها في الأسواق الشعبية في جميع أنحاء العالم. وعلى الرغم من عدم معرفة معظم الناس في بلدان مختلفة بالهوية الحقيقية والقصة التي تمثلها هذه الصورة وصاحبها، إلا أنها تجد طريقها إلى بلدان مختلفة وموزعة لا يشترط أن تجمعها الحدود وتتباين في أعراقها المحلية.

In *Fabiola*, Belgian artist Francis Alys gathers portraits of saint Fabiola found in flea markets around the globe. Unknown as the actual subject might be in most cultures, her portrait seems to have found its way to many different countries, regardless of boundaries and local mores.



Francis Alys, *Fabiola*, 2009

فابيولا، فرانسيس أليس، ٢٠٠٩

- حاولوا إيجاد صورة شخصية تعرفونها أو كنتم قد رأيتموها مراراً في أماكن مختلفة. هل تعلمون من تمثل؟ كيف تصفونها لأصدقائكم الذين لم يسبق لهم أن رأوا الشخصية؟ ماذا يخبرنا انتشار هذه الصورة عن الأشخاص الذين يعرضونها في متاجرهم أو محالهم؟ ماذا عن صانع الصورة؟ وعن الشخص موضوع اللوحة.

A. Try and find a portrait that you have seen several times, in different places. Do you know whom it represents? How would you describe it to a friend who doesn't know the subject? What does the propagation of the portrait tell about the ones who display it? About the one who made it? About the subject itself?

3 Ancestral stories and the verbal portrait

تنتقل الصور الشخصية في الحكايات العائلية والخرافات والأساطير الاجتماعية عبر الكلام والسرد القصصي، من دون أي توثيق خطي أو أثر بصري للشخصية. يهدف هذا التمرين إلى التأمل في الصورة الشخصية الغير البصرية ومكوناتها، بحثاً عن الكلمات والأصوات التي تصوّر الهوية/الشخص.

In both family stories and social myths and legends, the transmission of portraits goes through the actual telling of the story, without written record or a visual trace of the character. This exercise aims at triggering the reflection upon the unseen portrait and its components, exploring both the words and the sounds that depict an identity/subject.

- أخبرونا قصة سمعتموها (من أحد والديكم أو جدّيكُم) عن شخص لم يسبق لكم أن التقيتم به أو رأيتموه. هل تستطيعون أن تكونوا له ملامح مرئية؟ ما هي أوجه الشخصية التي تقصّر الرواية المحكيّة في التعبير عنها بشكل واف والتي اضطررتم إلى اللجوء لمخيلتكم لملء ثغراتها وألتمكن من تخيلها على شكل صورة مرئية؟

A. Tell us a story you heard (from your parents, grandparents) revolving around a person that you have never met/seen. Can you make a visual portrait of the principal character? What is it that the verbal portrait cannot convey and that you had to imagine in order to constitute an image?

- تخيلوا شخصية وألفوا قصة حولها. اطلبوا من صديق لكم أو صديقة الاستماع إلى هذه القصة ومن ثم إعادة تلاوتها بطريقته/طريقتها الخاصة وتسجيلها. مرّروا التسجيل إلى صديق/ة ثالث، واطلبوا منه/منها القيام بنفس العمل. أعيدوا الكرة مع صديق أو اثنتين. قارنوا النتيجة مع نسختكم الأولى من الرواية. كيف تطوّرت هذه الشخصية وكيف تطوّرت صورتها عبر الروايات المتواترة؟

B. Imagine a character and record a story about them. Ask a friend to listen to your recording and then retell the story in her/his own way and record it. Pass-on your friend's recording to a third friend, and let them do the same. Repeat the operation with another friend, or two. Compare the final result with your original story. How did the character and their portrait evolve through the successive versions?

5 Self-portrait and the construction of the subject

استخدمت الفنانة الأميركية سيندي شيرمان نمط الصورة الذاتية كوسيلة للتعبير عن الهوية بوصفها بنياناً مركباً ولطرح مسألة التمثيل وطبيعته. تظهر سلسلتها الفوتوغرافية بعنوان «لقطات فيلمية بلا عنوان» (١٩٧٧-١٩٨٠) شيرمان نفسها كعارضة تتقمص الأدوار الانتقوية النمطية التي مجدها الأفلام السينمائية في الفترة بين ١٩٥٠ و ١٩٦٠.

In her work, American artist Cindy Sherman used self-portrait as a way to address the construction of identity and the nature of representation. Her photographic series *Untitled Movie Stills* (1977-1980) feature the artist as her own model in stereotypical female roles based on the film scene of the 1950-1960.



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Movie Still #6*, 1977
سيندي شيرمان، «لقطات فيلمية بلا عنوان، رقم ٦».

- اختاروا صورتين أو ثلاث ومواضيع تخص مسألة الهوية وترغبون في التحدث عنها خلال هذا التمرين (العلاقة مع الآخرين، الهوية الخفية أو الغير المعلنة للآخرين، ثنائية العلاقة والاختلاف بين ما نحن عليه وما نظهره للآخرين، موضة التصوير الذاتي على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي اليوم ..) ابتكروا مجموعتكم الخاصة من الصور الشخصية الفوتوغرافية حيث تلعبون أنتم دور الموديل في هذه الصور. هل يمكن وصف هذه الصور على أنها صور ذاتية؟ أي نوع من الأسئلة تطرحه هذه التجربة عليكم عندم تودون دور المصور والموديل؟ ما هو دور كل من الشخصيتين اللتين تلعبونهما خلال التصوير في تكوين الذات؟

- اختاروا صوراً من فيلم أو من مجموعة فوتوغرافية. قلدوا هذه الصور وسجلوا أرشيفكم الخاص من الصور (الفوتوغرافية أو الفيلمية) حيث تودون أنتم الأدوار عينها في المواقف عينها. الآن، فكروا في ما تحاول هذه الصور أن تخبرنا وأعيدوا قراءتها بأسلوبكم الخاص، مع تخيل مكان وزمان مختلفين وهوية مغايرة لنفسك. ما هي علاقتكم بالشخصية التي تبدأ بالظهور من خلال هذا التمرين. إلى أي مدى يمكنكم القول إنكم مؤلفو هذه الصور التي أنتجتموها؟

A. Select 2 or 3 image and identity related topics you would like to address in this exercise (the relationship with the others; one's hidden or undiscovered identity; the duality between what we are and what we show; the self photography trend on social media today...). Create your own series of photographic portraits where you would be your own model. Does this qualify as an auto-portrait? What type of questions does this raise to you as a photographer and as a model? What's the role of each of your functions in the creation of the subject?

