

The lecture performance: contexts of lecturing and performing

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November 2013

Thesis Summary

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In recent years, the lecture performance has emerged as an important format in contemporary performance practice. Lecture performances incorporate elements of both the academic lecture and of artistic performance. They function simultaneously as meta-lectures and as meta-performances, and as such challenge established ideas about the production of knowledge and meaning in each of the forms to which they refer. The thesis includes detailed case studies of works by Chris Burden, Wagner-Feigl-Forschung, Jérôme Bel, Rabih Mroué, Andrea Fraser, Xavier Le Roy, geheimagentur, Joseph Beuys, Hannah Hutzig and Joshua Sofaer.

As a hybrid format, the lecture performance always participates in more than one context. The thesis approaches the lecture performance by analysing its participation in these different contexts: contexts of lecturing – both in the university and outside of established sites of knowledge production – and contexts of performing – which include the contexts of both contemporary artistic performance and of performance history. The scope is then extended to include an analysis of further contexts that the lecture performance both establishes and participates in: contexts of making and watching performance – here, the thesis investigates the relation between artists and spectators established in lecture performances and the processes of recontextualisation that occur between live performance, documentation, and the rearticulation of documentation in a live event; contexts of addressing and instituting – here, the thesis explores how lecture performances negotiate their situation towards different institutional contexts, and how they aim to establish different kinds of publics through various ways of addressing their audiences; and finally, contexts of assembling and disseminating – here, the thesis examines how lecture performances and related forms engage with a discursive context that transcends the frame of the singular event. Finally, all of these contexts are revisited in relation to the lecture performance *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?*, which is included on a DVD.

Acknowledgements

This research has been made possible through an Aberystwyth Postgraduate Research Studentship. I would also like to thank the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at Aberystwyth University for supporting the project, especially Ceris Medhurst-Jones, and the Center for Media and Interactivity (ZMI) at Justus Liebig University Giessen for allowing me to include their video recording of my lecture performance *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* in this thesis.

I am grateful to all the artists I have made lecture performances with these last few years for reminding me why I am doing this, especially Matthias Anton, Gareth Llŷr Evans, Sibylle Peters, Esther Pilkington, Lars Schmid and Jörg Thums. And special thanks to Sibylle for talking and listening.

Thanks also to my parents for their encouragement.

I furthermore wish to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Adrian Kear and especially Heike Roms, for her continued and generous support, for extensive notes and patience and for making this fun.

And finally in the I-have-no-words-section, thank you to Esther Pilkington for being with me throughout all of this, and thank you to Jo who has only just arrived.

Contents

1. Introduction	
WHAT IS A LECTURE PERFORMANCE?	1
<u>Examples</u>	1
Further examples	2
<u>What is a lecture performance?</u>	6
<u>Definitions</u>	10
Definition #1: Lecture or performance?	
‘Lecture performance’ or ‘performance lecture’?	10
Definition #2: The temporality of the lecture performance: process vs. product	13
Definition #3: Conceptual openness vs. formal limitations	15
Definition #4: the discourse about the lecture performance	16
<u>Conclusion and outline: the lecture performance in context</u>	17
Chapter 2	
CONTEXTS OF LECTURING AND PERFORMING	22
Where and when to begin?	22
<u>Contexts of lecturing</u>	
Presentation, lecture, performance	24
Titles and entitlement	30
Knowledge and know-how	33
The cake and the box	37
Evidence	43
The world out there	47
<u>Contexts of performing</u>	
Lineages	50
Performance histories	56
Experience and thought	60
The world out there again	67
Chapter 3	
CONTEXTS OF MAKING AND WATCHING PERFORMANCE	70
<u>Shooting <i>Shoot</i></u>	70
“You’re not seeing the actual experience...”	74
A recycling system	80
<u><i>The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art</i></u>	83
<u><i>A Spectator</i></u>	90
<u><i>The Last Performance (A Lecture)</i></u>	96
<u><i>Make Me Stop Smoking</i></u>	106
<u>Conclusion</u>	116

Chapter 4	
CONTEXTS OF ADDRESSING AND INSTITUTING	121
<i>Museum Highlights</i>	
“Good afternoon, uh, everyone?”	121
Unsuspecting Publics	125
Distinctions	129
Institutional Critique	133
Outside	137
<i>Product of Circumstances</i>	
“if you have questions afterwards I will be glad to answer them”	139
In and out of context	142
Circumstances and contaminations	145
Outside ourselves	148
<i>Schwarzbank</i>	
On the verge of participation	150
Opening a bank	156
Money, publics and the theatre	161
Branching out	165
<u>Conclusion</u>	171
Chapter 5	
CONTEXTS OF ASSEMBLING AND DISSEMINATING	176
<i>How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare</i>	
From a distance	176
The discursive context	181
<i>Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge</i>	
Expertise and authority	186
How is the <i>Blackmarket</i> a black market? What is non-knowledge?	
And when is it useful?	189
Storytelling, etc.	191
The art of not knowing	195
Public thinking	199
Dissemination/circulation	202
<i>The Many-headed Monster and Life Lecture</i>	204
Participating public	207
Participating public II	211
<u>Conclusion</u>	216
6. To conclude...	
<i>WOULD JOSEPH BEUYS HAVE USED POWERPOINT?</i>	223
In context I – a textbook lecture performance?	224
In context II – other lineages	226
In context III – the contexts of showing	230
In context IV – the “incessant movement of recontextualization”	234
“Thank you. Are there any questions?”	242
Bibliography	244

1. Introduction

WHAT IS A LECTURE PERFORMANCE?

Examples

Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk (1989): Andrea Fraser takes on the persona of the fictional museum guide Jane Castleton and leads an audience through the Philadelphia Museum of Art, focusing on the museum's architecture and institutional framework rather than on its exhibits.

A Spectator (2009): Alone on an otherwise empty stage and equipped only with a small notebook, Jérôme Bel recounts a series of spectatorial experiences. He remembers a number of dance performances and theatre productions he has seen and reflects on what he has learnt from them about spectatorship.

Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge (2005 – ongoing): Organised and curated by Hannah Hutzig, *Blackmarket* events have been held in numerous cities across Europe. In these events, audience members are invited to book one-to-one conversations on a given theme with a number of experts (often, there are one hundred or more experts to choose from).

Of these three performances, none was originally advertised as a 'lecture performance'. Fraser's *Museum Highlights* was performed long before 'lecture performance' had become an established term around the turn of the millennium. But even if the term had been established then, it is doubtful that it would have been used to advertise the event because Fraser's performance addressed an audience that was potentially unaware of its status as an artistic event; many participants instead expected to participate in a regular gallery tour.

A Spectator was originally advertised under a different title, *27 performances*, and described as an "intimate hour-long talk" (Sadler's Wells 2009) on the website of Sadler's Wells, the UK venue where the piece premiered. It seems to have failed to acquire a prominent position within Bel's oeuvre, and – other than Bel's explicitly termed lecture

performance, *The Last Performance (A Lecture)* – this piece is not listed among the performances on Bel’s website (Jérôme Bel 2013).

The final example here, *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge*, is described by Hurtzig as an installation, and Lyn Gardner, on her *Guardian* blog, has read it as an indication that the lecture performance form is already outmoded: “The fascination with performance lectures of a few years ago appears to be being replaced by forums and performances that are more about knowledge sharing rather than straightforward expertise.” (Gardner 2008)

At this stage, I do not want to discuss the validity of Gardner’s assessment, or her characterisation of “performance lectures”¹ as being about “straightforward expertise”, but rather read this statement as an indication for the status that the lecture performance had achieved as an artistic form in the decade prior to Gardner’s article: what better sign is there for the prominence of an artistic form than that it is declared already outdated in the more progressive fractions of mainstream media?

So, why have I chosen to begin this thesis on the lecture performance by introducing examples of works that are only retrospectively labelled as such, or that are already characterised as a progression away from the lecture performance form? My intention is to illustrate that, despite the continuing ubiquity of the label ‘lecture performance’, or possibly because of it, the question what actually constitutes a lecture performance is still contested. Or, in other words: even if the label is applied, it is seldom considered what it stands for.

Moreover, what these examples in their diversity are meant to show is that the lecture performance cannot be considered as an isolated phenomenon – instead it is important to reflect on the wider context in which the form has emerged and address its relation to other, similar formats that have emerged alongside it.

Further examples

The prominence of the lecture performance form can of course also be assessed in other ways, most obviously by naming some of the artists that have made lecture performances as part of their practice in recent years: these include Lone Twin (GB),

¹ The term ‘performance lecture’ is largely used synonymously with the term ‘lecture performance’ that I am using here, but I will get back to possible distinctions between them.

Forced Entertainment (GB), and here especially the company's artistic director Tim Etchells (GB), Rimini Protokoll (G), Jérôme Bel (FR), Xavier Le Roy (FR/G), Mårten Spångberg (S), Walid Raad / Atlas Group (LB), and Rabih Mroué (LB). The list could of course go on, and I will name many more protagonists and examples in the course of this thesis. But in its brevity I think the list illustrates two aspects: firstly, that practitioners who have made lecture performances come from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines (dance, performance, theatre and fine art); and secondly, that they are among the most prominent artists working in their respective fields. Conversely, another way to assess the importance of the form, and one that probably does more justice to the diversity of different approaches in the field, is to point to the multitude of lesser-known examples of works and of artists working with the form, which helps to demonstrate its ubiquity. In this thesis I will discuss in detail some of these lesser-known examples alongside more prominent ones.

Here in the introduction I would like to mention instead as further evidence of the prominence of the lecture performance some events that were dedicated to the form, especially as it is around these events, in the discussions, on-line forums and publications that arose from them, that a lot of the discourse surrounding the lecture performance has so far taken place. It is striking that despite the importance of the format, there are no extensive studies of the lecture performance, only a small number of essays (and even fewer that have been published in English), which are often very disparate and heterogeneous with regard to their contexts, their themes, and the performances they discuss. The only notable exception is Sibylle Peters's *Der Vortrag als Performance* (The Lecture as Performance)², published in 2011, which – alongside Peters's other publications on the performativity of the lecture and the lecture performance itself – will provide an important reference throughout this thesis. Although Peters considers the lecture performance in some detail and names it as a point of origin for her interest in the performativity of the academic lecture, it is this latter aspect that the book focuses on.

What will furthermore be evident from an overview of events engaging with the form of the lecture performance is that, as the label 'lecture performance' already suggests, the contexts in which the lecture performance has emerged and in which it

² In this thesis, I am quoting extensively from sources originally written or published in German. In addition, some of the works I discuss have originally been performed in German. To achieve better readability, I have decided to provide English translations in the main text and cite the original quotes in the footnotes. All translations from German are my translations.

participates are manifold, and cannot often be clearly defined as either artistic or academic; instead, many of these events have aimed to renegotiate the relations between art on the one hand and science or scholarship on the other.

The series *Performing Lectures* that the Frankfurt-based curatorial collective Unfriendly Takeover started programming in 2004 has over the course of about two years hosted more than twenty lecture performances. Video documentation of most pieces has been made available online as part of a video archive, and in some cases the performance text is also provided. In addition, there is a small “Theory Forum” that hosts discussions, newspaper articles and short texts about lecture performances (Unfriendly Takeover 2010).

Performing Science, an event first held at Giessen University in 2007 and a second time in 2011, invited scientists, scholars and artists to compete for the Performing Science Award by presenting their lecture performances or presentations in a public event. The winners were determined by a jury “consisting of distinguished representatives of the fields of science and art” (Performing Science 2011) who publicly discussed each presentation before reaching a decision. In the first instalment, awards were given in two categories, “Scholarly Presentation” and “Lecture Performance”. This distinction was however abolished for the second instalment, after several participants of the first event had expressed their discomfort with this categorisation, which again indicates the challenge of clearly defining a presentation or performance as a lecture performance. Both events have resulted in the publication of a DVD containing videos not only of the performances but also of the discussions about them.³

In 2010, a sound and video archive of lecture performance work was set up in London’s Whitechapel Gallery as part of the public programme *Performing Idea*⁴. What is noteworthy about this archive is the thematic and formal range of the works selected, as well as the fact that it covers a time span from 1973 (John Baldessari’s *Sings Lewitt*) to 2010 (e.g. Marcia Farquhar’s *To The Shelter*), even though only thirteen audio and video documents were included in total. Again, of the works selected, only a few had originally been labelled as lecture performances or ‘performance lectures’, the term used in the

³ In this thesis, I will discuss in detail two lecture performances that were presented in these *Performing Science* events: *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* by Wagner-Feigl-Forschung, which won the lecture performance award in 2007, and my own lecture performance *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?*, which won the 2011 award.

⁴ *Performing Idea* was the theme in the first year of the research project *Performance Matters*, a collaboration between the Roehampton and Goldsmiths universities and the Live Art Development Agency.

context of the archive (Performance Matters 2010). Of those works not originally advertised as lecture performances, most were simply labelled as lectures by artists, and could as well be called artist talks – an example for this would be Marina Abramović’s *Performing Body* (2003). In this talk, Abramović presents and comments on a number of visual materials “focused around the performing body, its mental and physical limits” that she has collected over the course of 20 years from a variety of sources (“film, dance, theatre, music, rituals and performance” (Performance Matters 2010)). The two works in the Whitechapel archive performed before 2000, Baldessari’s *Sings Lewitt* and a lecture by William S. Burroughs (*Lecture on Public Discourse* (1980)), pre-date the establishment of the term ‘lecture performance’. The archive furthermore includes works not originally performed for a live audience but for the camera (*Sings Lewitt* is one example, and Mel Brimfield’s *This Is Performance Art – Performed Sculpture and Dance* (2010) takes the form of a “fictional TV series” (Performance Matters 2010)). Other works in the archive appropriate forms of public speaking other than the lecture – Farquhar’s *To The Shelter* (like Fraser’s *Museum Highlights* that I have mentioned as an example at the beginning of this chapter) takes the form of a guided tour, Tania Bruguera’s *Tatlin’s Whisper #6* (2009) explores the form of the political speech in “a totalitarian context” (Performance Matters 2010) by opening up a podium in Havana for participants to speak freely for one minute each. I do not want to challenge the categorisation of these works as lecture performances, but the inclusive approach in the selection of works for the archive nevertheless indicates a somewhat indiscriminate use of the label. From this perspective, it is noteworthy that the selection process was based on suggestions from “*Performing Idea* contributors”, with one criterion for the selection being that the works should be considered “crucial to the definition of the form” (Performance Matters 2010)⁵. While the selection of works in the archive thus aims to define or delineate the form of the lecture performance, this definition is not explicated further in its context.⁶

⁵ Other criteria were works “that are vital to the development of their [the contributors’] own practice, and performance lectures that they have not witnessed but have longed to see” (Performance Matters 2010).

⁶ In a public event in which the archive was presented, hosted by Gavin Butt and Lois Keidan, several items from the archive were shown and discussed, and in this discussion the “elusiveness” of a definition of what constitutes a lecture performance was also a topic. There were, however, some attempts made at a definition. There was talk of a blurring of the boundaries between the lecture and other forms, of an experimentation with different forms of address, and of the “re-performance of typical types of speech”, that were in turn “subject to some degree of defamiliarisation” (I am here quoting the notes I took at the event). There was also the suggestion of a genealogy of the lecture performance that – through the works of John Cage, Antonin Artaud and Joseph Beuys – rooted the form in the history of the avant-garde. I will discuss different genealogies or lineages of the lecture performance in chapter 2.

In recent years, there have also been two exhibitions that focused, respectively, on the lecture in art (*A Short History of Performance Part II: The Lecture as a Work of Art* at the Whitechapel Gallery in 2003) and on the lecture performance (*Lecture Performance* at Kölnischer Kunstverein in 2009). Of the two catalogues that were published, especially the *Lecture Performance* catalogue is a helpful source for research into the lecture performance as it contains a number of essays on the format as well as documentation of performances, mainly images and excerpts from performance texts (Jentjens et al. 2009). Lecture performances have also featured prominently in academic conferences and symposia, especially in the field of performance studies. An example is the Performance Studies international Conference #15 in Zagreb in 2009 that introduced so-called *shift*-events. These are described on the conference website as follows:

From their inception, performance studies conferences invited and welcomed performative modes of conference presentation. The main problem with this approach was that these innovative presentations had to be inserted into conventional conference spaces and schedules. With the concept of *shifts* we aim to address this long-standing problem in performance studies conferences. However performative and inventive they may be, conference panels remain rooted in the notion of discursive presentation of ideas in the form of conference papers. By contrast, *shifts* take the notion of performance in the broad sense (aesthetic, cultural, durational, etc.) as their organizing principle. Therefore, performance informs both the form and content of each *shift*. A *shift* can accommodate a wide range of formats, such as various kinds of performative presentations, round-table discussions on performances presented, workshops, interactive events, seminars, and even mini-symposia. (Performance Studies international Conference #15 2009)

While a lot of the *shift* events actually took the form of a lecture performance, the suggestions for other forms the *shift* events could take also shows, as I have previously pointed out, that the lecture performance has to be understood in relation to such other formats – both artistic and discursive – that address similar concerns or employ similar forms. In order to do so, however, it seems necessary to first provide a clearer definition of the lecture performance itself.

What is a lecture performance?

There are two approaches to answering this question: giving examples, as I have already done and as, for instance, the *Performing Idea* archive does, or providing a

definition of what constitutes a lecture performance by trying to outline some of the characteristics of the format or genre. Both of these approaches have their respective disadvantages. Giving examples, and thus implying that lecture performances are in one way or another all like the one selected to exemplify the genre, brings with it the danger of looking solely at the work's generic qualities, at the features in the piece that characterise it as a lecture performance, and thus disregarding its singularity. In a different context, Giorgio Agamben has reflected on how treating something as an example changes its meaning:

What the example shows is its belonging to a class, but for this very reason the example steps out of its class in the very moment in which it exhibits and delimits it (in the case of a linguistic syntagm, the example thus shows its own signifying and, in this way, suspends its own meaning). If one now asks if the rule applies to the example, the answer is not easy, since the rule applies to the example only as to a normal case and obviously not as to an example. The example is thus excluded from the normal case not because it does not belong to it but, on the contrary, because it exhibits its own belonging to it. (Agamben 1998: 22)

Furthermore, the single example (maybe contrary to Agamben's example for an example, the linguistic syntagm) cannot account for the great variety and diversity of approaches within the field of the lecture performance. And it is also this diversity that on the other hand makes it difficult to draw the line, to establish the "norms and interdictions" (Derrida 1992: 224) that, according to Jacques Derrida in his essay *The Law of Genre*, delineate a genre: "As soon as the word *genre* is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn." (224) Yet this limit will first and foremost be drawn on the level of form: certain (mainly) formal characteristics, certain "trait[s] upon which one could rely in order to decide that a [...] given work corresponds to a given class (genre, type, mode, form, etc.)" (228-229), have to be identified, and then one has to examine if the work (the example) bears these traits.

Such traits can also be identified for the lecture performance. One such trait, for instance, is that the audience is usually addressed directly in lecture performances. While in a lecture, but also in many other forms of public speech, direct audience address is the norm, in theatre, in contrast, it is not. In a theatre context, as I have described in 'On Giving A Paper', an essay about *On Everest* (1997), a lecture performance by Lone Twin, this kind of address has to be understood as "extra-scenic" (Lehmann 2006: 127)

communication: “The audience is not overhearing a conversation between actors on stage, but is directly addressed, and thus implicated in the situation” (Ladnar 2011: 230). Hans-Thies Lehmann, who in his book *Postdramatic Theatre* introduces a distinction between “theatrical discourse” that is directed extra- and “intra-scenically” (Lehmann 2006: 127), diagnoses a shift towards direct audience address also for the kinds of theatre he describes as “postdramatic”, which in turn means that this trait also characterises a lot of contemporary theatre and performance work. There are certainly many other traits that can be identified as characteristic for lecture performance work, but it will always share these traits with other discursive or artistic forms. In many cases, such a focus on formal criteria means that the term ‘lecture performance’ is often rather indiscriminately applied to include works that could as well or even more productively be discussed in other contexts, for instance in the context of autobiographical performance.⁷ But more importantly, since the lecture performance appropriates many of its formal traits from the form of the lecture, a focus on these traits alone cannot be enough to distinguish lecture performance from lecture. Take Abramović’s *Performing Body* as an example: had it not been included in the *Performing Idea* Archive, I would probably not have considered the piece a lecture performance. Based solely on its formal traits, *Performing Body* would best be characterised simply as a lecture or a talk, and maybe it is rather that than a lecture performance, and its inclusion in an archive of lecture performances should be contested. Nevertheless, even if it was wrongly included in the archive, this inclusion itself suggests its belonging if not to the genre than to its context of proximity that, if nothing else, can inform the debate around the lecture performance. Even if the piece itself might not be “crucial to the definition” of what constitutes a lecture performance, it is nevertheless crucial to outlining this context, and to indicating where the drawing of limits becomes difficult, especially in the case of a form whose name is composed of the names of two other forms, namely lecture *and* performance.⁸ Outlining formal traits that

⁷ I am here using the example of autobiographical performance for two reasons: firstly, many lecture performances incorporate elements of autobiographical narration, and secondly, as Deirdre Heddon points out, autobiographical performance often employs form of storytelling in which the audience is directly addressed: “Most performers create a mode of address that acknowledges the spectator’s presence” (Heddon 2008: 5). An important example for the use of autobiography in a lecture performance is Le Roy’s *Product of Circumstances*. I think it is partly due to the prominent position of this work in the emergence of the lecture performance (an aspect I will return to in chapter 2) that many early discussions around the format emphasise the importance of the element of autobiography for the lecture performance (Peters 2011: 37).

⁸ The inclusion of *Performing Body* in the archive also makes evident the institutional dimension of such categorisations: the inclusion itself marks the work as a lecture performance.

lecture performances have in common will therefore not be sufficient for an understanding of the lecture performance.

Derrida states that a work of art does not merely belong to one genre or a number of genres, but that it always also, to use Agamben's words about the example, "exhibits its own belonging" to a genre: "[...] can one identify a work of art, of whatever sort, but especially a work of discursive art, if it does not bear the mark of a genre, if it does not signal or mention it or make it remarkable in any way?" (Derrida 1992: 229). A lecture performance might for instance be advertised as a lecture performance on the programme notes, or it might take place as part of a series of lecture performances. Or there might be a "mention" in the performance itself – which does not necessarily have to be an explicit self-characterisation of the work as a lecture performance, but any sort of indication of its belonging to this genre that can be found in the work.⁹ In indicating its belonging, the work however does something other than only belong. Like Agamben's example that "steps out of its class in the very moment in which it exhibits and delimits it", according to Derrida, because the "re-mark of belonging does not belong" (Derrida 1992: 230), a work is prevented from being fully absorbed in the genre by indicating its belonging to a genre. Derrida therefore speaks of a "participation" of the work in a genre: "Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text, there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging." (230) This in turn also implies that all works of art to some degree make examples of themselves (in order to be understood as works of art). I would argue that all lecture performances contain elements of self-referentiality. They are often self-referential not only as lecture performances, but also with regard to the lecture *and* to performance. Could self-referentiality be a trait that defines the lecture performance genre, and if so, can lecture performances ever be fully understood without being considered as examples of their genre?¹⁰

Summing up, lecture performances will need to be discussed both with regard to their singularity, to that which is never fully resolved by looking at the generic qualities of a particular piece, and with regard to how they negotiate their participation in their

⁹ "The remark of belonging need not pass through the consciousness of the author or the reader, although it often does so. It can also refute this consciousness or render the explicit 'mention' mendacious, false, inadequate or ironic according to all sorts of overdetermined figures." (Derrida 1992: 230)

¹⁰ This would imply a difference between Agamben's example, the linguistic syntagm, and the lecture performance (or, more generally, Derrida's example, the work of art or literature).

genre, or in other genres or forms they participate in (lecture *and* performance, for instance). This implies a shift of focus regarding the question of genre: Derrida's idea that the relation between a work of art and its genre is characterised by participation rather than belonging allows me to concentrate on the nature of this participation rather than on the "norms and interdictions" of a belonging or not belonging. The question how a lecture performance participates in its genre brings with it the question how it participates in other contexts and discourses from which it originates and to which it responds. To understand what a lecture performance is requires not only a discussion of examples of lecture performances and an analysis of the form in general, but also an understanding of these contexts.

In her contribution to the *Lecture Performance* catalogue, Jenny Dirksen reflects on the composite nature of the term 'lecture performance': "It combines two terms, lecture and performance, each with its own definition and its own history: on the one hand the lecture and on the other the performance."¹¹ (Dirksen 2009: 9) By thus incorporating the two terms 'lecture' and 'performance', the term 'lecture performance' itself already designates a participation of the lecture performance in the two genres of the lecture and the performance, or, put differently, in the two practices of lecturing and performing.

Before I go on to outline the lecture performance's participation in these contexts in detail in chapter 2 of this thesis, I will first try and approach the question I have initially proposed – What is a lecture performance? – by looking at existing definitions or descriptions of the lecture performance and by discussing a series of aspects that they raise.

Definitions

Definition #1: Lecture or performance? 'Lecture performance' or 'performance lecture'?

If one were to ask how to define a lecture performance, the answer would simply be: it is a hybrid lecture, in which a lecture intersects with an artistic performance.¹² (Ernst 2004: 192)

¹¹ Unfortunately Dirksen does not go on to trace these definitions and histories in her essay.

¹² "Wenn man fragte, wie eine Lecture-Performance zu definieren sei, so wäre einfach zu antworten: Es handelt sich um einen hybriden Vortrag, in dem sich eine Lecture [...] mit einer künstlerischen Performance überkreuz[t]."

The lecture performance's combination of lecture and performance is the focus of Wolf-Dieter Ernst's definition of the format. Interestingly, Ernst characterises the lecture performance as a "hybrid lecture", thus implying its belonging more closely to one of the two genres that its name suggests: the lecture, rather than the other, artistic performance.¹³ While Ernst acknowledges the format's hybridity – in that it combines elements both of the lecture and of artistic performance – his definition still points to an important question. Is the lecture performance a primarily aesthetic event, or does it, as a variation of the academic lecture, have to be considered as a primarily discursive format? Lecture performances regularly take place in academic contexts, albeit often introduced as something special, out of the ordinary¹⁴. And they often, on the level of form, have more in common with traditional academic lectures than with most artistic performances – *I in Disguise*, for instance, a self-declared lecture performance written by Florian Malzacher, but presented by Mårten Spångberg pretending to be Malzacher at Tanzquartier Wien in 2005, is a conventional paper in all respects but one: that it is delivered by somebody else.¹⁵

Peters, who has undertaken the most substantial research into the academic lecture to date, describes how she has originally arrived at her research area through an interest in the lecture performance (Peters 2006: 121-122). The lecture performance, according to Peters, can provide insights into the functioning of the academic lecture – by foregrounding its scenic or performative elements.

On the other hand, Peters also points out that it cannot necessarily be assumed that the motivation for artists to choose the lecture performance format is based on an interest in the performativity of the academic lecture (122-3). So while it seems possible to identify lecture performances that are not primarily concerned with their lecture-ness,

¹³ This also leads him to, in the course of his essay, develop an analogy between the lecture performance and a scholarly methodology – Clifford Geertz's "thick description" (Ernst 2004: 197). However, if lecture performances are merely discussed in relation to the lecture and not to other artistic practices, lectures would implicitly be introduced as the norm that lecture performances are measured against. (A similar problem is generated by a term like practice-as-research – one thing, *research*, is constituted as the standard that the other thing, *practice*, has to live up to.)

¹⁴ Ernst describes this with respect to a lecture performance he himself presented that was announced as "etwas ganz Dolles" (Ernst 2004: 192) – a colloquialism that is difficult to translate, maybe "something far-out" would be a good approximation.

¹⁵ This gesture corresponded with the theme of the paper, a discussion of the role of the "I" in lecture performances. However, the gesture was not noticeable to audience members who did not know either Spångberg or Malzacher. This example illustrates how difficult it is to delineate the lecture performance genre. Is this gesture enough to make something a lecture performance that is otherwise a conventional paper presentation?

but that make use of the openness of the format to address any issue, it is not possible to subtract the artistic element as that which differentiates the lecture performance from the cultural performance of the lecture. If, with Derrida, the question has to be how lecture performances participate in the respective genres that give them their name, their participation in the lecture genre can be described as characterised by an artistic appropriation of the lecture form.¹⁶

That an artistic element is indispensable for a work to be considered a lecture performance might in itself not be immediately obvious, considering that the term 'performance' in 'lecture performance' might merely foreground the performativity of any lecture that Peters for instance describes. Moreover, this proposition itself does not suffice to draw the Derridian "limit", because it still remains questionable when these elements are strong enough, as in the case of both Abramović's and Malzacher's alleged lecture performances. And furthermore, to stress the aesthetic or artistic elements of lecture performances cannot in turn mean disregarding its discursive or theoretical elements, i.e. the hybrid nature of the form always has to be acknowledged. With this hybridity of the form comes a certain undecidedness that is also evident in the different names it has been given. While I believe the term 'lecture performance' to still be the more common or established term, the examples I have given show that the term 'performance lecture' is also often used.¹⁷ The implications of these conflicting terminologies are not usually reflected in discussions of the form. The difference seems to be that the term 'performance lecture', much like Ernst's characterisation of the lecture performance as a "hybrid lecture", identifies the form as a variation of the academic lecture, while the term 'lecture performance' qualifies it as a type of artistic performance. The different names then each suggest a different focus, and each name privileges one of the two contexts – lecture or artistic performance – that the lecture performance participates in. As a form, the lecture performance blurs the boundaries between these contexts, and therefore such a privileging of one context will always be problematic. While I will throughout this thesis also reflect on how the lecture performance participates in the context of the lecture, I will however put a focus on the lecture

¹⁶ How this appropriation manifests (and manifests differently in different lecture performances), and what this means for the perception of these works and for how they are situated in relation to their respective contexts, will be discussed throughout this thesis, in particular in the case studies of chapters 3 to 5.

¹⁷ Other terms, like 'performed essay' or 'essay performance', are also frequently used, the 'performed essay' for instance being an established form of assessment in performance courses at the Theatre, Film and Television Department at Aberystwyth University.

performance as an artistic practice, and discuss it in the context of other forms of artistic performance. This is also one main distinction between my approach and Peters's, who in her book *The Lecture as Performance* outlines a history of the lecture as a performance that is framed by a consideration of the lecture performance, but that locates the lecture performance in a context of what she calls an "art of lecturing"¹⁸ (Peters 2011: 9). Peters thus places the lecture performance in a tradition that, even though it is for her characterised by a challenging of established conceptions of science or scholarship, nevertheless develops or emerges primarily in relation to these conceptions: "They stand in a tradition of scenic lecturing that can be traced back at least to the 18th century."¹⁹ (10) I will reflect on Peters's approach in detail in chapter 2 of this thesis, but would like to suggest at this point that the artistic appropriation of the lecture form is a relatively new development, and that it is different from the "art of lecturing" that Peters describes exactly because it manifests at least as vividly in the context of art as it does in an academic context. If I use the term 'lecture performance' rather than 'performance lecture' in this thesis (as, by the way, Peters also does), it is not least to acknowledge this focus of the thesis. It has to be mentioned, however, that this should not imply that lecture performances are somehow less legitimate or sincere attempts at presenting and/or generating knowledge than traditional lectures.

Definition #2: The temporality of the lecture performance: process vs. product

First and foremost, the lecture performance is a hybrid format that, like a multiple adaptor, can connect diverse artistic forms with each other.²⁰ (Peters 2006: 123)

This definition by Peters also describes the lecture performance as a hybrid form, yet it does so already with a view to artistic production. The hybridity of the lecture performance is thus not only based on its appropriation of a non-artistic form, but also characterises its artistic potential to combine and translate between different artistic forms. In addition, according to Peters, the lecture performance as a form has the capacity to translate between the various temporal stages of a work. It enables artists to

¹⁸ "Vortragkunst".

¹⁹ "Sie stehen in einer Tradition des szenischen Vortragens, die sich mindestens bis ins 18. Jahrhundert zurückverfolgen läßt."

²⁰ "In erster Linie ist die Lecture-Performance ein hybrides Format, das wie ein multipler Adapter unterschiedlichste künstlerische Formen miteinander verschalten kann."

turn archive-based projects into events. It also enables artists to revisit works that were conceived as unrepeatable singular events or site-specific projects and present them in different contexts. Lecture performances can thus function as what Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks have termed “second-order performance” or “performance-about-performance” (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 65).²¹ But lecture performances cannot only turn documentation into event, they also allow artists to present projects that are still in the concept stage or that are “work-in-progress” (Peters 2006: 124). This again shows that lecture performances have to be considered within a wider context of contemporary performance practices, especially as artists very often do not exclusively work with the format, but use it as one possible manifestation of their practice or of a particular project. Lecture performances thus negotiate a tension between process and product in so far as they can appear as the deferral of a finished product (as one manifestation of a larger, often yet unfinished process) and at the same time make evident the demand that “artistic production”²² (Peters 2006: 123) today has to be “presentable at every stage”²³ (123).²⁴

What this tension between process and product also shows is that the lecture performance, as Esther Pilkington and I argue in an essay entitled ‘Die Kunst des Nicht-da-Seins’ (‘The Art of Not Being There’), can be seen as an “example for a different conception of the temporality of performance beyond the singular event”²⁵ (Ladnar and Pilkington 2013: 200). By being presented as one manifestation of a larger (research) process, lecture performances always make reference to a context whose scope exceeds its articulation in the performance event itself.²⁶

²¹ In chapter 3, I will look in detail at lecture performances that are based on the documentation of past performance events.

²² “künstlerischen Produktion”.

²³ “in jedem Stadium präsentabel”.

²⁴ Lecture performances can according to Peters thus appear as a product that still promises that there is an “optimum yet to be achieved” (Peters 2006: 124) [“erst noch zu erzielende[s] Optimum” (Peters 2006: 124)]. With regard to this point Peters sees a connection between the lecture performance and the business presentation.

²⁵ „Beispiel einer anderen Konzeption der Zeitlichkeit von Performance jenseits des singulären Ereignisses“.

²⁶ In chapter 5, I will look at works that envision themselves as part of a larger discursive context and that aim to participate in this context both in and beyond the event.

Definition #3: Conceptual openness vs. formal limitations

For some years now, even decades, there is talk about the fusion of artistic practice and its theory, about the crossing of the borders of genres, about self-reflective art and creative science. No wonder that [since] Xavier Le Roy's 'Product of Circumstances' of 1999 lecture performances have become more and more popular. Popular as a thrilling, performative and discursive medium for choreographers, performers, directors and theorists alike. The seemingly narrow formal limitations of the performance lecture offer a set of unique, often quite complex opportunities and challenges. The lecture as performance, reflection as self-reflection, content as form, language as action. (Unfriendly Takeover, 2010)

This quote from the website of Unfriendly Takeover, whose series *Performing Lectures* I have mentioned above, stresses a point I have already raised, i.e. the appeal the lecture performance has for artists (and, as the quote also mentions, theorists) from different backgrounds. This diversity of disciplines that artists working with the lecture performance format come from illustrates the adaptability of the format (like the lecture, the lecture performance can potentially be about anything), its aforementioned capacity to accommodate a variety of artistic projects.

Even if they are only "seemingly narrow", the mention of "formal limitations" however also shows that the lecture performance achieves this openness to accommodate different forms and approaches by providing a framework of rules and strategies that these various approaches have to work with (and maybe sometimes work against). So if the above conception of the lecture performance stresses its simultaneously "performative" (in the artistic sense) and "discursive" nature, and proposes that the interest in the format stems from an existing discourse about the "fusion" of artistic theory and practice on the one hand and about the relation of art and science on the other, those features of the format also have to be understood to some extent as requirements (Derrida's "norms and interdictions"). A lecture performance that does not negotiate any of these relations on any level seems hard to conceive of, which in turn means that whatever else a lecture performance is *about*, it always also negotiates the question what it means to lecture and to perform, and how these two activities relate to each other.

Definition #4: the discourse about the lecture performance

The lecture performance has become a feature of contemporary art. Various descriptions of the phenomenon have circulated over the past few years, and this lack of consensus implies the need for a more accurate conceptual definition. Artists in this comparatively young genre work at the interface between lecturing and performing, seeking out creative ways of including traditional methods of artistic communication in presenting themselves to the audience. The method involves elements of self-reflection, discussion, performance or action. (Jentjens et al. 2009: 5)

Apart from locating the lecture performance “between lecturing and performing”, this short excerpt from the introduction to the *Lecture Performance* catalogue is not really a definition but a statement expressing the need for a “more accurate” definition of what is here referred to as a “phenomenon”. The importance of the lecture performance form is expressed by the reference to a variety of positions about the lecture performance and a “lack of consensus” among them. These different positions are, however, never outlined in what follows. There is no further reference to a wide-ranging discussion, which is not that surprising, as, to my knowledge, there are so far no extensive studies of the lecture performance.²⁷ How then can this assumption of a circulation of “various descriptions” be explained (and how, in turn, the lack of an extensive discourse)? Where, if it does not exist in writing, is this discourse “circulated” (or, if it indeed does not exist, how can this impression of a circulation be explained)? As I cannot know exactly what the authors are referring to, an answer to these questions has to remain somewhat speculative. I would, however, like to propose some explanations: If, instead of “various descriptions of the phenomenon”, the above quote would read “various manifestations of the phenomenon”, this would actually be an accurate description of a field that is not least characterised by a diversity of approaches and artistic strategies. In the second part of the quote, some characteristics of the lecture performance form are named, among them that it “involves elements of self-reflection, discussion, performance or action”²⁸. If self-reflection and discussion are features of the form itself, if lecture performances thus

²⁷ It is striking that, when looking at the individual essays that follow this introduction to the catalogue, there is no reference here to the existing literature on lecture performance, however scant – this might be due to the fact that this catalogue focuses on visual arts practice, while the existing literature on the lecture performance has mostly been published in a theatre or performance studies context.

²⁸ Although they are here mentioned in the same breath, these “elements” do not appear to belong to one category: “self-reflection” to me seems to describe a particular mode in which the other elements (all of them specific forms or activities) could be presented. Furthermore, that they contain elements of discussion is not necessarily the norm for lecture performances.

always also make examples of themselves, maybe it is also there, in the lecture performances themselves, that the discourse about the lecture performance takes place. And maybe this explains the lack of academic discourse around the subject: there is an overlapping of competencies, and/or lecture performances themselves can be understood as investigations into modes of academic discourse, a field that – especially with regard to the function of the academic lecture – is itself a blind spot of academic research.²⁹

And, furthermore, it is important to look at the context in which lecture performances are presented – often, they take place at the interstices between academic and artistic fields, in summer schools or conferences (I have mentioned P*Si* #15 as an example), or they are for instance presented as a discursive format programmed alongside performance or theatre festivals.³⁰ Discussions and workshops are also often part of these events, and occasionally lecture performances also incorporate or at least make provisions for an audience discussion (most prominently Xavier Le Roy's *Product of Circumstances* (1999) that I will discuss in chapter 4). Maybe, the discourse about the lecture performance takes place here, in the discussions and conversations around them that are often not easily distinguished from the works themselves, or that are part of the larger context these works are in turn part of – that is, they exist in an oral realm that is not easily accessible retrospectively.

Conclusion and outline: the lecture performance in context

In the various descriptions and definitions of the lecture performance that I have quoted, the lecture performance appears as a hybrid form that not only combines the cultural performance of the lecture and artistic performance, but also potentially connects various artistic forms and projects – temporally as well as conceptually. Lecture performances function both discursively and aesthetically. With regard to their relation to the academic lecture, this means that they simultaneously participate in and aesthetically

²⁹ The lack of academic research into the lecture is remarkable when looking at the importance it has for academic discourse, as Peters points out: “The lecture as an academic format and event has, despite its eminent importance for academic practice, for the most part remained an anathema in the history of science.” (Peters 2005: 311) [“Der Vortrag als wissenschaftliches Format und Geschehen ist, seiner eminenten Bedeutung für die akademische Praxis zum Trotz, bisher weitgehend Anathema der Wissenschaftsgeschichte geblieben.”]

³⁰ An example would be *Alles Anders?*, a programme of lecture performances presented at the festival *Wiener Festwochen* in 2010 (*Wiener Festwochen* 2010).

explore the performative production and dissemination of knowledge enacted in traditional lectures. Yet they also often explore the performance event itself, thus negotiating a knowledge of and about performance (e.g. when they turn either the documentation of an existing work or the conception of a yet unrealized work into an event, or when they negotiate the relation of performance practice and theory). In this sense, lecture performances function simultaneously as meta-lectures and as meta-performances, which in turn means that it is not least in lecture performances themselves that the discourse about the lecture performance takes place. The lecture performance therefore has to be approached from two angles, by exploring both its relation to the academic lecture and to other contemporary performance practices.

In the following chapter, I will look in detail at these two contexts that the lecture performance participates in and that give it its name. I am here deliberately choosing the term 'context' rather than 'genre', as this analysis, too, has to look beyond the "norms and interdictions" that could indicate a "belonging" of the lecture performance to either one or both of these genres. Instead, my focus will be on the question how the lecture performance challenges established ideas about how meaning is produced in lectures and artistic performances. If I am right in considering the lecture performance as both meta-lecture and meta-performance, then it is not least by displaying certain traits identified with either format that the lecture performance transcends the limits of these respective genres, because these traits themselves and the question how they participate in the production of meaning can become the object of the enquiry. Or, in other words, by making an example of itself, the lecture performance does more than indicate its belonging to a genre (which in itself according to Derrida is enough to undermine the notion of belonging), it negotiates the conditions of this belonging or not-belonging.

To speak of the lecture performance's participation in the *contexts of lecturing and performing* rather than in the genres of lecture and performance still implies a concern with such questions of belonging. At the same time, however, according to Derrida, "a context is never absolutely determinable, or rather, [...] its determination can never be entirely certain or saturated" (Derrida 1988: 2). At the beginning of his lecture 'Signature Event Context', Derrida speaks of "the limits of what is called a context" (2), a formulation that implies a parallel between determining the context of an utterance and establishing the genre of a work (which Derrida, as I have quoted, also refers to as the drawing of a "limit"). However, the "norms and interdictions" that establish a context can remain less

specific compared to those that delineate a genre, which shows in Derrida's characterisation of the "conventional context" he is presenting his lecture in (a colloquium on the subject of "communication") as "produced by a kind of consensus that is implicit but structurally vague" (2). Despite these implicit "presuppositions" (3) at work in establishing a context, no utterance can ever be contained within the limits thus established, as Derrida goes on to argue in the course of the lecture and throughout the other texts collected in the book *Limited Inc.* For Derrida, it is because of the "iterability" (12) of every utterance that its context can never be fully and finally determined: "Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the current sense of this opposition), in a small or large unit, can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable" (12).³¹

This understanding of context as "limitless"³² (136) that Derrida argues for I think is essential to an exploration of the contexts of the lecture performance: Firstly, the shifting between contexts and the "engendering" of new contexts that Derrida describes as a possibility for every "sign" is actualised in the hybrid form of the lecture performance. And secondly, the lecture performance, by participating in the genres of the lecture and of artistic performance, also participates in the larger contexts (institutional, historical, discursive, economical, thematic or other) that these forms themselves participate in. This is also evident in my discussion of the immediate contexts of the lecture performance: for the context of lecturing, I will in chapter 2 not only consider how the lecture performance participates in the larger context of academia or the university, but I will furthermore consider the lecture performance in relation to the increasing importance of presentational formats outside of the established sites of knowledge production. With regard to the context of artistic performance, I will also take into account the historical and institutional contexts of the emergence of the lecture performance. In both cases, I will ask how the lecture performance transcends the

³¹ At a later stage in the book, Derrida tries to state this idea more precisely: "It would have been better and more precise to have said 'engendering *and* inscribing itself,' or being inscribed in, new contexts. For a context never creates itself *ex nihilo*; no mark can create or engender a context on its own, much less dominate it. This limit, this finitude is the condition under which contextual transformation remains an always open possibility." (Derrida 1988: 79)

³² For Derrida, such an understanding of context is essential to the definition of deconstruction: "One of the definitions of what is called deconstruction would be the effort to take this limitless context into account, to pay the sharpest and broadest attention possible to context, and thus to an incessant movement of recontextualization." (Derrida 1988: 136)

perceived “limits” of each of these contexts, in particular the “presuppositions” about how meaning, knowledge or understanding are produced in them.

In chapters 3 to 5, I will continue this investigation into the contexts of the lecture performance by looking in detail at how individual examples of lecture performances engage with or establish specific contexts both on the level of form *and* content. These contexts of course overlap and intersect, and my concern is not with distinctions between them but with tracing what Derrida calls “an incessant movement of recontextualization” (Derrida 1988: 136) that, rather than in any specific context, I think the lecture performance could best be described as participating in. My introduction to each of these chapters will be a discussion of a “historical” performance or practice that precedes the establishment of the term ‘lecture performance’ – as a foil for the contemporary contexts that the lecture performance participates in.

In chapter 3, entitled *Contexts of making and watching*, I will analyse lecture performances that explore the relation between live event and documentation (a relation that I will approach through a discussion of works by Chris Burden). These lecture performances by Wagner-Feigl-Forschung, Jérôme Bel and Rabih Mroué all engage with past performance work: performances by the artists themselves, performances they have witnessed, historical performances or works that were never realised. I will discuss in this chapter how these lecture performances negotiate the status of documentation in relation to the live event and what kind of relationships between artist and spectator, or rather, between the activities of making and watching performance, are envisioned in them. In chapter 4, *Contexts of addressing and instituting*, I will investigate how lecture performances negotiate their relation to specific institutional and disciplinary contexts, and at how they attempt to create different kinds of publics through different modes of addressing their audience: addressing an audience in the name of an institution but doing so while taking on a fictional persona (Andrea Fraser), addressing a public with an autobiographical narrative that is primarily an account of the artist’s professional life in different institutional contexts (Xavier Le Roy) and addressing a public in the name of an institution that is yet to be established and whose establishment depends largely on the public thus addressed (geheimagentur). In chapter 5, *Contexts of assembling and disseminating*, I will look at participatory works that transgress the mode of the singular performance event by negotiating their relation to a wider discursive context that they participate in or establish: Hurtzig’s series *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-*

Knowledge that I have already briefly described and works by Joshua Sofaer that in different ways try to enable anyone to deliver a lecture. Joseph Beuys's practice serves as a historical foil to the contemporary works in this chapter, and I will return to Beuys again in the conclusion, where I will look at how one of my own lecture performances participates in the various contexts that the previous chapters have focused on. Developed as part of this research project, *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* traces claims for democratisation and participation from the artistic practices that Beuys and others introduced in the 1960s and 70s to the PowerPoint presentation as the paradigmatic presentation format today.

Chapter 2

CONTEXTS OF LECTURING AND PERFORMING

Where and when to begin?

In this chapter, I will look at how the lecture performance participates in the contexts of the lecture on the one hand, and of artistic performance on the other hand. By looking at these contexts separately, I am aware that I appear to be reinforcing a seemingly strict delineation between them – and with it a delineation between academic practice and art, between cultural and artistic performance, between different types of knowledge – despite the proposition made in the previous chapter that the lecture performance actually blurs such distinctions. It will, however, hopefully become evident that these distinctions are from the outset never as strict as they might appear. Maybe, the lecture performance not only blurs distinctions, but it also foregrounds already existing similarities and connections between its various contexts. In order to establish these connections, I have decided to keep these contexts provisionally distinct in the following discussion. However, not only the delineation between these contexts is up for discussion, but also the delineation of those contexts themselves: how far do these contexts extend, and what has to be included in the discussion to understand how the lecture performance relates to them? For instance, is it enough to focus on the academic lecture, or do other forms of presentations or, even more generally, of public speech have to be taken into consideration? And, with respect to artistic performance, how far do we have to go back in art history to understand the lecture performance? And, considering the different backgrounds of artists working with the format, what different artistic disciplines will have to be accounted for in this discussion? Finally, the question where and when to begin does not only pose itself for the context of artistic performance, but also for the context of the lecture, where Peters, as I have already quoted, sees the lecture performance in a tradition “that can be traced back at least to the 18th century” (Peters 2011: 10).

In outlining how the lecture performance participates in the contexts of the lecture and of artistic performance, this chapter will thus also function both as a historical overview and as a literature review. One of my main references in the first part of this chapter will be Erving Goffman’s ‘The Lecture’ (1981), the published text of a lecture that

Goffman originally delivered in 1976. In it the sociologist provides a lucid analysis of the performance of the lecture while at the same time arguing that it is of little significance for an understanding of a lecture whether it is encountered through its live performance or as text. The other main reference point is Peters's research on the lecture. Peters's book *The Lecture as Performance* and numerous essays she has written on the topic of the lecture from different angles constitute the most substantial investigation of the academic lecture to date.³³ What is of particular relevance to this thesis is that, as I have already mentioned, Peters's interest in the academic lecture originated in an interest in the lecture performance (Peters 2006: 121ff.) – references to lecture performances feature regularly in her essays, some of her writing directly addresses the lecture performance form, and, last but not least, Peters also makes lecture performances herself.³⁴ Even though I will come back to her writing at several points in the course of this thesis, the full scope of Peters's extensive writing on the lecture exceeds the topic of this dissertation, and I will instead focus on those elements that are relevant to my discussion of the lecture performance.

I will start this chapter by looking at the relevance that the lecture has today, at a time when its institutional context, the university, is undergoing radical changes. I will discuss how the format of the lecture is tied to questions of authority, and how lectures both mirror and shape our understanding of what constitutes knowledge. I will then go on to examine the relations between the lecture event³⁵ and the lecture text, i.e. between two different types of encounters one can have with a lecture. This will lead me to explore how exactly meaning is produced in lectures by looking at what Peters describes as the relation between “discursive”³⁶ (Peters 2005: 315) and “non-discursive”³⁷ (315) elements in this process. Finally, I will investigate how the lecture's subject matter focuses an audience's attention towards something other than the lecture

³³ The essays are written and published in German, which also means that Peters's historical analyses mainly focus on (but are not limited to) a German context. I will not retrace the historical development of the lecture here in detail, as it only becomes important for my research project if one of the lecture performances analysed here explicitly refers to this history.