B. Select images from films or photographic series. Reproduce them and record images (still or moving) of yourself in the same role and situation. Now think about what the images you picked are trying to tell, and interpret them in your own way, imagining a different setting and a different identity to yourself. What is your relationship to the subject in the different cases? To what extent can you say you are the author of the images you created?

6 The Portrait as consumer goods الصورة الذاتية كمنتج استهلاكي

في الأشهر التي تلت وفاة مارلين مونرو في عام ١٩٦٢، أنجز فنّان البوب آندي وار هول أكثر من ٢٠ لوحة من الطباعة الحريرية مستخدماً إحدى صورها التي شاعت في الحملة الإعلانية لفيلم «نياغارا» (١٩٥٣). ونظراً لأن الصورة مصدر هذا العمل هي في الأساس المادة الإعلانية لا الممثلة، فثمة أسئلة تُطرح حول علاقتنا مع صورة الشخص وكيفية تلقيها واستهلاكها. وتماًماً كما في عمل «شوربة معلبة» (١٩٦٢)، تثير الصورة المتكررة مسألة الإنتاج السلسلي والنسخ اللامتتاهي الذي يستدعي صورة الرفوف المرصوفة بالمنتجات الاستهلاكية في السوبرماركت.

In the months following Marilyn Monroe's death in 1962, pop artist Andy Warhol made over 20 silkscreen printings of her portrait used for the publicity of *Niagara* (1953). The source of the painting being a publicity material and not the actress herself raises questions about our relationship to one's image, the way we perceive it and the way we consume it. Just as the *Campbell Soup Cans* (1962), the repetitiveness of the image suggests a serial production, and an infinite duplication that echoes supermarket shelves.



Andy Warhol, *Twenty-five colored Marilyns*, 1962

آندي وار هول، خمس وعشرون مارلين ملونة، ١٩٦٢

يُنار اليوم السؤال عن العلاقة التي تتشكل بين الصورة الذاتية للشخص وبين وسائط التواصل الاجتماعي في ضوء الازدياد السريع لظاهرة «السيلفي» وما تستتبعه من أشكال محدّدة للوضعيات والإيماءات والحركات الجسمانية التي يتكرّر أدائها لدى الجانب الأكبر من المستخدمين. تجمع هذه الممارسة الشائعة بين التصوير الذاتي والأداء وتطرح شكلاً من الإنتاج السلسلي الشبه المنهجي.

- اختاروا سلسلة من «السيلفيات» (أو الصور الذاتية) التي التقطوها ونشرتموها على مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي (إن كان لديكم منها). اجمعوها في تصميم واحد. علام تدل كل من هذه الصور؟ ما الذي تجدونه في هذا التصميم أو المونتاج الجامع لها؟ ما تعليقكم على التشابهات بين هذه الصور (الوضعيات، تعابير الوجه، الخلفيات..)

- اختاروا صورة شخصية لشخصية عامة (ممثل/ة، مغني/ة، فنّان/ة) استخدموا وسائل النسخ والتلوين والتمويه للتعبير عن حقيقة ما في واقع هذه الشخصية وكيفية إدراك الجمهور لها وتعامله معها. شاركوا مشروعكم مع باقي زملائكم في الصف: ما رأيهم؟

Today, the question of the relationship between one's image and the (social) media is constantly raised by the increasing number of "selfies" and what has become a set of typical poses and gestures, repetitively reproduced by users. Combining self-portraiture and performance, this common practice also suggests a serial, semi-systematic production.

A. Select a series of "selfie" images you posted on social media (if any). Combine them into a single layout. What does each image refer to? What does the combination suggest? Comment on the similarities between the images (poses, face expression, backgrounds...)

B. Select a portrait of a public figure (actor/actress, singer, artist ...). Use duplication, coloring, distortions etc. to address a reality related to this person's reality or how it is perceived. Share your production with the class: how do they perceive it?

7 The monument as a portrait الصرح كصورة شخصية

تحفل معظم المدن في العالم بالصرح والنصب التذكارية. في علاقتها مع المؤسسة السياسية، تمثل هذه الصروح السلطة المعنوية، وتحمل تصورًا ذاتيًا للمؤسسة/السلطة السياسية والهوية التي تسعى إلى تظهيرها للمواطنين (والزائرين). يهدف هذا التمرين إلى تخطي العلاقة البصرية بين المدينة والصرح الرئيسية التي تحتل حيزًا في فضاءها العام إلى الحث عن المعاني والدلالات التي تحملها حول السلطة والمؤسسات.

- اختاروا صرحًا ذا بعد سياسي في مدينة من مدن العالم (الساحة الحمراء في موسكو، مقر البرلمان في لندن، إلخ..). ماذا تستدلون من هذه الصروح على السلطة القائمة؟ هل لكم أن تتخيلوا نوعًا آخر من الصروح التي تظهر مزايا مغايرة عن المؤسسات التي تمثل هذه السلطة؟

- تخيلوا صرحًا يعبر عن مؤسسة سياسية من اختيارك في بلدكم. كيف يمكن أن يكون؟ لماذا؟

Most of the cities around the world host a (or several) monument/s. In the case of political institutions, these monuments act as the reminder and the representation of the power involved. They become the portrait of the institution/power, the identity these entities want the citizens (and visitors) to see. This exercise sets to go beyond the visual correlation between a given city and its key monuments to look more into what those monuments reveal about the power and institutions.

A. Select a political monument in a city around the world (Moscow's Red Square, London's House of Parliament...). What do these monuments tell about the power? Can you imagine a different monument that would reveal other characteristics of the institutions?

B. Imagine a monument for a political institution of your choice, in your own country. What would it look like? Why?

IV. Additional Readings

This selection of readings suggests different approaches and questions related to the portrait, its making and its confrontation with the viewer.

Michel Foucault's *What is an Author* explores the dimension of being an author, what constitutes a work, and what can be retrospectively considered as such, in an essay that brings into question the subjectivity of the author. In Louis Marin's *The Portrait and Its Name*, the subject itself is confronted to its portrait: Marin studies the reciprocal imitation that occurs and the interchangeability of what becomes the "king of representation and the representation of the king".

Another aspect related to the subject is tackled in Amelia Jones' *Screening the Subject*, a study of self-portraits in the works of Cindy Sherman, Hannah Wilke, Lyle Ashton Harris, and Laura Aguilar.

In *A Poison Extracted from a Cure*, Christopher Pinney addresses the political and social dimensions of photographed portraits and how they differ from painted portraits in which the process allows for a greater filtering of elements of reality.

As an extension of the topic, Jalal Toufic's *Reading, rewriting Poe's "The Oval Portrait" - In your dreams* suggests yet another reading of Poe's short story, based on the fatal relation between the subject and its preservative painting: what does this transfer of life from the subject to the painting reveal about the real status of the narrator/viewer?

What is an Author?

Michel Foucault

In David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, editors, *The Book History Reader*, pp. 225–230. Routledge, New York, NY, 2002

In this essay, Foucault raises questions about what an author is, how their posture changes depending on their writings (whether they are intended for an audience or not). Their name is not only a proper name –like that of the reader or a person–, but it insinuates a certain character, way of writing, way of thinking, or a certain a priori that accompanies it.

Michel Foucault (1926–1984) was a French historian and philosopher who has widely influenced philosophical as well as humanistic and social scientific disciplines with his theories on History, Social Structure and Power. His seminal works include *The Order of Things* (1966), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), *The Discourse on Language* (1971), *History of Madness* (1972) and *The History of Sexuality* (1976–1984).

The coming into being of the notion of ‘author’ constitutes the privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences. Even today, when we reconstruct the history of a concept, literary genre, or school of philosophy, such categories seem relatively weak, secondary, and superimposed scansions in comparison with the solid and fundamental unit of the author and the work.

I shall not offer here a sociohistorical analysis of the author’s persona. Certainly it would be worth examining how the author became individualized in a culture like ours, what status he has been given, at what moment studies of authenticity and attribution began, in what kind of system of valorization the author was involved, at what point we began to recount the lives of authors rather than of heroes, and how this fundamental category of “the-man-and-his-work criticism” began. For the moment, however, I want to deal solely with the relationship between text and author and with the manner in which the text point to this “figure” that, at least in appearance, is outside it and antecedes it.

Beckett nicely formulates the theme with which I would like to begin: “What does it matter who is speaking,” someone said, “what does it matter who is speaking”.’ In this indifference appears one of the fundamental ethical principles of contemporary writing (écriture). I say ‘ethical’ because this indifference is not really a trait characterizing the manner in which one speaks and writes, but rather a kind of immanent rule, taken up over and over again, never fully applied, not designating writing as something completed, but dominating it as a practice. Since it is too familiar to require a lengthy analysis, this immanent rule can be adequately illustrated here by tracing two of its major themes.

First of all, we can say that today’s writing has freed itself from the dimension of expression. Referring only to itself, but without being restricted to the confines of its interiority, writing is identified with its own unfolded exteriority. This means that it is an interplay of signs arranged less according to its signified content than according to the very nature of the signifier. Writing unfolds like a game (jeu) that invariably goes beyond its own rules and

transgresses its limits. In writing, the point is not to manifest or exalt the act of writing, nor is it to pin a subject within language; it is, rather, a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears.

The second theme, writing's relationship with death, is even more familiar. This link subverts an old tradition exemplified by the Greek epic, which was intended to perpetuate the immortality of the hero: if he was willing to die young, it was so that his life, consecrated and magnified by death, might pass into immortality; the narrative then redeemed this accepted death. In another way, the motivation, as well as the theme and the pretext of Arabian narrative – such as *The Thousand and One Nights* – was also the eluding of death: one spoke, telling stories into the early morning, in order to forestall death, to postpone the day of reckoning that would silence the narrator. Scheherazade's narrative is an effort, renewed each night, to keep death outside the circle of life.

Our culture has metamorphosed this idea of narrative, or writing, as something designed to ward off death. Writing has become linked to sacrifice, even to the sacrifice of life: it is now a voluntary effacement which does not need to be represented in books, since it is brought about in the writer's very existence. The work, which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to be its author's murderer, as in the cases of Flaubert, Proust, and Kafka. That is not all, however: this relationship between writing and death is also manifested in the effacement of the writing subject's individual characteristics. Using all the contrivances that he sets up between himself and what he writes, the writing subject cancels out the signs of his particular individuality. As a result, the mark of the writer is reduced to nothing more than the singularity of his absence; he must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing.

None of this is recent; criticism and philosophy took note of the disappearance – or death – of the author some time ago. But the consequences of their discovery of it have not been sufficiently examined, nor has its import been accurately measured. A certain number of notions that are intended to replace the privileged position of the author actually seem to reserve that privilege and suppress the real meaning of his disappearance. I shall examine two of these nothings, both of great importance today.

The first is the idea of the work. It is a very familiar thesis that the task of criticism is not to bring out the work's relationships with the author, nor to reconstruct through the text a thought or experience, but rather to analyze the work through its structure, its architecture, its intrinsic form, and the play of its internal relationships. At this point, however, a problem arises: What is a work? What is this curious unity which we designate as a work? Of what elements is it composed? Is it not what an author has written? Difficulties appear immediately, if an individual were not an author, could we say that what he wrote, said, left behind in his papers, or what has been collected of his remarks, could be called a 'work'? When Sade was not considered an author, what was the status of his papers? Were they simply rolls of paper onto which he ceaselessly uncoiled his fantasies during his imprisonment?

Even when an individual has been accepted as an author, we must still ask whether everything that he wrote, said, or left behind is part of his work. The problem is both theoretical and technical. When undertaking the publication of Nietzsche's works, for example, where should one stop? Surely everything must be published, but what is 'everything'? Everything that Nietzsche himself published, certainly. And what about the rough drafts for his works? Obviously. The plans for his aphorisms? Yes. The deleted passages and the notes at the bottom of the page? Yes. What

if, within a workbook filled with aphorisms, one finds a reference, the notation of a meeting or of an address, or a laundry list: Is it a work, or not? Why not? And so on, ad infinitum. How can one define a work amid the millions of traces left by someone after his death? A theory of the work does not exist, and the empirical task of those who naively undertake the editing of works often suffers in the absence of such a theory.

We could go even further: Does *The Thousand and One Nights* constitute a work? What about Clement of Alexandria's *Miscellanies* or Diogenes Laertius's *Lives*? A multitude of questions arises with regard to this notion of the work. Consequently, it is not enough to declare that we should do without the writer (the author) and study the work itself. The word work and the unity that it designates are probably as problematic as the status of the author's individuality.

It is not enough, however, to repeat the empty affirmation that the author has disappeared. For the same reason, it is not enough to keep repeating (after Nietzsche) that God and man have died a common death. Instead, we must locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance uncovers.

First, we need to clarify briefly the problems arising from the use of the author's name. What is an author's name? How does it function? Far from offering a solution, I shall only indicate some of the difficulties that it presents.