³⁴ One example is *The Art of Demonstration* (2005, developed together with Matthias Anton), a lecture performance about lecturing.

³⁵ Although any 'lecture event' can also be considered as a performance, I am here using the term 'lecture event' to describe the performance of the academic lecture in order to avoid confusion with the term 'lecture performance'.

³⁶ “Diskursiven”.

³⁷ “Nicht-Diskursiven”.

itself, and address the question what this means for lecture performances, as they always also exhibit their own lecture-ness.

In the second part of the chapter, I will first look at the emergence of the lecture performance in the context of performance history, which will also lead me to consider different accounts of this history and different conceptions of performance as an art form. Within this history, I will pay particular attention to the specific situation around the turn of the millennium, and thus to the time when the lecture performance began to be recognised as an artistic format in its own right. I will then ask how the lecture performance relates to models of the aesthetic perception of performance that privilege performance's experiential over its discursive qualities. To conclude, I will briefly address the question how the relation between performance and documentation is negotiated in lecture performances, an aspect that I will return to and expand on in chapter 3 and throughout the rest of this thesis.

Contexts of lecturing

Presentation, lecture, performance

In 2005, musician and artist David Byrne presented a lecture entitled *I ♥ PowerPoint* in Berkeley.³⁸ In his introduction to the event, Ken Goldberg, the engineering professor and artist who had invited Byrne, is quoted as having said about Microsoft's often heavily criticised³⁹ presentation software: "It's easy to ridicule it for its corporate nature, but the real story is about how participatory and democratic it is. High school kids use it, rabbis use it, people even use it for wedding toasts." (in Powell 2005)

This statement, while playing down any possible serious concerns about the corporate nature of PowerPoint, raises some interesting questions about the increasing importance of presentational forms in many branches of society, a development for

³⁸ Byrne has delivered a number of these lectures, and has worked extensively with PowerPoint as a medium for his art (more information on this strand of Byrne's work can be found on his website (Byrne 2012)).

³⁹ A famous critique of PowerPoint has been formulated by Edward Tufte, who, in an article entitled *PowerPoint Is Evil* (2003), states that the use of the software in presentations leads to a simplification of complex issues: "the PowerPoint style routinely disrupts, dominates, and trivializes content" (Tufte 2003).

which the popularity of PowerPoint could serve as an indication.⁴⁰ In their multiple uses – in fields such as business, education, art, but also, as Ken Goldberg mentions, in religious contexts or for festive occasions etc. – PowerPoint presentations are paradigmatic for today’s ubiquity of the presentational. While the ‘lecture’ in ‘lecture performance’ suggests quite unambiguously that the academic lecture is the main formal reference point for the lecture performance, it seems necessary to discuss the lecture performance also in the context of the emergence of what has been called the “presentation society”⁴¹ (Peters 2011: 15).

Another example for the popularity of presentational formats outside of the academic realm are formats like the so-called ‘TED Conferences’, which, as Peters describes, “put the focus on the presenters [...] as charismatic advocates of their ideas”⁴² (164). In TED events, as the TED website proclaims, “the world’s most interesting thinkers and doers” (TED 2014) share their ideas in a standardised format of eighteen-minute-long presentations that often rely heavily on biographical narration (Peters 2011: 164). Peters points out that this focus on individual personalities erodes possible distinctions between the disciplinary or institutional backgrounds of the speakers, for instance whether they are entrepreneurs or scientists (165). While the events themselves are very exclusive (tickets cost thousands of dollars), the presentations are filmed and many of them are made available to be watched online. The presentations are thus conceived simultaneously as (exclusive) live events and as (accessible and potentially viral) online videos. Considering the TED motto – “ideas worth spreading” –, it could be said that the live manifestations of the TED talks evidences the “worth” of the ideas, while the online manifestations guarantee that they are being “spread”. The TED talks thus not only illustrate the role that digitalisation has in changing, as Mercedes Bunz puts it in *Die stille Revolution (The silent revolution)*, “what and how we know”⁴³ (Bunz 2012: 11); they at the

⁴⁰ In 2011 I developed the lecture performance *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?*, which I will document and discuss later on in this thesis. As this lecture performance negotiates and expands on some of the questions I raise throughout the thesis, and in particular in this chapter, and because it also incorporates some of the references and formulations I use here, some repetitions will become evident when watching the video documentation. I have nevertheless decided to keep these elements both in the documentation of the lecture performance and in this chapter, for two reasons: firstly, because they are essential for developing my argument in both instances, and secondly, because I believe that this way I also document my own research process, and how this process can manifest in different ways: in the thesis, and in the lecture performance that has originated from the same research process and is in turn incorporated into the thesis.

⁴¹ “Präsentationsgesellschaft”.

⁴² “stehen die Vortragenden im Mittelpunkt [...] als charismatische VerfechterInnen ihrer Ideen”.

⁴³ “was und wie wir wissen”.

same time show how a “new social relevance”⁴⁴ (9) of knowledge seems always already linked to economical considerations. In this respect, the TED talks can be said to have a normative function, an aspect that Ramon Reichert has identified for the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia. Although it is usually associated with “chances for participation and strategies of empowerment”⁴⁵ (Reichert 2008: 209), according to Reichert, Wikipedia relies on “values such as flexibility, mobility, creativity, and individual responsibility”⁴⁶, and thus replicates the organisation of capitalist production in today’s knowledge economy.

The increasing importance of presentational formats outside of academic contexts means that, as Peters points out, “[s]cience is at present significantly losing societal influence with regard to the presentation of knowledge in general.” (Peters 2011: 15)⁴⁷ This in turn has implications for the form of the lecture itself, as the “conventions of academic presentations” (15)⁴⁸ are no longer essential in defining what constitutes a presentation of knowledge. Instead, as Peters and others have shown (and I will expand on this later), how knowledge is presented increasingly follows an economic logic in which knowledge is primarily treated as a resource: “While this logic of a ‘knowledge society’ holds research in high esteem as the central context for the production of knowledge, knowledge is at the same time dissociated fundamentally from the scene of its production. It is no longer legitimised by the methods through which it is generated, but by the efficiency of its application as resource.”⁴⁹ (16) This for Peters means that the presentation of knowledge has to present itself as “a good performance”⁵⁰ (16).

Whilst I agree with Peters’s assessment of this development, it has to be noted that in her account of the history of the lecture she mentions many instances in which the perception of what constitutes a lecture has been challenged or shifted by developments that originated outside of the fields of academia or science. Peters recounts how in the

⁴⁴ “neue gesellschaftliche Rolle”. While the literal translation of “Rolle” would be “role”, Bunz here stresses not only a new function of or relation towards knowledge, but also its increased importance in society.

⁴⁵ “Beteiligungschancen und Ermächtigungsstrategien”.

⁴⁶ “Werten wie Flexibilität, Mobilität, Kreativität und Eigenverantwortung”.

⁴⁷ “Die Wissenschaft verliert gegenwärtig deutlich an gesellschaftlichem Einfluss, was die Präsentation von Wissen generell angeht.” Peters’s main reference here is Schnettler’s and Knoblauch’s research into the PowerPoint presentation (Knoblauch and Schnettler 2007).

⁴⁸ “Konventionen wissenschaftlicher Präsentationen”.

⁴⁹ “Denn zwar wird Forschung in der Logik dieser ›Wissensgesellschaft‹ als zentraler Produktionszusammenhang von Wissen hoch geschätzt, zugleich löst sich Wissen jedoch in fundamentaler Weise von der Szene seiner Produktion. Es wird nicht mehr über die Verfahren seiner Entstehung, sondern von der Effizienz seines Einsatzes als Ressource her legitimiert.”

⁵⁰ “eine gute Performance”.

1850s and 1860s women for the first time addressed a mixed-sex public audience in the context of spiritualist “trance lectures”, where they claimed to speak for the dead (83ff.); she describes how in the 18th century demonstrations of newly discovered scientific phenomena like electricity produced “new, heterogeneous publics that spanned from the auditorium to the market stand”⁵¹ (85); and she refers to magic shows of 19th century carnivals, in which illusions like levitations were often presented as revealing hitherto unknown scientific phenomena and were as such “embedded in lecture performances”⁵² (87). Furthermore, Peters describes how new academic disciplines also introduced new elements to the lecture: “A prominent example for this is the emergence of an experimental natural science, which at first was met with hostility not only by the fields of philosophy and mathematics, but also by natural history, the argument being that experimentation was about self-produced effects that could as such not be found in nature itself.”⁵³ (9-10)

Such a critical position against developments that contest established notions of science or research is mirrored in Peters’s own critique of the presentation of knowledge in today’s “presentation society”. That Peters at the same time places the lecture performance in the tradition of an “art of lecturing”, whose formation she herself characterises as defined by influences from outside the fields of academia or science, raises the question why the lecture performance rather than the presentation of knowledge as resource (which Peters identifies as the norm for presentations today) should be considered as the continuation of that tradition. In other words, there is a certain ambiguity in Peters’s argument with regard to the status of the lecture performance in relation to the emergence of a “presentation society”: sometimes Peters describes the lecture performance as a critical response to this development and as a means of counteracting it – for instance in discussing the lecture performance in the context of attempts to create alternative spaces of knowledge production. Other times she describes at length how the lecture performance follows the logic of the business

⁵¹ “neue, heterogene Öffentlichkeiten, die vom Salon über den Hörsaal bis zum Marktstand reichten“.

⁵² “[...] in Vortragsperformances eingebettet“. Peters here uses the German term “Vortragsperformance“, which she applies whenever discussing any lecture as performance, whilst reserving the English “lecture performance“ to describe specifically the lecture performance as an artistic performance, a distinction that she however does not elaborate on.

⁵³ “Ein prominentes Beispiel dafür ist die Entstehung der experimentellen Naturwissenschaft, die zunächst nicht nur von Seiten der Philosophie und der Mathematik, sondern auch von der Naturgeschichte angefeindet wurde, und zwar mit dem Argument, beim Experimentieren ginge es um selbst produzierte Effekte, die in der Natur so gar nicht anzutreffen seien.“

presentation (195) as a continuous “deferral”⁵⁴ of production and analyses how it reproduces the element of self-presentation characteristic for the post-Fordist labour market (an element that is for instance central to a format like the TED talks).

Moreover, it is not only the lecture performance itself, but more generally an understanding of the lecture as performance that for Peters promises a way out of the demand for a “good performance”: “Understanding the lecture as performance opens up the opportunity to expose the knowledge-poietic potential of the lecture, which is under threat of being covered up by the effort to achieve a better ‘presentation performance’.”⁵⁵ (16-17) In this one sentence, the term ‘performance’ is used to describe both a live presentation for an audience and the success of that presentation, its accomplishment.

While I will expand on these different notions of performance later, for now I would like to point out that this double meaning contributes to the ambiguity of Peters’s assessment of the lecture performance. Or, in other words, an “understanding of the lecture as performance” in the sense of a “good performance” is in fact constitutive for the development that Peters proposes such an understanding could counteract. But not only is the ambiguity not easily resolved, it is exactly this ambiguity that many lecture performances negotiate.⁵⁶ The popularity of the lecture performance form might actually be linked to the ambiguity inherent in the form, to the fact that the lecture performance can be read both as an example of and as a critique of the role of knowledge production and presentation in today’s society.

In an essay that considers the “use of performative art as a form of academic publication practice”⁵⁷ (Roms 2013: 205-206), Heike Roms only briefly (and with reference to Peters) mentions the lecture as performance (205). Nevertheless, her focus on the question how research is presented to a public through performance is of great relevance here. Roms shows how artistic forms of the presentation of research that have

⁵⁴ “Aufschub”. I have already quoted Peters’s remark that the lecture performance can follow the logic of the business presentation by turning process into product and thus meeting the demand for a presentable product while promising that there is an “optimum yet to be achieved”. [see footnote 24]

⁵⁵ “Im Verständnis des Vortrags als Performance liegt immer auch die Chance, das wissenspoietische Potential des Vortrags freizulegen, das vom Bemühen um eine bessere ›Präsentationsperformance‹ überdeckt zu werden droht.”

⁵⁶ Peters for instance mentions the first part of Jochen Roller’s *perform performing* (2003), in which Roller addresses his precarious working conditions as both dancer and call-centre agent.

⁵⁷ “der Einsatz performativer Kunst als Form wissenschaftlicher Veröffentlichungspraxis”.

evolved in the context of the “institutional acceptance”⁵⁸ (207) of artistic research or “practice-as-research” (207) in the last two decades can be seen as compatible with demands for a measurable public “impact” of research, a demand posed in the context of a restructuring and increasing privatisation of the universities in the UK. Artistic research is here perceived to generate “new publics and a new kinds of participation in academic research”⁵⁹ (208). At the same time, the idea of the public that is addressed by the university is shifting: Roms describes that the evaluation of academic research is no longer undertaken only by other academics or scientists, but also by so-called “research users” (213), whose background is often in business. This logic, as Roms describes, ultimately leads to a privatisation of research: “Because if it can be so clearly defined who benefits from research, then the funding of this research might as well be left to these recipients.”⁶⁰

Despite thus illustrating the extent to which artistic forms of presenting research can be instrumentalised in a discourse of efficiency, impact and usefulness characteristic for today’s knowledge economy, Roms also describes a critical potential of these forms, and I would like to argue that this potential can also be found in the lecture performance: to create different kinds of impact that are not predefined, and to make not only the research but the “act of research”⁶¹ (222) accessible to a public outside of the university. As a hybrid form, the lecture performance participates in different contexts, and can thus foreground and possibly challenge the conventions of any one of these contexts; it can address different publics, sometimes even simultaneously, and in choosing how this address is formulated it can negotiate its relationship to these publics. If the public addressed by universities is increasingly limited to “research users”, the lecture performance can choose to address a different kind of public. In doing so, it is not necessarily limited to established notions of what constitutes a public. In chapter 4, I will outline in detail how lecture performances can envision and temporarily constitute new kinds of publics.

⁵⁸ “institutionelle Anerkennung”.

⁵⁹ „neue Öffentlichkeiten [...] und neue Arten der Teilhabe an wissenschaftlicher Forschung“.

⁶⁰ “Denn wenn man derart klar benennen kann, wer von Forschung profitiert, dann könnte man doch eigentlich die Finanzierung dieser Forschung gleich diesen Abnehmer_innen überlassen“.

⁶¹ “Forschungsakt“.

Titles and entitlement

While Peters identifies emancipatory elements in certain historical developments that have influenced the practice of lecturing (an example would be her account of the role of women in “trance lectures”), she does not do the same for presentational formats that have emerged in the last few decades – with the exception of the lecture performance. However, as Ken Goldberg’s statement about the “democratic” nature of PowerPoint suggests, a reading of these new formats as offering emancipatory aspects could have some merit.

At this point, it seems worth noting that the lecture itself is often perceived as an archaic (Masschelein and Simons 2010: 56) and outdated form of knowledge transfer and is heavily criticised, for instance for being a form of “one-to-many” communication (Peters 2011: 162), a perception that even scholars arguing in support of the continued relevance of the lecture – such as Peters - concede. Masschelein and Simons, whose remarks on the lecture I will discuss at a later point, pose the question: “[...] why do professors in the age of the internet still speak to masses of students in public lectures?”⁶² (Masschelein and Simons 2010: 56) And Peters ascertains that “[w]hoever is invested in new forms of [knowledge] transfer today tries activating an audience that before seemed to be reduced to the role of recipients in performative settings. Against this background, the lecture appears to be a traditional and ultimately outdated form of transfer.”⁶³ (Peters 2011: 14) It is striking that the criticism outlined in these remarks is echoed in Gardner’s critique of the lecture performance as being about “straightforward expertise” rather than “knowledge sharing” (Gardener 2008). These criticisms are aimed at the specific relation that the lecture (or, in Gardner’s case, the lecture performance) establishes between the person delivering it and the audience, a relation that is perceived to be hierarchical in its structure and to submit the audience to a passive position of mere recipient.⁶⁴

It is not this relation that Ken Goldberg addresses in his statement; instead, he focuses on the role of the person delivering the lecture – not always a professor, but

⁶² “[...] warum eigentlich sprechen Professoren im Zeitalter des Internets noch immer in öffentlichen Vorlesungen zu Massen von Studierenden?”

⁶³ “Wer heute auf neue Formen der Vermittlung setzt, versucht, ein Publikum, das zuvor auf die Rolle von Rezipienten reduziert zu sein schien, in performativen Settings zu aktivieren. Der Vortrag erscheint vor diesem Hintergrund als traditionelle und letztlich überholte Form der Vermittlung.“

⁶⁴ I will more closely examine this relation in the case studies of chapter 3.

nevertheless a person in a position of authority. This role, his statement suggests, is now, with the introduction of PowerPoint, open to anyone, including school children, and it is here that he locates the medium's potential for democratisation.

In a self-referential lecture entitled 'TITLE: to be specified', Derrida comments on questions of authority and status and on the power awarded to a speaker within the institution of the academy by reflecting on the "implicit contract" (Derrida 1981: 6) behind the lecture he is giving:

[...] if the legitimate authorities of these premises signed a blank check honoring me with an invitation to speak about anything under a title remaining still "to be specified," it is only in authorizing the titles they recognize in me that merits such confidence. A whole legitimizing process is implied in this contract, and it forms infinitely complex networks of sub-contracts, implicit evaluations, codes of admissibility, more or less virtual protocol, in brief, of the establishment of an ensemble of titles – this time not in the meaning of what entitles or names a work, a discourse, a corpus, but of what appoints, what legitimizes a function or gives status – a law (for example a right to speak in given conditions, etc.). (6)

The question of title, of who is entitled or "authorized to speak with authority" (Bourdieu 1990: 177), as Bourdieu has put it in 'A lecture on the lecture' (another example of a self-reflexive lecture), is always at stake when discussing the academic lecture. In yet another lecture, Derrida demands "an *unconditional* freedom to question and to assert, or even, going still further, the right to say publicly all that is required by research, knowledge, and thought concerning the *truth*" (Derrida 2001: 24) for the modern university, a position that for Derrida is embodied in the figure of the professor. That lectures and presentations gain importance outside of the context of academia might indicate that the authority of the professor or academic, the question who is entitled⁶⁵ to "profess the truth"⁶⁶ publicly, is being re-negotiated. Lecture performances, then, in so far as they critically negotiate the authoritative aspects of lecturing and are characterised by a kind of self-authorisation to speak publicly, could be seen as one

⁶⁵ Bourdieu, too, reflects on the notion of title: "Social functions are social fictions. And the rites of institution *create* the person they institute as king, knight, priest or professor by forging his social image, fashioning the representation that he can and must give as a moral person, that is, as a plenipotentiary, representative or spokesman of a group. But they also create him in another sense. By giving him a name, a title, which defines, institutes, and constitutes him, they summon him to become what he is, or rather, what he has to be; they order him to *fulfil* his function, to take his place in the game, in the fiction, to play the game, to act out the function." (Bourdieu 1990: 195) In addition to entitling someone to, for instance, speak publicly, the title might also require a person to do so, to play the role associated with the title.

⁶⁶ In his lecture, Derrida describes a form of public speaking as elemental to the university's existence: "The university professes the truth, and that is its profession." (Derrida 2001: 24)

manifestation of this more general development. This does not mean that they are not institutionally legitimised, but rather that taking up the position of authority that is associated with the act of lecturing is in the case of the lecture performance not necessarily legitimised by the institution of the university.

It is however not only the question of who is “authorized to speak with authority” that is at stake in this development, but also the question to what extent this position is afforded the “unconditional freedom” that Derrida calls for, which implies freedom from the demands of efficiency and marketability that are made when knowledge is considered as a resource.

When Peters describes the attempt to find alternative spaces for knowledge production as an important impulse for the emergence of the lecture performance, it on the one hand coincides with a more general development in which the institution of the university is no longer the prime locale for the communication and presentation of knowledge. On the other hand, the realisation that the university may no longer be able to grant the freedom that Derrida demands is linked to exactly this development. And it is here that the lecture performance could be seen as an attempt to exercise that freedom outside of the framework of the university. Nevertheless, what remains to be seen is to what extent the lecture performance can free itself from the demands of presenting knowledge as resource, especially bearing in mind that, as Ana Vujanović points out, one of the ways in which art can attest to its social value today is by presenting itself as a way of generating knowledge, thus gaining “new legitimacy [...] in the context of cognitive capitalism” (Vujanović and Vesić 2009: 51).

Moreover, it has to be noted that, even if some lecture performance work indeed emerges in the context of an attempt to create alternative spaces for knowledge production, many lecture performances also take place within an academic context. And even if this is not the context from which they emerge, it is still a context in which they participate by appropriating an academic format. The question then is how, through their participation in this context, lecture performances are able to shift the parameters of this participation, parameters that of course are also affected by developments outside of the fields of academia and art. If presentational formats and lecture-like performances of all kinds seem to be ubiquitous today, this also changes the perception of the academic lecture. In turn, the questions how lectures are perceived and what roles are attributed to

them both inside and outside academia affect not only the way that knowledge is communicated but moreover shape an understanding of what knowledge is.

Knowledge and know-how

That lecturing – or, more broadly, the communication of knowledge – does not exclusively take place in an academic or educational environment is, as I have outlined above, not *per se* a new development; but I would like to suggest that the extent to which this is the case may be new. That PowerPoint – considered as the “the presentational form of the so-called knowledge society” (Peters 2007: 49)⁶⁷ – originated in business rather than academia for Peters suggests that today the “status of knowledge itself” has changed: “This might correspond to a changed status of knowledge itself, which is no longer primarily defined as knowledge through academic substantiation.”⁶⁸ (49) Conversely, as I have mentioned above, knowledge is considered as an economic resource not only in the field of business but also in academia. As Jelena Vesić outlines with regard to the implementation of the Bologna Convention, knowledge, if it is considered as a resource, turns into know-how:

The Bologna Convention makes it possible to view studying as a kind of profitable investment into a person as an entrepreneurial unit. In other words, its goal is not knowledge in itself or its socio-political utilisation, but what is referred to as *know-how*, something which is not attained through classical schooling but through experience, practice and social capital. This is precisely what regulates obedience to the ruling system – it is not established, then, through some institutional/state/corporate decree from above, but through producing creative entrepreneurs ready to take matters into their own hands and relieve the state and society of the burden of social insurance, permanent employment, etc. (Vujanović and Vesić 2009: 52)

During the first year of this PhD project I took part in the obligatory research training courses organised by Aberystwyth University. Whilst this is not the place to contemplate the implications of research training, I believe that the changes to knowledge Vesić describes can clearly be seen in the layout of these courses, with their

⁶⁷ “Präsentationsformat der so genannten Wissensgesellschaft”.

⁶⁸ “Dies entspricht möglicherweise einem veränderten Status des Wissens selbst, das als Wissen nicht mehr in erster Linie durch eine wissenschaftliche Fundierung definiert ist.” Another possible translation for German term ‘wissenschaftlich’, which I have here translated as ‘academic’, would be ‘scientific’ – in German, the noun ‘Wissenschaft’ designates a field that encompasses a broader spectrum of disciplines than the English ‘science’, ranging from the natural sciences to the humanities.

focus on transferrable skills and personal development. I would not mention this here if it were not for the two sessions in the training programme that dealt with academic presentations. It seems helpful to consider, as an introduction into the discussion of the lecture, how giving a presentation, presenting a lecture or a paper, is actually taught at university today, i.e. at the institution that is, as Jon McKenzie has described in *Perform or else*, itself so dependent on the performance of lecturing and that McKenzie, quoting Derrida, describes as “a powerful reading or lecture machine” (in McKenzie 2001: 21).⁶⁹

Interestingly, while there is little academic research into the lecture as a form, it appears to be self-evident that lecturing can be taught, as the doctoral research training sessions suggest. Furthermore, I believe it is important to refer to these sessions here because they – somewhat in contrast to the position that Goffman formulates in his lecture *The Lecture* (1981), which I will discuss in more detail in the following section of this chapter – foregrounded the presentational aspect of giving a paper: “Don't think about reading a paper ... rather, think about making a presentation” (Barker 2009) was a motto that session leader Martin Barker put forward, and session leader John Harvey proposed that a paper for presentation needed to be written differently to the actual PhD thesis (“The worst papers sound like a chapter from a PhD being read aloud” (Harvey 2009)). Both Barker and Harvey seemed to agree that there is a significant difference between writing for a reader and writing for a listener or a spectator (“one should write a conference paper with a view to it being read and heard” (Harvey 2009)). These statements suggest an awareness of the lecture as performance, as a specific format in which research is presented live, in front of an audience. The research training sessions with their focus on this specificity of the lecture are one of many examples of an increased awareness of the lecture's eventhood and performativity (compared for instance to Goffman's perspective); the emergence of the lecture performance could be seen as another example. This altered understanding coincides with a change in the practice of documentation and dissemination associated with the lecture that I have already briefly described with regard to the TED talks: today, lectures are increasingly documented and disseminated as videos, and made available online (Peters 2011: 155). This also means that they are documented as performances, as something that happened

⁶⁹ McKenzie's translation of the French “machine de lecture” (in McKenzie 2001: 21) as ‘reading’ or ‘lecture’ machine can serve as a reminder that in English, too, the term ‘lecture’ historically described the “action of reading” - and “that which is read” (The Oxford English Dictionary 1989).

in a specific time and place, rather than as text, as something that can exist independently from its performance and that has often had an existence not only after, but also before the performance (the model that, as we will see, Goffman relies on for his conception of the lecture).

Yet the implications of the lecture's liveness are rarely discussed: in research training, there was no reflection on how in a lecture – through the lecture form – knowledge is not only communicated but performatively constituted as knowledge. This, of course, has to do with these sessions being designed to teach PhD students “how to make a good / avoid making a bad conference presentation” (Barker 2009) – the how-to-guide does not aim to provide an analysis of its subject. A “good” presentation (a “good performance”, as Peters has it) in this case means one that achieves a successful approximation of the conventions of lecturing or presenting. If the research training sessions showed an awareness of the lecture *as performance*, performance here – at least to some extent – has to be understood in its meaning as a measure for success and achievement. The research training both responds to and articulates what Jon McKenzie has described as a “challenge” (McKenzie 2001: 3) to perform. Only if this challenge is met, the “investment into a person as an entrepreneurial unit” that Vesić identifies as the aim of studying today can pay off. In his attempt to rehearse a “general theory of performance” (McKenzie 2001: 9) McKenzie accounts for different types of performance – “organisational performance” (5) that “help[s] improve the efficiency of companies and other institutions” (9) as well as “cultural performance” (7) that aims to “foreground and resist dominant norms of social control” (9)⁷⁰. Lecturing, too, has to negotiate between these different dimensions of performance.

It is from this perspective that Ken Goldberg's assessment of the “democratic” nature of PowerPoint has to be re-addressed, as what goes hand in hand with that alleged democratisation is exactly the “challenge” to perform; the critique of the authoritative position of the lecturer or professor is turned into a demand to assume this position, a demand that is no longer limited to an academic context:

In the presentation society it is no longer primarily scientists and teachers who are confronted with the task to present knowledge in the form of a lecture and in doing so deliver a good performance. In numerous professions one is now confronted with this requirement. A flood of handbooks and training courses on the *how-to* of proper

⁷⁰ He also refers to technological performance as the third area. (McKenzie 2001: 9)

presenting and achieving a better 'lecture performance' react to the resulting demand for information, if not to say: to emotional pressure.⁷¹ (Peters 2011: 16)

This implies that, as Peters describes with regard to the PowerPoint presentation, the knowledge of how to present not only becomes an important element of the presentation, but that it becomes something that is itself being presented: "[...] in a presentation of knowledge in which knowledge is in principle treated as resource there are always already at least two types of knowledge involved: i.e. the presented knowledge and the knowledge of the presentation, the 'how to' of presenting."⁷² (Peters 2007: 50) Bunz describes how expertise once constituted itself on the basis of a "scarcity of knowledge"⁷³ (Bunz 2012:43), something that changed when digitalisation made information more easily available. This, however, also means that expertise is no longer primarily legitimised by factual knowledge, but increasingly by how this knowledge is presented and communicated.

When looking at the lecture, it is thus not possible to consider the content of the lecture as clearly distinct from the operation of lecturing, from the lecture as performance. It is exactly this distinction that Goffman tries to establish or maintain in 'The Lecture' – interestingly, and, because it shapes the way in which a reader encounters his text, somewhat paradoxically, he develops his ideas in the form of a (later published) lecture. Its special correspondence between form and content makes 'The Lecture' both a source for and an interesting object of research into lecturing.⁷⁴

⁷¹ "In der Präsentationsgesellschaft sehen sich längst nicht mehr in erster Linie Wissenschaftlerinnen oder Lehrer der Aufgabe gegenüber, Wissen in Vortragsform zu präsentieren und dabei eine gute Performance abzuliefern. In zahlreichen Berufsgruppen ist man mittlerweile mit dieser Anforderung konfrontiert. Auf den daraus entstehenden Informationsbedarf, um nicht zu sagen: Leidensdruck, reagiert eine Flut von Ratgebern und Schulungen rund um das *How-to* richtigen Präsentierens und die bessere 'Vortragsperformance'."

⁷² "[...] auch in einer Wissenspräsentation, in der Wissen grundsätzlich als Resource behandelt wird, immer schon mindestens zwei Arten von Wissen eine Rolle spielen: nämlich das präsentierte Wissen und das Wissen um die Präsentation, das >how to< des Präsentierens."

⁷³ "Knappheit des Wissens".

⁷⁴ In my essay 'On Giving a Paper' (2011), which I have already quoted in the previous chapter, I use Goffman's lecture as a foil for Lone Twin's performance *On Everest*. The essay covers a lot of the same ground as the following section of this chapter, and as this essay has emerged from the same research process, I am occasionally using the same formulations and ideas in both texts, without referencing each individual overlap between them.

The cake and the box

Goffman delivered 'The Lecture' at the University of Michigan in 1976 and published the text in 1981 in his book *Forms of Talk*. The year the lecture was given is mentioned in a short statement that prefaces the published lecture text – the exact date is, however, not provided. From the first few lines the reader is nevertheless able to deduce the time of day at which the lecture took place: "My topic and my arguments this afternoon [...]" (Goffman 1981: 162) – thus the beginning of 'The Lecture'.

How is this information relevant, if at all? This question to me seems paradigmatic for an analysis of the difference between the two modes of encounter that one can have with a lecture – the encounter a reader has with a written lecture text and the encounter a member of an audience has with a lecture that is delivered live (on a particular afternoon). Furthermore, it is here that the difference between how a lecture is encountered and perceived in contrast to the encounter with a theatre or performance event is negotiated – in performance and in most contemporary theatre, there seems to be no question whether it is important that whatever is happening is happening in real space and real time (on a particular afternoon).⁷⁵ A different value is placed on the 'live' and on its relation to the written or the recorded in lectures on the one hand and in theatre and performance work on the other (an aspect that I will discuss in detail in the case studies of the following chapter).

In his prefatory statement to 'The Lecture', Goffman explains that he has refrained from making any major changes to the lecture text for publication and has thus kept some characteristics of the lecture format, such as references to the "time, place, and occasion" (Goffman 1981: 160) of the lecture, in the printed version of the text: "My hope is that as it stands, this version will make certain framing issues clear by apparent inadvertence [...]" (160).

Paradoxically, very early in the lecture itself, Goffman identifies the nature of the format in which he delivers his remarks as being incidental: "That I am transmitting my

⁷⁵ As Lehmann points out in his discussion of the Aristotelian concept of the 'unity of time' (and its subsequent adaptation in different forms of dramatic theatre, but also for instance in film), the attempt to "make invisible any split between fictive time and real time" (Lehmann 2006: 161) and thus focus the audience's attention on the time of the fictional action constitutes "an essential part of a powerful tradition against whose normative efficacy the contemporary theatre continually has to assert itself – even if nobody still adheres to the norm of the unity of time in any formal sense." (161) Nevertheless, even if a theatre performance encourages its audience to primarily engage with the time of the fictional action, this engagement would still be considered different from that with the dramatic text itself.

remarks through a lecture and not, say, in print or during a conversation, I take to be incidental. Indeed, a term like 'paper' in its relevant sense can refer equally to something that is printed and something that is delivered." (162-163) Such an indifference with regard to the format in which ideas are presented does not necessarily speak of an arbitrariness of the format, but of the prevalence of what Peters has termed "rules of indifference" (Peters 2005: 312) or, later, "rules of irrelevance" (Peters 2011: 38). These rules (or conventions) tell the listeners what aspects of a presentation they are supposed to ignore as being irrelevant for their understanding – for instance the way the lecturer dresses or the time of day (this particular afternoon) at which the lecture takes place. Again, a difference has to be noted with regard to how a lecture is perceived in contrast to a theatre and performance event, where all elements of the performance are assumed to potentially carry meaning (Peters 2011: 38; Peters 2005: 312).⁷⁶

In Goffman's view, then, there is something in a lecture – he calls it the "text" (Goffman 1981: 165) of the lecture – that remains unaffected by the particular mode of its delivery. Goffman introduces the metaphors of the "cake" (the lecture text) and the "box" (the situation of its delivery) to further illustrate this idea:

Earlier I recommended that a lecture contains a text that could just as well be imparted through print or informal talk. This being the case, the content of a lecture is not to be understood as something distinctive to and characteristic of lecturing. At best, one is left with the special contingencies of delivering any particular text through the lecture medium. [...] One is left with the form, the interactional encasement; the box, not the cake. (172-173)

There is a clear value judgement expressed in this metaphor: the lecture text (cake) is characterised as essential, whilst the lecture situation (box) is considered merely incidental. It is this box, however, that is the focus of Goffman's analysis, that is his lecture's cake. In 'The Lecture', there is hence a special correspondence between the object of the enquiry and the form in which this enquiry is presented – a correspondence towards which Goffman assumes an apologetic position: "However, it is apparent that lecturing on lectures is nonetheless a little special. To hold forth in an extended fashion on lecturing to persons while they have to sit through one, is to force them to serve

⁷⁶ Of course, certain "rules of irrelevance" can also be identified for different types of theatre and performance – in dramatic theatre, the time of day at which the performance takes place for instance is usually not considered significant.

double time – a cruel and unusual punishment.” (163) Goffman's main concern with this correspondence is that a “frame break” (163) could occur, that in “breaching lecturing's constraints, he [the speaker; sic] becomes a performing speaker, not a speaker performing” (163). Despite these concerns, Goffman seems unable to fully escape the “impropriety” (164) he is in fear of committing:

Moreover, much as I argue that my avowals can, should, and must be firmly contained within the lecture format, something is likely to leak out. Indeed, I know that before this talk is over I will have turned more than once on my own immediately past behavior as an illustration of what is currently being said [...] (164).

That which is “contained” within the lecture format, the “text”, for Goffman appears constantly threatened in its autonomy (as something might “leak out”). It is threatened by that which contains it, by the lecture itself, i.e. by the lecture-as-event or the lecture-as-performance. Even though Goffman thinks of the lecture text as something that exists autonomously of the form in which it is delivered, he reflects throughout his paper upon how this text is affected by the performance of lecturing: he reflects extensively on changes of “footing” (i.e. changes in inflection and tone) and “the contrast they provide to what the text itself might otherwise generate” (174), e.g. a text could be presented with irony (174) or passion (175). He furthermore considers the use of “text brackets” (175), such as opening or closing statements, and how “text-parenthetical remarks” (176) will affect the perception of a lecture, as a speaker has the opportunity to “qualify, amplify, and editorialize on what the text itself carries” (177). Goffman identifies three “functions” that the speaker in a lecture usually performs: that of the “animator” (“the thing that sound comes out of”), of the “author” (the person who has “formulated and scripted the statements that get made”), and that of the “principal” (“someone who believes personally in what is being said and takes the position that is implied in the remarks”) (167). While he does not reflect on how these roles change or shift when a lecture is not delivered live by a speaker but encountered as text, Goffman throughout his lecture describes in detail differences between “written prose and spoken prose” (189). In doing this, he cannot avoid that something, as he himself puts it, “leaks out”. He does, however, never explicate what is “leaking out” exactly. What shows itself in Goffman's lecture – beyond what Goffman explicitly sets out to show – is that meaning is produced not only through the text, but through the act of lecturing itself. There is a surplus, which

implies that something becomes evident not only because it cannot be contained but because it never was autonomous, because it is only performatively produced in the act of lecturing.

Goffman considers all but the content or text of the lecture, everything that constitutes the lecture as a live event, as “noise”, which he identifies as “the very difference between reading a lecture at home and attending one” (186). This means that, as Peters points out, Goffman attributes “no scientific relevance whatsoever”⁷⁷ (Peters 2011: 127) to the effects and characteristics of lecturing that he himself describes in much detail. He does, however, acknowledge how what he describes as “noise” plays a role in the reception of a lecture, but in a way that is counterproductive to his concerns. He appears to be concerned with the integrity of academic discourse that aims to convey knowledge about “a real, structured, somewhat unitary world out there to comprehend” (Goffman 1981: 194). Lecturing is merely understood as a means to communicate that knowledge:

It is in this sense that every lecturer, merely by presuming to lecture before an audience, is [...] actively supporting the same position: I repeat, that there is structure to the world, that this structure can be perceived and reported, and therefore, that speaking before an audience and listening to a speaker are reasonable things to be doing, and, incidentally, of course, that the auspices of the occasion had warrant for making the whole thing possible. (195)

Contrary to Goffman’s position, Peters argues that it is such communication (in this case the act of lecturing) that produces such knowledge, that creates structure and an understanding of a “unitary world”. She points out that research does not simply exist independently of its presentation: “What is negotiated here does not simply exist outside of the scenarios of academic lecturing, it is formatted as cultural entity in the operations of lecturing.”⁷⁸ (Peters 2006: 126)

For Peters, the “rules of irrelevance” obstruct the acknowledgment of how meaning is produced in a lecture. Goffman’s ‘The Lecture’, in contrast, I think is best understood as a plea to adhere to these rules in order to secure the integrity of academic discourse, even to a point where that adherence is merely superficial:

⁷⁷ “keinerlei wissenschaftliche Relevanz”.

⁷⁸ “Das, was hier verhandelt wird, ist außerhalb des Szenarios des wissenschaftlichen Vortragens nicht einfach vorhanden, es wird in den Operationen des Vortragens als kulturelle Einheit formatiert.”

So your lecturer is meant to be a performer, but not merely a performer. Observe, I am not saying that audiences regularly do become involved in the speaker's subject matter, only that they handle whatever they do become involved in so as not to openly embarrass the understanding that it's the text they are involved in. (Goffman 1981: 166)

Goffman does not merely describe how a lecture functions, but insists that for a lecture to function in the way that is intended certain rules or arrangements have to be followed – both on the part of the speaker and that of the audience. In the quote above, Goffman equates “text” and “subject matter”, and this seems like a somewhat premature equation (as a listener might well be engaged in a subject matter without being engaged with the speaker's text). However, in the particular case of a lecture about lecturing, to focus on the performance of lecturing might just as well be considered an engagement with the subject matter at hand, and it is here that Goffman struggles with his role as speaker:

It is okay to clear one's throat or even take a drink of water, providing that these side-involvements are performed in speech-segment junctures – except, uniquely, this one, this being the only juncture when so minor a deflection would not be that, but some overcute theatricality, of merit only as a frame-analytical illustration of how to go wrong in performances. (184)

Goffman's concern here is again with the integrity and autonomy of what is communicated through a lecture. But what is more important, the “theatricality” that Goffman wants to avoid in this context (and “theatricality” for him here seems to be synonymous with the idea that his actions as a speaker carry meaning beyond the text) can, after Goffman has uttered these words, no longer be avoided by merely refraining from carrying out the action described (clearing one's throat or taking a drink of water), as not doing either of these things would equally constitute an illustration of what is said; not doing it would also carry meaning.

Within one sentence, Goffman first breaks (self-referentiality with regard to the format seems to have that effect for him) and then tries to fix (“it was only an illustration”) what he understands as the “frame”. This makes the reader of the text recall that this is a lecture text, a text for performance, and that it can only be understood as such. Goffman, in trying to show that the content of a lecture should remain unaffected

by the act of lecturing, relies in his demonstration on the specific operations through which lecturing produces meaning. Interestingly, these operations become evident in the lecture text itself and not only in Goffman's performance on some unspecified afternoon in 1976, as Peters describes:

Goffman's thesis that the separation of the speaker into three different roles that takes place in the academic speech act is specific for the performance only, and that it is concluded with the publication and thus scientifically irrelevant, gets in itself caught up in a performative contradiction. This way, Goffman's lecture like no other explains to us the relation between lecture [as performance] and text, namely by stating with virtuosity something other than what becomes evident in the reading process. (Peters 2011: 128)⁷⁹

I agree with Peters's assessment, but would like to briefly clarify that Goffman never explicitly makes the claim that these roles are only relevant in the context of the lecture as performance; he only never refers to them in the context of the lecture text. He does, however, as I have mentioned in the beginning of my discussion of 'The Lecture', acknowledge that the lecture situation resonates in the lecture text; and even more so, as I have quoted, that keeping the references to the lecture as performance "will make certain framing issues clear by apparent inadvertence". His acknowledgement illustrates that the presumed separation of text and context that Goffman presents as an ideal of the lecture cannot be maintained, whether this context is that of the lecture situation or that of a publication.

This does, however, not mean that it is really of little significance whether a lecture is encountered live or as text; that a lecture text can be read as a document of a performance does not mean that in reading a lecture meaning is produced in exactly the same way as in hearing it. While neither kind of encounter should be privileged over the other, they should nonetheless be considered as interdependent, as constantly referencing each other. The lecture-as-text and the lecture-as-event produce evidence differently, yet in each the knowledge of the other form always resonates. How the

⁷⁹ "Goffmans These, das im Zuge des wissenschaftlichen Sprechakts stattfindende Auseinandertreten des Sprechers in drei verschiedene Rollen sei spezifisch allein für die Performance, erledige sich mit der Drucklegung und sei damit wissenschaftlich irrelevant, verwickelt sich seinerseits in einen performativen Widerspruch. Damit erklärt uns Goffmans Lecture wie keine andere die Beziehung zwischen Vortrag und Text, und zwar indem sie quasi virtuos etwas anderes aussagt als das, was im Zuge der Lektüre evident wird."

production and substantiation of meaning in a lecture is tied to the figure of “evidence” is an important focus of Peters’s research into the lecture.

Evidence

Peters proposes that research into the lecture has to respond to and be developed in dialogue with a number of disciplinary discourses – she mentions theatre studies, media studies and the history and theory of science (Peters 2005: 312), and in her writings also refers to discussions in performance studies (Peters 2005a) and philosophy. Theatre studies as a discipline is based on the proposition that the relationship between a dramatic text and its scenic realisation needs to be analysed, i.e. that the text alone does not sufficiently document its performance or performances (Peters 2005: 312). Lectures, as Peters points out, usually enter the archive as texts (312), whereas other forms of documentation – those that would document the lecture as an event – are often neglected.⁸⁰ While studying the lecture for Peters implies including these other forms of documentation as a source, she also acknowledges, as already mentioned, the difference between “modern theatre”, where it is assumed that “anything that happens on stage is element of and factor in the scenic production of meaning”⁸¹ (312), and the lecture, where “numerous elements and factors are always covered by something like a rule of indifference”⁸² (312). To ask how these elements and factors are “involved in the production and reproduction of knowledge”⁸³ (312), but also how the “rules of indifference” or “rules of irrelevance” change historically, requires a focus on the question “[w]hich constellations are formed between those factors whose part in the production of knowledge is acknowledged and those whose part is ignored?”⁸⁴ (313). Peters considers the “relation between the discursive and the non-discursive”⁸⁵ (315) as

⁸⁰ One can therefore imagine the lecture as a temporary performative actualisation of knowledge (written – spoken – written). (cf. Peters 2005a: 202) Repeating something that has already been written through speaking can then be understood as an authorisation of what is said as its repeatability “affirms the identity of the statements across differences in time, space, medium and context” (“behauptet die Identität der Aussagen über zeitliche, räumliche, mediale und kontextuelle Differenzen hinweg”) (Peters 2007: 40).

⁸¹ “[...] dass alles Geschehen auf der Bühne Element und Faktor szenischer Bedeutungsproduktion ist” - and, it has to be added, not only everything that actively happens, but everything that is part of it (e.g. the set).

⁸² “zahlreiche Elemente und Faktoren mit einer Art Indifferenz-Regel belegt [sind]”.

⁸³ „[...] an der Produktion und Reproduktion von Wissen und Erkenntnis beteiligt“.

⁸⁴ “Welche Konstellationen stellen sich jeweils zwischen jenen Faktoren her, die anerkanntermaßen Teil der Wissensproduktion sind, und jenen, die unbemerkt Anteil nehmen?”

⁸⁵ “Beziehung zwischen dem Diskursiven und dem Nicht-Diskursiven”.

elementary to how meaning is produced in a lecture, i.e. besides looking for what is deliberately said or shown in a lecture one has to look at what shows itself (314f.). This raises the question of intentionality: When Goffman takes a drink of water, or neglects to do so, whilst remarking on the insignificance of non-discursive elements such as drinking water for the content of the lecture, he characterises this action as a potential “illustration of how to go wrong in performances” (Goffman 1981: 184) The role of illustrations in lectures, however, is in itself very complex: where exactly, asks Peters, lies the “border between proof and illustration”⁸⁶ (Peters 2005a: 213)? Can Goffman’s action of taking a drink of water (or neglecting to do so) be clearly distinguished from his argument?

Peters introduces the concept of a “figuration of evidence” (Peters 2005: 315)⁸⁷ to describe how – through the specific relation or constellation between discursive and non-discursive elements, between what is shown and what shows itself – lectures (simultaneously) present and produce knowledge:

The presentation of knowledge is intended to ‘make sense’ to the addressee. Specific combinations of telling and showing are aimed at producing evidence. Evidence here means [...] the event of a synchronisation between showing and understanding that is experienced as the presence of that which is to be shown.⁸⁸ (Peters 2007: 38)

The production of evidence in a lecture always has to take the audience into account, as evidence “irreducibly lies in the eye of the beholder, is always reserved to the other”⁸⁹ (Peters 2005: 315). Or, in other words, the “event of a synchronisation between showing and understanding” is something that can only be experienced by the addressee

⁸⁶ “Grenze zwischen Beweis und Veranschaulichung“.

⁸⁷ “Figuration von Evidenz“. Peters discusses this aspect throughout her research on the lecture. In *Intellektuelle Anschauung – unmögliche Evidenz* Peters and Martin Schäfer propose that “the generation of knowledge goes hand in hand with the figuration of evidence” (Peters and Schäfer 2006: 9) [“die Generation von Wissen geht mit der Figuration von Evidenz einher”] – not only in the lecture situation. In contrast to Goffman’s position, this implies that a lecture’s content does not simply exist independently of this delivery, but is performatively produced by it. The two forms in which lectures are perceived or encountered (reading and listening) can then be understood as two different yet interrelated figurations of evidence.

⁸⁸ “Die Präsentation von Wissen zielt darauf, dem Gegenüber einzuleuchten. Durch bestimmte Kombinationen von Sagen und Zeigen soll Evidenz erzeugt werden. Evidenz meint dabei [...] ein Ereignis der Synchronisation zwischen Zeigen und Auffassen, das als Präsenz dessen, was gezeigt werden soll, erfahrbar wird.“ On a basic level, evidence is a factor in any scene of address: “Somebody has made and addressed a statement, and somebody else has heard and seen it and can attest to it.” (“Jemand hat eine Aussage geäußert und adressiert, jemand anderer hat dies gehört und gesehen und kann es bezeugen.“) (Peters 2005a: 204).

⁸⁹ “liegt [...] irreduzibel im Auge des Betrachters, bleibt immer dem Anderen [...] vorbehalten“.

and hence cannot be planned in advance. As an 'event', it occurs in the moment. On another level, however, a figuration of evidence continuously underlies the production of meaning in a lecture, as every discourse has to depend on what is already considered to be true and evident, and therefore "does not require proof"⁹⁰ (315). This basis has to remain unquestioned or ignored – hence all discourse relies on evidence as a "(non-discursive) supplement"⁹¹ (315). Peters speaks of an "open secret"⁹² (Peters 2005a: 206) of how evidence is produced in a lecture that is passed on but not questioned. Or, put differently, the effects that the conventions of lecturing have on the production of meaning in a lecture are usually ignored.

With regard to lecture performances, this allows us to ask: to what extent do lecture performances rely on the non-discursive elements of the lecture, on those factors that are usually ignored (such as the glass of water from which the lecturer drinks), to illustrate their own lecture-ness, to become identifiable as lectures, to indicate their belonging to the lecture genre and in doing so (paradoxically) also to transcend this genre by potentially "breaking" its frame and exposing the "open secret".

If one approaches cultural performances for instance in Goffman's sense with the means of performance analysis, one somewhat counterfactually borrows the assumption of ubiquitous signification from the context of art and transposes it onto social situations. This way not only what is considered relevant inside these social performances but everything within the observational frame can be considered as participating in signification. [...] The assumption of ubiquitous signification systematically invalidates rules of irrelevance, taboos and routine blindness and questions them with regard to how they determine socio-cultural interaction.⁹³ (Peters 2011: 38-39)

Lecture performances can foreground the role of non-discursive elements in the lecture's production of evidence, just as they can expose the position of authority awarded to the person giving a lecture that I have discussed before. Lecture performances can therefore shift the attention from what is being said to how it is being

⁹⁰ "keines Nachweises bedarf".

⁹¹ "(nicht-diskursive) Supplement".

⁹² "offenes Geheimnis".