The author's name is a proper name, and therefore it raises the problems common to all proper names. (Here I refer to Searle's analyses, among others.¹) Obviously, one cannot turn a proper name into a pure and simple reference. It has other than indicative functions: more than an indication, a gesture, a finger pointed at someone, it is the equivalent

¹ Ed.: John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 162-74.

of a description. When one says 'Aristotle', one employs a word that is the equivalent of one, or a series, of definite descriptions, such as 'the author of the *Analytics*', 'the found of ontology', and so forth. One cannot stop there, however, because a proper name does not have just one signification. When we discover that Rimbaud did not write *La Chasse spirituelle*, we cannot pretend that the meaning of this proper name, or that of the author, has been altered. The proper name and the author's name are situated between the two poles of description and designation: they must have a certain link with what they name, but one that is neither entirely in the mode of designation nor in that of description; it must be a specific link. However – and it is here that the particular difficulties of the author's name and what it names are not isomorphic and do not function in the same way. There are several differences.

If, for example, Pierre Dupont does not have blue eyes, or was not born in Paris, or is not a doctor, the name Pierre Dupont will still always refer to the same person; such things do not modify the link of designation. The problems raised by the author's name are much more complex, however. If I discover that Shakespeare was not born in the house that we visit today, this is a modification which, obviously, will not alter the functioning of the author's name. But if we proved that Shakespeare did not write those sonnets which pass for his, that would constitute a significant change and affect the manner in which the author's name functions. If we proved that Shakespeare wrote Bacon's *Organon* by showing that the same author wrote both the works of Bacon and those of Shakespeare, that would be a third type of change which would entirely modify the functioning of the author's name. The author's name is not, therefore, just a proper name like the rest.

Many other facts point out the paradoxical singularity of the author's name. To say that Pierre Dupont does not exist is not at

all the same as saying that Homer or Hermes Trismegistus did not exist. In the first case, it means that non one has the name Pierre Dupont; in the second, it means that several people were mixed together under one name, or that the true author had none of the traits traditionally ascribed to the personae of Homer or Hermes. To say that X's real name is actually Jacques Durand instead of Pierre Dupont is not the same as saying that Stendhal's name was Henri Beyle. One could also question the meaning and functioning of proposition like 'Bourbaki is so-and-so, so-and-so, etc.' and 'Victor Ermeita, Climacus, Anticlimacus, Frater Tracturnus, Constantine Constantius, all of these are Kierkegaard.'

These differences may result from the fact that an author's name is not simply an element in a discourse (capable of being either subject or object, of being replaced by a pronoun, and the like); it performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function. Such a name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others. In addition, it establishes a relationship among the texts. Hermes Trismegistus did not exist, nor did Hippocrates – in the sense that Balzac existed – but the fact that several texts have been placed under the same name indicated that there has been established among them a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, authentication of some texts by the use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilization. The author's name serves to characterize a certain mode of being of discourse: the fact that the discourse has an author's name, that one can say 'this was written by so-and-so' or 'so-and-so is its author', shows that this discourse is not ordinary everyday speech that merely comes and goes not something that is immediately consumable. On the contrary, it is a speech that must be received in a certain mode and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status.

It would seem that the author's name, unlike other proper names, does not pass from the interior of a discourse to the real and exterior individual who produced it; instead, the name seems always to be present, marking off the edges of the text, revealing, or at least characterizing, its mode of being. The author's name manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicated the status of this discourse within a society and a culture. It has no legal status, nor is it located in the fiction of the work; rather, it is located in the break that founds a certain discursive construct and its very particular mode of being. As a result, we could say that in a civilization like our own there are a certain number of discourses that are endowed with the 'author function', while other are deprived of it. A private letter may well have a signer – it does not have an author; a contract may well have a guarantor – it does not have an author. An anonymous text posted on a wall probably has a writer – but not an author. The author function is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society.

Up to this point I have unjustifiably limited my subject. Certainly the author function in painting music, and other arts should have been discussed, but even supposing that we remain within the world of discourse, as I want to do, I seem to have given the term 'author' much too narrow a meaning. I have discussed the author only in the limited sense of a person to whom the production of a text, a book, or a work can be legitimately attributed. It is easy to see that in the sphere of discourse one can be the author of much more than a book – one can be the author of a theory, tradition, or discipline in which other books and authors will in their turn find a place. These authors are in a position which we shall call 'transdiscursive'. This is a recurring phenomenon – certainly as old as our civilization. Homer, Aristotle, and the Church Fathers, as well as the first mathematicians and the originators of the Hippocratic tradition, all played this role.

Furthermore, in the course of the nineteenth century, there appeared in Europe another, more uncommon, kind of author, whom one should confuse with neither the 'great' literary authors, nor the authors of religious texts, nor the founders of science. In a somewhat arbitrary way we shall call those who belong in this last group 'founders of discursivity'. They are unique in that they are not just the authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts. In this sense, they are very different, for example, from a novelist, who is, in fact, nothing more than the author of his own text. Freud is not just the author of *The Interpretation of Dreams* or *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*; Marx is not just the author of the *Communist Manifesto* or *Das Kapital*: they both have established an endless possibility of discourse.

Obviously, it is easy to object. One might say that it is not true that the author of a novel is only the author of his own text; in a sense, he also, provided that he acquires some 'importance', governs and commands more than that. To take a very simple example, one could say that Ann Radcliffe not only wrote *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* and several other novels, but also made possible the appearance of the Gothic horror novel at the beginning of the nineteenth century; in that respect, her author function exceeds her own work. But I think there is an answer to this objection. These founders of discursivity (I use Marx and Freud as examples, because I believe them to be both the first and the most important cases) make possible something altogether different from what a novelist makes possible. Ann Radcliffe's texts opened the way of a certain number of resemblances and analogies which have their model or principle in her work. The latter contains characteristic signs, figures, relationships, and structures which could be reused by others. In other words, to say that Ann Radcliffe founded the Gothic horror novel means that in the nineteenth-century Gothic

novel one will find, as in Ann Radcliffe's works, the theme of the heroine caught in the trap of her own innocence, the hidden castle, the character of the black, cursed hero devoted to making the world expiate the evil done to him, and all the rest of it.

On the other hand, when I speak for Marx or Freud as founders of discursivity, I mean that they made possible not only a certain number of analogies, but also (and equally important) a discourse, yet something belonging to what they founded. To say that Freud founded psychoanalysis does not (simply) mean that we find the concept of the libido or the technique of dream analysis in the works of Karl Abraham or Melanie Klein; it means that Freud made possible a certain number of divergences – with respect to his own texts, concept, and hypotheses – that all arise from the psychoanalytic discourse itself.

[...]

The Portrait and Its Name

Louis Marin

Food for Thought, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1997, pp.189-191

In this excerpt from *The Portrait and Its Name*, Louis Marin questions the relationship between the (royal) subject and his own portrait, introducing the notion of a reciprocal imitation and a self-subordination of each one to the other. He confronts the “king of representation and the representation of the king”, and studies the complex two-way relationship that connects them to one another.

Louis Marin (1931-1992) was a French philosopher, critic, and theorist. His works include *To Destroy Painting* (1977) and *Utopics: Spatial Play* (1984).

If there is a scene that sums up or condenses all the signs and insignia of a political power operating at the greatest level of efficacy, it must be that of a king contemplating his own portrait. Such a scene would make manifest to its royal impresario or spectator the imaginary character that affects, if not infects, all power in its consubstantial desire for the absolute. In recognizing the icon of the Monarch that he wishes to be, the royal spectator would recognize himself in the portrait and identify himself with it. The secret that resides within this royal act of contemplation is, then, the disappearance of the portrait's real referent, the cancelling out of its model. It is true that the real prince of flesh and blood has not yet passed through to the other side of Narcissus's mirror. Only a true magic of the image could do this, but death is always the consequence of mythical climax of self-contemplation. In the present case, the King only imitates his portrait as the portrait imitates the king: the king of representation and the representation of the king are involved in a process of mutual mimesis that reveals the fundamental figure articulating power and representation; in this process, we are able to discern the chiasmus in which the king and his royal representation reciprocally subordinate themselves to each other, in which

they belong to or appropriate each other in a manner that is perfectly reversible. In such a case, the royal representation would be the precise qualification, the most important attribute, and maybe even the effective means of the king's power. The king of representation would be the factitive modality and the processual power that make representations of himself possible. Yet this inverted expression, “the king of representation”, already establishes an ironic distance between representation and power, the two terms that make up the adequation. It signals the existence of a critical difference between them, a gap that threatens to separate the terms entirely and already renders the adequation unequal to itself: on the one hand, there would be nothing more than a portrait, a picture; on the other hand, we would discover nothing more than a role, a kind of mannequin. Moreover, the particular body and soul that make up a real individual would be swallowed up by the gulf separating these two poles from each other. Yet the disappearance of the individual allows the “king” to acquire for himself a title that begins with a capital letter – the King.

The story that narrates the life and actions of the king is elaborated in time and

across history. This type of story can only represent the prince in a successive manner and necessarily allows for the persistence of a difference that indefinitely and infinitely postpones the real satisfaction of the prince's desire for the absolute, the actual exercise of the law of the will. The portrait of the King will, however, convert this deferred narrative content into the absolute imaginary of the Monarch; the picture of the King will be his real presence, in the same way that the Catholic theology of the Eucharist will speak to the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus in the form of bread and wine.

Theoretically, the constitution of the King's portrait presupposes a twofold belief that is an absolute prerequisite to the portrait's effective presentation. First of all, there has to exist a belief in the efficacy and performativity of the royal iconic sign. It is quite clear why this belief would have to be obligatory: without it, the portrait of the King would be nothing but a simulacrum, and to see this picture in this light would be nothing short of the kind of heresy committed by the Reformers with respect to the bread and wine of the Eucharist. Second, the picture would have to be believed to have substance and real ontological density. The reason for the necessity of this belief is no less obvious than that of the first: were the picture to be considered contingent or merely possible, then the contemplation of the Monarch's portrait would become a form of sacrilege. The body of the King is really present in the form of his portrait. Thus we see that the execution of such an eminent and supreme painting, besides having been simply a matter of political importance, was equally crucial on a theologico-political register. In this respect, the king and his painter engage in a preliminary game that is much like the one played out between the king and his historian, although the expressive medium is different. It is the speech act itself, or in some cases the painterly act, that defines every eulogy in its epideixis, every bit of praise in its demonstration, every

panegyric in its singular exemplification: this act turns its receiver, the person who views his own portrait or hears his own story into the enunciator of a reflexive identifying utterance: "I am indeed just as you say I am, or just as you show me to be." In this game, a move, like all moves, involves a risk: that of eliminating the crucial difference between the discourse or portrait of praise on the one hand and the discourse of portrait of flattery on the other. Should we, like Hegel, want to accord flattery the positive power of a courtisan's heroism, then it would be a matter of distinguishing between a pragmatically successful flattery and a pragmatically unsuccessful one. By virtue of the excessive nature of its language or images, the unsuccessful form of flattery fails to bring about an identificatory belief on the part of its recipient. To understand this failure fully, it would be necessary to determine very precisely what it is that makes these words or images excessive.

Assume, however, that this risk has been successfully circumvented and that the king identifies with the portrait the painter shows him. The time has now come for the second game, for the second move within the game of representation and power: this move concerns the reader or spectator, that is, the third party who is external to the twin relation that the Monarch entertains (indeed, can only entertain) with his picture or his story; this third party occupies precisely the position we took when we envisaged the narcissistic scene of the king contemplating his own portrait. The move in question is also a speech act, which turns the third party, the spectator or reader, into an enunciator of a transitive utterance of identification: "That is the King," or even "That is indeed the King." By means of "that is", this identificatory utterance makes a King of portrait and a portrait of the King.

[...]

A poison extracted from a cure

Christopher Pinney

The Coming of Photography in India, The British Library, 2008, pp.97-101

In his introduction to *The Coming of Photography in India*, Pinney talks about the camera's lens permeability to data: "No matter how precautionary and punctilious the photographer is in arranging everything that is placed before the camera, the lens's inability to discriminate will ensure a substrate or margin of excess. However hard the photographer tries to exclude, the camera lens always includes." This feature, as opposed to a painter's ability to filter elements of reality, allows one to subvert the original purpose of an image, challenging power and institutions.

Christopher Pinney (1959) is a Professor of Anthropology and Visual Culture. His publications combine contemporary ethnography with the historical archaeology of particular media. *The Coming of Photography in India*, based on the Panizzi Lectures was published by the British Library in October 2008. Other recent work includes *Photography and Anthropology* (Reaktion 2011) and (together with Suresh Punjabi) *Artisan Camera: Studio Photography from Central India* (Tara, 2013).