⁹³ "Geht man mit Mitteln der Aufführungsanalyse an *cultural performances* etwa im Sinne Goffmans heran, entlehnt man diese Annahme einer ubiquitären Zeichenhaftigkeit gewissermaßen kontrafaktisch aus dem Kunstkontext und überträgt sie auf soziale Situationen. Auf diese Weise lässt sich nicht nur das, was innerhalb dieser sozialen Performances als relevant gilt, sondern alles, was sich im Beobachtungsrahmen zeigt, als Teil von Signifikation betrachten. [...] Die Annahme ubiquitärer Zeichenhaftigkeit setzt also gezielt Irrelevanzregeln, Tabuisierungen und ›Betriebsblindheiten‹ außer Kraft und hinterfragt sie im Hinblick darauf, wie sie die soziokulturelle Interaktion bestimmen."

said, from content to form, but not so the form becomes more significant, but rather that its role in the production of evidence becomes evident. They can, in producing and communicating knowledge or meaning simultaneously, show how knowledge or meaning is being produced and communicated.

This potential of lecture performances can, however, also be found in (more or less) any lecture. The lectures I have used above (by Bourdieu, Derrida or Goffman) as both sources and examples all achieve this in one way or another (and some more eloquently than many lecture performances), if only through talking about the lecture *in* a lecture. Bourdieu describes this operation towards the end of 'A lecture on the lecture':

A discourse, which takes itself as its object attracts attention less to the referent, which could be replaced by any other act, than to the operation which consists of referring to what one is in the process of doing and to what distinguishes it from the fact of simply doing what one is doing, of being, as they say, *entirely* absorbed in what one is doing. This reflexive self-examination, when it occurs, as here, in the midst of the situation itself, has something unusual, or even insolent, about it. It breaks the spell cast by the occasion, it disenchant. It draws attention to how simply doing what one is supposed to do enables one to forget and persuade other people to forget as well. It lists oratorical or rhetorical effects which, like the fact of reading in the earnest tone of improvisation a text prepared in advance, aims to prove and make palpable the fact that the orator is altogether present in what he is doing, that he believes in what he is saying and adheres fully to the mission with which he is invested. It thus introduces a distance which threatens to annihilate, both in the orator and in his public, the belief that is the ordinary precondition of the successful functioning of the institution. (Bourdieu 1990: 197-198)

Bourdieu's description of the distancing effects of both giving and witnessing a lecture about the lecture, which produces self-referentiality as a way of "breaking the spell of the occasion", is reminiscent of the "frame break" that Goffman tries but in his virtuosic command of the lecture format fails to avoid. While Goffman fears that such self-referentiality might threaten the integrity of academic discourse, Bourdieu in contrast considers it as elemental to research: "all the propositions that this science enunciates must be applied to the subject who practises this science". (177)

Lecture performances thus always have to be considered to some extent as "lectures on the lecture" in Bourdieu's sense. Yet not every self-referential lecture necessarily becomes a lecture performance (even though boundaries become very blurry here), because the field of lecturing is only one of the contexts with which the lecture performance enters into an often self-referential relationship. The other context is that of

performance. While in the first part of this chapter I have tried to describe the context within which the lecture performance can serve as a kind of *meta-lecture*, the following part aims to provide a basis for a discussion of the lecture performance as a *meta-performance* by looking at the artistic contexts in which the lecture performances participates and to which it responds.

Before I enter into the discussion of this other context, there remains one issue that needs to be addressed: namely, if there is not some merit in Goffman's insistence that it is the 'subject matter' of a lecture that should demand our attention, rather than its supposedly non-discursive elements. More generally speaking: might paying too much attention to how meaning is produced in a lecture not get in the way exactly of this production of meaning?

The world out there

I have already cited Goffman's assertion that a lecture concerns itself with an understanding of the "world out there", an understanding that, as Peters suggests, is only constructed in the activity of lecturing. At this point, however, I would like to focus on the question how this concern with the "world out there" affects the situation of the lecture itself and the relation between lecturer and audience. The full quote reads: "The lecturer and the audience join in affirming a single proposition. They join in affirming that organized talk can reflect, express, delineate, portray – if not come to grips with – the real world, and that, finally, there is a real, structured, somewhat unitary world out there to comprehend." (Goffman 1981: 194) Goffman here proposes that there is a shared understanding between audience and lecturer that is determined by a shared concern with something outside of the lecture itself: "A lecture, then, purports to take the audience right past the auditorium, the occasion, and the speaker into the subject matter upon which the lecture comments." (166) From this perspective it becomes evident why Goffman is so cautious about focussing the attention on the lecture situation itself, on the world "in here" rather than "out there", because it is the subject matter and hence something external to the situation with which he believes the audience should engage.

In their book *Jenseits der Exzellenz: Eine kleine Morphologie der Welt-Universität* (*Beyond Excellence: a Brief Morphology of the World University*) (2010), Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons formulate a position on the lecture that echoes Goffman's in many

ways. In their conception of the lecture as a “form of public thinking”⁹⁴ (Masschelein and Simons 2010: 59), they too put forward the idea that a “common topic” or “common concern” (and thus something outside of it) is constitutive for the lecture: “In the lecture, the professor does not present the world as a collection of facts and resources, but by making it a common concern. In the auditorium, the world becomes a real and common topic and the listeners a participating public.”⁹⁵ (59) For Masschelein and Simons it is because of this concern with the “world” (the Goffmanian “world out there”) as a “common topic” that a lecture should not be considered a performance: “Because of this, a lecture is no performance or entertainment. There are no stage, no roles, no script [...], instead there is somebody who presents the world and gathers students as an audience. What it is actually about is a form of public thinking [...].”⁹⁶ (59) The use of the term “performance” is not further explicated; it is, however, presented in association with the term “entertainment”, and several elements are listed that differentiate a lecture from a performance in their view: “no stage, no roles, no script”. This list could easily be contested, for instance by referring to Goffman’s description of the different roles the lecturer takes on or of the importance of the lecture text. But what the authors seem to suggest by making a distinction between lecture and performance is that the focus on a “common concern”, on something beyond the lecture situation, is what constitutes the lecture as a “form of public thinking”. In their conception of the lecture, which is clearly influenced by Goffman, Masschelein and Simons emphasise an “egalitarian ethos”⁹⁷ of the lecture, where the scholar or professor “addresses the others under the premise of equality” (49)⁹⁸:

The lecture is thus the place where somebody offers something to think, because he also offers his own thinking or demonstrates and shows his own thoughts. In this instant, ideas and words are exposed, they become public, and because people are

⁹⁴ “Form des öffentlichen Nachdenkens”.

⁹⁵ “Der Professor präsentiert in der Vorlesung die Welt nicht als eine Sammlung von Fakten und Ressourcen, sondern indem er sie zu einem gemeinsamen Anliegen macht. Im Hörsaal wird die Welt zu einem realen und gemeinsamen Thema und werden die Hörer zu einer Anteil nehmenden Öffentlichkeit.”

⁹⁶ “Genau deshalb ist eine Vorlesung auch keine Vorführung oder Unterhaltung. Es gibt keine Bühne, keine Rollen, kein Drehbuch [...], dafür gibt es jemanden, der die Welt präsentiert und Studierende als Publikum versammelt. Worum es eigentlich geht, ist eine Form des öffentlichen Nachdenkens [...].”

⁹⁷ “egalitäres Ethos”.

⁹⁸ “er spricht die anderen unter der Voraussetzung der Gleichheit an”.

gathered around them, they no longer belong to anybody, but everyone (or no one in particular). (70)⁹⁹

Despite the explicit differentiation between lecture and performance, it becomes clear here that for Masschelein and Simons (other than for Goffman) the lecture's liveness is an essential factor, because it is only in the co-presence of the live situation, when "people are gathered around" ideas, that the process or activity of thinking becomes a public matter. This conception of the public as an actual gathering can be problematised (an aspect to which I will return in chapter 4), and I have already reflected on how the lecture situation itself can resonate in the lecture text.¹⁰⁰ What I would like to highlight at this point is that Masschelein's and Simons's emphasis on the relevance of the live situation— in contrast to Goffman's position — shows that an awareness of this situation does not obstruct an involvement with the "subject matter". Even in stressing the importance of this involvement, in being attentive to something outside the auditorium, they cannot ignore the importance of the situation itself: "In this sense becoming a student also always means to let oneself be carried away from the auditorium, beyond the lecture towards the subject matter, towards the word, and thus to be here as well as there."¹⁰¹ (59)

Being "here as well as there": from this perspective lecture performances could be described as a "form of public thinking" *about* public thinking, as a form that asks its audience to shift their attention back and forth from engaging in a common topic to engaging in a consideration of the situation within which this topic is presented.

⁹⁹ "Die Vorlesung ist also der Ort, wo jemand etwas zu denken gibt, weil er auch sein eigenes Denken darbietet oder seine eigenen Gedanken demonstriert und zeigt. In diesem Augenblick werden Ideen und Worte exponiert, werden sie öffentlich, und weil Menschen um sie versammelt werden, gehören sie nicht länger irgendjemandem, sondern jedem (oder niemand im Besonderen)."

¹⁰⁰ Peters also comments on this aspect with regard to Goffman's 'The Lecture': "Goffman demands of the academic lecture that it detaches the audience's attention from the situation of the lecture and steers it towards the subject matter of the lecture, as it is presented in the lecture text. Nevertheless, the lecture text [...] continuously steers our attention back towards the situation of the lecture performance." (Peters 2011: 124) ["Goffman verlangt vom wissenschaftlichen Vortrag, er müsse die Aufmerksamkeit des Publikums von der Situation des Vortrags abziehen und in das Thema des Vortrags, wie es im Text des Vortrags gegeben sei, hineinlenken. Dennoch lenkt der Text des Vortrags [...] unsere Aufmerksamkeit unablässig auf die Situation der Vortragsperformance zurück."]

¹⁰¹ "In diesem Sinne bedeutet Studierender zu werden stets auch, sich aus dem Hörsaal davontragen zu lassen, über den Vortrag hinaus hin zum Thema, hin zur Welt, und somit sowohl hier als auch dort zu sein."

Contexts of performing

Lineages

In the introduction to this chapter, I have already pointed out that an attempt to situate the lecture performance within the history of performance as an art form is faced with the problem of where and when to begin the account. This problem is however complicated by the fact that the same can be said for the history of performance as an art form itself. The question of where and when to begin the account is for instance already evident in the title of RoseLee Goldberg's influential history of performance, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*. "Performance became accepted as a medium of artistic expression in its own right in the 1970s" (Goldberg 2011: 7), is the first sentence of the foreword to the book's third edition. While Goldberg here uses the more general term "performance", this is also and maybe even more specifically true for "performance art", the term that Goldberg uses in the title of her book. Nevertheless, Goldberg begins her account of performance as a "medium of artistic expression" with an account of Futurist performance, the emergence of which for her coincides with the publication of the Futurist manifesto in 1909 (Goldberg 2011: 11).¹⁰²

And while the lecture performance, to use Goldberg's words about performance, "became accepted as a medium of artistic expression in its own right" in the late 1990s, when roughly also the term "lecture performance" emerged, I have already mentioned earlier examples of works that could be and have been considered lecture performances. In an article entitled 'Performance and Pedagogy: All Talk, Some Action' (2010), Karen Archey for instance draws up a lineage of the lecture performance, choosing, somewhat arbitrarily, Joseph Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965) as the first example of "of art utilising both performance and the pedagogical lecture" (Archey 2010):

Beginning on the cusp of postmodernism, Beuys's 'How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare' marks the onset of lecture-based performance, through the era of 'institutional critique' and the performances of Andrea Fraser posing as museum docent Jane Castleton, and towards the contemporary work of Anton Vidokle, Mark Leckey, the Bruce High Quality Foundation and Seth Price. This lineage is not a direct chronology of

¹⁰² If we looked instead at a concept like Lehmann's "postdramatic theatre" that engages with many of the developments that Goldberg describes from a theatre perspective, it would seem equally plausible to go back a few thousand years more: grounded in the history of drama, the concept also has had to account for earlier theatre forms that Lehmann himself has described as "pre-dramatic" ["prä-dramatisch"] (Lehmann 1991: 2), such as Greek tragedy.

amassed references, but a largely fabricated one. It illustrates paradigm shifts in artistic discourse and changes in the assumed function of the artist via the lecture-performance. (Archey 2010)

Archey's comment on the fabricated nature of her proposed lineage should be kept in mind when looking at some other attempts at such a lineage. I have already mentioned that often, in academic discussions of lecture performances as well as in exhibitions or catalogues, contemporary lecture performances are presented alongside older works that are retrospectively classified as lecture performances. This approach seems especially problematic when it suggests some kind of continuity between them, especially when there is no indication that contemporary lecture performances are developed in response to, or even out of an awareness of older examples of performance work that may have used a similar form or addressed issues in a similar way.¹⁰³ Archey, at least to some extent, situates the works she chooses to discuss in relation to their different historical contexts, which is evident in her assertion that the lineage she sketches shows "paradigm shifts in artistic discourse".

Archey identifies three stages in the development of the lecture performance. The first is characterised by the attempt at "fostering a community within which to speak about artistic practice" (Archey 2010)¹⁰⁴, for which Beuys's work is considered paradigmatic. The second is the practice of institutional critique, here exemplified by Andrea Fraser's satirical exploration of "subjective and objective relationships within the museum sphere", which Archey characterises as an "authoritative subversion" (Archey 2010) of the institutions of art. The third phase, which encompasses contemporary artistic explorations of the lecture form, can according to her be described either as a shift towards the "strictly educational" or by "an investigation of the emerging role of the artist-as-professional" (Archey 2010). The former is represented by Vidokle's *unitednationsplaza*, a series of lectures that for Archey "barely engaged performance or

¹⁰³ Although there are many examples of lecture performances that engage with the history of performance (in the following chapter, I will for instance look at Wagner-Feigl-Forschung's *Encyclopaedia of Performance Art*), I am not aware of any examples that explicitly investigate this history with regard to early artistic explorations of the lecture form (I do this to some extent in my own lecture performance *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?*).

¹⁰⁴ This is actually a more appropriate characterisation of other pieces Beuys created, for instance his *Fat Transformation Piece* from 1972 (for an analysis see Lange 2007), than of *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, where the "community" consisted largely of Beuys and a dead animal.

any other codified artistic practice” (Archey 2010)¹⁰⁵ and made it thus difficult to be identified as art at all.

Archey’s “fabricated lineage” and her analysis of the paradigm shifts it supposedly illustrates is of course very much dependent on her selection of examples – she herself describes this lineage as “highly selective” (Archey 2010) and insists on the “heterogeneity” (Archey 2010) of the form. Nonetheless, her lineage is constructed exclusively from works from a visual arts context, ignoring some of the most significant examples of lecture performance work by artists from other disciplines.¹⁰⁶

Introducing the *Performing Idea Archive of Performance Lectures* in London in 2010, Gavin Butt, as already mentioned, situated the lecture performance in the tradition of the avant-garde and mentioned not only John Cage and Beuys, but also Antonin Artaud’s *Theatre and the Plague* (1933) as an early example of lecture performance work.¹⁰⁷ This selection suggests a lineage very different from the one that Archey proposes. Butt’s approach nevertheless resembles Archey’s in one important respect: both locate its beginnings well before the establishment of the term “lecture performance”. However, whilst I agree that a history of a genre or form might well include examples from the period before the genre was named or identified as such, the emergence of a term for it is nevertheless an important development that needs to be considered. Before the emergence of the term, before the identification of the genre, that is at the time when these works were first developed and shown, there could not have been a sense of their participation in a specific genre called ‘lecture performance’. Or, in other words, these works, while participating in a series of contexts and genres, did not exhibit their belonging to the context within which they are retrospectively discussed. Moreover, in

¹⁰⁵ Archey compares this work to Beuys’s focus on “discussion and community” (Archey 2010), which implies a certain continuity rather than the paradigm shift that she proposes.

¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, when lecture performances by artists from different backgrounds are addressed within one framework or event (such as the Lecture Performance exhibition at Kölnischer Kunstverein or the Performing Idea Archive of Performance Lectures at Whitechapel Gallery), there is usually hardly any consideration made of how these different backgrounds have influenced the respective performance works.

¹⁰⁷ In histories of early performance and performance art, references to performance work that incorporates lecture elements are not exactly manifold, but nevertheless a few examples can be found. Goldberg, for instance, mentions Hausmann’s reading of his lecture *The New Materials in Painting* on the occasion of the second Dada soirée in Berlin on 12 April 1918 (Goldberg 2001: 56) as an example of the diversity of contributions to this and similar Dada events. Butt probably had Cage’s famous *Lecture on Nothing* (1949) in mind when referring to him as a protagonist of the lecture performance, but it is worth noting here that an important event in performance history, the *Untitled Event* at Black Mountain College in 1952, was also preceded by a lecture delivered by Cage: “Before the actual performance, Cage gave a reading of the Huang Po Doctrine of Universal Mind which, in its curious way, anticipated the event itself.” (Goldberg 2001: 126)

the case of the lecture performance, the emergence of the term seems to coincide with an unprecedented output of works that are thus identified. Although it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the term was first used, within a relatively short amount of time (starting in the late 1990s) not only the term ‘lecture performance’ was introduced, but the practice described by it gained relevance within the context of contemporary performance. There is, accordingly, another lineage that locates the origins of the form around that time and that often awards a prominent position to Le Roy’s *Product of Circumstances*, a piece widely considered as “paradigmatic for the lecture performance format”¹⁰⁸ (Peters 2006: 124). In 2000, in an article about storytelling in contemporary theatre, dance and performance that focuses on *Product of Circumstances* as the central example, Gabriele Brandstetter still puts the term ‘lecture performance’ in quotation marks when discussing Le Roy’s piece (Brandstetter 2000: 413). This suggests that in 2000 the lecture performance is still perceived as an emergent form. Unlike *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* in Archey’s account, *Product of Circumstances* is never explicitly considered as the *first* lecture performance; it might however well be the first lecture performance that has entered into academic discourse – at least *as* a lecture performance. The prominent position of the piece is further exemplified by the citation from the Unfriendly Takeover website quoted in the introduction:

For some years now, even decades, there is talk about the fusion of artistic practice and its theory, about the crossing of the borders of genres, about self-reflective art and creative science. No wonder that [since] Xavier Le Roy’s ‘Product of Circumstances’ of 1999 lecture performances have become more and more popular. Popular as a thrilling, performative and discursive medium for choreographers, performers, directors and theorists alike. (Unfriendly Takeover 2010)

This quote also suggests a lineage, or two lineages to be precise: it places the lecture performance in the context of the debate on art and theory that dates back several decades (and I will return to this debate a little later on). And it furthermore proposes that within this already existing context, the lecture performance offers something new: where before there was “talk” there is now a “medium” that is both “performative and discursive”. Unlike the explicit attempts to construct a lineage of the lecture performance that I have summarised, which locate the origin of the lecture performance somewhere in art or performance history, this implicit lineage includes

¹⁰⁸ “paradigmatisch für das Format der Lecture-Performance“.

references to other fields, to science and theory. Exemplary for this perspective is, of course, Peters's writing on the lecture performance, which places it in the context of a history of the lecture as performance, and thus, to quote again, in a tradition "that can be traced back at least to the 18th century".

In her account, Peters does however acknowledge both the existence of different lineages and the fact that around the year 2000 there emerges a new development, a "new intensity" of lecture performance work:

Around the turn of the millennium the lecture performance appears on the public scene with a new intensity – in very different variations and media constellations and across the spectrum of artistic and scientific discourses. This lecture performance trend in many ways connects to historical scenarios of the art of lecturing, even though the lecture performance scene itself seems to identify its predecessors in the conceptual and performance art of the 1960s.¹⁰⁹ (Peters 2011: 180)

After briefly considering the possible origin of the lecture performance in the history of performance art, Peters focuses on a distinction between such earlier, "singular"¹¹⁰ (180) examples¹¹¹ and the emergence of the contemporary lecture performance form: "The lecture as performance is now (re-)discovered at the same time by scenic performance, visual arts and science [...]"¹¹² (181). Peters sees the emergence not of the lecture performance as such (which for her is part of the larger historical context of the lecture as performance) but of its recent trend as originating in different contexts simultaneously, which she describes as follows: "The interests of performance artists and cultural producers who rediscover theatre as public space, without, however,

¹⁰⁹ "Um die Jahrtausendwende erscheint die Vortragsperformance in neuer Intensität auf der öffentlichen Bildfläche – in sehr unterschiedlichen Spielarten und medialen Konstellationen und quer durch das Spektrum künstlerischer und wissenschaftlicher Diskurse. Diese Konjunktur der Lecture-Performance schließt auf vielerlei Weise an historische Szenarien der Vortragskunst an, obwohl die Lecture-Performance-Szene selbst ihre Vorläufer vor allem in der Konzept- und Performancekunst der 1960er Jahre zu sehen scheint."

¹¹⁰ "vereinzelt".

¹¹¹ Despite this assessment, Peters references examples from the history of performance art at other points in her book. For instance, a few pages later, she mentions Dan Graham's *Performer-Audience-Mirror* (1975), but tellingly again in the context of a reference to the history of the lecture (which also means outside the context of art): "In the action *Performer-Audience-Mirror* by Dan Graham [...] I saw mirrored the principle of speculation of the extemporaneous lecture around 1800." (Peters 2011: 183) ["In der Aktion *Performer-Audience-Mirror* von Dan Graham [...], spiegelte sich für mich nicht zuletzt das Spekulationsprinzip des freien Vortrags um 1800."]

¹¹² "Der Vortrag als Performance wird nun von der szenischen Performance, der bildenden Kunst und der Wissenschaft zugleich (wieder-)entdeckt [...]"

wanting to “make theatre”, and researchers looking for alternative spaces of knowledge production, meet.”¹¹³ (Peters 2011: 181-182)

The search for “alternative spaces” is linked by Peters with the increasing restrictions in the academic system that I have described in the first part of this chapter. This does, however, also mean that the contexts in which these shared interests become manifest are primarily arts contexts: “An exodus from the academic institutions is the consequence, and alternative conceptions of education as knowledge production temporarily find a precarious shelter in the public spaces of art.”¹¹⁴ (181) In the strategic alliance between art and science, the lecture performance for Peters “takes on new concrete functions as a format of knowledge presentation in contexts that can no longer fall back on existing formats”¹¹⁵ (182). And it is here that Peters locates further differences to earlier practices of artists such as Beuys, which for her were more concerned with a “unification of science and art”¹¹⁶ (182), forming a context in which the lecture performance remains an “exotic formal experiment”¹¹⁷ (182). The lecture performance that emerges out of this strategic alliance, on the other hand, concerns itself, according to Peters, with “concrete artistic, scientific or social concerns that look for new forms with which to address an equally new kind of public.”¹¹⁸ (182)

Peters’s narrative of the emergence of the “lecture performance trend” around the turn of the millennium proposes a synchronicity of developments in arts and science, and from this perspective suggests that earlier artistic experiments with the lecture form remain “exotic” or “singular” as even in their appropriation of an academic or scientific format they do not participate equally in both contexts. While I agree with Peters that there is a greater permeability between the contexts of art and science in the development she describes, I still purport that most protagonists of the emerging lecture performance scene were (or are) first and foremost artists. Regardless of whether this

¹¹³ “Die Interessen von Performance-Künstlerinnen, -Künstlern und Kulturschaffenden, die das Theater als öffentlichen Raum wieder entdecken, ohne doch ›Theater machen‹ zu wollen, und Forscherinnen und Forschern, die nach alternativen Orten der Wissensproduktion suchen, treffen sich.”

¹¹⁴ “Ein Exodus aus den akademischen Institutionen ist die Folge und so finden alternative Entwürfe von Bildung als Wissensproduktion zeitweilig einen prekären Unterschlupf in den öffentlichen Räumen der Kunst.”

¹¹⁵ “übernimmt neue konkrete Funktionen als Format der Wissenspräsentation in Zusammenhängen, die nicht mehr auf gegebene Formate zurückgreifen können“.

¹¹⁶ “Vereinigung von Wissenschaft und Kunst“.

¹¹⁷ “exotisches Formalexperiment“.

¹¹⁸ “[...] konkrete künstlerische, wissenschaftliche und gesellschaftliche Anliegen, die nach neuen Formen suchen, um sich an eine ebenso neue Form von Öffentlichkeit zu wenden.“

perception is true, however, and regardless of which context the person presenting a lecture performance is primarily associated with (which is often not easy to decide), what nevertheless remains to be discussed is how lecture performances are perceived not only in relation to the lecture as academic performance, but also in relation to artistic performance.

If the “exodus from academic institutions” into the art context that Peters describes (or, seen from a different perspective, the appropriation of academic formats into this context) is not simply an attempt to re-institute existing models of knowledge production in a different environment, then it also implies that this development cannot only be described by looking at how lecture performances renegotiate the production of meaning in lectures. It is equally important to consider how it does so in performance. Or, put differently, looking at the lecture performance in the context of an “art of lecturing” does not fully explain how the lecture performance is perceived not only as *an art* but as *art*, how it challenges perceived notions not only of what constitutes a lecture but also of what constitutes an artistic performance. In order to approach this issue, a look at the history (or several histories) of performance as an art form will indeed be useful – not to construct a lineage, but to point out how the lecture performance relates to different models of aesthetic perception that are associated with performance work.

Performance histories

Performed in 1965, Beuys’s *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* is today regarded as a canonical example of early performance art. When Peters writes that “the lecture performance scene itself seems to identify its predecessors in the conceptual and performance art of the 1960s”, Beuys is obviously one of the figures she has in mind (as her later comments confirm). However, it is not only the label ‘lecture performance’ that is retrospectively applied to the piece. The terms ‘performance’ and ‘performance art’, as Marvin Carlson points out, only became “widely utilized after 1970 to describe much of the experimental work of that new decade” (Carlson 2004: 108). In Carlson’s account, although performance art “drew much of its inspiration and methods from the complex experimental mix of the 1960s” (108), it was only in the 1970s and 1980s that “performance and performance art [...] emerged as major cultural activities in the United

States as well as in Western Europe and Japan¹¹⁹ (110). While this is quite a precise temporal outline of the emergence of performance and performance art – only complicated by the fact that a distinction between these two terms and practices (which Carlson provides elsewhere in his book) is missing – most histories of performance and performance art extend beyond this temporal frame to include examples of works dating back to much earlier periods in time. Goldberg, for instance, while focussing her account on the 20th Century, mentions among early examples a pageant directed by Leonardo da Vinci in 1490 (Goldberg 2011: 8). Indeed, the period after 1970 is only discussed in the final quarter of *Performance Art*¹²⁰ – despite the fact that she, like Carlson, regards the 1970s as the time when performance is recognised as an autonomous art form (7).

Performance in Goldberg’s account is a form that, firstly, has always been there but whose importance was not previously recognised; and that, secondly, is per se radical: “Live gestures have constantly been used as a weapon against the conventions of established art” (7).¹²¹ Goldberg’s narrative of the history of performance can be described as the attempt to appropriate the history of the avant-garde for the field of performance. Consequently, she attempts to develop continuity where before there was an “omission” (7), and thus discusses all her examples (i.e. work from the beginning of the 20th century as well as contemporary work) under the paradigm of performance. What follows from this approach is a very wide definition of performance: “By its very nature, performance defies precise or easy definition beyond the simple declaration that it is live art by artists. Any stricter definition would immediately negate the possibility of performance itself.” (9) There is an obvious contradiction between Goldberg’s assumption of an inherent radicalness of performance and the width of her definition –

¹¹⁹ There are of course also other histories of performance art beyond this Western perspective, although these have only quite recently come into focus. For an account of Eastern European performance practices see for instance Harutyunyan et al. 2012.

¹²⁰ The rest of Goldberg’s account is devoted to tracing the history of performance within the history of the avant-garde: “[...] whenever a certain school [...] seemed to have reached an impasse, artists have turned to performance as a way of breaking down categories and indicating new directions. Moreover, within the history of the avant garde – meaning those artists who led the field in breaking with each successive tradition – performance in the twentieth century has been at the forefront of such an activity: an avant avant garde.” (Goldberg 2001: 7) This focus on the avant-garde is in turn criticised by Carlson who – not surprisingly, given that he is writing from a US American performance studies perspective – instead emphasises the importance of “popular and folk forms” (Carlson 2004: 83).

¹²¹ The martial vocabulary is consistent with the image of the avant-garde.

not all “live art by artists”¹²² can be described as “a weapon against the conventions of established art”. I believe that Goldberg’s evocation of performance’s “radical stance” (7) is characteristic for an understanding of performance informed by the, as Frazer Ward puts it, “frequently confrontational” (Ward 2002: 2) performance art practices that have emerged in the 1970’s, the period leading up to the publication of Goldberg’s self-proclaimed “first history of performance” (Goldberg 2001: 7). If the performance art of the 1970’s is repeatedly brought up as one of the historical reference points for the emergence of the lecture performance, then the question is what remains of this perceived “radical stance” in contemporary lecture performance work. Or, to use Goldberg’s words, against which “conventions of established art” is the lecture performance used as a “weapon”?

The history that Goldberg claims as that of performance or performance art has also been described from the perspective of experimental theatre. A recent example for such an approach is Hans-Thies Lehmann’s account of the “Prehistories” of postdramatic theatre (Lehmann 2006: 46-68). Here, a different narrative unfolds, as Lehmann insists on maintaining a distinction between the experimental theatre forms he describes and performance art – despite acknowledging the connections between them:

Since the immediacy of a shared experience between artists and audience is at the heart of Performance Art, it is obvious that the closer theatre gets to an event and to the performance artist’s gesture of self-presentation, the more a common borderland between Performance and Theatre develops – especially since in the Performance Art of the 1980s a counter trend towards theatricalization could be observed. (134)¹²³

Lehmann’s account of a “blurred boundary” (134) between theatre and performance art, while foregrounding the similarities between the two forms, still has to insist on a distinction between them. This difference once again has to be situated within the history of the forms: as the term “postdramatic theatre” would not make sense for works clearly positioned outside a theatrical lineage, Lehmann has to acknowledge the visual arts heritage of such work: “From the point of view of visual arts, Performance Art presents itself as an expansion of pictorial or object-like presentations of reality through

¹²² In this deliberately imprecise definition of performance as “live art by artists”, Goldberg uses a term that in itself now constitutes (at least in the UK) an established category: ‘live art’. I will briefly discuss the term below.

¹²³ This shift within performance art towards the theatrical has also been noted by Carlson (Carlson 2004: 114f.).

the addition of the *dimension of time*.” (134). From this perspective, in its proposition of a discontinuity between developments in visual arts and theatre, rather than the continuity that Goldberg suggests, performance art initially appears as a new form originating from a visual arts context. However, such distinctions are increasingly difficult to maintain, as Lehmann’s reference to of a “common borderland between Performance and Theatre” shows. I propose that it is this “common borderland” that the lecture performance inhabits, and that the existence of such an overlap also means that it is not especially surprising that the lecture performance is taken up by practitioners from different backgrounds in the second half of the 1990s.¹²⁴ Moreover, at the time when the term ‘lecture performance’ was coined, ‘performance’ was the term commonly used to describe the practices that had emerged somewhere in this “common borderland” between performance art and experimental theatre (and, it has to be added, contemporary dance).¹²⁵ As such, the term ‘performance’ is or at least was in that period largely synonymous with the term ‘live art’ as the London-based Live Art Development Agency defines it: “Live Art is an umbrella term encompassing a range of performance, performative and time-based practices that are unrestricted by artform boundaries.” (Live Art Development Agency 2012) In a short lecture performance¹²⁶ entitled *What is Live Art?* (2002), Joshua Sofaer gives a definition of ‘live art’ that evokes Goldberg’s definition of performance: “Well, at its most fundamental, Live Art is when an artist

¹²⁴ These different practices – experimental theatre, performance art, dance – often found a common place in venues such as the Frankfurt Mousonturm – where I first encountered them as a student of Lehmann, and where, among the many performances I saw I also witnessed quite a few lecture performances.

¹²⁵ I would like to mention two publications from that period: Tim Etchells’s *Certain Fragments* (1999), which documents the work of his company Forced Entertainment and carries the subtitle ‘*Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment*’; and Goat Island’s Matthew Goulish’s *39 Microlectures* (2001), which is subtitled ‘*in proximity of performance*’. Not only do the respective subtitles show that the artists locate their practice or that of their companies in the field of performance, but both books also illustrate that leading practitioners of performance were at that time drawn towards theorising their practice. In addition, both books contain pieces of writing that are relevant to a discussion of the lecture performance. Goulish has performed some of his *Microlectures* live, for instance in the context of a Forced Entertainment retrospective at Mousonturm in Frankfurt in 2003 together with Etchells. And Forced Entertainment’s *A Decade of Forced Entertainment* (1994), the script of which is published in *Certain Fragments* and which was originally advertised as “part autobiography, part archive, part historical meditation and part theoretical speculation” (Etchells 1999: 29), could be considered as one of the first lecture performances to emerge out of that particular context of performance.

¹²⁶ *What is Live Art?* Is a lecture performance for camera. The 5-minute video shows Sofaer, dressed in a suit, giving a short introduction to live art in a busy street facing the camera that slowly zooms out, exposing more and more of the environment and passers-by looking surprised or confused at the artist. This look of surprise is explained when Sofaer, having finished his lecture, turns around and walks off, and we see that a hole had been cut into the back of his trousers, exposing his bare behind.

chooses to make work directly in front of the audience in space and time.” (Sofaer 2002)¹²⁷

Their liveness is the “fundamental” feature that is invoked in definitions of all these often overlapping forms or genres, whether they are referred to as performance, performance art, live art or postdramatic theatre. And while liveness is a feature that is obviously not exclusive to these forms (both Goldberg’s and Sofaer’s definitions could also describe a concert or a conventional play), what the definitions show is the great value that is attributed to liveness in performance in general (to use ‘performance’ here as an “umbrella term” instead of ‘live art’, because it is a component of the term ‘lecture performance’). In the first part of this chapter, I have already focused on the very different value that is placed on liveness in a performance or theatre context in contrast to a lecture context. Goffman, for instance, purports that a lecture’s content can remain unaffected by its live presentation and be communicated equally well as text. Such prejudices can also be found in specific models of the production of meaning in performance that conceive of the live moment as inviting a primarily emotional response which can only later be rationalised. While Goffman argues that its liveness is an aspect that can be disregarded in the lecture’s production of meaning, the models that I will discuss in what follows imply that live performance resists an immediate understanding.

Experience and thought

Marvin Carlson suggests that early performance art was characterised by an “opposition to logical and discursive thought and speech” (Carlson 2004: 110). From this

¹²⁷ Sofaer expands on the establishment of the term: “The term ‘Live Art’ came into usage in the UK in the mid-1980s, and was born out of a frustration by arts professionals to account for art practices that expanded or escaped the classifications in use. Artists were making work that wasn’t quite dance, that couldn’t be called theatre, that didn’t fit into any of the categories on offer. While Performance Art had been an established genre in the US since the 1970’, the term ‘Live Art’ was an attempt to acknowledge the diversity of live based arts practices.” Because “performance art” describes an “established genre”, it cannot for Sofaer account for the “diversity of practices” associated with the more general term “live art”. His description of these practices, however, echoes Goldberg’s portrayal of performance art “in the twentieth century” as a “permissive, open-ended medium with endless variables, executed by artists impatient with the limitations of more established forms, and determined to take their art directly to the public.” (Goldberg 2001: 9) Performance, Goldberg goes on, “draws freely on any number of disciplines and media for material – literature, poetry, theatre, music, dance, architecture and painting, as well as video, film, slides and narrative – deploying them in any combination.” (9) Again, she here conflates the terms “performance” and “performance art”; the latter does indeed, as Sofaer suggests, describe a more specific practice emerging only in the second half of the twentieth century.

perspective it seems difficult to imagine that the lecture performance, a form that heavily relies on “logical and discursive thought and speech”, even if it sometimes transcends, parodies or perverts it, should emerge from this tradition. That there is some value in Carlson’s diagnosis, however, becomes evident when looking at, for instance, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*. I will discuss this performance – in which Beuys, as the title suggests, explained pictures to a dead hare in a gallery while an audience was watching from the outside – in more detail in chapter 5 of this thesis. But for now I would like to use it as an example of what could be described as a conflicted relation rather than an outright opposition to rationalisation. While Beuys’s performance apparently consists mainly of an act of explanation, the audience is twice excluded from this act, first by not being addressed directly and secondly by not being able to hear what is being said. “[...] I do not really like explaining them to people ... A hare comprehends more than many human beings with their stubborn rationalism ...” (in Warr and Jones 2000: 76), Beuys himself afterwards said about the piece. At first this statement seems to be very much in line with Carlson’s assessment, but it is also evidence to the fact that, after the performance, Beuys decided to try and explain why he had performed the action, and in doing so actually appealed to an understanding of the action on the level of the “stubborn rationalism” he criticised in the statement. To what extent this discourse about the work can be separated from the work itself will be a focus of my later discussion of the piece. At this point, I would like to focus on the initial moment of reception or perception of the work, on what Gregory L. Ulmer, in the chapter of his book *Applied Grammatology* that is dedicated to Beuys’s work (and in which he also discusses *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* in some detail), refers to as the “primary effect” (Ulmer 1985: 252) of the work.

In the beginning of the chapter, in the context of introducing his readers to “contemporary movements such as conceptual art, performance art and video art” (228), Ulmer sketches a development that is characterised by a collapsing of distinctions between art and science in general and between the different forms in which they are manifest in particular:

In short, there is a general shift under way, equally affecting the arts and the sciences, in which the old classifications organizing the intellectual map into disciplines, media, genres, and modes no longer correspond to the terrain. The organizing principle of the

current situation is the collapse of the distinction (opposition or hierarchy) between critical-theoretical reflection and creative practice. (225)

Ulmer's statement can be read as a contribution to the debate about the "fusion" of art and science, theory and creative practice that, according to *Unfriendly Takeover*, has been going on "for decades" (*Unfriendly Takeover* 2010) and provides the context for the emergence of the lecture performance. Beuys's practice for Ulmer appears to be indicative of this development (Ulmer speaks of Beuys as "exemplary" (Ulmer 1985: 226)), which seems to contradict Carlson's assessment of the opposition of performance and thought. However, when it comes to the reception of the work, Ulmer's reading of Beuys still to some extent relies on exactly the distinction between "critical-theoretical reflection and creative practice".

In short (I will expand on this aspect in chapter 5), Ulmer proposes that Beuys's work resists an immediate understanding. An understanding of the work might however develop in retrospect as it is "intended to function by means of an aftereffect" (252). Despite mentioning "performance art", Ulmer never explicitly considers the specific social situation of the work (such as the co-presence of performer and spectators), and instead focuses on Beuys's use of objects:

[...] Beuys's objects are both what they are [...] and stimulation for the general process of memory and imagination. At the primary level, the object does not 'transfer a message' but moves the spectator – remaining open in its reference, the object evokes associated memories that are motivated less by the qualities of the object than by the subject of reception [...]. (251)

The effect that Ulmer describes here is one of not understanding. In the passage leading up to this quote, he evokes Derrida's reading of Mallarmé's writing as retaining "the structure of mimesis but without representing anything" and applies it to Beuys where "the objects produce the effect of reference, but without referring to anything" (251). It is because of this structure that, according to Ulmer, the spectator has to provide the reference through her "associated memories". While Ulmer disregards the social situation in which this "effect of reference" takes place, his remarks illustrate how a representational structure is at work even in the assumed immediate presence of the performance event that, as Andrew Quick summarises, "appears to resist the operation of representation, of repetition, of illusion, while somehow being or presenting 'the real'

itself" (Quick 1996: 12). Nevertheless, the effect that Ulmer describes as taking place at the "primary level" of reception is primarily emotional. The spectator is described as being "moved", and her being moved is due to the fact that there is no "message" that can be immediately understood. Thus, Ulmer, while aiming to use Beuys's work as an example of a collapsing of distinctions between "critical-theoretical reflection and creative practice", seems to insist that "critical-theoretical reflection" is something that only promises results after the "primary effect", after the initial emotional response that is triggered by the failure to understand. And while to associate "creative practice" with a primarily emotional response would seem to reinstitute the oppositions that Ulmer sees dissolve, it is nevertheless striking that for him the rational understanding and the emotional experience of the work function asynchronously.

In a quote that Ulmer does not properly reference, the effect of Beuys's work is described as being of an "intensity, which can register as a long-lasting shock in the mind of the confronted viewer" (in Ulmer 1985: 253). Ulmer himself never uses the term "shock" to describe the effect that Beuys's work has on its audience, but he nevertheless sketches a process in which an emotional response is over time transformed into a more rational understanding. And while emotional experience and rational understanding are never that clearly distinguished but are described as interrelated processes, the question remains what is left of the original "shock" (again, a term Ulmer only introduces via quotations) after the temporal distance has afforded a rational understanding.

How does Ulmer's model of aesthetic perception relate to the lecture performance? In its appropriation of the lecture form, a form that is conventionally not understood as being an object of aesthetic perception, the lecture performance itself is often suspected of being primarily concerned with, in Gardner's words, the passing on of "straightforward expertise" (Gardner 2008). This implies that, despite demonstrating how certain factors participate in the production of meaning in a lecture setting that would more readily be associated with "creative practice", or, indeed, with aesthetic perception, the lecture is often understood to appeal primarily to the faculties of "critical-theoretical reflection". This in turn would mean that Ulmer's model of aesthetic perception cannot be applied to the lecture performance, not simply because it does not invite an aesthetic perception (which it does, albeit not exclusively), but because it does not necessarily defer an immediate understanding (although it might occasionally do so). Or, to be more precise, if the lecture is aimed at the production of evidence, which Peters describes as "the event

of a synchronisation between showing and understanding that is experienced as the presence of that which is to be shown” (Peters 2007: 38), this is at least partly also true for the lecture performance. The production of evidence as a “synchronisation between showing and understanding” describes a process of perception that is fundamentally different to the model of a deferred understanding that Ulmer proposes. While Ulmer develops this model specifically for Beuys’s work, Lehmann proposes a similar model for the “aesthetic experience of theatre” in general:

The aesthetic experience of theatre [...] is only in a secondary manner reflection. The latter rather takes place *ex post* and would not even have a motivation had it not been for the prior experience of an event that cannot be ‘thought’ or ‘reflected’ and which, in this sense, has the character of a shock. (Lehmann 2006: 142)

Here, too, the “shock” of the aesthetic experience is linked to an inability to make sense of what is being perceived by means of “critical-theoretical reflection”, which in turn is the “motivation” for a process of reflection. Lehmann develops his model of the aesthetic experience of theatre from the idea of a co-presence of actors and spectators, a presence that according to him is “of a different kind than the presence of a picture, a sound, a piece of architecture” (142). Nevertheless, Lehmann in a next step generalises his observations about theatre and applies them to “all aesthetic experience”:

All aesthetic experience knows this bipolarity: first the confrontation with a presence, ‘sudden’ and in principle this side of (or beyond) the rupturing, doubling reflection; then the processing of this experience by an act of retroactive remembering, contemplating and reflecting. (142)

After this generalising statement, Lehmann returns to discussing the aesthetic experience of theatre in particular, but this time even more specifically considering “the presence we are dealing with in performance and in those forms of theatre that abandon the paradigm of dramatic theatre” (142). Over the course of a few sentences, Lehmann applies his model of aesthetic experience to three different contexts; or, more precisely, he each time frames the context differently. But how can a model of aesthetic experience be described as specific to one particular artistic form (theatre, postdramatic theatre, or, to bring Ulmer back into the equation, Beuys’s objects), when it can also be applied to the widest possible context (“all aesthetic experience”)? I propose that we are here

confronted with an idea of aesthetic experience that, while claiming universal validity, is still assumed to be more pronounced in the reception of a specific art form (in this case, it is implicitly assumed to be more pronounced in theatre than in other art forms, and even more so in postdramatic theatre). What is specific to these art forms for Lehmann is their relation to presence and to the present. Besides defining this “present of performance” (which is also the title of this section of *Postdramatic Theatre* (141)) as based on co-presence, Lehmann approaches it via Karl Heinz Bohrer’s conception of an “aesthetics of fright”, reminding us that concepts like “fright” or “shock” have become a “fundamental motif within contemporary theories of art and theatre”(143)¹²⁸. Lehmann himself introduces a slightly weaker term in speaking of an “aesthetic of startling” (143), describing the effect of being startled as “independent of an object” and thus as something that is not contained in a representational framework:

In the dimension of theatre aesthetics, however, we must recognize the structure of a shock whose arousal is independent of an object – not a fright occasioned by a story or an event but a fright about fright itself, so to speak. It can be illustrated by the experience of being startled when we suddenly realize we are missing something or cannot remember something [...]. The present, which in this way is an experience that is not suspended or suspendable, is the experience of a lack or of having missed something. (143)

While Lehmann again describes an effect that he considers specific to theatre, his description of the startling effect of (postdramatic?¹²⁹) theatre is structurally similar to Ulmer’s description of the Beuysian object as producing “the effect of reference, but without referring to anything”. For both Lehmann and Ulmer, this “primary effect” (of not understanding, of having missed something) motivates a process of reflection. The difference is that Lehmann, in contrast to Ulmer, does not specify when or if at all this process of reflection produces an understanding. It could happen in an instance, it could never happen, but it demands a specific kind of “involvement” in the performance:

The performance addresses itself fundamentally to my involvement: my personal responsibility to realize the mental synthesis of the event; my attention having to

¹²⁸ Lehmann here refers to authors like Walter Benjamin, Theodor W, Adorno, or Bertolt Brecht, and even though he also mentions more contemporary sources like Jean-François Lyotard or Heiner Müller, the selection of references belies his statement that it is “contemporary theories” he is here engaging.

¹²⁹ Because he keeps re-framing the context he refers to throughout, it is difficult to keep track of which particular practices Lehmann is making claims for at any given point.

remain open to what does not become an object of understanding; my sense of participation in what is happening around me; my awareness of the problematic act of spectating itself. (143)

Lehmann here does not describe the activity of any given spectator; instead, he outlines what could be described as an ethics of spectatorship, based on the “responsibility” (143) the work demands from the spectator. Rather than generalising an individual’s experience of an artwork (as Ulmer to some extent does in describing the effect Beuys’s works supposedly have), Lehmann describes a specific attitude or position towards the work that might not be taken by all spectators. In a very general sense, this attitude could also be taken up by spectators of lecture performance work. Yet what I find more interesting in this context is the question of how the aesthetic experience relates to the intentions of the artist. Even given the “right”¹³⁰ attitude or position towards the work, the resulting experience has to be thought of in terms of what Jacques Rancière (in his text ‘The Emancipated Spectator’, which will be an important reference in chapter 3 of this thesis) describes as a “dissociation” of “cause and effect” (Rancière 2009: 14-15) in the perception of an art work. This brings us back to the figure of evidence that, insofar as it occurs in “the eye of the beholder”, is beyond the grasp of intentionality. Put differently, even if all efforts are directed at its production, evidence cannot be deliberately produced. Similarly, the artistic attempt not simply to produce an effect of shock, but to produce through this effect a motivation for reflection, might or might not be successful. The spectators of *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, by being forced to watch the action from the outside through the gallery window, will necessarily have an “experience of a lack or of having missed something”, but the “aftereffect” of understanding might fail to manifest. In contrast to the model of the “shock” that creates an “aftereffect”, “evidence” (“the event of a synchronisation between showing and understanding that is experienced as the presence of that which is to be shown”) is described as the production of an immediate rather than a deferred understanding. However, is it always understanding or the production of evidence that the lecture performance, like the lecture, aims at? Or, in other words, is Gardner’s prejudice about lecture performances as being merely concerned with the passing on of “straightforward

¹³⁰ Instead, spectators might be distracted, they might be indifferent, but these attitudes might in turn also produce interesting results or experiences (on the role of distraction in a lecture see for instance Peters 2011: 35).

expertise” apt? I propose that, in contrast, the lecture performance shows that the communication of knowledge or expertise is never straightforward (considering, for instance, how allegedly “non-discursive” elements are shown to participate in the production of meaning). And while it would be easy to point out that not all elements in lecture performance work appeal primarily to a rational understanding or aim at the production of evidence (and there will be examples for such elements in the case studies of the following chapters¹³¹), what is more important is that the lecture performance shows that emotional and rational responses – experience and understanding, aesthetic perception and reflection – are not necessarily asynchronous processes. In other words, understanding can come as much as a shock as not understanding, and a deferred understanding might not replace what Peggy Phelan calls the “affective force of the performance event” (Phelan 1997: 12). In short, the lecture performance challenges the notion that performance is primarily experienced affectively inasmuch as it challenges the notion that a lecture’s content remains unaffected by the live situation in which it is presented.

The world out there again

Phelan conjures the “affective force of the performance event” in considering how to write about performance in retrospect, after the actual event. This leads us to the question of how the “present of performance” relates to its possible “aftereffects” from yet another perspective. In *Then Again*, his introduction to the book *Perform Repeat Record: Live Art in History*, Adrian Heathfield develops a different model of the aesthetic perception of live performance characterised by a complex synchronicity of “experience” and “thought”:

The witnessed event appears to assert qualities of experience that are singular, irreducible, unrepresentable, and yet there is cognizance even in ‘the heat’ of the event that the event will be repeated, albeit differently, in thought, memory, historical record. The understanding of a performance proceeds through a temporal paradox between the ‘specificity of knowledges [...] in a live performance event’ and their

¹³¹ One example for instance will be the very particular use of a sheriff star in Wagner-Feigl-Forschung’s *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* that I will discuss in chapter 3.

subsequent and no less specific revision in other instances of knowing. Experience cannot be detached from thought. (Heathfield 2012: 31-32)¹³²

The lecture performance, in appropriating the form of the lecture where it is not at all unusual to assume that “the event will be repeated”, can prove insightful in readdressing the idea of performance’s liveness and ephemerality. The lecture is a form that, at least in Goffman’s conception, values its repetition as text over its manifestation as event, a form that has, as Peters points out, usually existed as text before becoming event and then circulates again as text. A central debate in performance studies in recent years has focused on performance’s liveness and its relation to the document, to the written or the recorded. Because the lecture performance participates in two contexts that place a very different value on liveness, this debate is also central to the present research project, and I will address it throughout the thesis, in particular in chapter 3 in the context of an analysis of how lecture performances negotiate their relation to existing performance work.