The British attempted to counteract the impact of nationalist propaganda in the USA by funding figures such as T. K. Peters and Lowell Thomas. Peters – the beneficiary of Rs. 25,000 from the Government of India – was a minor chancer on the fringes of Hollywood and it was soon clear that he would be of little help.¹ Thomas had successfully marketed T. E. Lawrence as a hero, but was far less successful in this instance, and by 1930 his debt to the Government of India had to be written off. In India there was an attempt in 1921 to engender enthusiasm for the Prince of Wales's visit through the distribution of celebratory newsreels to counter press indifference.² However, in Madras the cinema showing the film was the 'object of attack by hooligans' and the copy of the film was damaged.³ Most famously the India Office

funded Katherine Mayo to write her 1927 gutter-journalism book *Mother India*. Intended to paint a picture of a barbaric and sexually degenerate Hinduism as the motor of nationalist consciousness, the book had the paradoxical effect (as Mrinalini Sinha has recently argued in a perceptive analysis) of making her readers question – if things were really this bad – British claims concerning their contribution to Indian society. This reflected what Sinha describes as the 'uniquely beleaguered status of Mayo's fact-laden rhetoric' whose chief effect was a fundamental and ironic reversal of everything she intended.⁴

This was an anxiety that applied particularly to images of famine from the mid-nineteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century. When published in *The People of India* starving bodies were intended to depict objects suitable for reform: this is what the British presence will prevent. But located in an official publication it raises the

¹ Abbas Ali, *Beauties of Lucknow*, preface, n.p., cited by Gordon, 'A City of Mourning', p. 90.

² There are five images in this series in the Alkazi Collection of Photography in London (ACP. 94.48.0006).

³ Natasha Eaton, 'Between Mimesis and Alterity: Art, Gift and Diplomacy in Colonial India, 1770-1800', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2004, 818.

⁴ Ibid.

question of why they are still in need of reform. W. W. Hooper, who as John Falconer puts it had a 'known predilection for photographing subjects *in extremis*',⁵ engaged the starving body as part of his photographic eschatology but also produced images whose excess was always dangerous to a colonising ideology.

Mayo published an illustrated sequel to her notorious book in 1935 with the title *Face of Mother India*, a book which – though it was clearly substantially illustrated with images directed to her through official channels (and written with the support of Hugh MacGregor in the India Office) – was attached to such a controversial author that the colonial authorities felt they had to ban it.⁶ Colonial surveillance and proscription, like photography itself, was now caught in a vortex of its own making.⁷ Perhaps nothing sums up this paradox better than the official anxiety about Sher Ali, a convict who had murdered Lord Mayo during a visit to the Andamans in 1872. This was the same

5 Couper appears several times in caricatures in the *Oudh Punch* in 1880 (see *A Selection From the Illustrations Which Have Appeared in the Oudh Punch from 1877 to 1881* [Lucknow, 1881] available at http://dsal.uchicago.edu/digbooks/dig_pager.html?BOOKID=NC1718.08&-object=3).

6 *The People of India: a Series of Photographic Illustrations with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan*, ed. by J. Forbes Watson and John William Kaye, originally published under the authority of the Government of India, and Reproduced by Order of the Secretary of State for India in Council (London: India Museum, 1868-75, 8 vols). The best account is provided by John Falconer, "A Pure Labour of Love" (note 63 above, pp. 51-81).

7 Described by Francis Robinson as 'the greatest Indian Muslim of the nineteenth century', Syed Ahmed Khan (1818-88) was raised in proximity to the Mughal Court. In 1838 he started work in the judicial branch of the East India Company. From 1878 to 1882 he sat on the Viceroy's Legislative Council and founded the Muhammadan Anglo Oriental Educational College at Aligarh in 1877 and the Muhammadan Educational Conference in 1886. See Francis Robinson, 'Introduction', in Syed Ahmed Khan, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt ... written in Urdu, in the Year 1858, and Translated into English by his Two European Friends* (Benares: Medical Hall Press, 1873), repr. by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2000, pp. vii-viii.

Mayo – Richard Southwell Bourke – who, three years earlier, had awarded the Viceroy's medal to Samuel Bourne in the Bengal Photographic Society annual exhibition. Sher Ali was first photographed as an object-lesson in colonial punishment, but his love of the camera and sense of himself as a celebrity started to unhinge a colonial system of discipline structured around visibility. Clare Anderson notes W. W. Hunter's description of how Sher Ali was 'childishly vain of being photographed as the murderer of a Viceroy' and Hunter's subsequent refusal to publish details of his identity. Anderson also notes how although there are three images of Sher Ali in the British Library, in only one of these is he named: in the other two he is an anonymous murderer and assassin.⁸

A poison extracted from a cure: when photography first arrived in India it was greeted by many as a magical cure for a set of already existing representational problems. It seemed to provide perfect chemical traces of the world: the largest spaces could be recorded, the tiniest spaces probed, past events appeared as though they might be recoverable, the retinas of murder victims – if photographed quickly enough – might reveal the identity of their attackers. The camera seemed to be a truly magical prosthesis and its possibilities seemed limitless.

One of the most enthusiastic proselytisers on behalf of the wondrous new technology was the Rev. Joseph Mullens. In his celebrated lecture *On the Applications of Photography in India* delivered to the Bengal Photographic Society in October 1856, he had noted that:

There are some applications of Photography, less peculiar but equally professional and of great importance to the Government. The scene and circumstances of a riot, the damage inflicted by rioters; the mode in which a robbery was committed; the scene of a murder and all its attendant circumstances; the position of a body whether hanging up or lying down, the state of its dress; the marks made on it, can all be copied with perfect

8 G. F. I. Graham, *The Life and Work of Syed Ahmed Khan* (Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons, 1885), pp. 188-9.

accuracy.

... A very active Photographer, in whom the ruling passion was very strong, might be able to sketch a riot during its actual progress, and by successive pictures to show who was most active, to identify the ringleaders, and show the murderous hand in the very act of inflicting a fatal blow. The purpose of justice would in this manner be served to the most material degree.⁹

Mullens assumed that photography's indexicality would serve the interest of the British colonial presence: we have seen how that same indexicality, photography's non-discriminating data ratio, did come to serve the purpose of justice, but not in the way Mullens anticipated.

As with the Derridean pharmakon (the untranslatable zone of the remedy, drug, philtre, cure and poison) this transformation reflected not a distortion of photography but a potential intrinsic to photography itself. The data ratio of photography proved itself capable of generating several directly opposed outcomes. From cure to poison, and all the while the same.

9 Syed Ahmed Khan, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt ... Written in Urdu, in the Year 1858, and Translated into English by his two European Friends* (Benares: Medical Hall Press, 1873, repr. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.4.

Screening the Subject

Amelia Jones

“The ‘Eternal Return’: Self-Portrait Photography as a Technology of Embodiment”, *Signs*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Summer 2002), pp. 947-978

Performative images in postmodern photography have changed our understanding of what a “self-portrait” is. In this essay, Jones engages with such images: the more contemporary work of Cindy Sherman, Hannah Wilke, Lyle Ashton Harris, and Laura Aguilar, and questions the way subjectivity is established.

Amelia Jones (1961) is the Robert A. Day Professor in Art and Design and Vice-Dean of Critical Studies at the Roski School of Art and Design (University of Southern California). Her current research addresses the confluence of “queer,” “feminist,” and “performance” in the visual arts. Jones is the author of several books, including *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (2012), *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject* (2006) and *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (1998).

The interrelation between the death-dealing pose and the life-giving spectatorial engagement of interpretation marks the contradictory process by which the subject takes place in and as representation, especially in relationship to the technologized and indexical field of the photographic print. This process is usefully understood in relation to Jacques Lacan’s notion of the screen, as articulated in his 1964 essay, “What Is a Picture?” ([1964] 1981). *Screen* is a crucial term in Lacan’s model of how subjects reciprocally define and negotiate one another in the visible. As in Sherman’s work, such as *Untitled #357* (2000) [...], one of her new series of self-portraits in which she masquerades as Hollywood doyennes in various states of seedy and disreputable disrepair, seems to announce, it is the screen—the site where gaze meets subject of representation—that is, in Lacan’s words, the “locus of mediation” where the human subject “maps himself in the imaginary capture” of the gaze. For Lacan, the subject is always already photographed in the purview of the gaze; the photograph is a screen, the site where subject and object, self and other, intertwine to produce intersubjective

meaning ([1964] 1981, 107).¹

The screen defines the process through which we perform ourselves simultaneously as subjects and objects of looking; the photographic portrait can thus be viewed as a screen across and through which complex processes of identification and projection take place in an ongoing dynamic of subject formation or *subjectification*. The screen is also a mask. In the self-display that constitutes our enactment of what we call our “individuality,” the subject, Lacan argues, “gives of himself, or receives from the other, something that is like a mask, a double, an envelope, a thrown-off skin” – the screen ([1964] 1981, 107).

We have begun to see that, because it presents not only *a* subject but the subject of making, the photographic self-portrait plays out this dynamic of the screen in a particularly

¹ Here, Lacan also notes, the subject « breaks up... between its being and its semblance, between itself and that paper tige rit shows to the other... What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside... I am *photo-graphed* » (Lacan [1964], 1981, 106-7)

heightened way. It points to the paradoxical “death” and “life” of the photographic image and thus, by extension, to the simultaneity of absence and presence—the inexorable passage of time rendering all seeming presence as absence – giving shape to the profound paradox of being human.

Exaggeratedly theatrical practices such as Sherman’s enact this process overtly, enabling an understanding of the processes by which all image making and viewing produce meaning between and among subjects (including the meaning of the subjects themselves). Who we are in relation to Sherman’s parodically rendered harridans, then, remains an open question. As I attach to them, they make me wince in my implicitly constituted superiority vis-à-vis their excessive, glued-on, prosthetic mixed metaphors of glamour gone awry. I connect to Sherman only obliquely and with some shame, imagining her sneakily placing herself on a plane above those she performs through this particular rhetoric of flamboyantly pathetic posing and attire. But of course, she “is” or “was” those she performs, at least at the moment of posing – such a splitting exhibits on yet another register the complexity of subject formation.

These women are definitively “dead” types, masks for the “real” Sherman who nonetheless continually eludes through her reiterative falseness across these and other self-portrait series. Everything here is dead, even me, as I fail to find myself comfortably lodged in these scenes of feminine subjectivity. And yet, still palpating, we breathe life into one another – I, by way of first projection (my insecurities and anxieties become intertwined with those I imagine to be Sherman’s/her character’s), then writing, and they, by way of insinuation (I cannot get the image of that heavenward-glancing, blasting yellow blond out of my mind).

Through the pose, then, and this is

where the productive tension of self-portrait photography resides, the embodied subject is exposed as being a mask or screen, a site of projection and identification. It is thus through the pose, via the screen that the subject *opens into performativity and becomes animated*. Sherman’s endless self-reiterations, in this case rendered so dramatically as “other”, make this animation manifest (we can never stop or fix her in one or another of the poses). Theorist Craig Owens has noted that the subject (in the self-portrait, the artist herself or himself) assumes a mask in order to become photographable, in order to be seen- and in this way, the subject “poses as an object *in order to be a subject*” ([1985] 1992, 212, 215).

The question of who the “subject” even is in the first place, of course, is never answered but endlessly deferred through the object – this is the great paradox Derrida identifies. Expanding on Owens’s observation then, Sherman’s reiterative self-portrait images seem to confirm that, *while mask and screen both appear on first glance to imply the photograph as a site of stasis, they are in practice passages where subjectification takes place as a process via an “eternal return” through the other*.

Reading, Rewriting Poe's "The Oval Portrait" — In Your Dreams

Jalal Toufic

Ashkal Alwan, 2006

In this essay, Jalal Toufic questions the fate of the *Oval Portrait's* narrator, exposing signs as well as raising questions that lead the reader to yet another subtle angle of Poe's short story.

Jalal Toufic (1962) is a writer, film theorist, and artist. He is the author several books including *Distracted* (1991; 2nd ed., 2003), *(Vampires): An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (1993; 2nd ed., 2003), *Over-sensitivity* (1996), *Forthcoming* (2000), *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster* (2009), *The Portrait of the Pubescent Girl: A Rite of Non-Passage* (2011) and *The Dancer's Two Bodies* (2015).

Dedicated to William S. Burroughs, the author of My Education: A Book of Dreams, who turned into a writer, then a painter with a shotgun,¹ to deal with his murder—while possessed—of his wife.²

The narrator of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Oval Portrait" arrives in a desperately wounded condition at a deserted chateau with his valet. How was the narrator mortally wounded? Neither Poe nor the narrator tells us about that. Given that we are not provided with a specific reason for the wound, it is appropriate to look for a general, anthropological one. Was the

¹ "I am forced to the appalling conclusion that I would never have become a writer but for Joan's death, and to a realization of the extent to which this event has motivated and formulated my writing. I live with the constant threat of possession, and a constant need to escape from possession, from Control. So the death of Joan brought me in contact with the invader, the Ugly Spirit, and maneuvered me into a lifelong struggle, in which I have had no choice except to write my way out." William S. Burroughs, *Queer* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), xxii.