In the context of Goldberg’s assessment that performance is by default radical, I asked with which “conventions of established art” the lecture performance breaks. Rather than breaking with conventions, the lecture performance challenges established ideas about how both the lecture and performance produce meaning. While Peters almost exclusively focuses on the first of these two aspects, the premise of this thesis is that it is equally important for an understanding of the lecture performance to analyse its relation to the context of artistic performance. Not only, as Peters stresses, does the lecture performance (in contrast to Goffman’s conception of the lecture) highlight the importance of its status as live event, it also constantly refers the audience’s attention to something outside of the event.

The media studies scholar Dieter Mersch writes about the art of the 1960s and 70s (and thus about the context in which performance art emerged) that its “medium is no longer the frame, the fixed place, duration or the continuous presentation, but the temporality of the execution itself, its temporal limitation, its non-repeatability.”¹³³ (Mersch 2005: 35) The aesthetics of performance are for him characterised by a

¹³² Heathfield here quotes from Amelia Jones’s important essay *Presence in absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation* (1997).

¹³³ “[...] Medium ist nicht länger der Rahmen, der feste Ort, die Dauer oder die anhaltende Präsentation, sondern die Zeitlichkeit des Vollzugs selber, dessen temporale Beschränkung, seine Nichtwiederholbarkeit.“

“progression of art into social and public space”¹³⁴ (39), i.e. the work of art no longer appears separated from “the world out there”. However, this focus on “the execution itself” brings with it the danger of introducing a different kind of frame by privileging the presence at the event over other kinds of encounters with performance. If, as Masschelein and Simons propose, the lecture is a form that asks its audience to “be here as well as there”, to both participate in the event and via the subject matter focus its attention on the “world out there”, then the lecture performance – in, as Peters suggests, addressing “concrete artistic, scientific or social concerns” – might also divert some of the audience’s attention from the here and now, from the “present of performance” that has been so important in theories of performance. It might divert it to something beyond the spatio-temporal frame of the performance event, to the “world out there” of which performance, in Mersch’s conception, is always also a part.

If the lecture performance, as I have pointed out, can potentially be about anything, and thus does not necessarily have to engage with performance on a thematic level, to what extent can it then be described as a ‘meta-performance’ (in the same way that it serves as a ‘meta-lecture’ by being what Bourdieu refers to as a “lecture on the lecture”)? While many lecture performance are actually about other performances, what is important to note is that all lecture performances are presenting something that extends beyond the spatio-temporal frame of the singular event, and part of what they thus present is always already the documentation of a process (an artistic process as well as a research process). Lecture performances thus always hint at their previous and future existence outside of their manifestation as event (as preparation, as text, as document), and while their subject matter might or might not be related to performance, they are always also about performance. Or, in other words, lecture performances participate in the contexts of lecturing and performing and at the same time provide a context that allows both for the consideration of a “common topic” and for a reflection on the form in which this topic is presented.

¹³⁴ “Übertritt der Kunst in den sozialen und öffentlichen Raum“.

Chapter 3

CONTEXTS OF MAKING AND WATCHING PERFORMANCE

Shooting *Shoot*¹³⁵

On November 19, 1971, in the F Space Gallery in Santa Ana, California, the artist Chris Burden was shot. A friend of the artist fired a 22 calibre rifle from a distance of 15 feet, aiming for the bullet to just scratch Burden's left arm. Instead, the bullet went right through the arm, leaving what Burden later described as "a smoking hole" (Burden 1993: 19) – apparently because Burden made a decision to move his arm just in the second that his friend fired the rifle. Photographs taken of Burden after the performance show both the entrance and the exit wounds in his arm, and a small streak of blood running down his arm where the bullet had entered. Although there were not many more than 10 people present for Burden's performance, *Shoot* has since become one of the iconic pieces of performance art. Burden himself attributes this continuous fascination with the performance to the realness of the shot: "[...] I think the reason that the piece works, or continues to work, is that you see it on television and in films over and over, and it's always fake if you actually see people being shot on television. Actually, being shot is quite different." (20) It seems without doubt that this realness is what is remarkable about *Shoot*; yet a similarly heroic gesture, Yves Klein's *Leap into the Void* (1960), has gained comparable recognition and fame despite the fact that the photograph depicting Klein hurling himself off the ledge of a building with no one there to catch his fall is actually a fake, an image composed of a shot of Klein's *Leap* that was caught by a group of friends holding a tarpaulin and another one of the empty street where the *Leap* had taken place.¹³⁶

In another interview, Burden juxtaposes the fictional representations of violence on television with the actual violence that was occurring in Vietnam at the time of the performance:

¹³⁵ Parts of the following description of Chris Burden's *Shoot* in relation to its documentation appear in a more or less literal translation into German in an essay I have written with Esther Pilkington, entitled *Die Kunst des Nicht-da-Seins* (Ladnar and Pilkington 2013).

¹³⁶ The comparison between *Leap into the Void* and *Shoot* is also the starting point for Philip Auslander's discussion of 'The Performativity of Performance Documentation' (2006) to which I will return later in this chapter.

Vietnam had a lot to do with *Shoot*. It was about the difference between how people reacted to soldiers being shot in Vietnam and how they reacted to fictional people being shot on commercial TV. There were guys my age getting shot up in Vietnam, you know? But then in nearly every single household, there were images of people being shot in TV dramas. The images are probably in the billions, right? It's just amazing. So what does it mean *not* to avoid being shot, that is, by staying home or avoiding the war, but to face it head on? I was trying to question what it means to face that dragon. (Burden 2006: 76)

Burden here disregards the fact that the violence in Vietnam, though not fictional, was also the object of mediated representations on television, in newspapers or magazines of the time.¹³⁷ Interestingly, it is exactly these media that played a role in establishing the notoriety of *Shoot*: Although Burden says he forgot how *Esquire* magazine got hold of the photos of *Shoot*, in 1973 they were included in an article in the magazine with the title 'Proof That The 70s Have Finally Begun'. And they had, and with them the emergence of, in Carlson's words, "performance and performance art [...] as major cultural activities in the United States as well as in Western Europe and Japan", which I have discussed in the previous chapter. With the publication of the documentation of *Shoot* in *Esquire* and an article written about the piece in the New York Times, Burden himself had become famous, as he recounts in an anecdote of a visit to – of all places – a photo store: "I remember going to the photo store, and the man at the photo store had seen the magazine. He said, 'Oh, you're famous now'." (Burden 1993: 18) The photographs of *Shoot*, published in *Esquire* magazine, did not only serve as proof that the seventies had finally begun, or that Chris Burden had arrived in the art world, their status as "proof" also and more importantly describes the relation of these photographs to the original performance event. Burden himself was very aware of the importance of documentation for his work, and the following statement shows that he carefully considered its use: "The combination of the dispassionate, dry written statement with the still image, like a police documentation, was really important. There would be no explanation as to why these things had happened, or what it meant." (17)

Shoot, for instance, was described by Burden as follows: "At 7.45 pm I was shot in the left arm by a friend. The bullet was a copper jacket 22 long rifle. My friend was standing about fifteen feet from me." (in Ward 2012: 83)

¹³⁷ Think, for instance, of a photograph even more notorious than those of Burden's *Shoot*, Eddie Adams's Pulitzer-Prize-winning photograph of the execution of a Viet Cong prisoner by General Nguyen Ngoc Loan in 1968.

The style of documentation that Burden chose referenced a documentary aesthetic familiar from newspaper reportage. Like most early performance documentation that, as Tracey Warr has pointed out, “cultivated a deliberately raw aesthetic, resembling crime reportage” (Warr 2003: 32), it played with photography’s indexicality and with a perceptual mode in which photography is considered a proof and an objective representation of an event:

The photograph as document usually assumes authenticity and authority, yet it is neither objective, necessarily factual nor a complete record. The creativity, selectivity and filter of the photographers and subsequent editors frequently remain invisible. The photograph has a compromised status as evidence and proof. There is plenty that the photograph leaves out (sound, time, space, often the audience). The photograph frames, composes and constructs. Lengthy, complex performances with audience participation are reduced to just one image – the ‘good’ image from a picture editor’s point of view [...] (32)

Despite the photograph’s necessarily reductive representation of a performance event critiqued here by Warr, photography (and also other means of documentation) have been used extensively to document early performance art work, and these representations have shaped the reception of and discourse around performance art, as artist Hayley Newman describes in the introductory statement to her project *Connotations – Performance Images*¹³⁸:

As a form, performance is often mediated through the documentary image, video, film, text or by word of mouth and rumour. [...] it is the image and its supporting text that is given privilege in publications on the subject, creating a handful of historical performances that have become notorious through their own documentation, leaving others behind that have not made the transition into the single image. (Newman 2001: 39)

¹³⁸ *Connotations – Performance Images* is composed of a number of staged photographs accompanied by short texts providing fictional information on performances that the photographs allegedly document. By employing a representational structure that is very often used in performance documentation, the combination of text and image, Newman shows how a document can frame what it documents as a performance event, even if the event never happened, at least not in the way that the documentation claims.

Both Warr's and Newman's statements are mainly concerned with *how* performance remains through documentation¹³⁹ and with the dissemination of this documentation. A more fundamental but equally common critique of documentation and its relation to performance is not so much concerned with the adequacy of the representation, but with the representational nature of documentation itself. Here, as Philip Auslander outlines, "[...] the common assumption is that the live event is 'real' and that mediatized events are secondary and somehow artificial reproductions of the real" (Auslander 1999: 3)¹⁴⁰ – or, in Burden's terms: "Actually, being shot is quite different".¹⁴¹ This position has been most famously formulated by Peggy Phelan in her often-quoted definition of the ontology of performance as being based on disappearance:

Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance [...]. Performance's being [...] becomes itself through disappearance. (Phelan 1996: 146)¹⁴²

In contrast to Phelan, Auslander stresses the co-dependency of performance and documentation by describing how performance documentation "produces an event as a performance" (Auslander 2006: 5): "[...] it is not the initial presence of an audience that makes an event a work of performance art: it is its framing as performance through the performative act of documenting it as such." (7)

¹³⁹ In her essay *Performance Remains*, Schneider proposes that performance "remains differently" (Schneider 2001: 101), i.e. not only through documentation but, for instance, in the embodied memories of performers and audience.

¹⁴⁰ Hans-Friedrich Bormann also refers to this perspective in the beginning of his essay 'Der unheimliche Beobachter: Chris Burden, 1975: Performance als Dokument' ('The uncanny observer: Chris Burden, 1975: Performance as Document'): "According to a common understanding the mode in which the art of performance takes place is that of the event. Singularity and processuality serve as terminological delineations against the art work as object and thus secure the coherence of the art historical perspective. In this context documents and artefacts are considered as a secondary, deficient manifestation to which the immaterial action should be preferred." (Bormann 2001: 403) ["Nach einer geläufigen Vorstellung findet die Kunst der Performance im Modus des Ereignisses statt. Singularität und Prozessualität dienen als begriffliche Abgrenzungen zum Kunstwerk als Objekt und sichern so die Kohärenz der kunsthistorischen Perspektive. Vor diesem Hintergrund gelten Dokumente und Artefakte als sekundäre, defizitäre Erscheinungsform, der die ungegenständliche Aktion selbst vorzuziehen wäre."]

¹⁴¹ As I have outlined above, Burden's concern here seems to be more with an opposition between fictionality and realness than between representation and realness.

¹⁴² In the ongoing debate around performance documentation, subsequent positions have almost always been formulated as critical responses to Phelan's statement (see, for instance, Jones 1997, Auslander 1993, Schneider 2001).

And it is with this in mind that it seems legitimate to propose that the *Shoot* referred to in the title of Burden's performance was also, and probably more importantly (considering Burden's statement that the piece "continues to work"), a photo shoot.

"You're not seeing the actual experience..."

In addition to the photographs, there is also film footage of *Shoot*. The film is about 8 seconds long, starting when Burden's friend is already aiming with the rifle. Burden is holding his left arm at a slight angle from his body, while his right arm remains relaxed. The friend fires the rifle, we see a sudden tremor going through Burden's body when the bullet hits, then Burden walks towards his friend, touching the arm where the bullet has hit, slightly pulling up the sleeve of his t-shirt to look at the wound, and then the film ends. This is all, and the effect is much less dramatic than that of the photographs. While on the photographs – depicting the result of the shot rather than the actual event – Burden looks somewhat pale and shocked, demanding the viewer's empathy, here the mood seems almost cheerful. And it is over very quickly (one of the shortest performance pieces ever), while the photograph commands the viewer's attention for much longer.

Considering the effectiveness of the photographic documentation in contrast to the film footage of *Shoot*, Burden's choice of photography as the primary medium for documenting his performance work seems appropriate. Yet it is his scepticism towards releasing the film and video footage of his performances that has led to a piece that is of great interest in the context of a discussion of how performance documentation can be explored in lecture performance work: the video *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974* (1975). For Peters, who considers the piece a "video lecture" (an appropriate classification, even though the piece was not originally labelled as such), this video is a prime example of a lecture performance work that re-articulates and re-contextualises documentation of previous performance works:

As a first and prototypical lecture performance of this type one should probably mention the by now legendary video lecture in which Chris Burden once again presents his transgressive performances of the Seventies. This video lecture can be considered prototypical primarily because it has demonstrated – or, one could say: taught – that the lecture offers possibilities to present inadequate documentary material in a way that its lack becomes productive: exactly the deficiency of the

documents [...] provokes the reflective lecture commentary, which in turn makes the lack of the material appear as traces of performances, as evidence.¹⁴³ (123)

While this very accurately describes the structure of Burden's *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974*, I think it is worthwhile to look at the piece in more detail to fully understand how the perception of a lack in the documentation is articulated in the piece.

The video is about 36 minutes long. The first 5 minutes are taken up by an introduction by Burden, not a carefully scripted declaration, but what seems to be an *ad hoc* statement for camera.¹⁴⁴ We see Burden's face, almost filling the screen, looking mostly directly at the camera, while, after introducing himself ("I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Chris Burden, and today, on this tape, I'm gonna show you excerpts or visual records from 11 different pieces that I've done starting in 1971 into 1974." (Burden 1975))¹⁴⁵, he starts to reflect on the nature of the documentation of his work that we are about to see. Hans-Friedrich Bormann, in an essay that takes Burden's video as a starting point for a discussion of the relation of performance art and documentation, has pointed out the similarities between how Burden presents himself here, looking directly at the camera and by extension at the audience, to the framing of reporters or commentators in television broadcasts (Bormann 2001: 405). Yet there are also differences to the cultural performance that according to Bormann seems to be referenced in the video: Burden is almost too close, the camera has zoomed in so that his chin and the top of his head are cut off, and we cannot look anywhere but directly at his face or the fragment of his face that we are seeing. This suggests that we are invited to develop a more intimate or personal relation to the "presenter" than we would in a news broadcast. There is nothing there to distance the viewer (other than that what we are watching is a video) – not even make-up. Burden comes across as shy and somewhat hesitant. With his "stuttering,

¹⁴³ "Als erste und prototypische Lecture-Performance dieser Art wäre vielleicht jener mittlerweile legendäre Videovortrag zu nennen, in dem Chris Burden seine transgressiven Performances der 70er Jahre noch einmal präsentiert. Als prototypisch kann dieser Videovortrag vor allem deshalb gelten, weil er vorgeführt, ja, man könnte sagen: gelehrt hat, dass die Lecture Möglichkeiten bietet, mangelhaftes Dokumentationmaterial so zu präsentieren, dass gerade diese Mangelhaftigkeit produktiv wird: Gerade die Unzulänglichkeit der Dokumente, sei sie nun prinzipieller oder ganz kontingenter Art, fordert den reflektierenden Vortragskommentar heraus, der wiederum gerade die Mängel des Materials als Spuren von Performances, als Evidenzen, zur Erscheinung bringt."

¹⁴⁴ It is thus an example of what Goffman describes as "fresh talk" (Goffman 1981:172).

¹⁴⁵ This and the following quotes by Burden are – unless referenced otherwise – taken from my transcript of the video recording of *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974*.

pauses, repetitions”¹⁴⁶ (Bormann 2001: 406) Burden not only “follows the media’s conventions of presentness and authenticity of a speech in front of a camera”¹⁴⁷ (406), his mumbling also corresponds to the doubts he is about to convey. He articulates two main concerns, firstly, that the works collected here present an arbitrary selection, “almost a haphazard selection of works” (Burden 1975), dependent on the contingencies and limitations of documenting live work where sometimes artistic concerns and at other times technical difficulties prevent works from being documented, and secondly, that the documents do not do justice to the original performances:

[...] another thing is that I’ve been hesitant to release these because of the sort of arbitrary nature of how they’ve come about, but more than that it’s because film and tape are taken as reality [...] while you the viewer or anybody is watching them, so for the most part I recorded most of my pieces with still photographs because they’re so old-fashioned that they’re taken very abstractly and they’re taken symbolically but I guess at this time I feel that there’s maybe [...] enough energy in the pieces or in the films that it’s important to show them and that some of that will filter through but I want you to try to – although I know a lot of you will forget it – to remain aware that you’re not seeing the actual experience [...] (Burden 1975)

Again, Burden articulates his preference for photographic documentation, i.e. he is not *per se* sceptical of documentation, but mostly of film or video, interestingly because they are in his view “taken as reality” while at the same time not being “the actual experience”. Photography, it seems, does not invite this kind of misunderstanding that Burden is cautious about, because it is taken “abstractly” and “symbolically”, i.e. it invites a different kind of engagement from a viewer¹⁴⁸, it cannot be as easily confused with reality. A viewer is more aware of its representational nature; it allows distance, as Bormann points out: “In contrast, the quality of the photograph is that it has to be read; it perpetuates the difference in medium between action and document and thus activates the spectator’s imagination”¹⁴⁹ (Bormann 2001: 408). Nonetheless, Burden hopes that something will still “filter through” in the films, that the “energy” of the pieces will

¹⁴⁶ “Stottern, Pausen, Wiederholungen”.

¹⁴⁷ “folgt den medialen Konventionen der Gegenwärtigkeit und Authentizität einer Rede vor Kamera”.

¹⁴⁸ In discussing the photographic documentation of another one of Burden’s performances, *Trans-fixed* (1974), Tracey Warr outlines photography’s ability to simultaneously invite empathy and to distance the viewer: “The photograph has a distance and a detachment at the same time as it allows an empathetic, imaginative entry” (Warr 2003: 34).

¹⁴⁹ “Im Gegensatz dazu zeichnet sich das Foto dadurch aus, dass es gelesen werden muss; es hält die mediale Differenz zwischen Aktion und Dokument aufrecht und aktiviert so zugleich die Imagination des Zuschauers”.

somehow still be communicated. Yet he does obviously not trust the films on their own, without his contextualising statement reminding the viewers to “remain aware” of what is lacking from what they are seeing. Because the films are so removed from the “actual experience” but at the same time so successful in simulating this experience, they need to be removed even more; the viewer needs to be repeatedly made aware of their lack. Bormann here concludes that Burden aims to activate the “experiential potential of the documents”¹⁵⁰ (Bormann 2001: 410) by focussing on their fragmentary nature rather than aiming to reconstruct an original event: “The documentation shows the spectator that there is nothing *to see*.”¹⁵¹ (408) Bormann implies that Burden aims to emulate the way in which photographic documentation is perceived differently to film and video (it activates a viewer’s imagination and thus invites an experience) by foregrounding their lack in his presentation of the footage. While Bormann here accurately describes the perceptive mechanisms that Burden’s combination of documentation and comment triggers, Burden’s statement still shows a commitment to the original event – he is concerned with an experience, with what “filters through” of the original event.

Bormann stresses the blurring of different roles – artist, commentator, observer – that Burden takes on in the video (405), which leads him to identify a “doubling of the spectator position”¹⁵² (Bormann 2001: 413) as one of its central features. I would however argue that this doubling is prevented exactly by the different positions that Burden speaks from. He is never merely an observer, but always one that speaks from a position of authority about what has actually happened (without, however, assuming authority over how what has happened is supposed to be read). While Burden’s introductory statement aims to distance the viewer from the experience of watching the films – and this would be the exact opposite of how he would want them to experience his performance pieces, which is manifest in his statement about the realness of the experience of *Shoot* in contrast to the representations of film and television – in the remaining parts of *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974* his comments take on a very different role. Again, they provide contextualising information. Yet here these

¹⁵⁰ “The strategy of this documentation is not to make the ‘original event’ comprehensible in a mediated transformation, but it is about the attempt to unlock the experiential potential of the documents themselves.” (Bormann 2001: 410) [“Die Strategie dieser Dokumentation besteht gar nicht darin, das ‘ursprüngliche Ereignis’ in einer medialen Transformation nachvollziehbar zu machen, sondern es handelt sich vielmehr um den Versuch, das Erfahrungspotential der Dokumente selbst zu erschließen.”]

¹⁵¹ “Die Dokumentation gibt dem Zuschauer zu sehen, dass es nichts *zu sehen* gibt.”

¹⁵² “Dopplung der Beobachterposition”.

contextualisations, now in the form of voice-over comments rather than of him speaking directly into the camera, aim to provide some additional information about the audio-visual material, to give the viewer a clearer idea of what actually happened, concentrating very much on the facts and only sometimes approaching an anecdotal tone. All that Burden says to introduce the film and audio recording of *Shoot*, for instance, is the following:

In *Shoot*, I am shot in the upper left hand arm by a friend of mine with a .22 rifle. The only visuals I have of this piece is a very short film clip about 8 seconds long so I'm going to begin the piece with an audio tape that was made during the actual performance. In the audio tape, some of the things to listen for are 'Do you know where you're going to stand, Bruce?' [actually, it says: 'Know where you're gonna do this, Bruce?'] and later, right before the film clip happens, you'll hear me say 'Are you ready?', then you'll hear the clicking of the super 8 camera. Later, after the clip is over, another thing to listen for is the sound of the empty shell dropping on the concrete floor. Ok, so I think we could go right into the audio tape. (Burden 1975)¹⁵³

Then we hear the audio, the screen remains black, sometimes words are inserted to identify the sounds on the tape that Burden has already commented on, then we see the 8 second film, and the screen goes black again for the remaining bit of audio. The text "EMPTY SHELL DROPPING ON CONCRETE FLOOR" is inserted when we hear the equivalent sound, then the screen goes black again.¹⁵⁴ Twice we are thus pointed at the sound of the empty shell hitting the floor, once in Burden's introductory comments as a "thing to listen for", then, when we hear the sound, through the inserted text identifying it. The emphasis on a minute detail of the action achieved by repeatedly calling the viewer's attention to it (to make absolutely sure it is not missed) again only serves to make evident the supposed lack of the documentary material. In making his contextualising comments, Burden supplements the supplement that the film footage constitutes with regard to the original performance, thus pointing to the supplementary nature of the documentation itself. Yet it is also in this figure of the supplement that a clear opposition between the live and the recorded, between the original performance event and its documentation, begins to appear uncertain. In analysing the opposition between the voice and writing,

¹⁵³ Burden's commentary about other pieces is sometimes more impressionistic, more personal, not purely descriptive; also, as Bormann elaborates, some of the original pieces already explore questions of the relation between live event and mediatisation (Bormann 2001: 410-412), an aspect that I unfortunately have to ignore here given the focus of my study.

¹⁵⁴ Right before the recording of the next piece, *Bed Piece* (1972), starts, Barbara Burden is credited – again in writing – with having shot the film footage of *Shoot*.

Jacques Derrida identifies an “indefinite process of supplementarity [that] has always already *infiltrated* presence, always already inscribed there the space of repetition” (Derrida 1997: 163) – there is no pure presence, representation is always already at work. Derrida’s figure of the supplement is taken up by Amelia Jones in her discussion of the role of documentation in body art:

The ‘unique’ body of the artist in the body artwork only has meaning by virtue of its contextualization within the codes of identity that accrue to the artist’s body and name. [...] Seemingly acting as a 'supplement' to the 'actual' body of the artist-in-performance, the photograph of the body art event or performance could [...] be said to expose the body itself as supplementary, as both the visible 'proof' of the self and its endless deferral. (Jones 1997: 14)

The “indefinite process of supplementarity” that Derrida speaks about becomes evident in the way performance documentation is yet again supplemented in Burden’s video. If Jones’s statement about body art is applied to performance in more general terms, it could then be argued that documentation does not only serve as a representation of a performance event, but that it also exposes the representational character of performance art itself.¹⁵⁵

It is such an understanding of the interrelation between performance and the document that, as I will argue in this chapter, provides the basis for a re-articulation, re-contextualization or re-evaluation of previous performances that has become a common feature in lecture performance work.

This can already be seen in Burden’s *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974*. Considered by Peters as a “prototypical lecture performance”, and thus as an art work in its own right, Burden’s video could also be understood, especially given the understated nature of his presentation, as a mere compilation of visual recordings of Burden’s performances with some contextualising comments. Burden himself does never in the video call it anything other than a “selection” of works, and an “arbitrary” and “haphazard” selection at that; he does not claim for it to be a work, a piece; the only claims he makes are for its lack. However, because many contemporary lecture performances articulate a similar relationship to documentary material, it is possible to consider *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974* as a piece that prefigures some of

¹⁵⁵ By a different route, Bormann comes to a similar conclusion in his analysis of Burden’s video: mediatisation “has always already begun” (Bormann 2001: 412) [“immer schon begonnen”].

the lecture performances I will discuss later in this chapter. This is the case because a lecture performance will always on some level make use of “secondary”, supplementary material; it is always *about* something. It cannot make the same claims for immediacy and authenticity that a performance art piece like *Shoot* could still make¹⁵⁶ – not because it is ontologically different to the performance art piece, but because the lecture performance’s representational structure can become immediately evident due to its reference to or appropriation of the lecture form.

A recycling system

I have so far ignored an important aspect in my discussion of Burden’s *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974*: it is not a lecture performance – because it is strictly speaking no performance at all, but a video recording.¹⁵⁷ In discussing how lecture performances explore documentation of previous performance work, what is at stake is not only the importance of the original performance’s liveness, but that of the lecture performances themselves. Auslander builds his argument against an ontological difference between live performance and mediatisation on the observation that live performance can incorporate mediatised representations, which is one important facet in the blurring of the opposition between the live and the recorded that Auslander observes:

Live performance has thus become the means by which mediatised representations are naturalized, according to a simple logic that appeals to our nostalgia for what we assumed was the im-mediate: if the mediatised image can be recreated in a live setting, it must have been ‘real’ to begin with. This schema resolves (or rather fails to resolve) into an impossible oscillation between the two poles of what once seemed a clear opposition: whereas mediatised performance derives its authority from its reference to the live or the real, the live now derives its authority from its reference to

¹⁵⁶ While in *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974*, Burden aims to avoid making many comments on his work beyond describing what actually happened, he can, however, not avoid commenting on the role of documentation in his work; and even when he is merely trying to describe what occurred, it becomes evident that it is through this “dispassionate” (a term he chooses to describe his use of captions for photographs of his performances) description that the relation between the documentary material and the original performance pieces is being re-negotiated. Burden’s comments, while distancing the viewer from an assumed “actual experience” of the original performance, enable a different experience of the material, in which its assumed lack, as Peters (and Bormann) propose, “becomes productive”.

¹⁵⁷ The video recording does not only incorporate audio-visual documentation of Burden’s performance work but also documents the secondary performance of Burden’s comments and reflections in the same medium.

the mediated, which derives its authority from its reference to the live, etc. (Auslander 1999: 38-9)

Lecture performances that incorporate or investigate performance documentation could be described as participating in this “impossible oscillation” between the live and the mediated that Auslander sketches here, and I would argue that such an oscillation is already predicated on their appropriation of the lecture form itself. I have noted in the previous chapter that a different value is placed on the notion of the live in lectures than it is in performance: a lecture is commonly understood as something that might just as well be encountered as a text, and their live rendition is only one momentary manifestation of the ideas or of the knowledge expressed in a lecture. Moreover, as I have described with reference to Peters’s research on the lecture, lectures usually exist as texts first, and after their presentation again exist as text. I have further argued that lecture performances foreground and aesthetically explore the lecture’s status as live events, as performances. This aspect is also of importance to Mike Pearson’s conception of the lecture as a kind of a “second-order performance” (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 59):

The lecture is a basic form of archaeological exposition. [...] We might take such extant forms, regard them as performed events and further theatricalise them with an extended range of heightened performance techniques – oratorical devices, gestural engagements – and technologies – multi-screen projection, video, soundtrack. (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 66)

While in the case of performance art, the primacy of the singular live event remained unquestioned for a long time (a position that resonates in Burden’s introductory statement in *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974*), in lectures it was the idea of a primacy of the text that presented the norm for an understanding of a lecture. Both these conceptions are challenged through the lecture performance form – because it can rearticulate documentation in a live setting, but also because it illustrates how representation and mediatisation are always already at work in the live event itself. It is because it participates in two genres simultaneously that the lecture performance challenges established ideas about each of these genres – the importance of the lecture’s character as a live event and the performance’s representational structure are immediately evident because they are conventionally associated with the respective other form.

Because of its potential to incorporate “all other formats in a live act”¹⁵⁸ (Peters 2006: 123), Peters refers to the lecture performance as a “recycling system”¹⁵⁹ (123). While the idea of a “recycling system”, like that of a “second-order performance”, implies a somehow secondary nature of the lecture performance with regard to an “original” performance event or an artistic process, both concepts involve a re-presentation or re-actualisation of the work or particular aspects of that work in a live setting.

This secondary character of the lecture performance, however, only applies to its temporary succession – the lecture performance presents documentation of a past process, or, in the case of the performances I will discuss in this chapter, it follows another performance. Jones says about performance documentation in general that an experience of a live event should not be privileged over an encounter with a work through its documentation – despite the differences between these two modes of encounters: “[...] while the experience of viewing a photograph and reading a text is clearly different from that of sitting in a small room watching an artist perform, neither has a privileged relationship to the historical ‘truth’ of the performance [...]” (Jones 1997: 11). The lecture performances that I will discuss, by turning documentary material into an event, invite yet another kind of experience – one where it becomes even more difficult to determine whether, as Burden has it, we are “seeing the actual experience”.

However, despite Burden’s insistence on the importance of the experiential qualities of his work, on the “actual experience”, which at first sight seems very much in tune with early performance art’s “opposition to logical and discursive thought and speech” (Carlson 2004: 110) that I have referred to in the previous chapter, *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974* shows Burden’s interest in the dissemination of his works beyond the original event: “The most important part of my performances is that they are disseminated as thought.” (Burden 2006: 76). This statement, as well as Burden’s overall very considered use of documentation, illustrates how from the onset, and despite many statements that attest to the contrary, performance art has always already addressed what Warr refers to as “the audiences of posterity” (Warr 2003: 31). In the lecture performances I will discuss in this chapter, the present audience is always simultaneously also such an “audience of posterity”.

¹⁵⁸ “aller anderen Formate in einen Live-Act“.

¹⁵⁹ “Recycling-System“.

While I have started this chapter by considering the relation between performance and documentation, an aspect that is central to all the lecture performances I will discuss in this chapter, the thematic and formal scope of these performances is not limited to an exploration of this relation. In engaging with past performances and their documentation, these lecture performances explore a wider context of making and watching performance, each, of course, with their own respective focus and agenda. In *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* (ongoing since 2001), Wagner-Feigl-Forschung – the artists Otmar Wagner and Florian Feigl – present their project of compiling an index of all materials and their uses in all performance art works ever made; in *A spectator* (2009), Jérôme Bel's reflects on past experiences he has made as a spectator; in *The Last Performance (A Lecture)* (2004), Bel revisits his earlier performance *The Last Performance*; and in *Make Me Stop Smoking* (2006), Rabih Mroué presents his personal archive of materials that he intends to use for making performance work in the future.

The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art

In 1971, Burden was shot. In 1975, he documented *Shoot* by assembling film footage, an audio recording and a voice-over commentary as part of *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974*. Thirty years later, this short excerpt from *Documentation of Selected Works* is screened in Wagner-Feigl-Forschung's lecture performance series *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art*¹⁶⁰, among a multitude of other pieces of audio-visual performance documentation. But Wagner-Feigl's lecture performances also classify *Shoot* as one of many performance art pieces involving the action of shooting or incorporating automatic weapons as materials – the artists show slides, among others, of Niki de Saint Phalle producing one of her *Tirs* (early 1960s), of Dick Higgins and an assistant “composing” one of his *1000 Symphonies* (1968-1998, unfinished) and of Dieter Maier's *This Man Will Not Shoot* (1971). To achieve this kind of contextualisation by cataloguing

¹⁶⁰ As I will outline, *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* is presented as an ongoing project (started in 2001) of which the lecture performances are only one manifestation. My writing about *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* is based on video documentation of two performances, one in Frankfurt in 2006 as part of the Unfriendly Takeover series of lecture performances and one in Giessen as part of the *Performing Science* event in 2007. These are two of a series of lecture performances based on the *Encyclopaedia* project which, although different in some respects, also have recurring features. In addition, I am referring here to a text also entitled ‘The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art’ (Wagner-Feigl-Forschung 2006) which is in large parts identical with parts of the lecture performance texts. As this text is in English, I am here mostly quoting from this source rather than from the German lecture performance texts.

all materials and actions ever used in performance art is the ambition behind *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art*, as Wagner-Feigl-Forschung outline in a manifesto from 2001:

The ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF PERFORMANCE ART is not another History of Performance Art. Its empirical and utterly materialist approach aims towards a complete and systematic overview of the materials and practices of performance art, as well as action and its special qualities within performance art. Its analytical approach on a 'molecular' level – emphasizing each singular material/action being used – is developed into a systematic catalogue that shows the singular element in its relationship with every other element in the catalogue. Besides the complete list and mere overview on material and action, THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF PERFORMANCE ART aims towards a three-dimensional map that offers a deeper understanding of the ever-increasing complexity of a singular material and/or action within the field of performance arts. The fact that potentially every material, tool, 'thing' one could imagine, and the different ways of behaviour and uses of it, will (at least possibly) appear in the Encyclopaedia shows the wide horizon of the project: it will be no more or less than a catalogue of the world, its use and possibilities. (Wagner-Feigl-Forschung 2006: 58)

The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art is not merely a title for a series of lecture performances, but refers to an ongoing research project whose existence outside the lecture performances in which it is presented nonetheless remains doubtful (Peters 2011: 201). The only indication of the uncertain status of the *Encyclopaedia* is the all-encompassing scope of the project and the fact that its achievability is never called into question. The artists present the *Encyclopaedia* and thus the idea of creating a complete record of all actions and materials of performance art very matter-of-factly in the lecture performances, and it is the lecture form that allows them to take up a seemingly objective, scientific tone. The lecture performances utilise many elements of traditional lectures: different kinds of projection (slide projection to show photographic documentation of performance pieces; an overhead projector to show graphic representations of the organisation of the *Encyclopaedia*; video projection again to show performance documentation); hand-outs illustrating the *Encyclopaedia's* taxonomic structure; demonstrations of actions (for instance the actions of slapping and being slapped); the live rendition of a prepared theoretical text sketching the project and its ambitions; and, not least, men in suits.

There are also, as in many examples of lecture performances, instances where things are taken too far (i.e. where the boundaries of lecturing are stretched, creating

what Goffman describes as a “frame break”) – here for instance is the minute detail in which the *Encyclopaedia’s* taxonomy is outlined, using the example of the tomato in performance art:

This way of representing a singular material of performance art has various advantages. It shows how each object is already embedded in the immense context of the material world and implies very complex processes of differentiation. Thus it identifies the special qualities (it is a tomato and not an orange) and dynamics (a tomato can be squeezed, thus producing tomato juice – in opposition to squeezing a stone, for example) inherent in each singular object or material. On the other hand this method of organization in no way precludes the other necessary tool of a true encyclopaedia; the Alphabetical Index (which will be contained in a different set of volumes from the systematic contents). As each level of differentiation bears in front a different character, sign or number, the tomato can be represented as well as the material with the cipher $\alpha IX.\$2par.1F.k.Nr.5.(1.-4.)$. (The numbers in brackets show how many types of tomatoes are listed. Thus to represent the plum tomato, a plain Arabic numeral 3 refers to the specified type of tomato is used [sic!]). As each character, sign or number stands for another step in the process of differentiation, the representation of materials as cipher codes creates an immediate awareness, when looking them up in the Alphabetical Index, of the highly complex relationships inherent in a specific material. Besides the obvious possibility of locating a singular material in the systematic overview, it allows the experienced user to get a quick overview of related materials as well. (Wagner-Feigl-Forschung 2006: 61)

It seems almost impossible that the absurd complexity of the index presented here (which is outlined in even more detail elsewhere in the performance text) can be comprehended if only heard once, yet it is nevertheless presented as creating an “immediate awareness” and allowing a “quick overview” (even if one has to be an “experienced user”). In an academic lecture, this discrepancy would be read as a failure to communicate the intended meaning; here, it makes evident the questionable nature of the *Encyclopaedia* project in particular, but also of any taxonomy more generally. Rather than questioning if documentation can give a “true” account (in the sense of the “historical ‘truth’” that Jones writes about) of a performance event, it is Wagner-Feigl-Forschung’s own “scientific” approach to using documentary material that is called into question. By extension, such a strategy of the lecture performance, as Peters outlines using *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* as one example, makes evident the role that science and academia play in producing their subjects: “The archives and documents that these lectures refer to are situated on the border of fiction, mark this border and transport in their actualisation the possible variations and paradoxes of, respectively,

archival and historical-scientific knowledge production”¹⁶¹ (Peters 2006: 126). The question of fictionality, however, here only applies to the archive itself, the *Encyclopaedia*, never to the documents that are being presented or to the historical performances that are being discussed.

How serious then are the artists in what they are claiming in the tone of academic seriousness? There is no straightforward answer to this question. While it is possible to identify elements of parody in the presentation of the lecture, the artists on the other hand put forward concerns and express an agenda that cannot easily be discarded. One focus of their critique for instance is the reception of performance art in academic discourse:

Theoretical analysis often relates itself to certain aspects or focuses on a few selected performances that are either extensively documented or personally witnessed by the scholars. This is for various reasons: often performances are reviewed and analysed, because a) they are well documented, and/or b) they are supported by aggressive strategies of marketing and publicity (for example the spectacular self-marketing of singular artists and/or the investments of art producers with a sense of trends), and/or c) they are benefitting from artist/scientist alliances, which grow out of friendship networks, and/or d) theoreticians and scientists are referring to their own system of references, which means that they are copying each other. Another aspect of this repetitive reference towards the same selected performances is the exclusiveness of theory and analysis. The principle of exclusiveness shows off on three different levels: a) exclusive self-limitation on few mediated performances (for art-historical reasons or because of certain trends), b) exclusive discussion of exclusively seen performances, and c) exclusive mediation (secret science for the initiated). In opposition to such approaches, ‘The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art’ aims at a complete collection of all performances ever performed. (Wagner-Feigl-Forschung 2006: 65)

According to this statement, the *Encyclopaedia* is conceived in direct response to what is perceived as an exclusive discourse around performance art. This discourse is portrayed as exclusive on two levels: on the one hand because it is seen to only speak to “the initiated”, but more importantly because it for various reasons privileges certain examples of performance art over other performances. This last aspect is particularly important in this context as it directly regards the role of documentation in the perception and dissemination of performance. Wagner and Feigl share Newman’s concern that specific performances are neglected because they are not as well-

¹⁶¹ “Die Archive und Dokumente, auf die sich diese Vorträge beziehen, stehen auf der Grenze zur Fiktion, markieren diese Grenze und transportieren dabei in ihrer Aktualisierung die Spielräume und Paradoxien archivarischer beziehungsweise historisch-wissenschaftlicher Wissensproduktion.“

documented as others (or because they are not marketed as aggressively), but their critique goes beyond this point, as they also portray the live encounter with a performance as potentially exclusive. This aspect has not been overlooked in academic discourse – Jones, for instance, develops her thoughts on performance documentation in ‘Presence’ in absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation’ on the premise of not having been present at seminal performance art events (“I was not three years old [...] when Carolee Schneeman performed Meat Joy at the Festival of Free Expression in Paris in 1964” (Jones 1997: 11)¹⁶²), making a case for the possibility of writing about performance despite her absence at the initial event. Yet what is noteworthy about Wagner-Feigl-Forschung’s approach is that, rather than discussing the question if performance can be represented, their concern is with how performance art participates in a representational system (i.e. academic discourse). The specific quality of the experience of a live performance is never evoked in their lecture performances, at least not in relation to their discussions of documentation. From this perspective, both the live event and the documentation can have an exclusive quality. Instead, Wagner-Feigl-Forschung propose a non-hierarchical¹⁶³ approach by focussing on the materials and actions of “all performances ever performed”, claiming that this approach enables, by way of re-contextualisation, a new perspective also on iconic performances like *Shoot*:

By focusing on formal aspects as well as emphasizing its history and contexts as a specific performative practice, ‘Shoot’ can be revived again and fed back into the circulations of a contemporary performance art practice. The achievement of ‘The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art’ is to re-contextualize ‘Shoot’ through formal as well as aesthetic aspects (material: automatic weapon; performative practice: to shoot) within a wide field of performances with similar approaches [...]. (Wagner-Feigl-Forschung 2006: 64-5)

Beyond opening a new perspective on existing works, the idea here is that a work thus contextualized can again appear as “contemporary”, i.e. as part of what is already described to be in circulation (the “circulation of representations of representations” that Phelan describes as something that performance art resists). The focus is thus shifted

¹⁶² Interestingly, Jones also reflects on the role that personal relationships with artists have for the writing about performance (Jones 1997: 11).

¹⁶³ “The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art’ is not judgemental in the sense of creating simple values or hierarchies. All events from the field of performance art are annotated and documented.” (Wagner-Feigl-Forschung 2006: 65)

from an original, “primary” experience of performance to the question how a performance – by way of its materials and actions – can be used or re-used.

This position is strikingly similar to what Nicolas Bourriaud has described as artistic practices of “postproduction”:

These artists who insert their work into that of others contribute to the eradication of the traditional distinction between production and consumption, creation and copy, readymade and original work. The material they manipulate is no longer *primary*. It is no longer a matter of elaborating a form on the basis of a raw material but working with objects that are already in circulation on the cultural market, which is to say, objects already *informed* by other objects. (Bourriaud 2007: 13)

It is noteworthy in this context that objects and their use have an important status in the *Encyclopaedia* project (and not, for instance, the experiential quality of performance). Having already described the *Encyclopaedia* as a “catalogue of the world, its use and possibilities” in their manifesto, it is this focus on objects and their use that allows Wagner-Feigl-Forschung to expand their scope from a concentration on performance art to the “material world” as a whole: “‘The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art’ with its description of the materials and practices of performance art, and, as such, of the material world itself, allows the gathered and systematically organized data to reverberate and thus makes the material world the real, ever-expanding Encyclopaedia.” (Wagner-Feigl-Forschung 2006: 65)

The world is the real encyclopaedia – this statement encapsulates the paradox of all encyclopaedic endeavours.¹⁶⁴ Here, however, it also envisions the world (including performance art) as something to be used. The focus is expanded from how performance art participates in a representational system to how performance art participates in and makes use of the world and its materials (making it, in Wagner-Feigl-Forschung’s terms, “a truly universal science of the world” (66)). This position is mirrored in Bourriaud’s idea of an art of postproduction:

In *Postproduction*, I try to show that artists’ intuitive relationship with art history is now going beyond what we call ‘the art of appropriation’, which naturally infers an ideology of ownership, and moving toward a culture of the use of forms, a culture of constant activity of signs based on a collective ideal: sharing. The Museum like the City

¹⁶⁴ Peters compares Wagner-Feigl-Forschung’s *Encyclopaedia* to the map that is as big as the territory it represents in Jorge Luis Borges’s story *On Exactitude in Science* (Peters 2011: 206).

itself constitute a catalog [sic!] of forms, postures, and images for artists – collective equipment that everyone is in a position to use, not in order to be subjected to their authority but as a tool to probe the contemporary world. (Bourriaud 2007: 9)

Other than the artistic practices that Bourriaud describes, Wagner-Feigl's *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* seems less concerned with using materials already in circulation (performance art documents) than with making them available for future use, with providing the tools for future performance practice and discourse; with "sharing", as Bourriaud puts it. At this point the question whether the *Encyclopaedia* actually exists outside of the lecture performances again becomes pertinent. One does not have to refer to any actual *Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* to use the tools that Wagner-Feigl-Forschung provide. The *Encyclopaedia* functions more as a model for how to deal with performance and its documents than as an actual catalogue; and in any case, the real encyclopaedia, as we have learned, is the material world – which is accessible to anyone.

What, then, is the status of *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* as a live performance (or a series of live performances)? As I have outlined, their focus on how performance and its documents can be used allows the artists to exclude a negotiation of the experiential qualities of performance art or performance documentation from their discussion – it is however not excluded from the performances themselves. On the one hand, this question is investigated through the exploration of the performative qualities of the lecture form. Furthermore, there is the showing of documents, like an excerpt from Kirby Dick's film *SICK: The Life & Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist*, showing Flanagan hammering a nail through his penis (introduced as an example for the use of hammers in performance art): here, the audience is told before the screening of the footage that they can close their eyes (and thus blank out what is perceived to be an extreme viewing experience even on video documentation). But most importantly, there is one action that remains unexplained in the discursive elements of the lecture performances: at the beginning of the piece, both Wagner and Feigl remove their jackets, unbutton their shirts, and both pin a sheriff star to their naked chests. They then put their shirts and jackets back on; and while we do not see a trace of their action after the image of two men dressed in suits is restored, we know throughout the performance that this sheriff star is still piercing their skin. Shortly before the end of the performance, the star is removed again.

That this action remains uncommented in the piece itself is coherent with its status in the *Encyclopaedia*: beyond showing the artists' commitment to the practices they are discussing, and beyond illustrating the *Encyclopaedia's* possible uses (it has to be assumed that there is a category for the sheriff star's use in performance art), the action indicates a blind spot in the *Encyclopaedia*, indicates that there is something beyond categorisation. At the same time, it suggests how this blind spot can be accessed – a thought again formulated in the lecture text: “Through the ongoing activity of the performance artist, engaged in the materials and practices of performance art, further potential meanings, contexts and implications are added. Thus performance art can be regarded as a door to worlds beyond the world.” (Wagner-Feigl-Forschung 2006: 65-6) This “ongoing activity” is not only facilitated by the *Encyclopaedia*, but is also enacted and thus demonstrated in the lecture performance itself.

A Spectator

Compared to *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art*, Jérôme Bel's 2009 lecture performance *A Spectator* presents an in almost all respects different approach to reflecting on past performance events in the context of a lecture performance. Bel's piece, originally advertised under a different title (*27 performances*) as an “intimate hour-long talk” (Sadler's Wells 2009) rather than a lecture performance, consists only of Bel, alone on the stage of an empty black box theatre and equipped with a small notebook (an actual analogue notebook, not a computer), talking the audience through a number of dance and theatre performances he has witnessed, recounting what he, as a spectator of these performances, has learned about spectating and about theatre in general. There is no documentation, nothing to objectify his account, only Bel talking about the performances. On a few occasions and very tentatively he hints at a re-enactment of a specific gesture or movement vocabulary from one of the performances he talks about. Yet the only reason why I am commenting on these minute instances is the absence of any other elements in the performance where anything happens but Bel addressing the audience with his verbal accounts of performances he has seen. There is, however, a structure to Bel's accounts¹⁶⁵. He first presents examples of what constitutes the activity

¹⁶⁵ This account of the structure of Bel's performance is based on notes written down collectively after seeing *A Spectator* in London in 2009, by Adrian Kear, Gareth Llŷr Evans, Esther Pilkington and myself.

of the spectator, for each performance example concentrating on one specific spectatorial activity – hearing, seeing, clapping, for instance (here Bel discusses, among others, works by Trisha Brown). He goes on to consider – again through talking about individual spectatorial experiences – what constitutes an appropriate behaviour for a spectator, for example by citing his own experience of enjoying a particular piece only because he enjoyed watching one specific performer in it – labelling himself as a “bad spectator” in this instance (here Bel furthermore mentions a performance by Jan Fabre and a stage production of *Three Sisters*). He then concentrates on how specific performances made him consider aspects of life or contemplate on philosophical questions – i.e. how theatre reveals something outside of itself, outside of the theatrical event (via discussions of, among others, Pina Bausch’s *Palermo* and pieces by Raimund Hoghe and Eva Meyer-Keller), before going on to reflect on spectatorial experiences that revealed theatre as a communal event (Bel here refers to pieces by Alain Platel, Steve Paxton and Peter Zadek, but also to a visit to the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro). In his choice of examples Bel thus concentrates on dance but also extends his focus beyond it.¹⁶⁶ Bel’s selection of examples is incidental, i.e. he does not aim to establish a canon of works that have inspired him (although it becomes evident in some instances that specific works have served as a model for and have informed his practice, for instance in Bel’s remarks on Steve Paxton’s exploration of everyday movements like walking). In contrast, Bel’s choice of examples suggests that any performance or theatre piece – regardless of its aesthetic or artistic merit – can potentially lead a spectator to an insight (about theatre, but also about their own lives) worth sharing with another audience – potentially even *despite* the work’s intentions or concerns. This suspension or “dissociation” of cause and effect, of intended and perceived meaning, is what Jacques Rancière has described as elemental in conceiving of an “emancipated spectator” – and I am quoting here at length because I will return to Rancière’s concept at several points throughout this thesis:

To this identity of cause and effect, which is at the heart of stultifying logic, emancipation counter-poses their dissociation. [...] It will be said that, for their part, artists do not wish to instruct the spectator. [...] But they always assume that what will be perceived, felt, understood is what they have put in their dramatic art or performance. They always presuppose an identity between cause and effect. This supposed equality between cause and effect is itself based upon an inegalitarian

¹⁶⁶ Unfortunately my memory fails me when trying to give a more detailed account of the pieces Bel talks about and of what he has used them as examples for (despite our collective notes).

principle: it is based on the privilege that the schoolmaster grants himself – knowledge of the ‘right’ distance and ways to abolish it. But this is to confuse two quite different distances. There is the distance between artist and spectator, but there is also the distance inherent in the performance itself, in so far as it subsists, as a spectacle, an autonomous thing, between the idea of the artist and the sensation or comprehension of the spectator. In the logic of emancipation, between the ignorant schoolmaster and the emancipated novice there is always a third thing – a book or some other piece of writing – alien to both and to which they can refer to verify in common what the pupil has seen, what she says about it and what she thinks of it. The same applies to performance. It is not the transmission of the artist’s knowledge or inspiration to the spectator. It is the third thing that is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect. (Rancière 2009: 14-15)

The emancipation of the spectator goes hand in hand with an emancipation of the work from the artist's intentions – the performance “is owned by no one”. What Rancière here constructs is a scenario of autonomies: of the artist on the one hand, the spectator on the other and the art work somewhere in-between. In order to discuss the validity of this scenario, I will try to follow its logic a little further. The symmetry in Rancière’s scenario is striking; but how does it reflect the actual configuration of artists, spectators and art work in a theatre or performance event?

In the case of Bel’s *A Spectator*, it is possible to identify a single artist appearing both as author and performer of the piece (yet this also means ignoring the role of, for instance, programmers, assistants, technicians, ushers or cleaning staff). This means also that it is immensely difficult to draw the line between the - in Rancière’s view - autonomous “third thing”, the performance, and the artist embodying and enacting it (and at the same time, according to Rancière, being “alien” to it). This distinction becomes even more complex if there is a collective or group of artists or producers involved in the creation of a performance, some maybe acting as performers and others working behind the scenes. On the other side of Rancière’s scenario, as is the case in Bel’s *A Spectator* (but not necessarily in all theatre and performance events), there is an auditorium of spectators engaging in the activity of “composing their own poem”: “They are thus both distant spectators and active interpreters of the spectacle offered to them. [...] spectators see, feel and understand in as much as they compose their own poem, as, in their way, do actors or playwrights, directors, dancers or performers.” (Rancière 2009: 13)

As Adrian Kear has pointed out in an email-conversation about *A Spectator* which we conducted and which was later presented as a paper entitled 'We other spectators'¹⁶⁷: "In a theatre we have spectators – plural – but Bel's title suggests that their experience is singular; or, perhaps, that the singularity of their response is the condition of the 'being together' as a public [...] audience." (Kear 2009) It is this singularity of the spectator's experience that allows Rancière to construct his symmetrical scenario:

The collective power shared by spectators does not stem from the fact that they are members of a collective body or from some specific form of interactivity. It is the power each of them has to translate what she perceives in her own way, to link it to the unique intellectual adventure that makes her similar to all the rest in as much as this adventure is not like any other. This shared power of the equality of intelligence links individuals, makes them exchange their intellectual adventures, in so far as it keeps them separate from one another, equally capable of using the power everyone has to plot her own path. (Rancière 2009: 16-17)

Because they each compose their "own poem", Rancière can project the individual spectator (rather than a collective or community of spectators, an audience or a public) as the artist's counterpoint in the scenario outlined above.¹⁶⁸ Yet is it not exactly the symmetry in this scenario that disguises an asymmetry: where does the spectator's "own poem" feature here? If the performance is the "third thing", what place does the spectator's "poem" have within Rancière's model? Within the relation of artist and spectator, the spectator's activity, regardless of how highly it is regarded¹⁶⁹, remains suspended in potentiality and is hardly ever actualised: When do spectators get to

¹⁶⁷ The paper was presented at the symposium *Archive/Practice* organised by Tanzarchiv Leipzig in 2009.

¹⁶⁸ If the focus is thus not on individual performance or theatre events, but on an individual's experience as a spectator of these events, what relationship does Bel establish to the performances that he is talking about in *A Spectator*? Kear comments on the logic of the example employed in *A Spectator*: "Telling the story of an event, isolating its specificity and significance is, as Benjamin told us, to interrupt its context and rupture the very form which it would serve to exemplify. Every example is, then, an example of singularity rather than generic normality. The very act of 'giving an example' performs this action whether intended or not. The example that way becomes exception, exceptional; even if its serves to draw attention to the generic, the quotidian. So every example in *A Spectator* ceases to be an example of how theatre operates 'normally', becoming instead an exemplification of the generic logic of theatre at its root through the articulation of singular instances of structural genericity. That is, of course, its radicality and epistemic brilliance; but also follows the logic of theatre in disappearing at the moment of its utterance; the work of the example being as fleeting and ephemeral as the experience of spectating." (Kear 2009: no page number)

¹⁶⁹ Pragmatically speaking, while the activity of the artist results in the accumulation of symbolic capital and the artist is awarded the spectator's attention, the spectator does not participate or does not participate on equal terms in this accumulation, and is not awarded the same kind of attention.

applaud their “own poems” (or is this what they always do)? To what extent can the spectator, though *per se* active, become a producer?

In *A Spectator*, Bel creates a situation in which the activity of the spectator is both presented and continuously exemplified, and, more importantly, it is presented and exemplified as production. Here it becomes important that Bel ends his piece with an invitation to each spectator to think of performances they have seen and the lessons they have drawn from these experiences: any spectator, not just Bel, could engage in the activity in which Bel is engaging. Bel thus enables a doubling of the spectatorial position: firstly the audience, via Bel, becomes an audience not only of *A Spectator* but of the other performances that Bel is describing; secondly, and more importantly, the audience is put into a position to constantly contrast and compare their own spectatorial experience (both in general and right now, while watching Bel perform) with the experiences described by Bel. Not only is Bel addressing the audience directly, but his activity is addressing their activity: the spectators are watching someone practise the intellectual and affective activity they are also engaged in.¹⁷⁰ When Bel is talking about enjoying a performance piece for the wrong reasons, about being a “bad spectator” because he enjoys watching one performer rather than appreciating the performance as such, the spectators listening to his account might in turn ask themselves how Bel’s personality or charisma affect their perception of the performance they are seeing. Ignoring the role of the performer(s) in this constellation, Rancière asks in ‘The Emancipated Spectator’: “[...] what exactly occurs among theatre spectators that cannot happen elsewhere? What is more interactive, more communitarian, about these spectators than a mass of individuals watching the same television show at the same hour?” (Rancière 2009: 16). In *A Spectator*, the live situation of the lecture performance, though stripped down almost to its bare minimum (a person on an empty stage addressing an audience), allows for a complex system of simultaneous mimetic processes, of performing spectating, to evolve between stage and auditorium in which it becomes increasingly difficult to identify any autonomous positions. And this is also why here the spectator’s account can become, or can at least be envisioned as, a performance upon similar terms as the events this account represents. When Bel ends his performance with an invitation to the spectators

¹⁷⁰ Bormann, as I have mentioned, also identifies a “doubling” of the spectatorial position in his discussion of Burden’s *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974*. His analysis, however, can only partly be applied to *A Spectator* as Bormann very much concentrates on the medium-specific aspects of Burden’s video.

to do what he has just done, this appears possible because they have already done it while watching his performance, or in other words: because he has just done what they have done. But has he not done more by translating his spectatorial experiences into a performance? Or, to pose the question differently: Is there not a difference between – in Rancière’s terms – being a spectator composing one’s own poem and the virtuosity and skill involved in actually articulating or performing this poem?

Bel’s performance in *A Spectator* seems to call into question the demand for skilfulness and virtuosity. As one review of the piece has it (and has it wrong): “He does not perform. He does not dance, except in occasional snatches. Instead, he offers a series of haphazard thoughts about the nature of theatre [...]. Bel does not deliver a coherent speech, he simply wanders about, carrying a small notebook as an aide-memoire.” (Thompson 2009) While I would disagree with the assessment of Bel’s performance as altogether haphazard and incoherent (it is on the contrary at times very eloquent and persuasive – but this is only a value judgement), what is more important here is that this assessment seems to articulate what Bel himself proposes: that anyone could do what he does. Any actual clumsiness and incoherence on Bel’s part therefore has to be read as consistent with this overall thesis. I would however argue that the impression articulated in the review is maybe due to the form in which Bel presents his remarks rather than to either content or delivery. By delivering a more or less improvised speech based only on a few notes, Bel chooses a form that, as Paolo Virno has pointed out, constitutes a mode of virtuosity that everyone has access to: “Each one of us is, and has always been, a virtuoso, a performing artist, at times mediocre and awkward, but, in any event, a virtuoso. In fact, the fundamental mode of virtuosity, the experience which is at the base of the concept, is the activity of the speaker.” (Virno 2004: 55)¹⁷¹

There is a prejudice which I have often encountered in conversations, namely that lecture performances are somehow easy to make¹⁷² (compared to writing a “proper paper” or making a “proper performance”). This might be because there is no other skill

¹⁷¹ Virno goes on: “This is not the activity of a knowledgeable and erudite locator, but of any locator. Human verbal language [...] has its fulfilment in itself and does not produce (at least not as a rule, not necessarily) an ‘object’ independent of the very act of having been uttered.” (Virno 2004: 55) It is important to note, however, that, despite defining it as “the special capabilities of a performing artist” (52), Virno understands virtuosity not so much in terms of a specific skill but as a mode of production in which, in Karl Marx’s words, “the product is not separable from the act of producing” (in Virno 2004: 52).

¹⁷² Peters, too, speaks of lecture performance as something that can be “quickly produced” (Peters 2006: 123) [“schnell zu produzieren”], but does so in explaining how lecture performances can be used to present ongoing artistic projects or enquiries, i.e. there is already something that provides the substance; there is already extensive work and research involved.

required than the “virtuosity of the speaker”, which, according to Virno “is the prototype and apex of all other forms of virtuosity” (56) (and this basic nature of the “activity of the speaker” might explain the impression that Bel “does not perform”). In *A Spectator*, the reliance on the activity of speaking, of telling of past performances, makes Bel’s invitation to the other spectators present with him at this performance to also engage in this kind of telling plausible; moreover, in this case the telling coincides with a showing: Bel does not only talk about the activity of the spectator, he himself exemplifies and embodies it. In doing so, he creates a kind of feedback loop between stage and auditorium: his demonstration of the activity of spectating constantly feeds back into the activity of spectating that the audience is engaged in, and vice versa.

The Last Performance (A Lecture)

While in *A Spectator* Bel presents accounts of performances he has seen as a spectator, in a previous lecture performance, *The Last Performance (A Lecture)* (2004), he revisits his own piece *The Last Performance* (1998). In doing so, he does not simply reflect on a piece he has developed six years earlier, but this reflection in the form of a lecture performance takes the place of the original performance in Bel’s repertoire. He decides to show it instead of the original performance, because he feels that this performance has often been misunderstood:

Invited at the same time by the Hebbel Theater in Berlin, the Tanz-quartier in Vienna and the Centre National de Dance in Paris to perform 'The last performance' (1998) I decided, instead of presenting the piece, to make a lecture about its issues. I have the feeling that this difficult piece hasn't been really understood. Maybe the piece was bad. But I believe that the issues of this piece were relevant, that is why I would like to change my medium and use the tool of the lecture to try to articulate better the stakes of 'The last performance'. (Bel 2004)¹⁷³

Compared to *A Spectator*, not only does Bel here speak from a different position (that of the author instead of the spectator), this change of position furthermore seems to entail a fundamentally different attitude towards the significance of the intentions of the piece’s author (because they are now his intentions), towards the relation between

¹⁷³ This and all the following quotes from the performance text are transcripts of the subtitles to the video of *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*. I have occasionally adjusted the punctuation.

“cause and effect” that Rancière describes. While in *A Spectator*, Bel’s reading of a particular performance often ignores or contradicts the intentions behind that piece, and Bel seems to celebrate the spectator’s freedom to do so, *The Last Performance (A Lecture)* – at least at first glance – takes the opposite approach. As Una Bauer remarks in an interview with Bel: “It seems to me that you are rather protective of the interpretation of your work. The opening lines of the lecture/performance *The Last Performance* are along the lines of ‘It seems very few people have understood the piece *The Last Performance*. Let me tell you why this piece is interesting.’”¹⁷⁴ (Bauer 2008: 45) It is the form of the lecture that according to Bel allows him to “articulate better” what he had intended to articulate with *The Last Performance* – but does this not also constitute an attempt to restore the “integrity of cause and effect” that, according to Rancière, “is at the heart of stultifying logic”? Because what he had intended to articulate with *The Last Performance* had not been understood, Bel decides to say it again, differently, to explain it in a lecture. This approach is reminiscent of what Rancière describes as the “explicative order” (Rancière 1991: 4) in his book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (on which ‘The Emancipated Spectator’ is based):

Consider, for example, a book in the hands of a student. The book is made up of a series of reasonings designed to make a student understand some material. But now the schoolmaster opens his mouth to explain the book. He makes a series of reasonings in order to explain the series of reasonings that constitute the book. But why should the book need such help? Instead of paying for an explicator, couldn’t a father simply give the book to his son and the child understand directly the reasonings of the book? And if he doesn’t understand them, why would he be any more likely to understand the reasonings that would explain to him what he hasn’t understood? Are those reasonings of a different nature? And if so, wouldn’t it be necessary to explain the way in which to understand them?

So the logic of explication calls for the principle of a regression ad infinitum: there is no reason for the redoubling of reasonings ever to stop. What brings an end to regression and gives the system its foundation is simply that the explicator is the sole judge of the point when the explication is itself explicated. (Rancière 1991: 4)

¹⁷⁴ While I cannot be sure that Bel never opens the performance with these words, he never uses them in the video of the performance on which I am basing my analysis (Bel 2004.)

Explication according to Rancière submits the one to whom the explanation is addressed to a “hierarchical world of intelligence” (8), resigning him or her to an “understanding [...] that he doesn’t understand unless he is explained to” (8).¹⁷⁵

This raises the question to what extent *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*, and lecture performances in general, participate in this “explicative order”. To take the idea of a dissociation of cause and effect seriously, however, also means to look beyond Bel’s articulation of his intentions behind *The Last Performance (A Lecture)* at what he actually says and does (and how he says and does it) in the piece itself.

Bel delivers his lecture from behind a small table, occasionally looking at the screen of a laptop; we have to assume he is looking at notes he has made. In the course of his about 80-minute-long lecture, he shows two excerpts from the video of *The Last Performance*. Once, he gets up to demonstrate a scene he has witnessed of a dancer tripping in a ballet performance at the Paris Opera, but apart from this he remains seated behind the table, talking: about his initial ideas for the performance, about theories and art works that have informed him in the process (from Julia Kristeva’s concept of “intertextuality” to Maurizio Cattelan’s copy of a show by Carsten Höller), and, of course, about the piece itself. While he has clearly prepared notes, and a loosely structured narrative develops, his presentation still has all the characteristics of an impromptu speech; sentences remain unfinished, and not all the thoughts and ideas are clearly developed – in short, what Bel performs is a thinking in-process. By delivering his text extemporaneously, Bel in his performance takes up a mode of lecturing that, as Peters shows, has evolved around 1800, and that she describes in terms of a “performance of thinking”: “In so far as the lecture presents thinking *in actu* and thus at the same time elicits thinking, it becomes a performance of thinking.”¹⁷⁶ (Peters 2011: 52) As Peters points out, this understanding of lecturing can also be found in early 19th century schoolmaster Joseph Jacotot’s concept of “universal teaching” that Rancière describes, where it was “an essential exercise [...] to learn to speak on any subject, off the cuff” (Rancière 1991: 43) – the focus here being on the lecturing or speaking itself rather than on its content (Peters 2011: 53). As Peters summarizes: “As a performance of thinking the

¹⁷⁵ The full quote reads as follows: “But the child who is explained to will devote his intelligence to the work of grieving: to understanding [...] that he doesn’t understand unless he is explained to. He is no longer submitting to the rod, but rather to a hierarchical world of intelligence.” (Rancière 1991: 8)

¹⁷⁶ “Insofern der Vortrag das Denken *in actu* vorführt und damit zugleich zum Denken verführt, wird er zu einer Performance des Denkens.“

lecture stops being a scene of instruction and instead becomes a scenario of intellectual perception.” (54)¹⁷⁷ – or, in Rancière’s words: “One always learns when listening to someone speaking.” (Rancière 1991: 102) But what is thus learned is not only necessarily a specific content – that which is being explained or said – but thinking itself, or thinking as process. While he reflects on the “misunderstandings” around his piece, Bel nevertheless appears to be still struggling with this understanding himself, either with appropriately articulating his ideas, or even with developing them. Not only does Bel give an account of the process of making *The Last Performance*, he also presents this account as a thinking in-process. I would argue that this approach is a way for him to re-open this process, to go back from a finished piece – a piece he had called *The Last Performance* because he had imagined it would allow him to make no further performances – into the process of enquiry of which that piece was one articulation.

But what is the object of this enquiry? Bel’s account largely focuses on two aspects: the relationship between author, performer and spectator (between making and watching) on the one hand, and on the other hand the idea of the liveness of performance in relation to questions of repetition and copying. These aspects, of course, are also at the heart of the performance he is talking about, *The Last Performance*. The basis of this piece are a series of reenactments, or copies, by Bel and the three dancers with whom he is working, of one of Susanne Linke’s choreographies, *Wandlung* (the title would most appropriately be translated as “transformation”). Each of these reenactments is introduced by the performer reenacting the dance with the words “Ich bin Susanne Linke” (“I am Susanne Linke”). Based on his account in *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*, it is this idea of copying an existing choreography he admired that stood at the beginning of his process, and it is this aspect of the piece that his account focuses on – he does not even mention, except for one brief contextualising statement during the second video excerpt that he shows, that also other figures besides Linke are being copied in the performance: Calvin Klein, Hamlet (which he never mentions at all in his account) and

¹⁷⁷ “Als Performance des Denkens hört der Vortrag auf, eine Szene der Unterweisung zu sein und wird stattdessen zu einem Szenario der intellektuellen Anschauung.“ As I have quoted above, Rancière describes the importance of what he refers to as a “third thing”, for example “a book or some other piece of writing” or possibly, as we have seen, a performance, to establish a relationship of equality between schoolmaster/artist and novice/spectator. But he also allows for the possibility that the artist/teacher/professor him- or herself can become this third thing: “[...] a professor is a *thing*, less easily handled than a book, undoubtedly, but he can be *learned*: he can be observed, imitated, dissected, put back together; his person, available for observation, can be tested.” (Rancière 1991: 102) See also Peters 2011: 53 for this aspect.

Andre Agassi (“I am Hamlet, Andre Agassi, Calvin Klein”). Bel therefore does clearly not try to give an exact account of everything that happens in *The Last Performance*, but concentrates on what he considers important for the issues he raises.

For Bel, there are three “functions” that are constitutive for any theatre or performance event: the author, the performer and the spectator. “If one of these functions is missing, there is no theatre” (Bel 2004), Bel says. Yet it becomes evident from Bel’s account that he considers it possible to move between those functions. He says that he has approached making *The Last Performance* not as a choreographer, but as a spectator, with the intention of presenting a “best of” (Bel 2004) of choreographies he has seen. In doing this, he emphasizes the importance of an historical context within which he is participating with his work:

If there is no quotation, no reference possible, there is no history. I must start again, from scratch once again. The prevailing idea in dance at the time [...] was that if you want to become a choreographer the people around you and in the profession say ‘Do something original, new and authentic’ – another problematic term – meaning, ‘forget the rest’. I believe that’s complete nonsense. You can only produce something by relying on and referring to past knowledge. [...] You refer to it implicitly. (Bel 2004)

The position that Bel describes here (and which to him is opposed to the art or dance market’s demands for originality, authenticity and newness) can be compared to that of a spectator, who, in Rancière’s words, “[...] observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things she has seen on other stages, on other kinds of place.” (Rancière 2009: 13)¹⁷⁸ It is this position that Bel articulates in *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*. While the “implicit” reference to other works, practices, to “past knowledge” that Bel refers to in the above quotation is already made explicit in the reenactments (or, as Bel refers to them, without settling on a definite term, copies or quotations of dances) that are at the heart of *The Last Performance, The Last Performance (A Lecture)* in turn takes this logic of making explicit a referential system, a historical and discursive context in which the work participates, one step further, in so far as here an explication of this context becomes a work in its own right and quite literally takes the place of the original performance. Instead of merely watching a performance, the spectators of *The Last Performance (A Lecture)* also become spectators of both a process and a context of making and watching, and of various manifestations of this

¹⁷⁸ This position is also taken up by Bel in *A Spectator*.

process, i.e. of the lecture performance itself but also of the documentation of *The Last Performance*. The first video excerpt from the performance that Bel shows is of two consecutive reenactments, the first one by dancer Claire Haenni, the second one by Bel himself, of Linke's *Wandlung*. The second clip is from later in the performance, when the spectators have already seen each performer reenact the dance. It is the final reenactment in *The Last Performance*, but this time, the dancer reenacting the dance is hidden behind a black sheet that two other dancers are holding, moving along with the dancer, but concealing his dance from the gazes of the spectators (who can only occasionally catch glimpses on the side of the sheet). Bel comments:

We clearly see the strategy function. It's very simple. We take away the model, the figure of identification, in other words, the dancer or the actor. "Ich bin nicht Susanne Linke". We take him away. He's hidden behind the curtain. What remains? The Spectator. [...] The idea with this strategy of hiding Susanne Linke was to reactivate the spectator. My idea was, the spectator sees the first part four times the same dance. Here, we offer it once again, but it's taken out of sight. We just see small clues on the sides. We have the same music. My idea was for you spectators [now] to interpret the dance. In other words, to reconstruct it mentally. I don't ask you to dance it but to try to remember it. And therefore to perform it. To be more active. I don't know if it worked but it was quite interesting. [...] Therefore, as I said before identifying myself with the spectator. I had abandoned my prerogatives as a choreographer to position myself as a spectator. With this set-up I ask the spectator to become a choreographer, to reconstruct this dance. We clearly see there is an exchange of functions. (Bel 2004)

Bel speaks of this "exchange of functions" in terms of an "activation" of the spectator. In a schematic comparison of Brecht and Artaud, Rancière identifies two opposing "attitudes" with regard to the idea of an activation of the spectator:

Such are the basic attitudes encapsulated in Brecht's epic theatre and Artaud's theatre of cruelty. For one, the spectator must be allowed some distance; for the other, he must forego any distance. For one, he must refine his gaze, while for the other, he must abdicate the very position of viewer. Modern attempts to reform theatre have constantly oscillated between these two poles of distanced investigation and vital participation, when not combining their principles and their effects. (Rancière 2009: 4-5)

There is a distancing involved in the strategy that Bel describes, but this distancing does not invite the spectator to become a "scientific investigator or experimenter" (4), but, in Bel's words, to "become a choreographer", i.e. to take Bel's position, while he in

his account has already taken the position of spectator. Bel therefore asks nothing else of the spectator but what, according to Rancière, any spectator always already does, i.e. composing his or her “own poem”, or, in this case more specifically, his or her own dance. Because Bel speaks of a strategy he employs, we can assume that with this strategy he aims to elicit a specific response or, more accurately, to facilitate a certain kind of engagement that the spectator should have with his work – in Rancière’s terms, he hopes to produce a specific “effect”. Rancière, however, also speaks of “attitudes”. This choice of words is relevant because it leaves open how (and if at all) a specific attitude actually manifests in the performance itself. If we accept the premise that a dissociation of cause and effect occurs whenever a performance work meets an audience, can a critique of an “attitude” ever be translated into a critique of an aesthetic practice that supposedly expresses this attitude? In the case of *The Last Performance*, we only know of the specific effects that Bel had hoped to produce through his account in the lecture performance about this performance. This lecture performance, however, does not aim to replicate these effects. That he lets the spectators in on what he had hoped to achieve in *The Last Performance* does not mean that Bel gives them any indication about how to read this other performance, the one they are actually watching. Nevertheless, it is relevant that the performance they are watching is about and contains video documentation of another performance and that the spectators are also asked to engage with that performance via the documentation and Bel’s account.

So what is the status of the documentation in *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*? Bel uses it to illustrate the points he makes about the performance, thus very much following the conventions of the lecture format he is using. This means that what he shows, the video, will be read against and compared to what he says about the performance, and we have to assume that his aim is to produce evidence, which Peters, as quoted before, describes as “the event of a synchronisation between showing and understanding that is experienced as the presence of that which is to be shown” (Peters 2007: 38). However, it seems appropriate to assume that the spectators at this point are looking at least as much for why this effect that Bel had hoped for has not been achieved in the performance itself, i.e. for why he feels the need to supplement the performance with his explanations, as they are looking to reconstruct the effect he is talking about, i.e. to have or comprehend the experience that Bel intended for the audience of the original performance. Furthermore, at several points throughout *The Last Performance (A*

Lecture), Bel stresses the importance of performance's liveness, with a repeated reference to Phelan's definition of the ontology¹⁷⁹ of performance as based on disappearance. What is of particular relevance to Bel's argument is the question of repeatability, because he of course talks about a performance consisting of repeated reenactments of an existing choreography. Other than Phelan, whose subject is body art, Bel thus talks about a practice for which the notion of repeatability is integral; choreography implies an ideal movement that, in each performance, the dancers try to actualise, again and again (Bel speaks of trying to "produce an ideal of the performance"). The differences between these actualisations, between each performance, then have to be understood as deviations from this ideal, which however never exists outside of them. It is these differences that Bel hopes to foreground by showing various reenactments of the same choreography in one performance; in *The Last Performance*, the difference between various enactments of a choreography is no longer merely incidental, but it becomes an intentional gesture.¹⁸⁰ And it is in these differences between various enactments of a choreography that Bel sees the main difference between live performance and "a DVD" – a video recording to him is always the same, a performance always different, "it will never happen the same way again". But because his performance consists of several enactments of the same choreography, the difference between these enactments is translatable to video, and the spectators of *The Last Performance (A Lecture)* are in a position to identify these differences also in the video excerpts that Bel shows them. Nevertheless, they are aware that Bel has chosen these excerpts, maybe between various existing video recordings of the show, specifically to illustrate his points. While the notion of an "ideal performance" that Bel evokes implies that every actualisation of a choreography involves an element of (at least potential) failure, the spectators can assume that Bel has chosen a video of a performance that comes as closely as possible to this ideal; they are safe to expect that, unlike in the instance of a dancer slipping at the Paris Opera that Bel reenacts, at no point in the video will a dancer make a serious mistake. Many people before Bel have proposed that performance's

¹⁷⁹ In the subtitles to the video, ontology is mistakenly transcribed as "anthology" (Bel 2004).

¹⁸⁰ If a performance which is based on choreography is always only an approximation to an ideal which never manifests, the live itself has to be understood as being always already a supplement to this ideal.

realness becomes evident in the performer's mistakes¹⁸¹; Bel arrives at this conclusion by way of another connection that has often been made with regard to performance's liveness: that between theatre and death. Bel explains the audience's fascination with theatre (in contrast to other art forms) via Heiner Müller's famous quote as being based on the possibility that an actor might actually die on stage.¹⁸² The mistake for him is a variation of this "potential death" (Bel 2004). This emphasis on the possibility of mistakes and the death of the actor I think is striking in the context of Bel's lecture performance because, although the performance explicitly concerns his authorial intentions, he here identifies something as constitutive for the audience's fascination with performance which lies completely outside of the reach of these intentions – both because it is generally against the intentions to make a mistake (although, as I have tried to outline, Bel aims to foreground the differences between various enactments of a choreography – the repeated "failure to become Susanne Linke" – in his performance) and because he speaks of generic qualities of theatre and performance, i.e. of something that is true for every performance regardless of the piece's specific concerns. "For instance, If I were to die now", he says in *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*, "it would obviously be the best performance you have ever seen. Wouldn't it?" (Bel 2004). If it were, however, it would have nothing to do with the performance as it was conceived or imagined. If we follow Bel's proposition, this means that because of the contingencies of a live situation, the authorial intentions are always already suspended in performance. What does this mean then for Bel's decision to show video excerpts of the original performance in this lecture performance, to supplement the performance not only with another performance but to include video documentation in it – as a further element in the "chain of supplements"? Rather than constituting an attempt to gain control over how this first performance is read, i.e. to save it from the contingencies of the live, I propose that it is exactly this reading, this process of making sense of the performance, that is again submitted to these contingencies: the spectators are invited to make sense of Bel trying to make sense

¹⁸¹ "I know that I often talk about mistakes in performance [...]", Tim Etchells starts a paragraph of his essay 'Doing Time' (2009) entitled "Mistakes" (in a footnote, the essay is identified as a script to a lecture performance, but there is no further indication of why it is thus categorised). Etchells describes how despite his insistence on the importance of the "liveness and dynamic force (of rupture)" (Etchells 2009: 75) created by errors and mistakes, the work of his company Forced Entertainment, here compared to a kids' pantomime, actually aims to be "very stage-managed and on top of the game" (75). His reflections illustrate how the mistake, if it becomes an aesthetic feature of the work, does not necessarily have to work against the intentionality of its producers.

¹⁸² Lehmann uses the same quote in *Postdramatic Theatre*: "And the specificity of theatre is precisely not the presence of the live actor but the presence of the one who is potentially dying." (in Lehmann 2006: 144)

of his performance. Thus, it is not only the performance itself, but the whole process of making and watching the performance, of both its conception and reception, that is opened up again for negotiation. In addition to the contingencies of the live event, the spectators are here confronted with the contingencies of the processes of making and watching, with different ways the performance could have been or has been understood, with different forms it could have taken; in short, with its potentiality.

At this point, it needs mentioning that Bel's main theoretical reference in reflecting on the relationship between spectator and author in *The Last Performance* is Roland Barthes's 'The Death of the Author' – although Bel never makes an explicit connection between his reflections on the potential actual death of the performer and the metaphorical death that Barthes talks about. The applicability of Barthes's text to a theatre or performance event however seems questionable, as Barthes bases his argument on qualities specific to writing, which he calls "that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing." (Barthes 1977: 142) It is the separation from the author which characterises all writing that allows Barthes to state that "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (148), i.e. in the reader. In his brief reflections on Barthes's text, Bel does not consider this difference between writing and performance, where such a separation does not take place because even if the author (or director or choreographer) might not be present, there is still the performer to consider. He does, however, reflect on the role of the performer, which for him most importantly is characterised by an "inalienable subjectivity" (Bel 2004). He identifies this subjectivity in the necessary variations between the different reenactments of Linke's choreography by different performers in *The Last Performance*, in which, each time, this difference becomes visible as an "irreducible part" that "resists transformation" (Bel 2004). This presence of the performer for Bel seems to be in the way of an "activation" of the spectator: "We take away the performer – what remains – the spectator" (Bel 2004), Bel says at one point in the lecture performance, and at another point: "I took away the author to reactivate the spectator" (Bel 2004).¹⁸³ This activation to Bel seems to be

¹⁸³ A statement Bel made in an interview with Gerald Siegmund in 2002 clarifies Bel's position with regard to the lack of a distinction between author and performer in the above quotes from *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*; Bel here speaks of the "author-actor's attempt to disappear" (Jérôme Bel 2013) - the actor in this case standing in for the author ("as Flaubert said 'Emma Bovary is me', I can say 'Frédéric Seguet is me', the principal actor in all my productions up to *The Show Must Go On*" (Jérôme Bel 2013)).

synonymous with Barthes's idea of a "birth of the reader", for which, according to Barthes, the "death of the Author" (Barthes 1977: 148) is the precondition. Interestingly, Bel misquotes Barthes here: "That's why he [Barthes] opposes the death of the author to the birth of the spectator." (Bel 2004) While for Barthes, writing's dissociation from its origin is what brings about the "death of the Author",¹⁸⁴ in theatre and performance, where such a dissociation does not take place, the "birth of the spectator", if we follow Bel's argument, is something that needs to be achieved – by subtraction, by "taking away" the author/performer.¹⁸⁵ While spectators for Bel are "co-producers" of the performance, it seems they nevertheless need to be made aware of this role. Bel appears to insist that in performance there are certain factors (like the presence of the performers in their "inalienable subjectivity") that prevent the spectators from, to again paraphrase Rancière, composing their own performance. In a way, although Bel never explicitly makes this connection, it is the anticipation of an actual death that he has mentioned earlier in the piece that stands in the way of the metaphorical death of the author; which, in turn, leads Bel to adopt in his work the logic of trying to subtract the author via subtracting the performer, or, in the case of the one scene from *The Last Performance* that he shows a video of, the performance itself. This logic is continued in another way in *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*. Again, yet differently, Bel "takes away" something, this time the performance as a whole, and substitutes it with a lecture performance. In doing this, however, he not only foregrounds the spectators' role as co-producers of the one performance event, but enables them, albeit retrospectively, to take on this role for what I have described as the processes of making and watching that surround the work.

Make Me Stop Smoking

The final lecture performance I will discuss in this chapter is Rabih Mroué's *Make Me Stop Smoking* (2006). Like *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*, Mroué's lecture performance focuses on the processes of making performance; like *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* and *A Spectator* it engages with an archive or a selection of materials related to performance. Unlike these other lecture performances, however, it does not

¹⁸⁴ According to Rancière, in contrast, distance is "the normal condition of any communication" (Rancière 2009: 11), i.e. there is always a dissociation of cause and effect.

¹⁸⁵ This disappearance, or subtraction, for Bel is the precondition for the spectator, as Bel goes on to say, to "become aware of [her] role" which is that of "a voyeur with nothing left to see" (Jérôme Bel 2013).

speak of performances that have happened; there is no finished piece or body of work upon which the lecture performance reflects in hindsight. The archive that Mroué presents in *Make Me Stop Smoking* is intended to provide materials and ideas for future art work, as Mroué describes early on in the performance:

Since 1986, the year I started working in theater and visual arts, I have been collecting various materials: cut outs from local newspapers, photographs, interviews, news stories, excerpts from television programs, written ideas, proposals for performances, objects, press articles and other things; material from the past and still waiting to be used in the future. From time to time, I return to this material to see if any of it can be used in the present; a piece of news, an image, an idea worth working on which might develop into an art project to present in the future. It will then speak of the present, I mean, the present of that future: material from the past, as potential for future artworks to talk about the present. (Mroué 2012: 278)

Whilst I have described how Bel in *The Last Performance (A Lecture)* aims to return from a finished performance to the process that led to it and thus to the potentiality of this process, Mroué in *Make Me Stop Smoking* confronts his audience with a potentiality that has not yet been realized, with documents that might be used in making a performance rather than with the documentation of a past performance or the “making of” of this performance. The archive is presented as potentiality, as something that will only reveal its meaning in the future – which brings to mind Derrida’s characterization of the archive in *Archive Fever*: “It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come.” (Derrida 1995: 37) While in Derrida’s formulation the meaning of the archive seems to be indefinitely deferred into the future (it “will have meant” something), Mroué emphasises this future as a present, or more precisely, he insists that the material from the archive, “from the past”, will not only speak about the past and what it “will have meant”, but it will in the present speak “of the present”. The question that this raises is whether this present has yet arrived, or in other words, whether by presenting the archive to an audience in *Make Me Stop Smoking* its potentiality is realised or whether it still remains to be realised in the future. While Mroué uses the materials in his archive to make his lecture performance, in this lecture performance he nevertheless still speaks of their potential future use – which is for instance evident when he lists the different “types” of material that he has collected in his “personal archive”:

After 20 years of collecting bits and pieces, I can say that: Today I possess what resembles an archive. I call it: my personal archive. My personal archive consists of four different types of collected material:

- 1) Documentation of the projects I made and already presented... All the papers, writings, preparations, drawings, photographs, etc ...
- 2) A journalistic archive related to my work. Everything written about my projects, articles, interviews, and publicity.
- 3) Proposals that I wrote, ideas for upcoming, and unfinished projects.
- 4) A general, non-personal archive from newspapers televisions, radio and other sources, relating to the public sphere. Part of this material I collected myself, while others I've got them from friends. I've worked on parts of this material, and there are still parts I've no clue what to make out of them.

Personally, I am interested in the last two types of material. The first two types do not interest me in the least. Maybe because they relate to the past. Unlike the other two, which relate to the future? (Mroué 2012: 279)

Mroué's assertion that he has "no clue" as yet of the use of some of the materials in his archive implies that their use lies outside of the present performance, that despite them being presented in this performance their appropriate future use is still to be discovered. On the other hand, it becomes clear in the course of the performance that some of the projects to which Mroué here refers as "upcoming" or "unfinished" would be more appropriately characterised as abandoned projects, i.e. their future realisation seems very unlikely. He speaks, for instance, of a project he pursued for a while, which consisted of photographing manhole covers in cities all over the world, and which he abandoned after coming across a book in which this had already been done. This in turn means that this lecture performance is very likely the only context in which these photographs will ever be presented to an audience, implying that they have found their use exactly by being presented in the context of this piece.

It is the form of the lecture performance which allows Mroué to maintain and play with this ambivalence: maybe more than any other form, lecture performances oscillate between being a product (a performance), and being the presentation of a process that

has no definitive end point.¹⁸⁶ Peters makes the following observations about lecture performances based on a discussion of Le Roy's *Product of Circumstances*, but they can just as well be used to describe the ambivalent nature of Mroué's *Make Me Stop Smoking*:

But while the lecture performance, in the sense of a direct realisation of an inquiry or of the enactment of a concept or of the documentary configuration of a series of rather precarious stations of artistic experimentation and searching, seems to reject the conventional end product, it simultaneously stands for the becoming ubiquitous of the demand for product and presentation.¹⁸⁷ (Peters 2006: 124)

This dynamic is also at work in *Make Me Stop Smoking*, in which Mroué presents materials to be used in future performances and reflects on how this process of archiving relates to making work, while at the same time of course also using these materials and thus turning this process into a product, into the performance that the audience is currently watching. This performance, however, in its constant reference to future works, operates in the mode of a promise of "an optimum yet to be achieved"¹⁸⁸ (124). If we consider Virno's description of the activity of the virtuoso as one "[...] which finds its own fulfilment (that is, its own purpose) in itself, without objectifying itself into an end product, without settling into a 'finished product,' or into an object which would survive the performance" (Virno 2004: 52), then it could be argued that all performances, not just lecture performances, to some extent share this logic of a productivity which is never fully resolved in the performance; in performance, productivity always appears as process, yet this process necessarily transcends the performance itself. However, the lecture

¹⁸⁶ In an essay about Mroué's lecture performances that focuses largely on his investigation of images, Maaïke Bleeker reflects on how Mroué invites his audience into a "process of investigation", taking his performance *Who's Afraid of Representation?* (2005) as a starting point: "In this performance as well as in his other lecture-performances, Mroué takes the audience along in a process of investigating and questioning, and demonstrates the potential of performance for such an investigation. His lecture-performances are not merely alternative modes of accounting for the results of his investigations (alternative, that is, to a journalistic or academic mode of reporting). More than that, the medium of the lecture-performance presents Mroué with an alternative mode of producing knowledge [...]." (Bleeker 2012: 186-188) The production of knowledge that Bleeker here describes takes the form of an open-ended process in which the audience is involved; the lecture performance is not only a presentation of the "results" of an inquiry, it is where the inquiry takes place. I have however shown in the previous chapter that this could be said of the performance of any lecture, and that lecture performances only foreground the potential of the lecture as an event that produces rather than merely "reports" knowledge.

¹⁸⁷ "Doch ebenso wie die Lecture-Performance im Sinne der Direktumsetzung einer Recherche oder des *Enactments* eines Konzepts oder der dokumentarischen Zusammenstellung einer Reihe von eher prekären Stationen künstlerischen Experimentierens und Suchens das klassische Endprodukt zu verweigern scheint, steht sie doch im gleichen Zug auch für das Ubiquitär-Werden von Produkt und Präsentationszwang."

¹⁸⁸ „erst noch zu erzielenden Optimums“.

performance form allows artists to not only present the results of a process but to reflect on and make present the process itself. Like the other lecture performances I have discussed here, *Make Me Stop Smoking* functions both as product and the deferral of a product.

This deferral is, according to Peters, the logic of the business presentation. I wish to argue, however, that it is exactly this structural resemblance to the logic of the business presentation that allows Mroué to turn this logic on its head. While the performance could on the one hand be read as a “portfolio turned into a performance” (Peters 2006: 124)¹⁸⁹, it also presents an account of the various failures and setbacks that accompany artistic production. As in the example of the photographs of manhole covers, *Make Me Stop Smoking* in many instances speaks (often with great wit) of a productivity that comes to nothing, that has no impact, no outlet, that does not produce anything. Paradoxically, the performance itself at the same time provides this outlet, provides a space for this surplus generated by failure. This is for instance evident in another set of materials which Mroué presents in the performance: the proposal for a play he never realised, which was to be entitled “The poster”, and which in turn is based on a photograph/poster showing assassinated Lebanese prime minister Harriri standing behind his son that was displayed before the election following the assassination. Mroué projects pages from the proposal and an accompanying letter to the Lebanese Ministry of Culture with which he had applied for funding (23,000 US dollars), while reflecting on the work he had intended to make (“I still have this proposal, although I forgot all its details, and can’t remember anything concerning the text. I forgot why I was so excited about it.” (Mroué 2012: 283)) and on the proposal itself, discarding parts of it as “Bla blab la ... nonsense ...” (Mroué 2012: 284), thus ridiculing the process of proposal writing (and with this, one of the four categories he had identified for the contents of his personal archive). He ends his account of this particular project as follows: “Four years after I submitted the proposal, I was notified by the Ministry of Culture that I had been awarded \$1,000 for having produced and presented my successful play: *The Poster*, the play which in fact I had neither produced nor presented. Of course I kept the money.” (Mroué 2012: 284) The absurdity of this procedure is evidently amusing; but the anecdote also raises the more general question of how to measure the financial value of artistic production, especially if, as in

¹⁸⁹ “in eine Performance verwandelte [...] Bewerbungsmappe”.

this case, it produces no product. The productivity that comes to nothing is contrasted with Mroué's characterisation of the archive as a burden, as a demand to be productive:

Every element of my archive is waiting to take its place in a work that I will make. The problem, however, is that I have kept many things, I don't know if I will live long enough to use them all. It's depressing. The same feeling I have, each time I go to a library and look at all the books standing on the shelves; I ask myself: How many life(s) do I need in order to read all these books. It's really depressing. (Mroué 2012: 279)

Beyond expressing a specific personal disposition, Mroué's account raises the more general question of how to deal with materials and objects from the past, and thus implicitly also with memory and history; however, this question is never completely dissociated from the (perhaps only seemingly) more pragmatic question of how to use these materials, a question that ultimately concerns the present. Here, Mroué's approach to the archive is similar to the one offered in *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* by Wagner-Feigl-Forschung, in which the question of how to use the archive is also foregrounded. In both pieces, the artists reflect on how to use an archive while at the same time presenting one or many possible uses of this archive, thus enacting their ideas while developing them for the audience. This does, however, not mean that showing and telling merely collapse in *Make Me Stop Smoking*: on one level Mroué simply shows materials from his archive in a PowerPoint presentation whilst telling the audience about the materials and the process of using these materials in his work; on another level, however, the combination of showing and telling constitutes another showing, because in it the process of making a work from archival materials is enacted.

This is already evident in the very beginning of the performance, where Mroué contemplates the process of giving a title to a work and discusses the relation between the work and its title. "Since I started doing videos and performances, I have been obsessed with titles" (277) is the first sentence in the performance. Mroué goes on to explain that at first the process of picking a title was very difficult for him, as he wanted the title not only to encapsulate the work but also to "sound light but intellectual, beautiful and at the same time intelligent; deep and catchy. A title, that is easy to memorize, easy on the ear and easy on the tongue." (277) He describes how his "relation with titles and names has changed" (277):

I used to believe, as we say in Arabic, a letter is understood from its title. It took me a long time to understand a title doesn't have to be related to the work. The moment a title or name is given, it acquires its meaning, its dimension. [...] With time I found a solution to this problem: A list of good titles. Any phrase or sentence or words that I thought could make a good title, I would write it down in a special notebook. This way, I created some lists of titles for my unknown projects. Titles of works I have no idea what they are yet. I will show you one of these lists: [...]. (277)

And he goes on to do just that: with one slide per title he projects a long list of potential titles for works, from *Switzerland is no longer Lebanon* to *Life is short, although the day is long to My wife and I love Al Pacino, but she loves him even more* to the title of the performance we are watching, *Make Me Stop Smoking*. Some titles in the list, such as *Who's afraid of representation?*, are titles of works that Mroué has actually made (which of course raises the question whether he has actually picked them from this list or has included them in the list retrospectively), and some refer to the "unfinished" projects he will go on to talk about, such as *I, the undersigned*. He does not only show the titles he has collected to be used for future projects, and he does not only tell about the process of selecting titles. The performance itself with its somewhat random title, *Make Me Stop Smoking*, serves to illustrate further what Mroué presents through showing and telling, i.e. that there is always another level on which the performance itself exemplifies the processes described by Mroué.

Mroué presents all the projects and materials in his lecture performance in a tone that combines anecdote and – often poetic – reflection; there is, however, a dramaturgical development that also necessitates a shift in emphasis from anecdote towards reflection, from the light-hearted and humorous tone that characterises the beginning of the piece to a more serious tone towards the end. This, I believe, has largely to do with the subject matter: in the beginning of the performance, Mroué talks more generally about and presents materials from projects he has done or intended to do, projects that have remained unfinished or were abandoned, and the materials he presents are often things he has made or texts he has written himself. Towards the end though he shifts his focus towards documentary materials that relate to issues of the Lebanese Civil War and terrorism. Among the final materials shown are a video from "the Mount Lebanon battles that [...] took place between the Lebanese Druze and the Lebanese Maronites in 1983" (291), and the video testimony of a female suicide bomber.

The video of the battle presents an exception to the materials Mroué shows in *Make Me Stop Smoking*. He explains that he has come into the possession of this video because people have started giving him materials to use in his work:

After I presented *Looking for a Missing Employee* in Beirut, a performance based on documents from Lebanese newspapers and in which I tell a true story, with the real names of the people involved, many people started giving me actual files and documents to work on. The people felt that these were worthwhile topics, so they collected information and presented it to me, to archive and work on in the future. That is how I got my hand on a video that I will now show you. (291)

So while he was given the video as something “to work on in the future”, Mroué never clearly states his intention to actually do so; instead, his concern is with the question of whether he should show it at all:

When I played the video, I was shocked. I saw corpses strewn across fields, under cars, everywhere, piled on top of each other; rotting corpses, cut into pieces, burnt, split in half, mutilated. If it were not for the teeth, we might not be able to identify them as human. I watched this tape once, and was afraid to go near it again, but the images were burnt into my mind. Moreover, I know that the tape is still at my house. I hesitated a lot about whether I should show you this video, so you may see how images can burn the eyes. I hesitated and finally decided that yes, I will not show it to you. This belongs to my censored archive... but I will show you a part of it, where a group of Druze militiamen are saluting the unknown cameraman. By the way, the Druze won this particular battle. (291)

When Mroué finally shows the video of soldiers preparing for battle, the audience will of course imagine the violence that Mroué has described but has decided not to show. So whilst there is obviously a process of framing involved – the video is framed by Mroué’s introductory comments as well as by the performance as a whole the audience is asked to watch it as a historical document, i.e. the criteria for making sense of it are not, or not primarily, of an aesthetic nature. After showing the video, Mroué concludes:

I have been collecting material for 20 years. Basically, this material is worthless. Something anyone can find. As long as you make the effort to collect it and keep it for the future, until this material acquires some kind of value. It could be a historical, anthropological, scientific value. That is how the idea of the archive is constituted. The danger lies, I believe, in the archive becoming the property of one side that can manipulate it as it pleases. In the sense that that side will decide what is worth archiving and what is not; what should be made available to the public, and what

shouldn't; what remains hidden, and what should be destroyed. The archive, in this sense, is an authority over historians.

I think that one of the signs of democracy appears when every citizen, with no exceptions, will have the right to see all the contents of any archive that belong to any side, wherever it could be. (292)

Mroué here no longer speaks of his personal archive but of the archive as an instrument of the state and a source of power; although he still considers possible uses of the archive (the material could be of “historical, anthropological, scientific value” – interestingly he does not mention art here), he shifts his concern towards stressing the importance of allowing everyone access to any archive. He symbolically puts into practice this concern by showing materials from his own archive, by presenting them to a public – especially with regard to the video of the soldiers, for which he does not propose a future use in an art work. More generally, by showing us materials he intends to use in future art works, Mroué does not only invite us to witness his process as an artist, but he is paradoxically also able to present these materials as if they were not elements of an art work; he frames them as potential ingredients of a work, and therefore as not completely absorbed in the framing process of this particular performance. In other words, they still belong to the “world out there” with which lectures, according to Goffman, are concerned. I am referencing Goffman here because it is the use of the lecture form that enables Mroué to present the materials in this specific way – as part of an art work (the lecture performance) and as part of an archive that exists independently of this art work, that belongs to the “world out there”.

This implies that Rancière's model of performance as a “third thing” that belongs neither to the artist nor the spectator cannot easily be applied to lecture performances. If lecture performances always present materials that exist outside of them (and all the lecture performances I have discussed in this chapter do so), what would then be this “third thing” – the materials, or their presentation (the performance)? Nevertheless, what Rancière says about the quality of this “third thing” could indeed be applied to the materials which Mroué presents in his lecture performance, namely that they exclude “any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect” – not because of their autonomy from context, but because they cannot be clearly assigned to a particular context (art, history, the world out there). In turn this means that the criteria by which to make sense of them are not predefined. Mroué *shows* us these materials; and while he

also interprets and reflects on them and thereby frames the showing, the materials are also shown as they are and are thus allowed to speak for themselves.

Throughout the performance, Mroué has engaged with the question how the archive, how documents of the past, can be used in future art works. Yet in the end of *Make Me Stop Smoking*, he leaves behind this question and discards the archive in favour of what he refers to as “our daily experiences” (293). At many times in his performance, he has linked the desire or need to archive to “a fear of death” (280) and has contrasted the archive with death (“Death threatens all archival desires” (291)). Death is also the subject of many of the materials he presents, the last of which is the aforementioned video testimony of the martyr Wafa’ Nouredine.¹⁹⁰ What Mroué points out after showing this testimony is the martyr’s smile:

One day I will do a work about the most beautiful smile I ever saw: Wafa’s Smile.
Since in this world, there is not only one suffering but there is thousands.
There is not one memory.
There is not one experience.
There is not one war.
There is not one enemy
There is not one friend
There is not one confessional
There is not one religion.
There is not one god.
There is neither one truth nor one origin.
Thus, there is not one archive.
But there is only one death. (293)

He goes on to close his PowerPoint presentation, so that the projection shows the desktop of his laptop; he then drags all the files he has used in the performance into the “recycle bin” and empties it.