² William Burroughs, for whom painting, like writing, was to create magical effects, painted with the same instrument with which he killed his wife, a shotgun. Many of his "Shotgun Paintings" were produced by placing a can of spray paint in front of a piece of plywood and shooting it so that the paint would get splattered over the wood.

wound inflicted during a Hegelian fight to the death for recognition? "Anthropogenic Desire is different from animal Desire (which produces a natural being, merely living and having only a sentiment of its life) in that it is directed, not toward a real, 'positive,' given object, but toward another Desire.... Man 'feeds' on Desires as an animal feeds on real things.... For man to be truly human, for him to be essentially and really different from an animal, his human Desire must actually win out over his animal Desire.... Man's humanity 'comes to light' only in risking his life to satisfy his human Desire—that is, his Desire directed toward another Desire.... all human, anthropogenic Desire ... is, finally, a function of the desire for 'recognition.' ... Therefore, to speak of the 'origin' of Self-Consciousness is necessarily to speak of a fight to the death for 'recognition.' ... In order that the human reality come into being as 'recognized' reality, both adversaries must remain alive after the fight. Now, this is possible only on the condition that they behave differently in this fight.... one ... must refuse to risk his life for the satisfaction of his desire for 'recognition.' He must ... 'recognize' the other without being 'recognized' by him. Now, 'to recognize' him thus is 'to recognize' him as

his Master ...”³ Did the narrator continue the fight even after he was mortally wounded, while the other man, witnessing his foe’s grave wound, was seized with fright, yielded and acknowledged the other man as his master? Now a valet, he forced for his master the gate of the deserted chateau they came upon. Bedridden, the latter soon starts to gaze at the numerous “very spirited” modern paintings hung on the walls as well as read a volume that discusses these paintings and their histories. At one point he comes across a picture he had not noticed before: it is the portrait of a young girl just ripening into womanhood. According to the volume, the painting was done by the model’s husband, a passionate painter “having already a bride in his Art” and who became “lost in reveries.” Are we to understand by “having already a bride in his Art” that the painter’s art was his bride? I consider rather that it indicates that he thought to have his bride in his Art, in painting. Moreover, are we to understand by “lost in reveries”: lost to his surroundings because in reveries? I understand by it rather that in order to manage to paint this kind of portrait he had to be lost in the reveries, i.e., taken by the reveries to a realm where one cannot but be lost (reverie: 1: Daydream. 2: the condition of being lost in thought. Etymology: French *rêverie*, from Middle French, delirium, from *resver*, *rever* to wander, be delirious), the labyrinthine realm of undeath. According to the volume, after weeks of posing meekly for the portrait in the Chateau’s “dark high turret-chamber,” the health and the spirits of the painter’s bride wasted away. Then came the moment of the outstanding final touch. And indeed “the brush was given, and then the tint was placed; and, for one moment, the painter stood entranced before the work which he had wrought; but in the next, while he yet gazed, he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with a loud voice, ‘This is indeed Life

³ Alexandre Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit, assembled by Raymond Queneau; edited by Allan Bloom; translated from the French by James H. Nichols, Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 6–8.

itself!’ turned suddenly to regard his beloved:— She was dead!” The painting functions here as a sort of ancient Egyptian tomb in which the dead “lives”/LIVES. But while for ancient Egyptians bas-reliefs and statues could magically replace the (mummified) body, in case the latter was irremediably damaged, and be the site for the Ka’s return, in Poe’s story the painting can replace the living model only by draining her of life, killing her.⁴ How to preserve what is preserving her (at the price of her premature death!), the painting, where it cannot be destroyed? The painter hid this preservative painting where it cannot be found, where it is lost, “in” an unworldly, unnatural labyrinth, rather than in a trifling, all too mundane maze that’s merely a more or less intricate spatial human arrangement. But where to find an unworldly, unnatural labyrinth? In the undeath realm; in order to see the portrait hidden there or to steal it or to damage it, one had to die. We encounter here a case where the cult value of artistic production and its resultant images— which, as Walter Benjamin pointed out, has been displaced by the exhibition value but which has found a last refuge in the cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead⁵ —displaces exhibition value all along the line, since unlike mundane pictures of loved ones, absent or dead, which continue to be exhibited, be it only in the privacy of the family home,

⁴ I can well envision a contemporary version of “The Oval Portrait,” whose author also wrote the cosmological essay *Eureka*, in which the original’s painter, who imprisons the model in his Chateau’s dark high turret-chamber and makes a preservative portrait of her at the price of her physical death, is replaced by a scientist who sends his wife to a black hole to preserve her as an image at the event horizon while she speeds to her doom as she approaches the singularity of the black hole.

⁵ Walter Benjamin: “Artistic production begins with ceremonial objects destined to serve in a cult.... In photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value all along the line. But cult value does not give way without resistance.... The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture,” “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, ed. John Hanhardt (Rochester, New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1986), 33–34.

the picture of the painter’s wife in “The Oval Portrait” is not exhibited at all as far as the world is concerned. Had the two living intruders searched for the painting of the dead woman in the chateau, they would not have found it—and not because of the chateau’s “bizarre architecture.” Are others ready to die to take their revenge on him by destroying the painting of his beloved concealed in the undeath realm? In case they are ready to do so, they would be answering affirmatively Shakespeare’s “Can vengeance be pursued further than death?” (Romeo and Juliet).

[...]

V. Biography

Hassan Khan is an artist, musician and writer who lives and works in Cairo, Egypt. Before beginning to exhibit his work in art spaces in the late 1990s, Khan was deeply involved in Cairo's alternative cultural scene and is considered a pioneer in both the fields of experimental music and video.

Working in sound, video, and performance, Hassan Khan investigates the challenges inherent in themes of identity and culture. Incorporating his own experiences growing up in Cairo, Khan has created conceptual works that attempt to construct a coherent narrative out of the city's disparate citizens and phenomena.

His latest solo exhibitions include *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*, MMK, Frankfurt (2015); Marcelo de Andrade, Kunsthalle Sao Paulo, Brasil and D-CAF - Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival, Cairo, Egypt (2014); *Density Studies*, Wilfried Lentz Gallery, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (2013); *Hassan Khan*, SALT, Istanbul, Turkey (2012); *Objectif*, Antwerp, Belgium *Hassan Khan - The Hidden Location*, Queens Museum of Arts, New York, U.S.A and *Lust*, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, France (2011); *evidence of evidence*, Kunst Halle St Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland (2010).

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