The archive is not a diary. It seems that we collect an archive to cover our daily experiences, and to hide behind it. We create an archive of pictures, notes, stories, texts, CVs, all these in order to hide our daily life.

¹⁹⁰ “Between 1982 and 1987, and beside the military operations, the resistance fighters started to do some suicide operations against the Israeli army which was still occupying the south of Lebanon. The fighters used to record their testimonies on VHS tapes just before they go to die. The suicide bombers used to start their recorded testimonies with the same opening phrase: I am the comrade martyr. In fact I am always taken by the power of this phrase: I am the martyr. It intrigues me and keeps me thinking of its meanings. I mean how someone could say: I am martyr when he or she is not yet dead? And when we will be watching the video tape, he or she will be a martyr? How can one speak about past, present and future in relation to this phrase: I am the martyr?” (Mroué 2012: 292)

We hide behind the archive so no one sees us naked.
Thank you. (293)

Different concerns and themes overlap in the final part of the performance. There is the cathartic gesture of deleting the archive: Mroué has used the archive, and what we have seen was the work he has made from it; he has freed himself from this burden. The singularity of death, exemplified in the “most beautiful smile” of the martyr, cannot be contained in the archive, and, symbolically, brings about the death of the archive, exemplified in its deletion.

After freeing himself from the archive’s hold, Mroué can make a plea for experiencing daily life uncovered, or “naked”, a nakedness that is exemplified in the naked desktop we see projected, and that in turn exemplifies the singularity not only of death, but of this “daily life”. Paradoxically, however, we, the spectators, despite witnessing the symbolic deletion of the archive, have instead become burdened with the materials it contained, with the images we have seen, with the words we have heard. Going back to our “daily lives”, we carry the archive with us.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at how lecture performances engage with other performance work – with “all performances ever performed” (*The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art*), with a selection of performances experienced by one spectator (*A Spectator*), with a single performance that its author feels has been misunderstood (*The Last Performance (A Lecture)*), and with materials collected in order to be used in future performances (*Make Me Stop Smoking*). They are performances about performances, performances about making performance and performances about watching performance. That they are *about* something is important here because it means that they always refer to something outside of themselves, even if that something is another performance. They are therefore always in a way secondary or supplementary with regard to what they are about – a status that is somewhat at odds with the idea of an experience of performance as “primary”, as, to cite Quick again, “a practice that appears to resist the operation of representation, of repetition, of illusion, while somehow being or presenting ‘the real’ itself” (Quick 1996: 12). This being-about-something is of course

due to their form as lecture performances; lectures, too, are always about something, are always both secondary to what they are about and make use of secondary materials, of documents and records. Lectures and lecture performances therefore cannot be understood as singular, isolated events. Instead, they establish a context which they explore and in which they simultaneously participate. For the lecture performances I have discussed in this chapter, this context is that of making and watching performance. They participate in this context in two ways – by being performances, and by being *about* performance. *Make Me Stop Smoking* is both a lecture performance about the process of using archival materials in performance and a performance made from archival materials; *A Spectator* is a spectator's account of different experiences of watching performance – an experience that the audience is going through at the very same moment at which it is being related to them; in *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*, the audience is told that a video can never be the same as a performance, because other than a performance it is always the same – and is nevertheless invited to watch video excerpts of the performance that this lecture performance is about; in *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art*, an encyclopaedia is presented that might not exist outside of this presentation; and there are, in all of these pieces, many more instances where the content of the piece enters into a specific, sometimes corresponding, sometimes contradictory, relationship with the form of the piece.

These specific conjunctions of form and content bring with them a number of questions that are negotiated in all these lecture performances, albeit of course in varying degrees and with differences in emphasis. They all negotiate, both on the level of content and of form, the status of documentation and documents in relation to the live event, the relationship between artist-performer and spectator (and thus between making and watching performance), and that between process and product. These aspects are of course interrelated: Because they have an outside referent, in this case other performances or their documentation, these lecture performances make evident that they function as one element in a “chain of supplements”, thus foregrounding the supplementary nature of performance itself. Performance documentation here does not appear as something that contradicts the live nature of performance, that turns it from a process in the present to a product representing the past, but in contrast documentation here is itself shown as a process, in the way that Pearson and Shanks speak of “second-order performance as a creative process in the present and not as speculation on past

meaning or intention” (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 59). What thus comes into view is how performance (and, indeed, performance documentation) generates other performances, something Rebecca Schneider has described by comparing the way that solo performances influence other solo performances to the structure of call and response that can be found in the solo in jazz: “as an artist makes a call and another responds and another responds to that response as a call and a response is made which, again, becomes a call citing, or reciting, a response as call.” (Schneider 2005: 37) We can assume that this process of call and response often depends on access to documentation rather than on a live presence at a performance event, and Wagner-Feigl-Forschung demonstrate exactly how performance documentation can be generative of new performance work – both on the level of content, by presenting their ambitions for the *Encyclopaedia*-project to be used to inform future performance work, and by creating a lecture performance almost entirely based on archival materials. What goes hand in hand with an understanding of documentation as process rather than product is a shift in focus from the concentration on a concrete instance of performance to a wider context of making and watching performance, which can also be found in all the works I have discussed here, as they are all concerned with how watching becomes making and how making becomes watching. In their performances, the artists constantly shift between these positions of making and watching, they constantly embody both of these functions. This does, however, not mean that there are no implicit and explicit hierarchies involved in the relation between watching and making. Rancière envisions a symmetrical relationship between artist and spectator, and his insistence that spectating is an activity on equal terms with making performance seems to be supported by the fact that the lecture performances I have discussed here all portray the activity of watching as the basis of making performance – again, both on the level of content, for instance in Bel’s assertion that one “can only produce something by relying on and referring to past knowledge”, but also on the level of form, as all the performances present the activity of spectating (which according to Rancière consists of the activities of observing, collecting, comparing and interpreting) as constitutive for their own existence. I have though argued that the activity of a spectator “composing her own poem” is different to that of making an actual performance: the “own poem” has a status that is different from that of an actual performance, which Rancière describes as the “third thing” that bridges the distance between the positions of making and watching. It is important in this respect

that in two of the lecture performances I have discussed, *A Spectator* and *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art*, the artists include an explicit invitation to the spectators to repeat what they have done (Bel invites the spectators to themselves consider their spectatorial experiences, Wagner and Feigl want to make the *Encyclopaedia* available to others for future use). Does this invitation constitute an attempt at “activating” the spectators otherwise perceived as “passive”, and thus call into question the value of their spectatorial experience, their “own poems”? I propose that, in contrast, it constitutes an acknowledgement that it is from the position of the spectator that these performances have been made. This refers to the fact that performances can take on an existence which is independent from what Pearson and Shanks refer to as “past meaning or intention”, or what Rancière describes as a logic of “cause and effect”. While I believe that it is difficult to maintain that a performance such as Burden’s *Shoot*, which consists of the artist being shot in his arm, can be considered as a “third thing” existing completely independently of the artist, maybe, if we accept the premise of a “third thing”, the video of the performance, presented by Burden in his *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974*, could take on such a function. In turn, this might also be stated for all the documents presented in the lecture performances I have discussed. But two arguments against this proposition come to mind: Firstly, Rancière bases his conception of an emancipated spectator on the premise that there is no ontological difference between performance and other art forms, or, between performance and its documentation (an argument similar to that of Auslander (Auslander 1999, 2006)). Yet why in this case should the documents presented in the performance and not the performance itself be able to take on this function of a “third thing”? And secondly, the documents are of course themselves presented in the context of a performance. While I maintain with Jones that the differences between various encounters with performance need to be acknowledged without privileging either the live event or the document (Jones 1997), what is more important here is that it is not their status as documents as such that allows the documentary materials presented in lecture performances to take on the function of a “third thing”, but the fact that they are contextualised within a performance, that the performance is *about* them, that it makes them the object of an aesthetic exploration; and that they remain to some extent alien to this performance in

that they also belong to the “world out there”.¹⁹¹

And this is also why lecture performances do not participate in the “explicative order” that Rancière describes, even if they explain. If artists use the lecture performance form to articulate their intentions behind a project - whether it is, as in *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*, the past work that the lecture performance is about or, as in *The Encyclopaedia of Performance Art*, the project that is just being presented – they take on the position of the lecturer as “someone who believes personally in what is being said and takes the position that is implied in the remarks” (Goffman 1981: 167) – even if, as we are still operating in the context of art, we can never be absolutely sure about the sincerity of all their remarks. What is important, however, is that what is being stated can be measured against what is being presented.

¹⁹¹ “Performance's being [...] becomes itself through disappearance”, says Phelan (Phelan 1996: 146). This may also imply that performance is not simply a “third thing” but is instead, through disappearing, and through the different ways in which it remains (following Schneider's critique of Phelan (Schneider 2001), constantly becoming a third, fourth, fifth, ..., thing.

Chapter 4

CONTEXTS OF ADDRESSING AND INSTITUTING

Museum Highlights

“Good afternoon, uh, everyone?”

“Good afternoon, uh, everyone? Good afternoon. My name is Jane Castleton, and I’d like to welcome all of you to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I’ll be your guide today as we explore the museum, uh, its history, and its collections.” (Fraser 2005: 96)

If we trust the performance script she later published, this is how Andrea Fraser welcomed the audience to her performance *Museum Highlights* in the West Entrance Hall of the Philadelphia Museum of Art on a series of afternoons in February 1989. Her introductory words are addressed to “*whoever appears to be listening*” (96), as it says in what – even in the absence of an actual stage – is best described as the stage directions for the performance. But who is listening? “*Two or three dozen museum visitors are waiting in the southeast corner of the visitor reception area; some are waiting for a Contemporary Viewpoints Artist Lecture by Andrea Fraser; some are waiting for one of the museum’s many guided tours; some are just waiting for friends.*” (96) The audience for Fraser’s performance is here described as a heterogeneous crowd; some people are there by chance; and even those who have come to participate in a specific event, be it the lecture by Fraser or a guided tour through the museum, are not aware of the exact nature of the event that is about to unfold. They cannot depend on an introductory text or stage directions to contextualise what is happening, and they might or might not be aware that Jane Castleton is a persona that Fraser has created for this performance, and that they are actually encountering Fraser playing the role of Castleton. They will have to rely on their immediate context to make sense of what they are witnessing and to understand the conventions of the situation in which they find themselves – in this case the

institution of the museum, where guided tours, as Fraser remarks, are a common feature.¹⁹²

I will get back to what this reference to “making sense of the situation” entails, but I would first like to consider in more detail this initial scene of address in terms of the constitution of a public. Fraser’s initial address, “Good afternoon, uh, everyone?”, is followed by a question mark in the performance text.¹⁹³ This question mark serves to indicate the tone she uses in inviting her audience to gather around her; she is making sure that “everyone” who might want to participate can do so. The question mark therefore also signifies that, at the outset of the performance, it is as yet unclear who this “everyone” is – because the audience is still being assembled, but also because potentially everyone could join the audience of this public event. Not everyone in the reception area will respond to this address, but everyone who does so in the next instance becomes implicated in it – “I’ll be your guide today as we explore the museum, uh, its history, and its collections.” The “we” already addresses the audience as a more defined group, but one whose constitution remains temporal (once “we” have explored the museum, “we” will probably go our separate ways), and one that remains open for others to join (other visitors in the museum can potentially still come along or just listen in for a while). Michael Warner, whose book *Publics and Counterpublics* will be an important reference throughout this chapter, describes that to “come into range” of a public address is all that is required for anybody to become a member of a public: “[...] you might have wandered into hearing range of the speaker’s podium in a convention hall only because it was on your way to the bathroom. No matter: by coming into range, you fulfil the only entry condition demanded of a public.” (Warner 2002: 87-88) Already, each audience member, “everyone” or, more precisely (again in Fraser’s words) “whoever

¹⁹² This illustrates very nicely the difference between two ways of encountering this performance: as a member of the live audience or as a reader of the performance script. While the live audience has the context, the readers have the contextualisation to consider. Each audience has access to information the other audience cannot access: the readers get all the contextualisation as well as Fraser’s reflection on her intentions and some background information in the footnotes to the performance script; they can, however, only imagine what the actual performance did in relation to its audience in the live situation. Furthermore, they are unable to see the places that Fraser’s text refers to as they read it. I will reflect on these different ways of accessing the performance at various points in my discussion of *Museum Highlights*.

¹⁹³ The “uh” that is interjected here, and at various other points throughout Fraser’s text, signifies that her mode of delivery could be described as “fresh-talk illusion” (Goffman 1981: 172), i.e. the text is memorised but meant to appear improvised. Shannon Jackson describes Fraser’s initial address in her book *Social Works* as “mimicking the conventional welcoming gesture”: “The opening lines of *Museum Highlights* present Jane’s attempts to establish herself, mimicking the conventional welcoming gesture with a touch of insecurity. Fraser’s text includes the ‘uh’s’ that show Jane re-gathering her poise, including a question mark after ‘everyone?’ to show a bit of uncertainty as to the positioning of her addressee.” (Jackson 2011: 119).

appears to be listening”, is implicated as belonging to a public that has been constituted temporarily. The negotiation of the terms of this belonging is central to Fraser’s performance, and, as “we” will see (even as readers of the performance text), it is carried out on the level of the relationship that is established in the performance between Fraser and the audience, rather than being explicitly thematised. For Warner, a public “exists *by virtue of being addressed*” (67). Curiously, the address both presupposes and establishes this public (Warner speaks of a “kind of chicken-and-egg circularity” (67)): “A public might be real and efficacious, but its reality lies in just this reflexivity by which an addressable object is conjured into being in order to enable the very discourse that gives it existence.” (67) The public is “conjured into being” by being addressed as if it already existed. Its members, “whoever appears to be listening”, become members by being addressed as if they already belonged to it. If a public is made up of “whoever appears to be listening”, this listening (or other forms of attention) are required for the public to come into being:

Most social classes and groups are understood to encompass their members all the time, no matter what. A nation, for example, includes its members whether they are awake or asleep, sober or drunk, sane or deranged, alert or comatose. Publics are different. Because a public exists only by virtue of address, it must predicate some degree of attention, however notional, from its members. (87)

The attention, as Warner says, can be “notional”, he for instance mentions the example of an audience member falling asleep at the ballet (87); and the address, too, can be implicit, it does not have to be a “Good afternoon, uh, everyone?” Once the address is met with attention, the heterogeneous crowd of “whoever appears to be listening” constitutes itself as a public. It does so as a “*relation among strangers*” (74): “A public sets its boundaries and its organization by its own discourse rather than by external frameworks only if it openly addresses people who are identified primarily through their participation in the discourse and who therefore cannot be known in advance.” (74) And that it does so by itself is, according to Warner, another characteristic of the public: “*A public is self-organized*” (67). This quality of publics is important to Warner because it is only in their self-organisation that publics appear as “sovereign with respect to the state”

(68). In Warner's conception, a public constitutes itself independently of institutions.¹⁹⁴ Fraser, in contrast, calls into question the possibility of such an independence¹⁹⁵.

For Fraser, because it is "internalized, embodied, and performed by people" (in Jackson 2011: 124), there can never be an "outside" of the institution: "So if there is no outside for us, it is not because the institution is perfectly closed, or exists as an apparatus in a 'totally administered society' or has grown all-encompassing in size and scope. It is because the institution is inside of us, and we can't get outside ourselves." (124) In his essay 'Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming', Gerald Raunig comments on the limitations of Fraser's conception of the institution:

Although there seems to be an echo of Foucault's concept of self-government here, there is no indication of forms of escaping, shifting, transforming. Whereas for Foucault the critical attitude appears simultaneously as 'partner' and as 'adversary' of the arts of governing, the second part of this specific ambivalence vanishes in Fraser's account, yielding to a discursive self-limitation that barely permits reflection on one's own enclosure. (Raunig 2009: 6)

What is the way out of what Raunig here rightly characterises as a "discursive self-limitation"? I will argue in this chapter that it is by looking at how the relation between institutions (which according to Fraser do not allow for an outside position) and publics (which according to Warner constitute themselves independently of institutions) is negotiated in lecture performance work that such a way out can be imagined. Lecture performances always address (and through this address constitute) a public, and while they are often situated in specific institutional contexts, they are hardly ever limited to one such context but instead are shifting between contexts (most obviously between art and academia). Therefore, in what follows, I will look at how lecture performances both participate in and create different institutional contexts, and at how they both participate in and create different kinds of publics.

¹⁹⁴ "A public organizes itself independently of state institutions, laws, formal frameworks of citizenship, or pre-existing institutions such as the church." (Warner 2002: 68)

¹⁹⁵ At least she does so in her writing. How *Museum Highlights* negotiates its relation to the institution is one focus of the following discussion of the piece.

Unsuspecting Publics

Fraser is one of the artists that are commonly referenced in discussions of lecture performances, especially in a visual arts context; her work was featured in the two lecture exhibition projects I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the *Lecture Performance* exhibition at Kölnischer Kunstverein and the exhibition *A Short History of Performance Part II: The Lecture as a Work of Art* at London's Whitechapel Gallery. In the catalogue to the Whitechapel exhibition, *Museum Highlights* is introduced as the piece on which Fraser's prominence as an artist is based:

Fraser came to prominence with her mischievous *Gallery Highlights* [sic!], 1989, a guided tour of Philadelphia Museum of Art. Presenting herself as the prim gallery guide Ms Castleton, the artist led an unsuspecting public around the building. Speaking with an air of authority she mused on art in grand hyperbolic statements, but concentrated on peripheral areas such as the museum's canteen rather than its collection. [...] Enshrouded with the vaguely neurotic assertion from Ms. Castleton that she was indeed a qualified guide, Fraser constructed the talk using the museum's own public information as a source, augmenting it with references to other 19th century institutions, such as prisons and poorhouses; and incorporating references to class, sexual and cultural difference that are generally elided by official histories. (Whitechapel 2003: 20)

What I find interesting in this account of *Museum Highlights*, beyond its description of some of the main features of the performance, is the characterisation of the piece's audience as an "unsuspecting public". It is congruent with Fraser's own account in the stage directions and footnotes to the performance text. In this account, as I have quoted above, Fraser too points out that, at the beginning of the performance, audience members of *Museum Highlights* had different expectations of what that event would be, even if they had come to participate in the event that was advertised. This means that they were indeed "unsuspecting", or, in other words, that Fraser assembled the audience of *Museum Highlights* under false pretences. In contrast to this "unsuspecting public", the readers of the footnoted performance text are immediately made accomplices to Fraser's plan; they encounter *Museum Highlights* as the piece in which Fraser pretends to be a museum guide to an "unsuspecting public", i.e. they are not included in Fraser's address, or, to be more precise, they are addressed in the stage directions and footnotes but not in the "Good afternoon, uh, everyone?" This also implies that the readers of the

performance text do not have to negotiate their relationship towards the piece in the same way as the assembled audience, i.e. they do not have to negotiate a position towards the institution on behalf of which Fraser addresses her audience, and they do not have to negotiate the question of belonging to the public that is constituted in Fraser's address in the same way. This, however, is what the audience of *Museum Highlights* is asked to do. From the perspective of "being in the know" that is the position of the reader it is very difficult to guess at what point (and it will not always be the same point for everyone) the "unsuspecting public" (if its members ever really were unsuspecting) leaves behind the status of being "unsuspecting" and enters into a different relationship with what is happening.

As the tour unfolds, the audience members will become aware that what they are witnessing is not a generic guided tour but a work of art in itself, that they are indeed participants in a performance piece. They will do so because there are indications in the piece that what Fraser/Castleton says and does cannot to be taken at face value. In this guided tour spectators are asked to consider functional or architectural parts of the museum – such as, for instance, its cafeteria – with the same kind of attention that would otherwise be devoted to artworks on such an occasion. That the event is a performance will therefore probably be the most plausible explanation for what they are seeing; after all, they are in a museum. How will this understanding affect their perception of the work? How will it have changed from when they still might have thought they were going along on a conventional guided tour?

What is important is that the audience is addressed throughout as the audience of a museum tour - despite the audience's possible comprehension of the event's actual nature as a piece of performance, and despite the possible realisation that there are elements of fiction involved (even if the audience members do not identify Castleton as a fictional character, they might pick up on the fact that this event is not, or not only, what it claims to be). Not only are they listening to a fictional character; in doing so, they, as an audience, become implicated in this narrative, in this fiction. Not only are they watching Fraser play the role of Castleton, in doing so, they themselves are given a role to play, that of the museum patron, of the art lover, in a crowd of other likeminded people attending a guided tour.

In a footnote to the performance text, Fraser describes the role of the guide in relation to its audience as follows:

Providing the services of a guide in the galleries and at the information desk, a volunteer docent is not just someone who gives tours for a small percentage of the museum's visitors; she is the museum's representative. Unlike the members of the museum's nonprofessional maintenance, security, and gift shop staff whom visitors come in contact with, the docent is a figure of identification for the primarily white, middleclass audience. (Fraser 2005: 110)

The relation of identification (which Fraser here ascribes to the factors of class and race) is enacted again in the tour; it is implicit in the way that Fraser addresses her audience – as (what she conceives of as) the standard audience of a museum tour. Fraser insists that she/Castleton speaks as a representative of the institution of the museum, and her address to the audience seems to follow a logic different to the one ascribed to the address by Warner. Whereas Warner focuses on the inclusive nature of public address (“A public is always in excess of its known social basis.” (Warner 2002: 74)), Fraser's address serves to illustrate the homogenising function of any address, the element of normativity in the taking-for-granted of certain characteristics of the assumed public that is being addressed. Rather than emphatically inviting her audience to participate in the “poetic world making” (114) that characterises a public according to Warner, Fraser's address offers a forum for a critical reflection on the make-up of the assembled or assumed audience that the specific institution she operates in, the museum, invites.

In (implicitly) asking for the complicity of her audience in going along with the fictional premise of her performance, Fraser draws attention to the parameters within which the institution of the museum functions, and, on another level, invites the audience to reflect on the relations that they participate in reproducing. Because she poses as a fictional representative of the museum, Fraser's position towards the institution is never explicated in the performance itself. I will in the following describe in more detail the position that Fraser assumes by playing Castleton, but for now I would like to propose that the reaction that Fraser hopes to produce is actually one in which the audience members question Castleton's position. This means a reaction in which they do not, or at least not fully, identify with how they are being addressed, or one in which they at least become aware of the implications of their identification with this address.

That no single person can fully identify with the “object of address”, however, is, according to Warner, a characteristic of all public speech:

It isn't just that we are addressed in public as certain kinds of persons or that we might not want to identify as that person (though this is often enough the case, as when the public is addressed as heterosexual, or white, or sports-minded, or American). We haven't been misidentified, exactly. It seems more to the point to say that publics are different from persons, that the address of public rhetoric is never going to be the same as address to actual persons, and that our partial nonidentity with the object of address in public speech seems to be part of what it means to regard something as public speech. (78)

If to-not-feel-fully-spoken-for in an instance of public speech is actually a condition of our understanding an address as public, what does this mean for the address to an "unsuspecting public" in *Museum Highlights*, the address to a public assembled under false pretences?

Firstly, the element of "nonidentity" is here also introduced on the level of address rather than only on the level of the addressee, and it is this non-identity that might lead the "unsuspecting" audience to question the nature of the event. I here do not only mean the nonidentity that is introduced through Fraser's acting (which Jackson reads in terms of Brechtian techniques of *Verfremdung* (Jackson 2011: 121-3)), but also the fact that the guided tour itself is "both typical and unusual" (117) in incorporating elements both familiar and strange. Once they are no longer "unsuspecting", this nonidentity on the level of address invites the audience members to take on a double role: that of being audience members in a performance and of going along with the fictional premise of being audience members in a guided tour, a double role that requires constant shifts of perception and attention. And if by giving our attention to a public address we become part of a public that only constitutes itself through this attention, then one could say that the audience members in *Museum Highlights* shift between two different publics. Their mode of identification or non-identification with these publics can thus not be described in terms of the "partial non-identity with the object of address" that Warner speaks about, because, while they might be able to shift their attention, they cannot *not* pay attention to one of these addresses. This means that they cannot only belong to one of these publics, and they cannot consider themselves identical or not or partially identical with the object of only one of these addresses. They have to remain to some extent complicit with the fictional premise of the performance; they can, of course, choose not to play the role they have been given, or play it half-heartedly or reluctantly, but they

have to play the audience of a guided tour if they want to witness the performance piece. They have to participate in two publics at once – that is, if they leave behind their status of being “unsuspecting”.

Distinctions

This ambiguity of the positions of both speaker and audience also means that Fraser’s approach in *Museum Highlights* is very uncharacteristic of how lectures (or guided tours, a distinction I will return to) are commonly targeted at an audience. I have mentioned in chapter 2 the three “functions” that the speaker in a lecture performs according to Goffman: that of the “animator”, “author” and “principal”. It “is characteristic of lectures (in the sense of common to them and important for them)”, Goffman goes on to explain, “that animator, author and principal are the same person.” (Goffman 1981: 167) It is because she combines these three functions that the speaker is “assumed to have ‘authority’”, an authority that Goffman defines as “intellectual, as opposed to institutional” (167). Goffman does not further explicate this distinction, but goes on to say that “By virtue of reputation or office, he is assumed to have knowledge and experience in textual matters, and of this considerably more than that possessed by the audience.” (167)

Reputation and the office a person holds are, however, not intellectual categories, and it is in this contradiction that it becomes evident that the institutional frame not only plays a role in establishing the authority of a speaker, but, moreover, that no clear distinction can be made between how institutional and intellectual factors affect the perceived authority of the speaker. That a speaker combines the three functions outlined by Goffman is in itself an institutional premise of the lecture form: if, with Derrida, it is the university’s profession to “profess the truth”, then “to profess the truth” is always also a speaking on behalf of, in the name of, the institution of the university. The lecture, Peters argues, is “speech in the name of knowledge”¹⁹⁶ (Peters 2011: 135). Peters derives this figure from Pierre Legendre, who writes that every institution functions “in-the-name-of”¹⁹⁷ (in Peters 2011: 112), and the Derridian “professer” for Peters in this context is exactly such a speaking “in-the-name-of”. Giving a lecture, then, can serve as a rite of

¹⁹⁶ “Rede im Namen des Wissens“.

¹⁹⁷ “im-Namen-von“.

passage in the context of academia, especially in the form of the inaugural lecture (Peters 2011: 111). In every lecture setting, however, there is an element of “passing” involved, of submitting oneself to the rules of the occasion, in playing the roles of, for instance, “animator”, “author” and “principal”. In taking on the persona of Castleton in *Museum Highlights*, Fraser passes as a museum guide. But it is only in not fully submerging herself in this role, in the doubts that the audience has about the authenticity of this persona, and subsequently about the extent to which the speaker “believes personally in what is being said and takes the position that is implied in the remarks” (Goffman 1981: 167) (as Goffman says about the “principal”) that the performance can be understood as a critical exploration of the institution of the art museum. Furthermore, it is not only the function of the “principal” that Fraser subverts, but also that of the “author”. Not only is it Fraser, not Castleton, who has authored the text that is being presented, this text itself is (and increasingly so as the performance goes on) a montage of texts from a large variety of sources. Fraser incorporates in the performance text a number of quotes that are only referenced in the printed version of the text, while in the performance they remain unreferenced; these quotes are taken from, for instance, museum catalogues and other texts about the museum in general and about the Philadelphia Museum of Art in particular, some of them contemporary, others historical texts dating back to the time when the museum was founded. That these quotes are not referenced also means that no distinction is made in the presentation between contemporary quotes about the museum and those dating back to, for instance, the 1920s, implying a continuity in how the museum has been perceived and how its role has been characterised throughout the last century. But it is not only the institution of the museum, but also other institutions that come into focus in Fraser’s text; there are numerous references to institutions that were founded in the city at the time of the museum’s inception – not only, for instance, the library or the stadium, but also poorhouses and mental institutions (Fraser 2005: 98). What thus comes into view is the role that these institutions supposedly play in the formation of the bourgeois individual. The means by which this formation – which in most of Fraser’s sources is described as a process of education – is achieved is the cultivation of taste¹⁹⁸, which in turn appears as a disciplinary practice. Fraser prefaces the published

¹⁹⁸ “And for those who have not yet cultivated taste, the Museum will provide a ‘training in taste.’” (Fraser 2005: 98) The quote is taken from a 1928 publication by The Museum Fund, entitled *A Living Museum: Philadelphia’s Opportunity for Leadership in the Field of Art*.

text of her lecture with two quotes (which, again, are only available to one audience of her piece, i.e. the readers, not the spectators); one by Philadelphia's then-mayor Harry A. Mackey on the occasion of the opening of the museum in 1928, stating that "In every home in Philadelphia, youth will be taught to revere the things that are housed here", the other one from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*: "Let us conceive of places of punishment as a Garden of the Laws that families would visit on Sundays ... a living lesson in the museum of order." (in Fraser 2005: 95) The poorhouse or prison provides the negative, the museum the positive example, but the lesson to be learned in both cases is one of making distinctions (and these distinctions here take on the functions of exclusion and inclusion).

The final quote that Fraser incorporates in the performance text is again from 1928, from the *Report of the Superintendent of Schools* by Edwin C. Broome, who characterises the "appreciation of values" as "the ability to distinguish", among other things, "between the worthy and the unworthy, the true and the false, the beautiful and the ugly" (in Fraser 2005: 108). Fraser continues Broome's list of distinctions, without marking the passage from quote to original text in the performance itself (where, as I have described before, the quotes remain unreferenced):

... here, the ability to distinguish between a coat room and a rest room, between a painting and a telephone, a guard and a guide; the ability to distinguish between yourself and a drinking fountain, between what is different and what is better and objects that are inside and those that are outside; the ability to distinguish between your rights and your wants, between what is good for you and what is good for society. Well, that's the end of our tour for today.
Thank you for joining me and have a nice day. (110)

Fraser/Castleton here, in her closing remarks, adds an absurd spin to Broome's catalogue of distinctions; this calls into question the sincerity of her remarks, and by extension her own ability to make distinctions in the first place, i.e. the success of her attempt to pass as guide, as a person of taste, or, as she has put it towards the beginning of the performance, "as a guest, as a volunteer – and, shall I say – as an artist" expressing herself "as a unique individual" (97). If contributing to the formation of the bourgeois individual is one of the functions of the museum, the Castleton persona is a representative of this process. In the framework of the performance, this establishes an interesting parallel between Castleton's attempts to conform to the ideals she represents

“And I sincerely hope that I express my best qualities – as do we all, if I may say so. That’s why we’re here.” (97)) and Fraser’s attempts to pass as Castleton, the museum guide. Fraser’s decision to introduce and embody a fictional character thus, in yet another twist, puts the audience’s ability to distinguish to the test – between Castleton and Fraser, but also between performance piece and guided tour, between the speaker (in Goffman’s words) as “someone who believes personally in what is being said and takes the position that is implied in the remarks” and the performer taking on this person’s role. What the performance thus achieves is a constant blurring of distinctions to a point where the complexity of the situation in which the audience find themselves makes it difficult to make any distinction with certainty. One of the main theses of the performance text – i.e. that the institution of the museum (and the guided tour in which it is presented) teaches its audience to make distinctions (to cultivate taste, to appreciate what is beautiful and what not) – is thus undermined by the performance itself. This thesis, of course, is not Fraser’s, but it is taken from the source materials that are incorporated in the text.¹⁹⁹ Fraser’s extensive use of quotations might not become evident to her audience, because, as most of these quotations come from quite obscure sources, the audience might not be able to identify them, but what will translate nonetheless is the citational character of her speech, the fact that, on the surface, it reproduces numerous clichés about the institution of the museum and its role in society.

The role of the speaker that Goffman describes as that of the “principal” is thus not only subverted by the fact that Fraser does not speak as herself, but also, and more profoundly, by the fact that her performance puts a focus on the relation between speaker and institution. In showing to what extent a speaker speaks on behalf of the institution, *Museum Highlights* makes evident that the speech (the lecture, the guided tour) depends on the institution’s legitimisation in as much as it itself legitimises this institution, i.e. it shows that the position of the principal, even if it might be in opposition to the institution, still relies on this institution’s authorisation and thus is never an autonomous position. In *Museum Highlights*, this aspect is also linked to the factors of race and class as mentioned by Fraser in the footnotes to the performance text: not only does Fraser take on the role of somebody speaking on behalf of the institution, she

¹⁹⁹ While in an academic lecture this would be considered unfair practice, that a museum guide utilises texts taken from museum catalogues without referencing them is in itself not necessarily contradictory to the form of the guided tour.

thereby also embodies a person on whose behalf the institution of the museum has been instituted.

The spectators of the performance have to decide for themselves if they agree with being implicated in this speaking, if they think they are being spoken for. To foreground the implicit inclusion or exclusion enacted and perpetuated by the institution through the ways it addresses a public is one of Fraser's main strategies in *Museum Highlights*. In doing so, as I have briefly mentioned above, Fraser invites disagreement with perceived ideas about the museum rather than the conformity that the character she plays seems to suggest.

Institutional Critique

I have already mentioned Fraser's prominence in discussions about the lecture performance. But it is as one of the main protagonists of what is in retrospect labelled the "second wave" of institutional critique in art practice that she has achieved her canonical status as an artist, a rather paradoxical status as the practice of institutional critique is itself evidently critical of "specifically institutional practices" such as canonisation (Nowotny 2009: 21). Simon Sheikh briefly outlines the shifts that have occurred between the first and second "wave" of institutional critique:

The very term 'institutional critique' seems to indicate a direct connection between a method and an object: the method being the critique and the object the institution. In the first wave of institutional critique from the late 1960s and early 1970s – long since celebrated and relegated by art history – these terms could apparently be even more concretely and narrowly defined: the critical method was an artistic practice, and the institution in question was the art institution, mainly the art museum, but also galleries and collections. Institutional critique thus took on many forms, such as artistic works and interventions, critical writings or (art-)political activism. However, in the so-called second wave, from the 1980s, the institutional framework became somewhat expanded to include the artist's role (the subject performing the critique) as institutionalized, as well as an investigation into other institutional spaces (and practices) besides the art space. (Sheikh 2009: 29)

In 'A Speech On Documenta', Fraser summarises her practice as follows: "[...] I think of art making as a social practice through which I attempt to transform the relations organized by the institutions that authorize my activity." (Fraser 2005: 149) This self-characterisation is congruent with Sheikh's description of the "second wave" of

institutional critique as including an exploration of the artist's own role within the institutional context— as the “subject performing the critique”. In contrast to Fraser's later statement, which places the focus on the impossibility of escape (“the institution is inside of us, and we can't get outside ourselves”), the focus here is the idea of a transformation of the institution through the “social practice” that is art, according to Fraser. What is consistent in both statements is that Fraser situates her practice of institutional critique within the institution. Pierre Bourdieu, who has written the foreword to the edited volume *Museum Highlights*, which brings together many of Fraser's writings, also stresses Fraser's role as an actor within the institution and contrasts this approach with the “detached” position of the “analyst”: “Unlike the analyst, who remains detached, remains a spectator, she puts herself personally into play and joins the action” (Bourdieu 2005: xiv). Bourdieu's statement seems to suggest that there is a choice which position to take, that of a critical spectator or analyst and that of “joining the action”, a choice that Fraser's statement about the institution being “inside of us” seems to contradict. If we look at the “*experimental situation*” (xiv) that Fraser sets up in *Museum Highlights*, what is striking is that, while there are of course also spectators in this situation, they cannot take up a fully detached position²⁰⁰. That they cannot do so is mainly due to the mode in which Fraser “puts herself personally into play” in *Museum Highlights*, i.e. by taking on the role of a fictional docent, which in turn, as I have outlined above, forces the spectators to also play a role, to also “join the action”.

Jackson, in contrast, describes how this introduction of a fictional character could have provided a “safety net” (Jackson 2011: 124) as it enabled “a degree of dis-identifying protection, one that allows both performer and audience member to locate the institution outside” (124). Consequently, as Jackson describes, Fraser let go of this fictional element in subsequent projects:

If her own primary embeddedness is key to Fraser's exploration of institutions, then it also might shed a light on her decision to drop the Jane Castleton character for future performances. Henceforth, she decided to use her own name in self-presentation,

²⁰⁰ Fraser's position of “action” takes up almost heroic proportions in Bourdieu's account: “This presupposes the talent, but also the courage, to go to the furthest limits of one's convictions, after the fashion of an exemplary prophet who acts as much through the expressive virtue of actions as through words.” (Bourdieu 2005: xiv). While the opposition that Bourdieu sketches is reminiscent of what Rancière criticises as the assumption of the spectator's passivity, Bourdieu does not explicitly render the position of spectator or analyst (which, we can assume, would be his position) inactive.

thereby disallowing herself the modicum of personal safety that comes with playing a character in quotation marks. (124)

If we accept the premise (characterised by Raunig as “discursive self-limitation”) that there can be no outside of the institution, then this argument is indeed consequential. But could not, on the other hand, a “degree of dis-identifying protection” actually provide the way out of this predicament? Bourdieu describes that Fraser “is able [...] to trigger a social mechanism [...] whose operation causes the hidden truth of social reality to reveal itself, exposing or calling up underlying power relationships and confronting human agents with an unblinking view of what they are doing.” (Bourdieu 2005: xiv) If this is what Fraser’s work (including *Museum Highlights*) does, when does the transformation occur that is – according to Fraser herself – a goal of the work?

In *Museum Highlights*, Fraser employs a strategy of over-affirmation: in slightly exaggerating in her speech the ideology upon which the museum is built without openly critiquing it, she leaves it to the audience to identify this ideology and, consequently, also leaves the critique to the audience.²⁰¹ While “the relations organized by the institutions that authorize [Fraser’s] activity” are clearly the focus of the work’s enquiry, and in the event of the performance itself they are respectively being foregrounded, exaggerated, or parodied²⁰², their transformation, however, seems to be deferred to another time. There is a danger that in merely foregrounding “underlying power relationships” they are actually being perpetuated. I believe that *Museum Highlights* avoids this trap not least through the ambiguity that is introduced by the fictional element of the performance, exactly because it allows for a position of, at least partial, dis-identification. Recalling Warner’s assessment that a “partial nonidentity with the object of address in public speech seems to be part of what it means to regard something as public speech”, I argue that it is this element of dis-identification in *Museum Highlights* that opens up a perspective beyond institutional determinism, because it introduces another concept, that of the public. There would, of course, be other ways to achieve this aside from the

²⁰¹ If in *Museum Highlights* this exposing is achieved, among other factors, through exaggeration, the element of exaggeration cannot be identified in any single statement Fraser/Castleton makes – after all, most of her statements are quotes or of a citational character. Rather it lies in the excessive use of similar statements (which, altogether, seem to form a coherent picture of the museum as an institution of learning, an institution that enables the cultivation of taste) and in the indifference towards the sources, in particular in the fact that she does not distinguish between contemporary quotes and those dating back to the 1920s.

²⁰² Bourdieu identifies parody as a strategy in Fraser’s work, his example being that “a museum’s security apparatus is parodically described in the language of aesthetic analysis” (Bourdieu 2005: xiv).

introduction of a fictional character, but an element of the imaginary is at work in any constitution of a public – an idea that Peters develops on the basis of Warner’s theory of publics:

Because modern publics define themselves through the fact that they always also consist of members that do not know each other, i.e. of strangers, the imaginary plays a decisive role in the event of the address. An address in the sense of a public address is thus necessarily directed at a partially imaginary group whose existence it nonetheless presupposes. If the invocation that is implied in this address is successful, the presupposition seems to confirm itself even though the respective public only constitutes itself in the performance of this address. The public that is presupposed in an address only comes into being once the addressees feel spoken for as members of this public, which starts up a circulation of the imaginary. (Peters 2011: 189-190)²⁰³

Peters demonstrates how, in this “circulation of the imaginary”, new kinds of publics cannot only be imagined but also tested; she describes how lecture performances can utilize the function of the address for the temporary constitution of what she refers to as “improbable assemblies” (187)²⁰⁴. This, of course, goes beyond what Fraser does in *Museum Highlights*, which is still very much concerned with a critique of existing institutions rather than the imaginary exploration of new kinds of publics. In what follows I will look at contemporary lecture performance work that engages in an exploration of new kinds of publics, an engagement that might coincide with what Raunig and Ray refer to as “instituent practices” in their conception of a possible perspective for a “new ‘phase’ of institutional critique” (Raunig 2009: 3):

[...] *instituent practices* thwart the logics of institutionalization; they invent new forms of instituting and continuously link these instituting events. Against this background, the concept of ‘instituent practices’ marks the site of a productive tension between a new articulation of critique and the attempt to arrive at a notion of ‘instituting’ after

²⁰³ “Da sich moderne Öffentlichkeiten im Sinne von ›Publics‹ dadurch definieren, dass sie immer auch aus einander unbekanntem Mitgliedern, also aus Fremden, bestehen, spielt das Imaginäre im Geschehen der Ansprache eine entscheidende Rolle. Eine Ansprache im Sinne der öffentlichen Adresse richtet sich demnach notwendig an eine partiell imaginäre Gruppe, deren Existenz sie nichtsdestoweniger voraussetzt. Gelingt die in der Adresse implizierte Anrufung, scheint sich diese Voraussetzung zu bestätigen, obwohl sich die entsprechende Öffentlichkeit doch erst im Performativ ihrer Adressierung herstellt. Die Öffentlichkeit, die in einer Ansprache vorausgesetzt ist, entsteht erst, insofern AdressatInnen sich als Mitglieder dieser Öffentlichkeit angesprochen fühlen, so dass eine Zirkulation des Imaginären in Gang kommt.“

²⁰⁴ “Unwahrscheinliche Versammlungen”. Peters’s example is Hygiene Heute’s *Kongress der Schwarzfahrer* (*Congress of Fare-dodgers*) (2000)), in which different agencies and perspectives were temporarily aligned in a “figuration of the public which seems imaginary and at the same time is taken for granted” (Peters 2011: 190). [“Figuration von Öffentlichkeit, die imaginär erscheint und zugleich als gegeben vorausgesetzt wird”].

traditional understandings of institutions have begun to break down and mutate. When we speak of an 'instituent practice', this actualization of the future in a present becoming is not the opposite of institution in the way that utopia, for instance, is the opposite of bad reality. [...] Rather, 'instituent practice' as a process and concatenation of instituent events means an absolute concept exceeding mere opposition to institutions: it does not oppose the institution, but it does flee from institutionalization and structuralization. (Raunig and Ray 2009: xvii)

How this idea of an "instituent practice" as an "actualization of the future in a present becoming" can be linked to the temporary figuration of new kinds of publics in lecture performance work will be a guiding question for the remaining case studies in this chapter.

Outside

To conclude my discussion of *Museum Highlights*, I would like to consider briefly its form as a guided tour. While, as I have outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the academic lecture is a main reference for lecture performances, lecture performances can also refer to and incorporate elements of other forms of public speech. In their conception of the "performed lecture" in *Theatre/Archaeology*, Pearson and Shanks suggest the possibility of a site-specific approach to documenting past (performance) events: "Of course, this may be equally site-specific in its direct engagement with another space – museum, gallery, auditorium." (Pearson/Shanks 2001: 66) Interestingly, Pearson and Shanks here explicitly mention the museum as a possible site of such an engagement; however, they also mention the auditorium. Rather than simply considering performances that appropriate the form of the guided tour as site-specific variations of the lecture performance, what comes into focus here is the (potential) site-specificity of the lecture performance itself – in its "direct engagement" with the architectures of lecturing. In the chapter 2, I have described how lecture performances can foreground those elements of a lecture that are thought to be non-discursive and are thus supposed to be ignored according to what Peters has termed "rules of irrelevance". Just as the audience of a lecture is not supposed to attach much importance to the specific architecture of the auditorium, the audience of a guided tour would usually not be invited to consider a drinking fountain as an aesthetic object. Jackson considers this strategy, employed by Fraser in *Museum Highlights*, in the context of the readymade:

The performance thus dynamizes the logic of the readymade. Whereas Duchamp called attention to the operation of the museum by putting a pedestal under the quotidian object, Fraser instead shows the art object's dependence upon performed action by redirecting the museological actions in the direction of the quotidian drinking fountain. (Jackson 2011: 123)

That the object of reference in this case is a drinking fountain rather than a painting or sculpture foregrounds how meaning is produced ("through performed action") in a museum tour, and how the museum distinguishes between what is art and what is not (this operation of distinction is central to *Museum Highlights*). The piece puts the focus on the production of meaning itself while being engaged in this production, a strategy that it shares with many lecture performances; but other than in most lecture performances (and indeed in most lectures), the object of reference is in plain view. While the lecture, in Goffman's terms, aims to describe the "world out there", the museum tour deals with the world in there, or, in other words, it is in the world. While the lecture has to somehow present the outside world in a mediated way, through documentary materials, the guided tour places its participants right in front of the objects it considers and of which it tries to make sense. But here, too, certain rules of irrelevance apply. To direct the audience's attention towards an art object also means to divert this attention away from the museum as a building, as an institution, or, more generally, as part of the "real world". If, instead of an art object, what the audience is being pointed toward is a drinking fountain, this not only shows how the art object acquires its status through institutionalised performance (Jackson's argument), but it also shows how for this performance to succeed it needs to go unnoticed. The modernist idea of the art work's autonomy, which has been called into question not only in the practice of institutional critique but also in other artistic movements of the time (like, for instance, site-specific practices), is dependent on an operation of framing. But it is this operation of framing that in itself destabilises any assumed separation between the art work and the "world out there", as Andrew Quick has argued:

The idea of art achieving some sort of autonomy is always undone by the unavoidable processes of framing, including the 'classical' frame that encases the picture and also contextualizations that occur as a result of the spectator/viewer/witness standing before a work of art. These processes of framing, which always include temporal,

ethical, and contemplative dynamics, prohibit the idea of pure perception. (Quick 1996: 13)

In its specific context of the museum, *Museum Highlights* thus does what many lecture performances do in their respective contexts: it puts the focus on the operation of framing itself, on the production of meaning itself, and in doing so it considers its own relation to that which is outside the frame, outside the auditorium, outside the museum, outside the institution.²⁰⁵

Product of Circumstances

“If you have questions afterwards I will be glad to answer them”

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I will do this performance in English; if you have questions afterwards I will be glad to answer them.” (Le Roy 2005: 77) This is how Xavier Le Roy welcomes the audience to his performance *Product of Circumstances*. At this point, the audience has already assembled; they have taken their seats and have quieted down in anticipation of the performance. Le Roy is addressing them from behind a lectern, reading from a script. Both stage and auditorium are evenly lit. In welcoming the audience, Le Roy is establishing the rules and structure for the evening: firstly, he will present his performance; afterwards, once he has finished, the audience will be able to ask questions. He mentions that he will “do” the performance in English; the primary purpose of this statement seems to be to indicate that he is not using his first language, something that will have been evident to a live audience from his French accent. Instead he has chosen to speak in a language in which his abilities are limited – “*The text is written in English corresponding to my ability in this language*” (77) is how Le Roy describes this aspect in the introductory notes or stage directions that supplement the published performance text (Le Roy himself refers to these notes as “*instructions*” (77)). Yet I think that two other important aspects can be identified in this opening remark: firstly, it implies that text will be a central element of the performance that the audience

²⁰⁵ In chapter 2, I have analysed the operation of framing in the case of the academic lecture with reference to Goffman’s *The Lecture*. According to Goffman, lecturing is based on a “contract” (Goffman 1981: 194) that the speaker conveys knowledge about the “real world” (194), which by Goffman’s definition is the “world out there”, i.e. it is the world outside the auditorium. The auditorium itself is supposed to play no role in the production of meaning about this outside world, i.e. this meaning could as well be communicated by other means than lecturing, for instance through the printed lecture text.

is about to witness, and secondly, the audience members are here addressed directly by the artist who, implicitly, shares a first biographical detail with them: It is only necessary for a speaker to acknowledge that he will speak a certain language if either the speaker or the audience would be more proficient in another language. Moreover, it is the first time that Le Roy uses the first person singular, and even though he is at this point only describing the parameters of the performance that is about to unfold, this already establishes a specific relationship with the audience; for the most part of the performance, the audience is told, an “I” will be addressing a “you”, and in the end, these positions will shift, and the audience will have the opportunity to ask questions. This set-up, however, will be familiar to the audience; it is a format that is employed in most lectures or artist talks, and in many other instances of public speaking. It is, however, less common in a performance piece, although there, too, a performance is sometimes followed by a Q&A session, albeit usually after a short break. Accordingly, if Le Roy had chosen to substitute the term “performance” with, for instance, “talk” in his opening statement, this remark would be well within the conventions of that format. In a performance or dance piece, however, it is unexpected, not because different forms of audience involvement or participation are so far outside of the norms of contemporary performance or dance, but because Le Roy here so clearly utilises another established form, the cultural performance of the lecture or artist talk while insisting on calling it a performance. Even today, now that lecture performances have become an established format within contemporary performance, the Q&A session is not a regular feature of lecture performance work; not more so, at least, than for any other type of performance work, and especially not, as in the case of *Product of Circumstances*, as part of the performance itself. Of course, in 1999, when Le Roy first performed *Product of Circumstances*, the lecture performance was not yet an established format, and, as I have already outlined, Le Roy’s piece is often credited with having been a factor in triggering the emergence of the lecture performance form (as Bleeker puts it, *Product of Circumstances* “is often considered to mark the emergence of lecture-performance as a genre” (Bleeker 2012: 188). I have also quoted Lyn Gardner’s assessment from 2008 that the “fascination with performance lectures of a few years ago appears to be being replaced by forums and performances that are more about knowledge sharing rather than straightforward expertise.” (Gardner 2008) This prejudice against lecture performances as a specific form of communication in which one person passes on

knowledge or expertise rather than engaging in a discussion or creating a forum for sharing knowledge, is first and foremost a prejudice against the lecture as a form; the same criticism is not directed at other forms of performance that do not involve audiences in a sharing of knowledge. I will analyse this aspect in detail in the following chapter which addresses works and projects that, while incorporating elements of the lecture performance, aim to establish exactly such a forum; at this point, however, it seems important to consider exactly to what extent “straightforward expertise” is what Le Roy is aiming to communicate or pass on to his audience, and what role the integrated Q&A session plays in this regard.

In Goffman’s terms,

A lecture is an institutionalized extended holding of the floor in which one speaker imparts his views on a subject [...]. [...] A platform arrangement is often involved, underlining the fact that listeners are an ‘immediate audience’. I mean a gathered set of individuals, typically seated, whose numbers can vary greatly without requiring the speaker (typically standing) to change his style, who have the right to hold the whole of the speaker’s body in the focus of staring-at attention (as they would an entertainer), and who (initially at least) have only the back channel through which to convey their response. (Goffman 1981: 165)

It is exactly this form of the lecture as (in Vilém Flusser’s terminology) “one-to-many-communication” for which the lecture is often criticised²⁰⁶, and this seems to be implicitly also what Gardner has in mind when referring to the lecture performance as a passing on of “straightforward expertise”.²⁰⁷ The Q&A session – and that might be why it is so rarely taken up in lecture performance work – rather than counteracting this

²⁰⁶ “Some particularly keen representatives of the web-2.0-ideology consider lecture and presentation as ‘theatre-discourses’ (forms of one-to-many-communication) after Flusser and consider them finished. It would only be a matter of time until the forms of communication of the networked knowledge-multitude (many-to-many-discourses) would be implemented offline as well.” (Peters 2011: 162) [“Einige besonders überzeugte Vertreter der Web-2.0-Ideologie bezeichnen Vortrag und Präsentation nach Flusser gleichermaßen als »Theater-Diskurse« (one-to-many-Kommunikationsformen) und sehen sie am Ende (vgl. Flusser 1998). Es sei nur noch eine Frage der Zeit, bis sich die Kommunikationsformen der vernetzten Wissensmultitude (many-to-many-Diskurse) auch offline durchsetzen.“]

²⁰⁷ Is this privileging of specific modes of communication another version of the myth of the passive spectator? Paradoxically, as I have outlined in the previous chapter, Bel describes his lecture performance work in terms of an activation of the spectator.

prejudice might actually reinforce it, because it can be understood to reinforce the authoritative position of the speaker as the person who has the answers.²⁰⁸

In and out of context

In *Product of Circumstances*, however, Le Roy does not assume such a position of authority. In contrast, he insists at the end of the piece that he has chosen its particular form – which would later be regarded as prototypical for the form of the lecture performance – because of his inability to “write a ‘real’ paper, lecture or discussion” (Le Roy 2005: 92). I will get back to this statement, but would first like to have a closer look at how the performance develops after the initial address to the audience. After the short welcome and introductory remarks, Le Roy goes on:

The title of this performance is ‘Product of Circumstances’.

In 1987 I started work on my thesis for my PhD in molecular and cellular biology, and at the same time I began to take two dance classes a week.

I finished my master’s degree and received a scholarship from the French government to write my thesis. The same year, I was admitted to work in a laboratory specializing in research on breast cancer and hormones. Also, I started to see a lot of dance performances during the summer festivals in the south of France where I lived. The same year was the painful ending of a three years [sic]long love relationship.

I was still playing a lot of basketball and my body was trying to get some stretch. (77-8)

In this short paragraph, Le Roy introduces all the narrative elements that he is to follow through in the performance: the training of his body; the beginnings of a career in dance; his studies in biology; and the local, institutional and biographical contexts in which he pursues these activities (although there will be no further references to his love life in the remainder of the piece). And, following on from this paragraph, he introduces the other formal elements he uses in the performance. Firstly, he reenacts stretch exercises he used to do as part of his basketball training (“*My hands don’t get closer than 20 cm from the floor, like it was in 1987*”, the stage directions state (78)). This is the first instance in which he employs the strategy of re-enacting elements of his training and of shows in which he has either performed or which he has devised.

²⁰⁸ An example for such an understanding can be found in Barbara Lange’s reading of Joseph Beuys’s *Fat Transformation Piece* at the Tate in London in 1972. Lange here discusses Beuys repeated question to the audience ‘Questions, you have questions?’ in terms of an “attempt at self-assertion” (Lange 2007: 178). In this particular case, Beuys’s general demeanour in the piece supports Lange’s assessment.

Then, he starts presenting his PhD research with the help of a slide projector. While what he has done so far (maybe with the exception of reenacting the stretch exercise) could be described as giving a talk, the presentation of his research in biology is of a different quality both with regard to tone and style. Again speaking from behind the lectern, Le Roy now switches from quite an informal tone to scientific jargon; the lights have been dimmed, if only to make sure that the projection is visible. For a non-biologist, the research that he presents is difficult to comprehend. We have entered the more formal setting of a scientific presentation, but what is presented remains as hermetic as some of the examples of dance pieces that Le Roy will later reenact. What does however become evident is that this, too, is a reenactment. We are not told if Le Roy has ever presented his research in exactly the same way outside of this performance. But even if it is not an exact reconstruction, the character of the presentation is nonetheless citational with regard to both content and form. Le Roy does not continue his biographical narrative within this framework. There are references to the research process (and once to his specific tasks within the project), but identifying one's tasks within a research process does not constitute what Goffman refers to as a "frame break" in a lecture situation. "Frame breaks", however, are a central structural element of the performance: after presenting four slides, Le Roy asks for the slide projector to be turned off and for the lights to change back. He keeps talking about his research, but then leaves the lectern to – as the written stage directions reveal but uncommented on in the performance itself – *"perform the first five minutes from a piece I did in 1994 called Things I Hate To Admit"* (80). Le Roy performs his reenactment, and then goes back to the microphone to talk, still about his research, but now again adding biographical information: about his first scientific publication, and then about exercises he tried to learn in dance class, exercises he then goes on to reenact. So sometimes, the audience is given information about the context of what Le Roy presents, and at other times, he just steps away from the microphone to present something. The frame breaks are thus not always abrupt, but what is clear is that the piece takes elements from different contexts -- dance and science -- and reframes them in the context of a lecture performance. In this context, however, they are sometimes presented as elements that, although not fully self-contained because they are contextualised by what Le Roy says, are nonetheless allowed to function as separate small entities, which also means that Le Roy switches between different modes of address. The audience of *Product of Circumstances* is at times addressed as an

audience of a scientific presentation, at other times as the audience of a dance piece, but the different modes of address are framed by the initial address, in which Le Roy announces that this will be a performance; this means that, in contrast to in Fraser's *Museum Highlights*, the cards are on the table. It does, however, not imply that the status of the different elements that Le Roy introduces remains unambiguous within this framework; because the elements are taken from different contexts, it is not immediately obvious how the audience is expected to make sense of what they are seeing and hearing, what perceptive registers they should employ when watching the slide presentation on the one hand and the reenactment of choreographies or dance exercises on the other hand. In the specific frame of the lecture performance, not only is the reenactment of a choreography integrated into a discursive framework within which it has an illustrative function, the scientific slide presentation at the same time becomes the object of an aesthetic exploration (Peters 2011: 220).

Peters describes this aspect in terms of a confrontation of "two conventional forms of demonstration"²⁰⁹ (218):

"Exactly in the immediate combination of scientific presentation and the demonstration of dance exercises both forms of presenting start to question each other with regard to their way of showing: what is in each case shown how? For the scientific demonstration the question is how in the course of the research process objectivity is constructed and produced, and for the dance demonstration what limited understanding of movement it is based on. The form of the lecture allows Le Roy to both articulate and pursue his doubts about both forms of representation."²¹⁰ (218)

I will get back to the doubts expressed by Le Roy, which relate primarily to the institutional frameworks or contexts in which dance and science (or biology) are practiced rather than to specific forms of representation (although these two aspects are of course interrelated). But first, I would like to look a bit more closely at the status of the reenactments of dance and scientific presentation as demonstrations in the context of the lecture performance. What is it that they are used to demonstrate?

²⁰⁹ „Zwei konventionelle Formen der Demonstration“ (Peters 2011: 218).

²¹⁰ „Gerade in der unvermittelten Kombination der naturwissenschaftlichen Präsentation mit der Demonstration von tänzerischen Übungen beginnen beide Präsentationsformen, einander auf ihre Art des Zeigens hin zu befragen: Was wird hier jeweils wie gezeigt? Dabei steht die wissenschaftliche Demonstration im Hinblick darauf in Frage, wie im Zuge des Forschungsprozesses Objektivität konstruiert und produziert wird, und die tänzerische Demonstration im Hinblick darauf, welches begrenzte Verständnis von Bewegung ihr jeweils zugrunde liegt. Die Form des Vortrags erlaubt es Le Roy, seine Zweifel an beiden Repräsentationsformen gleichermaßen zu artikulieren und zu verfolgen.“ (Peters 2011: 218)

For Peters, they function as a kind of meta-demonstration in so far as they constitute demonstrations of two different types of demonstrating or showing. But they nevertheless also retain their function of demonstrating, on the one hand, a specific biological research, and on the other hand specific choreographic exercises or practices, which in turn also appear as demonstrations of a research process (and that his choreographic practice constitutes research is a point that Le Roy stresses at several points in the lecture performance). But while the scientific slide presentation has this function also outside of the framework of the lecture performance, the dance pieces of which Le Roy reenacts certain elements (more so than the exercises which would usually be presented in a workshop context rather than in a public performance) only take on the status of demonstrations as reenactments presented within this framework. While they can also be described as results of a research process outside of the framework of the lecture performance, they would not have been introduced as such originally, i.e. not within the frame of the original performance, where they would not have been contextualised in the same way. Through this contextualisation, however, the works are not considered as finished products but the focus is instead put on the specific contexts and processes they have resulted from; they are presented, to quote the title of the performance, as *products of circumstances*, and as such their specific form is rendered circumstantial. As I have outlined in the previous chapter with regard to Bel's *The Last Performance (A Lecture)*, here, too, we can see the lecture performance as an attempt to re-enter the process and context of making a performance, to take a step back from product to process.

Circumstances and contaminations

It is here that we can finally address the aforementioned "doubts" that Le Roy expresses about both science and dance, because it is exactly the demand to create products that he criticizes in both fields. He describes how his disillusion with science started when he was urged to publish results of his research that he did not consider "relevant enough to be published" (Le Roy 2005: 81): "I was learning the importance of publication and that publishing articles is the scientist's best way to create and protect his position in society. [...] I was learning that research has to follow and use the methods of capitalism. I was asked to produce science, and not to search." (81) This is not the only

explanation Le Roy gives for “quitting” science for dance and thus one kind of research into the body for another. (“In 1990, after I presented my thesis, I quit my career as a molecular biologist. I escaped. I decided to do more dance.” (86)). He also mentions that he hoped that dance would enable him to find a different approach to the body, one that did not aim at “the impression and satisfaction of total control of questions on [...] the human body” (85): “The human body is not organized only in the way that biology tries to organize it.” (84) But I will here focus on the distinction between product and process that is not only central to Le Roy’s argument but also to the structure of his lecture performance. Le Roy’s criticism here is not directed at an “idealistic idea of science” (85) but at its employment of “methods of capitalism”, methods that he soon found to be at work in a dance context as well: “I slowly noticed that the systems for dance production had created a format that influences and, sometimes to a large degree, determined how a dance piece should be. I think that to a large extent [sic!] dance producers and programmers essentially follow the rules of the global economy.” (89) With regard to both science and dance, Le Roy’s criticism is directed at their respective institutional contexts that operate within what he identifies as a capitalist logic of production. The way out of this logic for him seems to be in strengthening the processual element: “Can the production of a dance piece become the process and the production in itself, without becoming a product in terms of performance and representation?” (91) Although he never explicitly says so, the lecture performance *Product of Circumstances* has to be seen as the attempt to find an answer to this question by trying to turn product back into process.²¹¹

In the previous chapter, I quoted Peters’s proposition that in trying to escape the demand for turning process into product, the lecture performance resembles the business presentation’s promise of an “optimum yet to be achieved”.²¹² For Le Roy performance is not (as Phelan proposed) beyond representation and commodification: it is not in performance’s ephemerality that he locates the way out of the logic of capitalist production; performance’s resistance to being turned into a product for him is not ontological but something that has to be worked towards, by stressing performance’s processual dimension. The difficulty with this position is that the notion of product is here substituted with a kind of continuous productivity that resembles the way that labour is

²¹¹ As such it has similarities with Bel’s lecture performances that I have discussed in the previous chapter.

²¹² Peters makes this point in reference to *Product of Circumstances*.

organised in Post-Fordism. But *Product of Circumstances* does not only reflect on the processes that lead to the 'product,' but the respective institutional contexts of science and dance are also the part of these 'circumstances'. In the final paragraphs of the lecture text, which I will quote at length here, the performance *Product of Circumstances* itself is described as a 'product of circumstances':

[...] I was invited [...] to participate in an event about performance and theory called *Body Currency*. I was invited because as a dancer and choreographer, my currency in the 'society of spectacle' is to be an atypical dancer or a dancer-biologist. For this event I was asked to think about possible theoretical pathways between biology and performance. [...] But it was impossible for me to get to an abstract and theoretical level. I could not generalize or conceptualize. I could not write a 'real' paper, lecture or discussion. So I decided to stay at a personal level and give some information about possibilities of exchange I experiences as a support for different thoughts. [...] This is how I came to produce what I just presented to you this evening.

Now to end this lecture, I would like to suggest that this performance was about a contaminated body in its weavings of historical, social, cultural and biological levels, unable to transform themselves into abstraction and theory.

And maybe theory is biography, presenting it is a lecture, and doing a lecture is performing. Thank you for your attention. I'd be glad to answer any questions you might have. (Le Roy 2005: 91-92)

There are a few threads to pick up here: if *Product of Circumstances* is seen as prototypical for the lecture performance form and instrumental for its emergence, then this would suggest that not just this particular lecture performance is a 'product of circumstances', but that the form in general responds to a context in which there is a demand for such work. And while Le Roy here speaks of the inability to transform the practices of a "contaminated body" into "abstraction and theory", this also suggests that the kind of knowledge he aims to present or produce cannot be contained in the lecture form. What thus comes into focus are not only the institutional contexts of dance and science, but the lecture itself as an (as Goffman puts it) "institutionalized" (Goffman 1981: 165) form. And when Le Roy says that "to end this lecture, I would like to suggest that this performance was about a contaminated body", the fact that, in the same sentence, he (maybe intentionally, maybe not) refers to the piece both as a lecture and a performance illustrates that this contamination also applies to these different forms he is combining ("theory is biography, presenting it is a lecture, and doing a lecture is performing"). It is not only through the role of the performer's body that this cross-contamination is triggered, but it is here that it becomes most evident. (According to Goffman, the

performer's body in a lecture is what the audience has "the right to hold [...] in the focus of staring-at attention" (165), but whose relevance for the lecture's production of meaning it is nevertheless supposed to ignore.) I have stated above that, in acknowledging his inability to "write a 'real' paper, lecture or discussion", Le Roy denounces the authority usually associated with the position of lecturing. Denouncing this authority could also be seen as another attempt at avoiding a definitive ending, at keeping the process open. It means delegating this authority to the process by which – in a lecture/performance – meaning is made. And this process (as I have outlined in chapter 2 with regard to the production of evidence in a lecture performance), not only involves but is dependent upon the audience. That this is the case is not as self-evident in a scientific lecture (where Goffman assumes knowledge could as well be communicated in a different medium) as it is in an artistic presentation. Although the different modes of address that Le Roy employs in the performance all address the audience as exactly that – an audience –, the fact that they are different shows that within different institutional or disciplinary contexts there are different assumptions about what constitutes the specific constellation of the public that is referred to as 'audience'. In *Product of Circumstances*, which in this respect is paradigmatic for the lecture performance form, the audience's role in the production of meaning is made evident in the juxtaposition or cross-contamination of different forms of presentations. This also means that no Q&A session is required for the lecture performance to be more than an articulation of "straightforward expertise". But maybe Le Roy did not consider the idea that each performance has an "open-ended character"²¹³ (Peters 2011: 185) in its relation to the audience enough to guarantee the processual nature of the piece. From this perspective the fact that he ends the performance with a Q&A session could be seen as yet another attempt to blur the frame of the performance by opening the process up to the audience.

Outside ourselves

At this point, and to finish my discussion of *Product of Circumstances*, I would like to refer briefly back to Fraser's assessment that there is no "outside" of the institution "because the institution is inside of us, and we can't get outside ourselves." This statement seems to be reflected in Le Roy's image of the "contaminated body", and much

²¹³ "ergebnisoffenen Charakter".

of his autobiographical account in *Product of Circumstances* deals with the futility of trying to escape the logic of the institutions in which his work has been situated: “I felt like a fugitive who actually never escaped what he thought he was” (Le Roy 2005: 89), Le Roy says of his move away from science and towards dance. In *Product of Circumstances*, there are, however, two crucial differences to Fraser’s approach in *Museum Highlights*: firstly, Le Roy engages with the two different institutional contexts of science and dance in a way that allows for what I have called – in reference to Le Roy’s own metaphor – a cross-contamination between them. This implies that they can, to some extent, function as an external position to each other.²¹⁴ And secondly, whilst Fraser invents a character, Le Roy explores his own entanglement in the institutional contexts in which he has participated by giving an account of himself²¹⁵ (a strategy that Fraser would also adopt in her later work). In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Judith Butler describes the “structure of address” (Butler 2005: 67) that is inherent to any account of the “I” (but at the same time makes this account impossible): “The ‘I’ cannot give a final or adequate account of itself because it cannot return to the scene of address by which it is inaugurated and it cannot narrate all of the rhetorical dimensions of the structure of address in which the account itself takes place.” (67) Although it is impossible to predict how the account will be received, the other is the precondition for this account to take place. “We can’t get outside ourselves”, says Fraser, and stresses the “internalized, embodied” relation to “the institution” (in Jackson 2011: 124). And while the role awarded to the institution in the formation of the subject in Fraser’s account in *Museum Highlights* corresponds to the role of the other in Butler’s theory (being addressed by the other as subject is the “scene of address by which [the subject] is inaugurated”), it might be in the “structure of address”, in the relationality of the account that such a “getting outside ourselves” has to be imagined. In *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, a book to which Butler refers, Adriana Cavarero also speaks of the inability of the “I” to tell her own story, but proposes that “[...] it is the other [...] who can realize such a narration” (Cavarero 2000: 56); or, as she also puts it: “I will tell you my story in order to make you capable of telling it to me.” (114) From this perspective, the Q&A session at the end of *Product of Circumstances*

²¹⁴ This different approach does, however, not contradict Fraser’s statement, who proposes that it is not because it is “perfectly closed” (in Jackson 2011: 124) that there is no outside to the institution.

²¹⁵ The figure of the account is central to Esther Pilkington’s PhD thesis about *Performance Journeys* (2011), where it is developed in detailed. It is also briefly introduced as a mode of research in an essay co-written by Pilkington and me, entitled *Die Kunst des Nicht-da-Seins* (Ladnar and Pilkington 2013).

could also be read as Le Roy's attempt to have his story told back to him.²¹⁶ In any case, it stresses the reliance on the other in any autobiographical narrative. But because this autobiographical narrative takes place in a performance, it is the audience that takes on the function of the other, i.e. the address is directed at a public that constitutes itself as an audience, and – in Warner's definition – a "public organizes itself independently of state institutions, laws, formal frameworks of citizenship, or pre-existing institutions" (Warner 2002: 68). A public is therefore a form of collective organisation that can function as a counter concept to that of the institution, and it is in this function that Le Roy engages with it – in the lecture performance and in the Q&A session that is part of it.

Schwarzbank

On the verge of participation

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Oberhausen is bankrupt, Oberhausen is poor, Oberhausen is in debt. The city of Oberhausen is so much in debt that it will never be able to pay back this debt by itself."²¹⁷ These are the first words that were spoken from the stage of Oberhausen's city theatre on the occasion of the opening performance of geheimagentur's project *Schwarzbank: Kohle für alle!* on 16 March 2012.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Warner describes how the public (as opposed to *a* public) is commonly understood as being constituted through "dialogue or discussion among already co-present interlocutors [...]. The prevailing image is something like parliamentary forensics." (Warner 2002: 115) The Q&A session as a kind of open public discussion could be said to convey this idea of the public. I will get back to this idea in the following case study as well as in the conclusion to this chapter.

²¹⁷ "Guten Abend, meine Damen und Herren, Oberhausen ist pleite, Oberhausen ist arm, Oberhausen hat Schulden. Die Stadt Oberhausen hat sovielen Schulden, dass sie niemals in der Lage sein wird, diese aus eigener Kraft zurückzuzahlen."

²¹⁸ The German "geheimagentur" translates as "secret agency". This already points to the fact that anonymity plays a crucial role for the organisation of the collective. Katrin Ullmann describes this aspect of geheimagentur's practice as follows: "Who is actually behind *geheimagentur*? That is, of course, a secret. *geheimagentur* can be anyone. Since 2002, this Hamburg-based performance group has worked primarily on participatory projects; the more people who take part in them [sic], the better. After all, one of the most important goals of *geheimagentur* is to achieve the broadest possible socialization of each particular scenario. [...] *geheimagentur*'s work is expressly not tied to the biographies of individual artists; even its initiators wish to remain behind the scenes. The performance group functions according to its motto of "the art of being many". And they greatly welcome it when others continue their work. The basic principle is that anyone who has taken part in at least one *geheimagentur* performance or workshop can immediately use the name, brand, label for their next event and can claim to be the *geheimagentur*." (Ullman 2011) For the strategy to work, the anonymity of members of the collective has to be maintained, especially when addressing a wider public. This, however, is not always easy. For instance, the conventions of academic writing dictate that one should indicate one's involvement in a project about which one is writing. Without identifying the exact nature of my involvement in the *Schwarzbank*-project, I would like to briefly acknowledge here that my knowledge of the process and the intentions behind the project is different from that of other performances about which I write. This also means that I am invested in its overall agenda.

While I have started my discussion of the two previous performance examples in this chapter also by quoting how the artists in these performances first address their respective audiences, in this case I will defer this discussion to a later point and start with a more general description of the project. The address was indeed not the beginning of the project, nor was it the first thing that happened that evening in the theatre. Although the evening was the official opening of the project, for many audience members it was not the first time they had encountered the project or the first time they had been addressed in the context of the project. And, moreover, while the project was framed by two lecture performances, staged at the opening event and at a closing event two weeks later, there were many other ways of being involved in the project in the course of and prior to these two weeks.

These two lecture performances are hence different to all the other lecture performances I have discussed in this thesis so far: while some of these other lecture performances also make reference to an artistic process outside of the frame of the lecture performance, or reframe the artists' previous works, in this case there is a more immediate connection between the larger artistic project and the lecture performances that frame it. Despite this difference to other works I have discussed, I will argue that this structure is quite common in participatory theatre and performance practice today, where lecture performances are often used not only to frame a process but also to give such a process that often takes place outside of the institution a manifestation inside the institution, potentially also addressing a different kind of audience or public. What is important to remember, however, is that the lecture performances are only one of many elements of the *Schwarzbank* project. In the context of this thesis, my discussion of the project thus also marks a shift towards a consideration of projects that have a more explicitly participatory and collective dimension, that, while employing either lecture performances as elements or lecture performance elements, cannot be understood in their totality by a discussion of only these elements. In addition, it has to be mentioned that in contrast to most performance examples I have discussed so far, these two lecture performances were not delivered by a solo artist but by a collective. While lecture performances are often solo efforts, there are also many examples of groups or collectives employing the format (some of which I have mentioned in the introduction to this thesis). However, in the course of the *Schwarzbank* opening and closing performances, as I will describe in detail later, many more people were invited onto the

stage, and the performances also included a number of elements that had no connection to the lecture as a form. This means that these events might not have been immediately identifiable as lecture performances, especially since they were not advertised as such. Nevertheless, it was in the lecture elements of these performances that the ideas behind the project were presented to a larger audience.

The project *Schwarzbank: Kohle für alle!* introduced a new currency to the German city of Oberhausen, a city that had been in the news for (allegedly) being Germany's poorest city (although there are other contenders for that title). To introduce this currency, geheimagentur founded a bank, the Schwarzbank (the name translates as "black bank"²¹⁹), which issued the new currency in a branch based in a container located in the city centre. The name of the currency was "Kohle", which literally translates as "coal" but is also a common German slang term for money. The name referenced Oberhausen's industrial past in the coal mining and steel industry, when the city was still relatively wealthy (the last coal mines closed in the early 1990s). For two weeks, the new currency circulated in the city; by the end of the two weeks, the network of shops, businesses and institutions that accepted the currency for selected goods and services included about 80 partners. More than 10,000 *Kohle*, issued in 1-, 5- and 10-*Kohle* notes, were distributed to more than 500 customers, who received the money as a credit, but one that they did not need to pay back. All they had to do to receive the money was to suggest an activity that is usually not remunerated but for which they wanted to be paid, and to promise to carry out this activity for at least one hour at a point in the future. A "credit form" was filled in that specified the activity, and that also included the promise that participants would document the activity. For this they were paid 20 *Kohle*, regardless of the nature of the activity.

For the project, geheimagentur not only collaborated with the city's theatre, and with a range of local businesses and cultural institutions in Oberhausen, but also set up a transnational collaboration with Banco Palmas, a community bank situated in Conjunto Palmeiras, a former ghetto in Fortaleza, a city in the northeast of Brazil. The rationale behind this collaboration was to extend the focus beyond the primarily local perspective that characterises many alternative currency projects, and to enlist the expertise of Banco

²¹⁹ The name of the bank is a play on the German word "Schwarzgeld", literally "black money", a common term for money that is unreported or illegally obtained. It is also a reference to the colour of "coal", i.e. the name of the currency issued by Schwarzbank.

Palmas in the institution of a community bank. Presenting the success story of Banco Palmas helped to illustrate the social and economic potential of such an endeavour and thus provided an incentive for people to become involved in the project.

This also meant that by the time of the official opening, the network of collaborators was already at least partly formed. Of the ca 260 people that gathered in the theatre for the opening event, a number were representatives of the by then 60 local businesses and institutions that had previously agreed to be part of the network. There had already been two instalments of the weekly meetings of the network that would continue throughout the project (and indeed continued after the end of the project, but I will get back to this later). These gatherings (“Schwarzbank-Stammtisch”) were open to anyone, not just businesses, and here all the questions and problems that came up in the course of the project could be discussed. Even before these weekly meetings had been initiated, there had been other gatherings and discussions, both with individual participants and with larger groups. The opening in the theatre therefore was the largest, but not the first public event in the context of the project. And even those people who had not attended any previous events probably already had some sort of idea about the project as it had received quite an extensive media coverage both locally and nationally before it was officially launched.²²⁰ The opening in the theatre therefore had, to some extent, the quality of being an extension of these previous gatherings, of these previous addresses. Only now a larger number of people were for the first time directly addressed in this context. Furthermore, the evening was the first occasion on which many partners in the projects encountered each other directly. I here not only refer to the partners within the network of businesses and institutions that had not previously met; it was on this evening that all the people who had worked on the project came together: geheimagentur, theatre actors and dramaturges, representatives of the network partners, and the two representatives of Banco Palmas, Emanuela Ferreira Matias and Francisco Gilvanilson Holanda. The latter would accompany the project for its duration. Some of these people had specific roles within the opening lecture performance, which I will describe later. But regardless of whether they had previously been involved in the preparations, everyone in the theatre this evening was addressed as a potential

²²⁰ At the very least, they would have seen the posters with the bank’s logo, based on Malevich’s black square, and the slogan “Kohle für alle!” (“*Kohle* for all!”) that had been on display all over the city well before the official opening of the project.

participant in the Schwarzbank project. One main function of the lecture performance was to outline the parameters of this possible involvement, to set the agenda and to explain the rules. What is important to note, however, is that participation in the project was never dependent upon agreeing with all the aspects of this agenda. The rules were up for negotiation at all times and all participants in the project could follow their individual agendas within the larger project. This was to some extent already the case in the opening performance.

While I have previously referred to the fact that lecture performances can also be used as a way of addressing a public in an ongoing project or inviting a public to become involved in a project that is itself not limited to its manifestation as a lecture performance, the Schwarzbank project, as I have already mentioned, is the first example I am discussing in this thesis of a performance project that employs this kind of structure. It is, however, a structure that geheimagentur and other groups and collectives employ frequently, as Peters points out:

This first type of lecture performance has by now become a central format for groups that put their performances up for discussion as possibilities for political intervention, that recommend that they are taken up or that are (per se) looking for participants for a next action [...].²²¹ (Peters 2006: 123)

While the lecture performance in these cases is awarded a specific role or function within a larger project, for some audience members it might still be the only encounter they have with that project. This means that lecture performances of this kind have to be considered both in relation to the overall project and with regard to how they address and involve the particular audience that has gathered on the occasion of its performance. If lecture performances take on the function of inviting participation in a larger project, they will (at least to some extent) also be the deferral of this participation. Their structure can be compared to that of the manifesto, as Martin Puchner describes it:

What remains is the split second it takes to say 'Act now' or 'Let us speak no more' or 'Now, after I finish this last sentence, there will be no more sentences; we will stop

²²¹ "Dieser erste Typ der Lecture-Performance ist mittlerweile zu einem zentralen Format für Gruppen geworden, die ihre Performances als Möglichkeiten politischer Intervention zur Diskussion stellen, zur Nachahmung empfehlen beziehungsweise (per se) auf der Suche nach den Mitwirkenden für eine nächste Aktion sind [...]."

talking and writing and reading, and we will act, as soon as I have said the last now: now!' After this last 'now' has been said, there is more postponement still in the form of an exclamation mark that both emphasizes the urgency to act and postpones the act itself once more. [...] In this way, the manifesto is a genre that imagines itself to be on the verge of action, anticipating, preparing, organizing this action, and perhaps participating in it already, if only in a preliminary manner. The manifesto simply cannot wait for its own end so that real action, the only thing it cares about, can begin. It is a genre that is impatient with itself, that is eager to stop talking and to begin doing, even as it tries to make its own language part of that envisioned action. (Puchner 2006: 43)

It is a similar paradox that lecture performances that invite future participation have to address: on the one hand, the talking will have to stop at some point; on the other hand, it is the talking that aims to conjure into being the participation which forms the next stage of the project.

Puchner identifies the manifesto's dilemma as speaking from a position that lacks the power with which to realise its own proclamations or pronouncements. Manifestos aim to be performative speech acts in the Austinian sense ("Political manifestos are texts singularly invested in doing things with words, in changing the world." (5)), yet they depend on theatricality – Puchner here means that they have to make the (often false) claim that their realisation is possible – in order to assume a position of authority and power²²²: "Theatricality and performativity thus describe two conflicting tendencies that informed all manifestos, the two ingredients that, according to their respective degree of influence, produced the various types of manifestos that populate the twentieth century." (Puchner 2006: 5)

Similarly, in lecture performances artists can take up a position of authority by means of theatricality, sometimes by actually embodying a fictional character, like that of the museum guide in the case of Andrea Fraser, and at other times by merely assuming the authority of the lecturer in adopting a language and gestures specific to the act of lecturing. This act of lecturing, however, would usually be associated more with a constative description of the "world out there" than with an attempt to performatively "change the world". It is, however, exactly this understanding of the lecture as a merely constative utterance that is challenged in all lecture performances. They make evident that in lecturing, knowledge or meaning is performatively produced, while simultaneously

²²² Puchner describes this aspect as follows: "Political manifestos frequently overcompensate for the actual powerlessness of their position with theatrical exaggerations, and their confidence is often feigned rather than grounded in real authority." (Puchner 2006: 5)

enacting this performative production of knowledge or meaning. Lecture performances show how meaning is produced and at the same time produce meaning. It is thus through the theatrical appropriation of the lecture form that its performativity is at once made evident and put into operation.

This is also true for lecture performances that, like the opening of the *Schwarzbank*, invite participation in a larger project. Maybe even more so than in other lecture performances, this operation appears to be linked to the constitution of a public as described by Warner. Interestingly, the address that constitutes a public also has to combine elements of both performativity and theatricality, in the sense that Puchner uses these terms: a public is at the same time imagined and performatively called into being.²²³ While Puchner describes the manifesto as the deferral of an “envisioned action”, Warner, as I have quoted above, describes the temporality of the process by which a public is constituted in terms of a “chicken-and-egg circularity”. This means that the theatrical and performative elements of the address are mutually dependent, and it cannot be decided what comes first. The invitation to participate extended by a lecture performance like the *Schwarzbank*-opening can be described as the deferral of this participation in terms of an “envisioned action”. At the same time it initiates a participation in the public that the invitation addresses and thus a participation as a public in the lecture performance itself. This public, however, is supposed to enter into a different kind of organisation outside of the spatio-temporal frame of the lecture performance.

Opening a bank

I have above quoted the opening lines of the opening lecture performance. But, as I have also stated, something else had already happened before these lines were uttered. At 7.33 pm (and this had to be timed exactly because it was broadcast live on local television), and before any performers had entered the stage, money started to ‘rain down’ from the ceiling onto the auditorium. Stagehands and technicians threw around 400 5-Euro-notes from the lighting rig and the balcony (which was closed to visitors), and

²²³ In trying to constitute a public through the specific address they employ, these lecture performances often also appropriate elements of other forms of public speaking (that maybe have a more openly appellatory character), like political speeches or, indeed, manifestos.

most audience members caught at least one of the notes. While the money was raining down, a light box with the word “CHANGE” flashed above the still empty stage. When the audience was finally welcomed and addressed with the statement that “Oberhausen is bankrupt”, this assessment was at odds with the action that had just occurred, namely the free distribution of bank notes. This made evident that the solution that geheimagentur was going to propose to this problem would have nothing to do with the austerity measures imposed on the city by the state government. Instead, geheimagentur put forward an agenda of wastefulness and proclaimed that everyone should have the privilege to print their own money. This programme or agenda was further elaborated in the lecture elements of the performance. In the first lecture element, Oberhausen’s dire financial situation was addressed, a situation that most people in the audience were not only aware of but that was related to their everyday experience of the city, where not only many shops had closed down but also numerous public institutions.²²⁴ The local imperative to save money was discussed as being paradigmatic of a shift away from democratic participation and self-determination within contemporary capitalism:

Whenever there is debt somewhere, it must be somebody’s fault. Then, wastefulness and luxury are denounced: for instance that a city can afford a theatre or public swimming pools. Hence, we were not surprised when, underneath an announcement for tonight’s event, a reader had left the following comment: ‘Obviously the city of Oberhausen is still swimming in money if it can finance such rubbish through the theatre.’ Ladies and gentlemen, if everything works out, this vision could become reality, and soon we will all really be swimming in money. Because, as you all know, tonight, in about one hour, the Schwarzbank will be opened and Oberhausen will get a new currency. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to “Kohle für alle”! Ladies and gentlemen, we have complained about bankers for long enough, it’s time we become bankers ourselves. Ladies and gentlemen, in the words of Bertolt Brecht: ‘What’s

²²⁴ The theatre itself, as the audience would have known, has been under constant threat of being closed down, and has experienced significant budget cuts in the past few years.

breaking into a bank compared to founding a bank?’ Ladies and gentlemen, let’s make money!²²⁵

In the second lecture element, geheimagentur briefly explained that nowadays the value of money is constituted through belief only,²²⁶ a belief that is performatively reinforced every time that money is used to buy or sell something: money is “no longer created by governments – and that means by formally democratically legitimised authorities – but by commercial banks – through credit”²²⁷. What follows from this, so the argument continued, is that money is not a neutral medium, and that it is not the same for everyone: “geheimagentur asks: how can we intervene in the monetary system if we don’t have money ourselves?”²²⁸. The third lecture element then focused on the faculty of money to create publics: “Money enables interactions between strangers; or, put differently, money creates publics. If there are two people, no money is needed. In contrast to exchange and the gift, dealing with money implies that there is a third person who will accept this money in the future.”²²⁹ Although this was not explained in any more detail, the implicit reference here was Warner’s idea of the stranger as a constitutive element in the constitution of any public (Warner 2002: 74).

The relationship between money and publics was then linked to the logic of the gift, via a brief look at the history of money (taking up David Graeber’s proposition that money did not constitute an evolution from a barter economy but was instead introduced as a way to formalise and quantify debt (Graeber 2011: 21)). Buying somebody a drink was

²²⁵ “Wenn irgendwo Schulden sind, muss auch jemand schuld haben. Dann wird die Verschwendung angeprangert, der Luxus: also dass sich eine Stadt zum Beispiel ein Theater leistet oder Schwimmbaeder. Und so hat es uns nicht weiter verwundert, dass unter einem Ankuendigungstext fuer den heutigen Abend [...] ein Leser folgenden Kommentar geschrieben hat: „Scheinbar schwimmt [sic] die Stadt Oberhausen immer noch in Geld, wenn sie einen solchen Quatsch über das Theater finanzieren kann. Meine Damen und Herren, wenn alles klar geht, dann koennte diese Vision Wirklichkeit werden, und wir schwimmen bald wirklich alle im Geld. Denn, wie sie alle wissen, wird hier heute abend, in etwa einer Stunde, die Schwarzbank eröffnet und Oberhausen bekommt eine eigene Währung. Meine Damen und Herren, willkommen bei Kohle für alle! Meine Damen und Herrern, wir haben lange genug über die Banker geschimpft, es wird Zeit, dass wir selber Banker werden. Meine Damen und Herren, in den Worten von Bertolt Brecht: ‚Was ist ein Einbruch in eine Bank gegen die Gründung einer Bank?‘ Meine Damen und Herren, let’s make money.“ In German, the term “Schuld” refers both to “debt” and “guilt”. In his book *Debt: The first 5000 years*, David Graeber refers extensively to the perceived relation between “debt” and “guilt” and the conflation of economy and morality that goes with it (Graeber 2011: 77).

²²⁶ The economic term for money that is “backed only by the public trust” (53) is “fiat money”.

²²⁷ “Der grösste Teil unseres Geldes wird heute nicht mehr von Staaten – und das heisst auch von formal demokratisch legitimierten Instanzen – erschaffen, sondern von kommerziellen Banken– per Kredit.“

²²⁸ “Die geheimagentur fragt: Kann man im System des Geldes intervenieren, auch dann, wenn man selbst kein Geld hat?“

²²⁹ “Geld ermöglicht Interaktionen zwischen Fremden, oder, anders gesagt, Geld stiftet Öffentlichkeiten. Wenn man zu zweit ist, braucht man kein Geld. Im Gegensatz zum Tausch oder zum Geschenk impliziert der Handel mit Geld, dass dort ein Dritter ist, der dieses Geld auch in Zukunft annehmen wird.“

used as an example that “maybe we don’t all want to be even with each other all the time”²³⁰. The lecture performance proposed that a link between money and the gift was especially evident in the introduction of *Kohle*. The performers declared that to deal with *Kohle* might in hindsight turn out to have been a gift, because there was no guarantee that the currency would still be valuable after the two weeks: “Maybe in two weeks all this will have been nothing but theatre.”²³¹

The delivery and tone of these lecture elements, as the quotes may already suggest, was closer to that of a TV show than an academic lecture. Geheimagentur performers took turns in presenting these ideas, and in illustrating what was being said by placing materials, texts, titles and images underneath two cameras, the live footage of which was projected onto a large screen to create a single image.

In between the lecture elements, guests were invited onto the stage. Oberhausen’s treasurer Apostolos Tsalastras and theatre’s director Peter Carp were interviewed about their ideas for the project, and the representatives of Banco Palmas presented the story of their community bank and the currency it had introduced. Each of the guests’ performances was followed by a series of commercials for businesses that were part of the bank’s network, performed live by actors of the theatre. In these commercials, the focus was on the fact that all the businesses were offering goods or services for *Kohle*. The commercials were deliberately whimsical, incorporating elements of slapstick, live music and live costume changes. Thus, the lecture elements were only one mode of address employed in the performance. Geheimagentur simultaneously expressed their agenda in different ways and allowed other agendas to be present in the performance: the commercials, for instance, were another way of trying to convince people to participate in the project by spending *Kohle* in the participating shops and institutions,

²³⁰ “wollen wir vielleicht nicht immer notwendigerweise sofort alle miteinander quitt sein“. This aspect is described in more detail in ‘Changing Money’, a paper presented at the Performance Studies international Conference #18 in Leeds in 2012, in which geheimagentur reflects on the Schwarzbank-Project: “What is especially interesting if we want to make money ourselves is the intrinsic link between money and the gift. [...] In a gift economy, I give you something that you need, but expect that, the next time I need something, you will give it to me. [...] you might have something I need in the future. There is no contract, but there is a bond between us. And actually, for this type of economy to work, it is important that we are never completely even; what you give me in the future should be more or less valuable than what I have given to you, so that the bond remains intact. Money erases that bond by formalising the debt you owe me. On the other hand, maybe the logic of the gift is only suspended in money, it is delegated, through the medium of money, to the public framework, which is guaranteeing us the validity of the notes we use for our interaction, so what happens is that when there is money involved it is no longer only a matter between you and me.” (geheimagentur 2012)

²³¹ “Vielleicht wird das alles in zwei Wochen nur Theater gewesen sein.“

and also represented an agenda that many shops and businesses shared, i.e. that the project would serve as a kind of advertising for them and help them attract more customers. And while the choice of guests corresponded to the theme of the respective lecture elements after which the guests were invited onto the stage, they were free to formulate and express their own agenda (or that of the institution they represented) within the project.

In the final lecture element – consisting of a ten-point programme for the founding of the Schwarzbank – each point was presented by a different person (members of geheimagentur, dramaturges, the translator, and Katrin Bahrs, the designer for the project). The stage thus started filling up with people, thereby illustrating the thesis that “You cannot make money by yourself”²³², which took the form of a recurring statement in this part of the lecture performance. The ten points included practical information about how the project would work and how people could participate in it (for instance where and how to get the money). This was combined with theoretical expositions (for instance on why *Kohle* would not be convertible into Euros). In the course of the presentation of these ten points, *Kohle*-notes were printed on a photocopier that had been rolled up to the front of the stage. Each member of the network was thanked individually for being part of the project.

And, finally, the members of the audience were invited on stage, where they could wager the Euros they had caught in a series of games in order to win *Kohle* (for 5 Euros, people could win 5, 10 or 15 *Kohle*). The rationale behind distributing *Kohle* through gambling was that, on the one occasion in the project where Euros could be exchanged into *Kohle*, no exchange rate would have to be fixed.²³³ Audience members could immediately spend the *Kohle* they had won at a number of market stalls that the partners in the network had set up on stage and which offered all sorts of products and services. The audience was thus invited right away to perform their belief in the new currency by exchanging their Euros for *Kohle* (although they were of course also allowed to just take their Euros home with them), and by spending their *Kohle* on, among other things, food, drinks or haircuts.

²³² “Geld kann man nicht alleine machen”.

²³³ The partners in the network negotiated the value of the currency by determining what goods would be on offer at what prices, and comparing their individual offers with each other. One reference point was the value of the Palmas, the currency of Banco Palmas.

Money, publics and the theatre

To use Puchner's terms, once the "talking" had stopped (although people continued to engage in all sorts of conversations), the action that had been anticipated, prepared, and organised, indeed materialised. The fact that this "envisioned action" was able to be realised seems to be where the analogy between manifesto and lecture performance falls short, bearing in mind that historically, according to Puchner, the position from which the manifesto spoke was lacking the authority to realise its own demands. Puchner studies both artistic and political manifestos, and comes to the conclusion that, whilst, performativity and theatricality are both features present in either type of manifesto, what distinguishes these types is their respective focus on only one of these features:

This distinction between performativity and theatricality can be phrased in terms of means and end: the socialist manifesto has tended toward seeing itself as an instrument, a means to an end, whereas the avant-garde manifesto has tended towards seeing the manifesto as an end in itself. (Puchner 2006: 261)

The dominance of either performativity or theatricality presents a paradox, according to Puchner: "How can a text be means *and* end, theatrical *and* performative, without, in the process, becoming neither?" (262) Puchner ends his book with the demand for a manifesto that "inhabit[s] this paradox" (262). I do not want to suggest that a lecture performance like the opening of the Schwarzbank necessarily presents the answer to Puchner's question. But it can be described, on a structural level, as inhabiting the paradox of being both an end in itself (as a performance for an audience that might or might not become involved in the next stages of the project) and as a means to an end, because it is framed as an invitation to participate. As such, it does not obtain its authority primarily through the authoritative position from which it is speaking, although it might claim such an authority. Rather, it is legitimised only if the public chooses to follow the invitation. If this public, however, is only constituted through the act of being addressed in the performance itself, what kind of public, then, is envisioned in the address?

I have already stated that there were different modes of address performed in parallel in the performance. The audience was addressed as just that, a theatre audience ("Good evening, ladies and gentlemen"). But audience members were also addressed as

inhabitants of Oberhausen, and as future bankers or bank clients, as people who would like to “swim in money”. Many times they were implicated in a common project through the use of the first person plural, “we”. And they were not only addressed by geheimagentur but also by representatives of the city, representatives of the theatre and representatives of a Brazilian community bank. In this multiplicity of voices the dramaturgy of the evening suggested that the performance not only addressed a public but also presented a kind of rehearsal for the constitution of a public, a pre-figuration of the public it set out to construct. This was underlined by the fact that more and more people were invited on stage until, in the end, the stage was opened for the audience to enter. Furthermore, it was implied that the public that would be constituted through the introduction of *Kohle* would necessarily extend beyond the public gathered in the theatre that evening, or beyond any actual physical gathering of people. While any public according to Warner is constituted through address, this address is never limited to a particular concrete situation but dependent upon circulation: “all discourse or performance addressed to a public must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate and it must attempt to realize that world through address” (Warner 2002: 114). Seen from this perspective the circulation of the new currency in the city would constitute a kind of ‘reality check’ for the public that was constituted through being imagined in the Schwarzbank’s opening performance.

At this point, we have to consider the particular institution in which this public had gathered: the city’s theatre, which is part of the German state and city theatre system. Historically, as Kai van Eikels points out, theatre in Germany “in the 18th Century was credited with the capacity to prefigure the nation, which then did not exist as a political entity, by virtue of the effect it has on the audience” (van Eikels 2012)²³⁴ To this day, the German institutions of the ‘Stadttheater’ (city theatre) or ‘Staatstheater’ (state theatre), as van Eikels argues, to some extent still rely on this assumption. As a result, the idea still prevails that there is “a congruency between the collectives ‘the audience’, ‘the people’ and ‘the public’” (van Eikels 2012).²³⁵ Hence, the idea that what takes place in a theatre performance can be regarded as a pre-figuration of the public is – in the German tradition – inherent to the institution of the theatre. The audience in the theatre does not simply

²³⁴ “das im 18. Jahrhundert ja die Kompetenz zugesprochen bekam, die Nation, die damals als politisches Gebilde noch nicht existierte, kraft seiner Wirkung auf das Publikum vorzubilden”.

²³⁵ “Kongruenz der Kollektive ‘das Publikum’, ‘das Volk’ und ‘die Öffentlichkeit’”.

constitute a public, but is seen as representative of “*the public*”, as described by Warner: “*The public is a kind of social totality. Its most common sense is that of the people in general. It might be the people organized as the nation, the commonwealth, the city, the state, or some other community.*” (Warner 2002: 65)

If, in the Schwarzbank-opening, the audience is not only addressed as a public but the variety of addresses also constitutes a pre-figuration or model of that public, is this a public that represents “the public” as a social totality which is exclusive, which defines itself against an outside (“whenever one is addressed as *the public*, the others are assumed not to matter” (66))?

On one level, one could assume so, considering not only the specific theatre tradition I have referred to, but more generally the specific scope of the project for the city of Oberhausen (underlined by the fact that a representative of the city’s government speaks in support of the project), and the specific economical model it proposes: the model of a local currency, issued by a community bank, is based on the idea that the money earned in the community continues circulating in it rather than being spent outside of it. The idea of community is indeed central to Banco Palmas, as confirmed by their presentation at the Schwarzbank opening. Yet the very presence of Banco Palmas also pointed beyond the specific locale of the project, beyond the theatre, beyond Oberhausen, beyond Europe. That representatives of a former slum in Brazil would help introduce a new currency in Oberhausen turned on its head the idea of foreign aid (which would usually be directed the other way). And the fact that a transnational collaboration would be central to the project was a way of making sure that the project could not be subsumed under any kind of “social totality”.

Geheimagentur’s position too has to be considered in this context, because it was always communicated as being an outsider’s position. In the opening performance it was made clear that geheimagentur had been invited to realise a specific project in Oberhausen. This implied that the collective’s investment in the city would end with the completion of the two-week period for which the project was scheduled. While site-specific practices are often criticized for short-term engagements with specific communities with which artists have no personal, lasting relationship, in this case such a position can in fact provide a way out of the totality inherent in the concept of community or of “*the public*”.

I have stated before that people were able to participate in the project without buying into the specific agenda proposed by geheimagentur in the opening performance. All they had to do was to use the new currency – regardless of their motivation. In doing so, however, they would experience money as something that, for once, was not scarce, and something that they could participate in shaping. What then is the relation of the agenda put forward by geheimagentur to the public that is constituted in the address? Warner makes a distinction between publics that can come to “stand in for *the* public” (117) and counterpublics that “mark themselves off unmistakably from any general or dominant public” (117-8). I argue that geheimagentur’s critique of capitalism articulated in an agenda of wastefulness constituted a position that was in opposition to any assumed “unity of public opinion” (117). What is important to note, however, is that formulating a “critical opposition to the state” (117) is by no means exclusive to counterpublics. Rather, it is this function that is often used to define the role of “the public” in relation to the state and its institutions:

The circulation of public discourse is consistently imagined, both in folk theory and in sophisticated political philosophy, as dialogue or discussion among already co-present interlocutors [...]. The prevailing image is something like parliamentary forensics. I have already noted that this folk theory enables the constitutive circularity of publics to disappear from consciousness, because publics are thought to be real persons in dyadic author/reader interactions rather than multigeneric circulation. I have also noted that the same ideologization enables the idea that publics can have volitional agency: they exist to deliberate and then decide. (115)

Warner characterises the agency attributed to publics as “an extraordinary fiction” based on an understanding of “the ongoing circulatory time of public discourse as though it were a discussion leading up to a decision” (123). From this perspective, “all publics are part of *the* public” (116).

It is thus not only their oppositional content that distinguishes counterpublics from other publics. It is also their reliance on forms of expression or modes of address that cannot be easily subsumed under the “ideology of rational-critical discussion” (116) usually imposed on the idea of publics or the public: “Publics more overtly oriented in their self-understandings to the poetic-expressive dimensions of language, including artistic publics and many counterpublics, lack the power to transpose themselves to the generality of the state.” (116) In Warner’s conception of counterpublics, this lack of

power seems to be what prevents such counterpublics from being subsumed under the label of *the* public. This assessment, however, appears to be at odds with the role attributed to the theatre in the German tradition, where in the aesthetic experience (an experience that can be assumed to transcend rational-critical discourse and access the “poetic-expressive dimensions of language”) exactly such a “transposition to the generality of the state” is assumed to take place, as a specific public is seen to stand in for a “social totality” (the public, the people). This apparent contradiction illustrates that publics do not necessarily escape the subordination to a dominant public only because they are constituted through an address that cannot be described as “rational-critical discourse” (what Warner terms “artistic publics”). If thus neither oppositional content nor “poetic-expressive” address guarantees an escape from being incorporated into *the* public, what remains is to look at specific figurations of these elements and how they allow for an imagination of different kinds of public (the role of the imaginary is essential to Warner’s idea of publics and Peters’s reading of Warner). This leads me back to the lecture performance as a form that appropriates the language of “rational-critical discourse” whilst at the same time showing how other forms of expression always enter into this discourse.

Branching out

By putting the focus on the role that the two lecture performances had within the *Schwarzbank* project, and thus on its two manifestations in a theatrical setting, I am ignoring a substantial part of the project, indeed arguably its most important part, namely the daily business of the bank. While the opening first lecture performance, as I have described, functioned to some extent as the anticipation of a public process, the closing second lecture performance largely functioned as an account of this process, of what had happened in the two weeks in which the project had inhabited the city. A discussion of the second lecture performance thus allows me to at least briefly consider this aspect of the project.

The structure and basic set-up of the second lecture performance was similar to the first, with one main exception: there were no “commercials”. Instead video documentation was shown: footage from the businesses that participated; short video statements in which customers of the bank stated for which activities they had received

Kohle (“I received 20 *Kohle* for gardening”; “I received 20 *Kohle* for robbing the Schwarzbank”; and so on); excerpts from conversations with passers-by and from several meetings and events surrounding the project, mostly featuring discussions relating to the future of the currency. Invited on stage were representatives of some of the participating businesses and institutions, but also people who had come to the bank as customers and who explained what they had done for and with *Kohle*. The lecture elements were again used to explicate geheimagentur’s agenda for the project, often with direct reference to the previous lecture performance: “two weeks ago, we said ...” was a recurring introduction to parts of the lecture text. Also the very first address was a reflection on what had been said in the previous performance:

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. Oberhausen is not bankrupt, Oberhausen is not poor. Even if two weeks ago on this stage we made a different claim: we take it back. Because it is exactly this talk of bankruptcy and debt that obstructs the view for the resources that are available in abundance everywhere, and of course also in Oberhausen. There is no intrinsically poor region, says Banco Palmas. And in the past two weeks, we have set out to explore the wealth of Oberhausen together.²³⁶

The retrospective tone of the lecture was not primarily a reaction to the official end of the project, but also to its potential continuation outside the frame of the performance project: over the two weeks the project had run, a large number of people had expressed the hope that the new currency would continue in some way. What became, however, evident was that in order for the project to continue, it would have to take on a different form, and that geheimagentur could not be responsible for this continuation. That people more permanently invested in local issues in Oberhausen would have to continue the project if so desired was a point that geheimagentur had stressed from the start. To celebrate what had been achieved regardless of a possible continuation of the project was one aim of the second performance, to set the scene for handing over the project another. This meant that additional voices to geheimagentur’s would have to be even more prominent in this performance than in the first one. While the first lecture performance led up to the opening of the bank, the second one led up to

²³⁶ “Meine Damen und Herren, guten Abend. Oberhausen ist nicht pleite, Oberhausen ist nicht arm. Auch wenn wir vor zwei Wochen an dieser Stelle etwas anderes behauptet haben: wir nehmen das zurueck. Denn es ist genau dieses Gerede von der Pleite, von den Schulden, vom Sparen, das den Blick darauf versperrt, was an Ressourcen im Ueberfluss vorhanden ist, ueberall, und selbstverstaendlich auch in Oberhausen. Es gibt keine von sich aus arme Region, sagt die Banco Palmas. Und in den vergangenen zwei Wochen haben wir uns gemeinsam daran gemacht, den Reichtum Oberhausens zu erforschen.“

geheimagentur's resignation as what had ironically be termed the 'Direktorium' (board of directors) of Schwarzbank, and the handing over of the project to the group of people who had expressed an interest in continuing it. It is thus not surprising that a review of the project (based on a visit to the Schwarzbank branch and on the second lecture performance) that appeared in the magazine *Theater Heute* focussed almost exclusively on the role of everybody but geheimagentur in the performance (calling them at one point "the audience", and "participants" at another):

That the Oberhausians believe in their *Kohle* is made evident in the final gala in *Theater Oberhausen*: all participants seem to be excited by the idea of *Kohle*. The retailers report that people have become more aware of their shops, a young Italian owner of a delicatessen enthusiastically explains that people have stepped into his shop who would otherwise never had thought of it, and makes a pledge on the open stage to continue offering espresso and juice for *Kohle*, other shop owners follow his example. Selected credit receivers give accounts of their highly original methods of payment, and along the way one hears about guerrilla gardening, while a visibly glowing, but also quite obstinate lady in the audience tries to climb the stage and grab the microphone – in short: the whole thing has the character of a happening. That one wants to continue seems obvious, about the how there is a discussion with the audience members, who seem to agree: thanks to *Kohle*, people came together who would have otherwise never met, invitations were extended, exceptional deeds done, discussions about alternative means of payment organised ... it seems as if Oberhausen had once again found a way of making a living from coal." (Bloch 2012: 69)²³⁷

Although it does not become clear from this description what exactly occurred in the performance, the review still quite accurately summarises the atmosphere of the event. Accounts of what had happened over the two weeks of the project, pledges for the future, and discussions (not so much *with* the audience as *among* the audience) indeed constituted a large part of the performance. Yet these elements alone do not account for

²³⁷ "Dass die Oberhausener an ihre Kohle glauben, führt die Bilanz der Abschlussgala im Theater Oberhausen vor: Alle Beteiligten scheint der Kohle-Gedanke gepackt zu haben. Die Einzelhändler berichten, dass der Bekanntheitsgrad ihrer Läden gestiegen sei, ein junger italienischer Feinkosthändler erzählt begeistert, dass Leute seinen Laden betreten hätten, die sonst nie auf die Idee gekommen wären, und legt ein Gelübde auf offener Bühne ab, weiter Espresso und Säfte gegen Kohle anzubieten, andere Ladeninhaber folgen seinem Beispiel. Ausgewählte Kreditnehmerinnen berichten über ihre hochgradig originellen Zahlungsformen, und man erfährt nebenbei etwas über Guerilla Gardening, derweil versucht eine sichtlich erglühte, aber auch ziemlich renitente Dame aus dem Publikum ständig die Bühne zu erklimmen und das Mikrofon in die Hände zu bekommen – kurz: Das Ganze hat Happening-Charakter. Dass man weitermachen will, scheint klar, über das Wie wird mit dem Publikum diskutiert, das sich einig ist: Dank der Kohle kamen Menschen zusammen, die sich sonst nie getroffen hätten, wurden Einladungen ausgesprochen, außergewöhnliche Dinge getan, Gesprächsrunden über alternative Zahlungsmittel organisiert ... Es scheint, als habe Oberhausen wieder einen Weg gefunden, von der Kohle zu leben."

the reviewer's perception that the performance had the "character of a happening". This perception might have as much to do with the composition of the public that was assembled in the theatre that evening as with what happened there. In comparison to the first performance the audience had changed. In the opening performance, there was already a relatively mixed crowd due to the many business partners who had made their way to the theatre. But in the closing performance, the people sitting in the auditorium were the same people that had populated the container over the duration of the project: for many of them, it was the first time they had ever been to the theatre, if only because usually they cannot afford the ticket money and this time they could pay it in *Kohle*. The collaboration with social institutions like Oberhausen's Caritas guaranteed that people who really had no money could participate in the project, by receiving *Kohle* or also by engaging in the discussions around the project. That the review describes the performance as having the "character of a happening", and thus as belonging to a genre other than theatre, might also be because the audience present did not fit with the idea of a theatre audience that stands in for *the people*. Van Eikels points out that: "The state theatre is supposed to be a place of the people, i.e. of a political subject that, on the occasion of a performance, experiences itself in the process of coming and being together, and that fits to a representative democracy" (van Eikels 2012)²³⁸. This conception of the theatre audience as standing in for the people or the public for van Eikels makes the state theatre an institution that "embodies a gap" (van Eikels 2012)²³⁹ between the concepts of "the people" and "the multitude" – a distinction that goes back to Hobbes, for whom the "multitude" is distinguished from the "people" by its inherent resistance to transfer its "natural rights" (see Virno 2004: 23) to the state. As van Eikels summarises, the concept of the multitude has in recent years been re-evaluated in theories that have identified "forms of self-organisation"²⁴⁰ (van Eikels 2012) within it:

There is, to briefly summarise, no situation in which collectivity would be purely of the people. Every assembly is permeated to a certain degree by forms of self-organisation between some of the assembled, which establish a relation between those among the assembled who participate in these forms with the others of the assembled (but not with all of them), but also with those who are not part of the assembly: not part of the

²³⁸ "Das Staatstheater soll ein Ort des Volkes sein, d.h. eines anlässlich einer Vorstellung zu sich kommenden, sich im Vorgang des Zusammenkommens und Beisammenseins erfahrenden politischen Subjekts, das zu einer repräsentativen Demokratie passt".

²³⁹ "einen *Abstand* [...] verkörpert".

²⁴⁰ "Formen von *Selbstorganisation*".

assembly as representation or embodiment of the people – or, with regard to the theatre: not part of the audience of this performance. (van Eikels 2012)²⁴¹

So while, on the one hand, the public assembled in the theatre on the evening of the *Schwarzbank's* closing performance was probably quite far off from the ideal of a theatre audience that stands in for *the people*, this assembly was more importantly an assembly of assemblies, in that many people there had already participated in some of the other gatherings, discussions and workshops that the project had generated. It was not only the theatre that had brought them together. Instead, in the theatre event, the different forms of organisation and self-organisation that had existed outside of it constantly reverberated. And while there were elements of discussion present throughout the evening, a final staged discussion was initiated not by geheimagentur but by the representatives of Banco Palmas: they introduced the concept of the FECOL, a socio-economic forum to which all inhabitants of Palmeiras are invited monthly to discuss current issues. Questions were projected on to a screen in the auditorium (“Does Oberhausen need *Kohle* and if yes, what for?” “Do we need to extend the network and if yes, with whom?” “What is the next step?”²⁴²). Geheimagentur’s role in the discussion was to pass around the microphone in the auditorium and to take notes, which were also projected. And because this was not the first time that the people in the audience were involved in discussions around the project, many had things to say and presented arguments they had already rehearsed in the previous meetings. The theatre became the forum for a discussion that very soon focussed on the future of the project and how the people assembled in the theatre were willing to contribute to this future.

Thus, even if the lecture performance dissolved into a discussion, it was not simply an occasion of what Warner describes as a “dialogue or discussion among already co-present interlocutors”, because there was a constant reference to the circulation of the discourse that constituted that public outside of this gathering. Moreover, even though some people expressed their wish to continue the project and made pledges concerning

²⁴¹ “Es gibt, knapp zusammengefasst, keine Situation, in der die Kollektivität rein eine des Volkes wäre. Jede Versammlung durchdringen zu einem gewissen Grad Formen der Selbstorganisation zwischen Einigen der Versammelten – Formen der Selbstorganisation, die diejenigen unter den Versammelten, die an ihnen partizipieren, sowohl mit anderen Versammelten in Beziehung setzen (aber eben nicht mit allen) als auch mit solchen, die nicht Teil der Versammlung sind: nicht Teil der Versammlung als Repräsentation oder Verkörperung des Volkes – bzw., mit Bezug auf das Theater: nicht Teil des Publikums dieser Aufführung.“

²⁴² “Braucht Oberhausen Kohle und wenn ja wofür? Müssen wir uns weiter vernetzen und wenn ja mit wem? Was ist der nächste Schritt?”

their future involvement, there was never an official decision or vote, or indeed a concrete plan for how this continuation would manifest.²⁴³ And, finally, even though it took the form of “rational-critical discourse” for the most part, the discussion retained an element of the irrational in circling around the realisation of the seemingly impossible endeavour of instituting a local currency in Oberhausen while still maintaining the transgressive nature of the two-week-long art project. It is important to stress, however, that even though I have described the audience of the lecture performance as not complying with the ideal of a theatre audience resembling a “social totality” such as “the public” or “the people”, it also did not constitute a counterpublic in Warner’s sense. In counterpublics, according to Warner (and his focus on queer politics is reflected in this statement), strangers “are socially marked by their participation in this kind of discourse; ordinary people are presumed not to want to be mistaken for the kind of person who would participate in this kind of talk or be present in this kind of scene.” (Warner 2002: 120)²⁴⁴

The heterogeneity of the public assembled for the second lecture performance though was never one that excluded what Warner refers to as “ordinary people”. The above-cited review’s reference to a lady in the audience behaving in a way that was perceived to be inappropriate suggests that there was a certain uneasiness with regard to this heterogeneity. At the same time it appears as an essential ingredient to the “character” of the performance. I wish to argue that it is exactly because this heterogeneity cannot be subsumed under a “social totality” (which is always based on exclusion) that the public constituted in the *Schwarzbank* project transgressed any notion of “*the public*”: not as a counterpublic, but as one that is actually broader than the idea of *the public* as prefigured in a theatre audience. Finally, the constitution of a public, while never limited to one concrete instance, always has to be temporal; nevertheless, as I am writing this, and long after *geheimagentur* left the city, people in Oberhausen are still meeting regularly to work on the continuation of the *Schwarzbank* project.

²⁴³ The most concrete idea was presented in a video message by Oberhausen’s treasurer Tsalastras, who proposed that *Kohle* could serve as a kind of “culture coupon”, allowing people access to cultural events in the city.

²⁴⁴ The conception of counterpublics, however, to some extent relies on the ability of members of this public to take the “risk” of performing their belonging to the counterpublic (“One enters at one’s own risk” (Warner 2002: 121), writes Warner and uses the example of “African-Americans willing to speak in what is regarded as a racially marked idiom” (121)). The ability or willingness to perform one’s belonging to a counterpublic, however, is not only always associated with “risk” and never easy to assume, but it is also more difficult to ascribe agency to the performance in cases where passing is not an option – as in the case of poverty.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at how lecture performances negotiate their position with regard to specific institutional contexts, and at how they explore different notions of what constitutes a public. Essential to this analysis has been the question of how the audience is addressed in the respective performances. It is in this address that the relation to the institutional context manifests itself, and it is through this address that a specific conception of the public is imagined and potentially called into being.

“Good afternoon, uh, everyone?”

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.”

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.”

“Ladies and gentlemen, good evening.”

Despite the similarity of how the audience is initially addressed in each of the lecture performances I have discussed in this chapter (showing the lecture performance’s appropriation of the lecture’s convention of welcoming and directly addressing its audience), very different conceptions of what constitutes a public are negotiated in what follows each of these initial addresses.

Andrea Fraser, in *Museum Highlights*, uses the address to first assemble an audience, and then lead that audience on a guided tour through the museum. However, she does so under false pretences: firstly, Fraser takes on the fictional persona of a museum guide, and secondly, *Museum Highlights* is not a conventional guided tour. Elements of the museum’s architecture and interior receive the kind of attention usually awarded to art works, and the account of the museum’s role and history is interspersed with quotes from historical documents, which deal not only with the museum but also with other types of institution, concentrating on their role in the formation of the bourgeois individual – exemplified, in turn, by the persona of Jane Castleton, the museum guide. As Castleton, Fraser speaks in the name of the institution of the museum. But because she gives this speech as a fictional character – because she does not take on the role of the “principal” who “believes personally in what is being said and takes the position that is implied in the remarks” – we cannot identify Fraser’s position with that in whose name she speaks. If all institutions function “in-the-name-of” (Peters 2011: 112),, this figure is undermined if Castleton is revealed as a fictional character. On another level,

however, because the fictional nature of the event is never made explicit, the uncertainty in whose name the audience is addressed goes further still, and it remains open if and when the audience will become aware of the fictionality of what they are not only witnessing but in which they are participating. If the audience members become aware – and there are enough indicators for them to do so – they will also become aware of their double role of an audience that is at once real and fictional, without being able to give their full attention to either one of these roles. If this becoming aware, as Bourdieu has it, “causes the hidden truth of social reality to reveal itself” (Bourdieu 2005: xiv), this revelation does not free the audience from enacting (possibly unwillingly) this “social reality” in least in one of its roles. By asking her audience members to play the role of the museum audience as which they are addressed, Fraser commits them to the normative function of the address. Their perceived “nonidentity” with what they are addressed as might lead them to engage with the critique of the institution that the performance implies. It does, however, also hint at a way out of the determinism of Fraser’s later statements, which proclaim that there can be no “outside” of the institution, in so far as it is not least through this “nonidentity” that the audience can imagine itself as a public. Warner’s notion of *publics* as opposed to *the public* as a “social totality” has served in this chapter as a kind of counter-concept to the notion of the institution, as, according to Warner, publics constitute themselves independently of institutions. However, all the lecture performances I have discussed in this chapter of course participate in and address their audiences from, (albeit different) institutional contexts. In the case of Fraser, the institutional context is that of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which, in turn, becomes exemplary not only for museums in general but for any state institutions devoted to teaching the public to distinguish (to quote from Fraser’s script) “between the worthy and the unworthy, the true and the false, the beautiful and the ugly” (Fraser 2005: 108). Fraser’s address in the name of the institution is accordingly addressed to *the public* as a “social totality”. And while the audience is implicitly invited to take up a critical position towards this address and the conception of the public that comes with it, the performance at no point suggests a different conception of what constitutes a public.

In contrast to such an implicit criticism of the institution, Le Roy in *Product of Circumstances* is openly critical of the institutional contexts within which he participates with his scientific and artistic practice. Le Roy’s exploration of, in Fraser’s words, “the relations organized by the institutions that authorize [his] activity” is – in contrast to

Museum Highlights – decidedly personal; yet despite this autobiographical approach, Le Roy’s account focuses largely on his professional life, and on his engagement with two different approaches to the body – biology and dance. Although, as Deirdre Heddon describes, in autobiographical performance “[...] the binary between fictional/real is notoriously unstable” (Heddon 2008: 10), there is no real doubt that Le Roy “believes personally in what is being said and takes the position that is implied in the remarks”. Indeed, Le Roy not only “takes a position”, he also reenacts previous positions by demonstrating dance exercises and choreographies and by presenting his research in biology as a kind of lecture within the lecture performance. By characterising what he shows and recounts as a “product of circumstances”, Le Roy describes the “methods of capitalism” that inform these institutional contexts as determining the outcome of his work. Instead he argues for a more processual approach that resists the demand for a product in both science and dance. The lecture performance itself serves as an implicit example for such an approach, while at the same time running the risk of perpetuating the logic of a continuous productivity characteristic of post-Fordist capitalism. What comes into focus in these demonstrations, however, is Le Roy’s body, which he refers to as “contaminated”; and while the reenactments of exercises and performances take on the role of demonstrations in a lecture setting, they also hint at a knowledge beyond language, something that, as Le Roy puts it, cannot easily be translated into “abstraction and theory” (Le Roy 2005: 92). If the lecture according to Peters is a “speech in the name of knowledge” (Peters 2011: 135), then the appropriate question seems to be in whose or what name is Le Roy dancing here? The image of “contamination” provides a clue, because, in participating in different contexts at once, the lecture performance allows for a juxtaposition of these contexts, a moving between them, where it is no longer immediately evident who the referent is in whose name it speaks (“theory is biography, presenting it is a lecture, and doing a lecture is performing”). The audience, too, is thus asked to move between different contexts, to access different registers of perception, at one time watching a choreography, at other times a scientific lecture, while all along following the overall narrative of the lecture performance. Le Roy’s conception of the public in *Product of Circumstances* seems to be that of a conventional audience in all respects but this, the fact that the audience too will have to negotiate between and participate in the different contexts in which the lecture performance does. I have interpreted the Q&A session, which is unconventionally part of the performance rather

than a follow-on, as an attempt to blur the frame of the performance and open the process up to the audience. While at first seemingly in line with the idea of publics as “exist[ing] to deliberate” described by Warner, Le Roy’s Q&A session also highlights the relationality of any biographical account, the reliance on the other to “realize such a narration” (Cavarero 2000: 56), as Cavarero has it. Seen from this perspective the public that is constituted in *Product of Circumstances* is what enables a “getting outside ourselves”, and thus is outside of the institutions that Fraser locates “inside of us”. The circulatory nature of publics that Warner describes is important here, as every address to a public necessarily aims to circulate beyond the original scene of address, beyond any concrete gathering, beyond “dialogue or discussion among already co-present interlocutors”: once again, “all discourse or performance addressed to a public must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate and it must attempt to realize that world through address” (Warner 2002: 114). From the perspective of the lecture (and, in this case, also the lecture performance) this means that the “world out there” is not only its subject matter, but that in its address to a public the lecture also aims to transcend its spatio-temporal frame as performance and participate in the “poetic world making” (114) which constitutes a public in Warner’s conception.

The address that aims to constitute a public, then combines elements of theatricality and performativity in the way that Puchner describes for the manifesto: the theatricality of presupposing a specific public in the address coincides with the attempt to performatively call this public into being. It is this logic that is at the heart of the two lecture performances that frame geheimagentur’s *Schwarzbank*-project. Because the project is not limited to these lecture performances, the “circulation of the imaginary” (Peters 2011: 190) (to cite Peter’s reading of Warner) that is envisioned and set in motion in the lecture performance (and with it the constitution of a public and the founding of an institution) is actually tested as part of the project, in the form of the circulation of a new currency. Or, in other words, the opening lecture performance not only aims to describe the “world out there” but to initiate a process that manifests in this “world out there”. The assembly in the theatre can thus be described as prefiguring the public envisioned as participating in this process, and it is through the inclusion of many voices, not only those of the anonymous artists or representatives of city institutions, that the lecture performance attempts to conceive of this public as something beyond *the* public as “social totality”. The concluding lecture performance then does not merely bring to a

close and give an account of this test and investigate the possibility of its continuation outside of the frame of an art project. Rather, it is here that the public that was constituted in the project (which I have described as being broader than *the* public which, according to van Eikels, is assumed to be prefigured in any theatre audience in the context of the German city and state theatre system) gathers yet again, and constitutes itself independently of this institutional context. While according to Warner publics organise themselves independently of institutions, I argue that the lecture performances I have discussed in this chapter show that publics, even if they are addressed in institutional contexts, always have the potential to transcend those contexts. Or, as Raunig puts it in his conception of “instituent practices”, they can aim to participate in “processes of instituting and in political practices that traverse the fields, the structures, the institutions.” (Raunig 2009: 11)

While the lecture, according to Peters, is a speech in the name of knowledge, lecture performances can appropriate the speaking “in-the-name-of” in order to negotiate their position with regard to different institutional contexts: addressing this position ironically, as in *Museum Highlights*; contaminating it, as in *Product of Circumstances*; or using it to temporarily establish another institution, as in the *Schwarzbank* project.

Chapter 5

CONTEXTS OF ASSEMBLING AND DISSEMINATING

How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare

From a distance

On the 26th of November, 1965, in Düsseldorf's Galeria Schmela, Joseph Beuys explained pictures to a dead hare, in the appropriately titled performance *Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt*, or, as most English translations would have it, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*. The title ignores the question why one would choose to explain pictures to a dead hare. Instead it suggests, in its reference to a how-to-guide, an applicability to any situation in which one would choose to do so. This reference is more evident in the English translation than in the original German title, where it nevertheless also resonates: a more literal translation of the title would be *How to Explain the Pictures to the Dead Hare*, suggesting an applicability only to a specific dead hare and to specific pictures. Other dead hares and other pictures might require a different approach. While not the first lecture performance (contrary to Archey's assessment; see chapter 2), *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* might well be the first artistic appropriation of the how-to-guide – although the performance is a how-to-guide only by way of its title, because at no point does Beuys spell out what is actually required in order to explain the pictures to the dead hare. The audience has to gather this solely from Beuys's actions. In relation to its title, the performance takes on the character of a demonstration, but one that the audience can only follow through the gallery windows. This means that the audience can only see Beuys – whose head is covered in gold leaf and honey – carry the hare through the gallery from picture to picture and speak or whisper to it, but cannot know what Beuys is speaking or whispering. It is only after Beuys has stopped his three-hour long task of explaining the pictures to the dead hare that the audience is invited into the space. At this point, Beuys has sat down on a stool, holding the hare, his back facing the audience as they enter the gallery. There is more to be said about other materials and elements of the work, but what interests me here is the position of the audience in relation to the performance.

As already described, the spectators are watching the performance from a distance, from outside the gallery space, without ever being addressed directly, and thus they have

no way of knowing the content of Beuys's explanation to the hare. The only source for what Beuys has uttered is Beuys himself; the audience present at the performance has no privileged access to this information. The question is indeed how relevant this knowledge would be for an understanding of the performance if Beuys never intended for the spectators to know. But the situation is complicated by the fact that Beuys later, in accounts of the performance, explicated what he had told the hare. Therefore, in the aftermath of the performance, this information has become available to what Warr calls the "audiences of posterity" (Warr 2003: 31). Moreover, in all accounts of Beuys's piece that I have been able to locate, the description of the piece is contextualised by statements that Beuys made either about the piece itself or about his wider artistic or pedagogical programme. This means that it is almost impossible today to encounter the work through its documentation without also encountering this contextualising information.

In a text that itself at points depends heavily on Beuys's own statements about the work, Gregory L. Ulmer comments on this aspect of the reception of Beuys's work:

[...] commentators thus far have tended to confine themselves to descriptions of his work, venturing by way of explanation little more than paraphrases of Beuys's own statements. But, as Lothar Romain and Rolf Wedewer stress in calling for analyses that bring to bear other categories and contexts, Beuys's interviews and lectures do not constitute interpretations but exist at the same level as, even as part of (verbal extensions of), the art. (Ulmer 1985: 228)

From this perspective, Beuys's statements are difficult to ignore in discussions of his art practice because they are part of it and because there can no longer be a clear distinction between the different manifestations of his practice. In this chapter, I will look at works that transcend a singular manifestation as event by engaging with a wider discursive context as part of the work through different strategies of assembling and disseminating.

I have already in chapter 2 extensively reflected on the model of aesthetic perception that Ulmer develops in relation to Beuys's practice, which for him is paradigmatic for a "collapse of the distinction (opposition or hierarchy) between critical-theoretical reflection and creative practice" (225). As I have outlined, Ulmer suggests that, while the "primary effect" of Beuys's work is one of not understanding, of "shock",

this in turn triggers an “aftereffect” that can produce an understanding that is, as we will see later, primarily conceived of as a rational understanding:

Beuys’s object-actions [...] are expressly intended to function by means of an aftereffect, working thus directly with the ‘time of understanding,’ the way the Impressionists, for example, worked with the effects of space and light – one has to experience Beuys’s works from the proper distance in time, as integrated by the operation of memory, just as one has to be at the right spatial distance from an Impressionist painting to allow the eye to integrate the colors properly. (252)

At other points Ulmer considers the role of Beuys’s own statements for an understanding of his work and also emphasises the importance of the discussions with audiences that often follow Beuys’s performances (246). But he does not directly address the role of the discursive context that is generated around or as part of the work in his characterisation of Beuys’s work as primarily aiming at a retrospective understanding. As his comparison with the reception of an Impressionist painting illustrates, Ulmer is concerned with the individual experience of a specific work of art, and precisely with the role that distance plays in the process of understanding. Experience is linked to the “operation of memory”, which means that memory is here conceived not simply as something that remains after an experience, but as belonging to this experience or as enabling some kind of continuation of it.²⁴⁵ However, Ulmer’s image of a “proper distance in time” from which the work needs to be experienced “properly” also suggests that there is a transition from experience to understanding.

The proposition of a “proper distance”, though, seems questionable, even with regard to the comparison Ulmer makes to the spatial distance required in order to appreciate an Impressionist painting: is it not the process of moving between distances – of seeing, to use Ulmer’s own words, the colours “integrate” and disintegrate – that

²⁴⁵ By extending the temporal frame of the engagement with the work beyond the singular moment or event, beyond the “primary effect” (Ulmer 195: 252) of encountering the work, Ulmer’s conception of the reception of a work of art seems to challenge the idea of the primacy of the performance event. But even though Ulmer explicitly discusses Beuys’s work as part of “contemporary movements such as conceptual art, performance art and video art”, he does not specifically account for Beuys’s work as performance. His concern is with the “evocative function of the Beuysian object” (252), and he does not consider whether it makes a difference if this object is encountered in the context of a performance or an exhibition (indeed, in building his argument Ulmer moves between discussions of Beuys’s performance work, his “multiples” (250) and other types of works). So while some of his propositions might transcend the discourse of immediacy and presence that has been established around performance art by indicating how an engagement with a performance work continues after the event (and by attributing an experiential quality to this engagement), he takes no notice of this discourse in his writing.

characterises the experience of encountering an Impressionist painting? In a linear conception of time, such a moving back and forth between distances seems difficult to imagine with regard to performance. Metaphorical conflation of spatial and temporal distance aside, what Ulmer seems to describe is, as I have already pointed out in chapter 2, a moving between different faculties: on the “primary level”, it is the failure of the faculties of “critical-theoretical reflection”, the failure to understand right away, that invites an emotional response; this emotional response stimulates a process that, after a “proper” temporal distance, leads to understanding.

Understanding in Ulmer’s model of the reception of Beuys’s work is thus something that is deferred. In his discussion of Lacan’s teaching methods, Ulmer introduces the concept of a “time of understanding”, which is related to the Freudian notion of “Nachträglichkeit”, as a retroactive understanding and links it to Lacan’s advice to his students to “avoid understanding too quickly” (in Ulmer 1985: 196). Understanding is something that needs time; although that in itself calls into question the image of a “proper distance”, as it suggests that the process of understanding could be completed once the “proper” amount of time has passed.

While Ulmer never explicitly states what might constitute such an understanding, it seems reasonable to assume that his own reading of a piece like *Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt* can serve as an example. Here, Ulmer accumulates in detail etymological, cultural, historical and mythological connotations of the objects used by Beuys in his performance and of their names, i.e. the kind of lexical knowledge that we can assume not everyone can readily access when witnessing a performance event. The hare, for instance, is read as a sign of “birth”, of “reincarnation” (Ulmer 1985: 256), or of “an embodiment of Troth, the god of Writing” (257).

Ulmer’s writing about and reading of Beuys’s performance (a performance that he did not personally witness) can only make assumptions about the emotional response a spectator might have had to it, while providing an interpretation that in no way accounts for this response; he clearly does not aim, as Phelan does in her conception of performance writing, to “enact the affective force of the performance event again” (Phelan 1997: 12)²⁴⁶. Indeed, the “affective force” of Beuys’s work is mentioned by Ulmer only as a trigger for something else. And while this something else is not expressly identified as the learned, well-informed interpretation that Ulmer puts forward, it is the

²⁴⁶ See also: Ladnar 2011: 238.

fact that, for Ulmer, Beuys's work warrants such an interpretation, that shapes his model for the reception of the work.

Ulmer develops his reading of Beuys's work from a comparison with Derrida. The comparison is based on Ulmer's assessment that "the specific elements of grammatology as Derrida defines them are also available in Beuys's work, although Beuys himself never makes them explicit" (Ulmer 1985: 256). From this observation, Ulmer develops his methodology in approaching Beuys's work: "My procedure here will be to treat Beuys's objects or 'ciphers' the same way Derrida treats vocabulary, that is, in terms of the entire semantic field or symbolic topos that is evoked." (256) What Ulmer here proposes, however, is merely to apply a specific procedure or programme to Beuys's objects that could be applied to any cultural product. And while Beuys indeed attaches specific meaning to the materials he uses in the sense of evoking a "semantic field or symbolic topos", this aspect (again) comes into view primarily through Beuys's own statements about his work: "And Beuys is not at all reluctant to state specifically what he intends the objects to mean, what concepts he wants attached to the Actions." (244)

Moreover, Ulmer's proposed "procedure" – especially if applied to performance work – implies a certain indifference towards the aesthetic experience itself insofar as it focuses on a reading of the "semantic field" evoked by the objects. This suggests that a register of these objects (and possibly their uses, although Ulmer shows little regard for this aspect) would in theory suffice to arrive at some sort of understanding of the work. The temporal distance required to understand the work could then easily be measured as the time it takes to go to the library and read up on the "semantic field" evoked by the work.

What is striking is that the hypothesis that Ulmer formulates at the beginning of his discussion of Beuys's work – that here is an example of a "collapse of the distinction (opposition or hierarchy) between critical-theoretical reflection and creative practice" – is not in fact reflected in his model of aesthetic perception. I would like to suggest that Ulmer names all the elements that would support such a hypothesis by hinting at and participating in the discursive field produced in the context of Beuys's work, but then limits himself to a reading of what he calls the "semantic field". Thus, while he does refer to statements by other authors and by Beuys himself, he treats them as statements about the art rather than (as he himself puts it in reference to statements made by the artist in "interviews and lectures") as "part of (verbal extensions of), the art".

Superficially, a performance such as *Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt* shows little regard for discursivity, especially considering Beuys' statement that "[a] hare comprehends more than many human beings with their stubborn rationalism" (in Warr and Jones 2000: 76). Beuys's statement itself, however, somewhat paradoxically appeals to a rational understanding of the performance; in thus stating his intentions for the piece, Beuys seemingly undermines them. To what extent can these statements be considered "part of" the work? And to what extent might such statements also include accounts of Beuys's work by other people, by those who have witnessed it, and by those who, like Ulmer, have not? Because if the focus was on this discursive context rather than on what Ulmer refers to as the "semantic field", if it was indeed considered part of the work, then the "collapse of the distinction [...] between critical-theoretical reflection and creative practice" might indeed be realised to some extent.

The discursive context

I have already stated in chapter 2 that despite Archey's somewhat random classification of *Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt* as the first lecture performance, other works by Beuys might be more suitably included in a lecture performance lineage; but while Beuys has used more distinctly discursive formats in his practice, Ulmer insists on the importance of "discussion" generated by all his works:

The discussion following the performances, whether led by Beuys himself or whether taking place among the spectators, is a direct part of the production (at times it becomes nearly the whole production, as in 'Honey Pump,' Documenta 6 in Kassel, in which Beuys managed an information booth and organised discussion workshops throughout the one hundred days of the exhibit) [...]. (Ulmer 1985: 246)

Interestingly, Ulmer here suggests that not only Beuys's "interviews and lectures" but also discussions among the spectators in which the artist does not necessarily participate, can be considered part of the work. However, that a work of art generates discussions, even if they are characterised as "part of" the work, is something very different from a work in which discussion is "nearly the whole production". In another statement quoted by Ulmer, Beuys maintains that he decides which form his work takes in relation to the context in which it is presented:

In which sphere and in which sector can I reach something with these media, in which domain can I bring about something with each medium. Sometimes I can do something with a complete, determinate combination, for example object and action or action and discourse, or only with speech or only thought or only writing or only drawing and so forth. (in Ulmer 1985: 246)

Beuys here does not explicate what he aims to “reach” or “bring about”. But in explaining that the choice of the “medium” in which he presents his work is dependent on its presumed effect in a specific context, he also suggests that this context is more important than the content with regard to the form in which this content manifests. This implies that in a different context the same content could be presented differently. The form his work takes, its “medium”, for Beuys only has the character of a “demonstration” of “the thought behind it”:

To be a teacher is my greatest work of art. The rest is waste product, a demonstration. If you want to explain yourself you must present something tangible. But after a while this has only the function of a historic document. Objects aren’t very important for me anymore. I want to get to the origin of matter, to the thought behind it. (in Ulmer 1985: 245)

Beuys’s conception of the relation between content and form in his art resembles Goffman’s ideas about the lecture; while the form of his work for Beuys is not purely “incidental” but dependent upon the context, its characterisation as a “waste product” comes close to Goffman’s image of the “cake” and the “box”. Like Goffman, Beuys suggests that “the thought behind it” remains largely unaffected by the particular mode of its presentation or “demonstration”; although his insistence that “something tangible” is needed when communicating this “thought” relativises this idea. There are two questions that follow from Beuys’s argument here: what conception of teaching or pedagogy is expressed in Beuys’s statements, and, what is the relation between “work” and discursive context that is envisioned here?

In the above quote, Beuys expresses his desire to “explain”, and we can assume that this activity is for him related to his role as teacher. In her book *Fluxus Experience* (2002), Hannah Higgins devotes one chapter to the pedagogical practices of artists associated with Fluxus. Higgins detects a contradiction between Beuys’s expressed desire for dialogue (Higgins 2002: 203) and his “shamanistic persona” (204), asking: “One

wonders: In the presence of such a forceful personality, is real exchange even possible?" (204) Barbara Lange identifies a similar contradiction in Beuys's *Fat Transformation Piece* (1972). In this six-hour performance at the Tate Beuys, from a podium in front of a wall with blackboards, addressed his audience while his voice was transmitted to other rooms in the gallery. In the discussion part of the performance, Beuys "made it clear that, for him, the formal aspects of his work were of less importance than the democratic ideas it propagated, ideas which he could best disseminate in these kinds of public discussions." (Lange 2007: 182) However, as Lange describes, Beuys took a "dominant role" (183) not only in the discussion but also throughout the performance: "The enquiry he repeated – 'Questions, you have questions?' – reveals that Beuys did not aspire to change roles, where he then would have had to give up his position of transmission, or his role as teacher." (182)

The criticism directed at Beuys by Higgins and Lange focuses on his authoritative position, and on the fact that certain factors – his persona, his "position of transmission" – undermine the possibility of discussion and "real exchange". This criticism mirrors Gardner's criticism of the lecture performance as being about the passing on of "straightforward expertise". As I have discussed in chapter 4, such criticism often appears in the context of any "one-to-many-communication". And indeed Higgins not only speaks of the benefits of "restructuring lecture methodologies to be more conversational" (Higgins 2002: 199) but overall locates the potential of the pedagogical methods developed in the context of Fluxus in a "status equality between educators and students" (203) that could guarantee "active engagement, as opposed to passive absorption of information" (203). "In this way," Higgins purports, "the role of teacher as gatekeeper to an official culture of expertise becomes obsolete." (203)

In her characterisation of the traditional role of teacher and in her demand for "status equality between educators and students", Higgins's ideas resemble those put forward by Rancière in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and in *The Emancipated Spectator*. For Rancière, too, as I have already quoted, an "inegalitarian principle" (Rancière 2009: 14) is at work when the teacher defines the "knowledge of the 'right' distance and ways to abolish it" (14). However, while Beuys seems to interpret his role as teacher in a way that would perpetuate what Rancière calls the "explicative order" (Rancière 1991: 4), this would for the philosopher not be due to the form in which Beuys aims to communicate

his ideas. What Higgins calls “active engagement” is for Rancière always already what a spectator does:

There is the distance between artist and spectator, but there is also the distance inherent in the performance itself, in so far as it subsists, as a spectacle, an autonomous thing, between the idea of the artist and the sensation or comprehension of the spectator. [The performance] is not the transmission of the artist’s knowledge or inspiration to the spectator. It is the third thing that is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect. (Rancière 2009: 14-15)

While my main criticism of Rancière’s concept of performance as the “third thing” was that it suggests a symmetrical relation between artist and spectator that ignores the role of what Rancière himself calls the spectator’s “own poem”, I have also questioned the possibility of thus distinguishing between performance and performer. In the case of Beuys’s work, which so much depends on Beuys’s persona and his presence, this question seems all the more pertinent. Moreover, Rancière’s model ignores the role of the other spectators and the interaction between spectators in the production of meaning in a performance (“what exactly occurs among theatre spectators that cannot happen elsewhere?” (16), asks Rancière). But while I believe that Higgins’s criticism of Beuys’s teaching practice is to some extent valid, a more dialogical structure as demanded by Higgins (as well as Gardner and others) does not necessarily constitute a more “real exchange”. This demand itself, especially paired with the demand for “active engagement”, could be seen to perpetuate the myth of the passive spectator criticised by Rancière.

I have already quoted Rancière’s assertion that “One always learns when listening to someone speaking” (Rancière 1991: 102). This, as the sentence preceding this quote shows, is also the case if that someone participates in the “stultifying logic”: “There are hundred ways to instruct, and learning also takes place at the stultifiers’ school: a professor is a *thing*, less easily handled than a book, undoubtedly, but he can be *learned*: he can be observed, imitated, dissected, put back together; his person, available for observation, can be tested.” (102) From this perspective, the assumed identity of work and person, of performance and role or persona in the case of Beuys, which becomes evident in a statement like “[t]o be a teacher is my greatest work of art”, does not challenge Rancière’s concept of the “third thing”, as Beuys too can be seen as a “*thing*”

that the spectator can “learn”. If, however, the discursive context is considered “part of” the work – and this does not only refer to the context in which Beuys personally participates – the concept of the “third thing” does no longer suffice to describe the relations organised by the work. It becomes difficult to account for all the “things” involved (unless the spectator’s “own poems” could not aspire to the status of becoming autonomous “things”): “The art historians will never record the many questions posed after his Actions, Beuys complains, even though these are an important part of the total work.” (Ulmer 1985: 246) Again, Beuys, as he is here paraphrased, seems to confuse being asked questions with a discussion. Nevertheless, his equation of being a teacher with a “work of art”, his description of the questions discussed after his performances as “part of” the work, and his assertion that the objects he produces are “waste products” and what is really important is the “thought behind” them, all show that, for Beuys, his art cannot be reduced to a single event or object. Beuys both calls the physical products of his art “historic document[s]” and complains that important parts of his work (the “questions posed after his Actions”) are not represented in the documentation of his work by “art historians”. On one level, this position recalls statements about the failure of performance documentation to appropriately represent performance events. But other than, for instance, Warr, who ascertains that photographs reduce “complex performances” to “just one image” (Warr 2003: 32), or Burden, who insists that watching a video is different from the “actual experience” (Burden 1975) of a performance, Beuys is concerned with the potential failure of documentation to represent that which happens beyond what would usually be considered the frame of the performance event²⁴⁷: the “thought behind” it and the discussions surrounding it – in short, what I have called the discursive context of the work.

Of course, there are valid points to be made that Beuys’s authoritative and sometimes even authoritarian demeanour might get in the way of a discussion on equal terms, as, does his role of defining what it is that needs to be learned (his assumed “knowledge of the ‘right’ distance and ways to abolish it”). Beuys’s insistence on the

²⁴⁷ Lange’s reading of the audio documentation of *Fat Transformation Piece*, as well as of the blackboard drawings produced in the event, would be an exception to this assumed indifference of art historians towards reflecting on the discussions surrounding Beuys’s work. However, while *Fat Transformation Piece* does not only consist of discussions, the format is primarily discursive, and the discussion element was staged as part of the work itself. In other works, where not “nearly the whole production”, as Ulmer has it, functions primarily discursively, the discussions surrounding the work will often really remain undocumented.

importance of discussion for his art might thus merely reflect his intentions rather than being represented in the actual work. However, as Ulmer has it, Beuys's presence is not necessarily required for this discursive context to manifest; moreover, I would argue that it is not only discussions surrounding the performance, but everything uttered in relation to the work (also potentially at a much later point) that makes up this context. And as Ulmer's reading of Beuys's work shows, a presence at the original performance event is not required to participate in this context. The validity of the model of aesthetic perception as put forward by Ulmer, which proposes that an initial emotional response after a "proper distance" in time leads to a rational understanding, is undermined not least by his own assertion of the importance of discussions surrounding the work, as this suggests that audiences to these events can access different perceptive registers simultaneously. Ulmer's model definitely does not account for the reception of works where, as he puts it, discussion is "nearly the whole production".

There is, of course, as I have pointed out before, a difference between such works and other works that, as any work of art, might generate discussion regardless of their form. In this chapter, I will look at works that are framed in a way that lets the discursive context appear in the work itself. In doing so, I will for the first time in this thesis look at contemporary works that are not primarily defined as lecture performances – because of their participation in the contexts that the lecture performance also participates in, and to examine if and how they can be distinguished from the lecture performance.

Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge

Expertise and authority

When Gardner claims that the "fascination with performance lectures of a few years ago appears to be being replaced by forums and performances that are more about knowledge sharing rather than straightforward expertise" (Gardner 2008), her central example for such work is Hannah Hurtzig's series *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge*. What Gardner praises about "forums and performances" like the *Blackmarket* is their dialogical and collaborative structure. Since she does not expand on her comments in her short blog entry, we have to assume that, for her, lecture performances are missing the elements of dialogue and collaboration, and, furthermore, that these elements are essential to Gardner's conception of "knowledge sharing".

Gardner announces the *Blackmarket* event in Liverpool in 2008 as “a live performance installation in which 50 experts will offer 30 minutes of on-to-one [sic!] dialogues” (Gardner 2008). Indeed, Hurtzig herself refers to these events as installations, usually also adding the number of experts that are involved: on the Mobile-Academy-website (Mobile Academy being the label under which Hurtzig and her collaborators organise the *Blackmarkets* and other events), which also features an extensive archive of audio-visual documentation of previous *Blackmarkets* (an aspect that I will return to later), a *Blackmarket* in Berlin in 2006, for instance, is advertised as “An installation with a 100 Experts” (Mobile Academy 2013).

While these brief descriptions of the format already show that the figure of the expert is central to the *Blackmarket* concept, Gardner describes the emergence of the forums for knowledge sharing as related to a “mistrust of expertise”: “In part this may be a manifestation of the growing importance of collaborative processes in theatre, and in part I suspect it is driven by a wider public mistrust of expertise [...]” (Gardner 2008).

Contrary to Gardner’s assessment, the expert has become quite a prominent figure in contemporary theatre and performance in recent years. Paradigmatic for the recruitment of experts from all areas of life for the theatre stage is the work of the German group Rimini Protokoll. A monograph on the group’s practice has been fittingly titled *Experten des Alltags, (Experts of the everyday)*, and a list of the “experts” involved published in the introduction to the book shows the range of backgrounds from which they are recruited: “elderly ladies, teenagers, unemployed air traffic controllers, failed mayoral candidates, Vietnam veterans, funeral speakers, truck drivers, lawyers, call-centre agents, policemen”²⁴⁸ (Dreyse and Malzacher 2007: 9) The list underlines that in the context of Rimini Protokoll’s work, potentially everybody can be considered an expert for something. And while the *Blackmarkets* also invite experts in a more traditional sense – scholars, artists, professionals or institutional representatives –, they have a similarly open concept of what constitutes an expert, and amateurs or hobbyists (albeit usually in smaller numbers) are invited alongside people whose expertise and authority is institutionally legitimised.

I have previously quoted Goffman’s somewhat contradictory remark that a lecturer is “assumed to have ‘authority’”, that this authority is “intellectual, as opposed to

²⁴⁸ “alten Damen, Teenager, arbeitslosen Fluglotsen, gescheiterten Bürgermeisterkandidaten, Vietnamsoldaten, Trauerredner, Fernfahrer, Rechtsanwälte, Call-Center-Arbeiter, Polizisten“.

institutional”, but at the same time based on “reputation or office” (Goffman 1981: 167). However, regardless of how this authority is legitimised prior, assuming the position of giving a lecture means performing and making a claim to this authority. An agenda behind lecture performance work is to destabilise this authority in a gesture of self-authorisation or by foregrounding the mechanisms by which this authority is performatively produced. I argue that something very similar occurs in the *Blackmarkets*: here, too, a framework is established within which individuals are authorised as experts, and which in turn allows the audience to consider this status and how it is institutionally produced or performed. Like many lecture performances, the *Blackmarkets* are concerned with the question of what constitutes knowledge and expertise and how knowledge and expertise are constituted by being communicated in a public forum.

Gardner is thus of course right to consider forms like the *Blackmarket* in reference to the lecture performance. But I think her assessment that they have replaced lecture performances is historically inaccurate, even if we disregard the discursive formats that Beuys and many of his contemporaries produced in the 1960s and 1970s: The first *Blackmarket* took place in Hamburg in 2005, but previous events organised by Mobile Academy had already explored similar formats. Moreover, such formats already started to emerge around the time that the lecture performance itself became popular – Hygiene Heute’s *Kongress der Schwarzfahrer (Congress of Fare-dodgers, 2000)*, for instance, combined elements of a lecture and a conference with a market or trade fair setting, assembling a line-up of “experts” in fare-dodging. Peters includes these forms alongside the lecture performance in the context of what she describes as a “search for alternative spaces for knowledge production” (Peters 2011: 182).

Going hand in hand with this re-evaluation of the locale of knowledge production, as Gardner suggests, is indeed a re-evaluation of the notion of expertise itself. In contrast to Gardner, however, I would like to suggest that it is not a critique of expertise itself, but a critique of how expertise is institutionally authenticated that forms like *Blackmarket* engage with. While Gardner perceives a “mistrust of expertise”, Mercedes Bunz in *The Silent Revolution* describes a mistrust that is directed the other way round: the mistrust of established experts in their fields (doctors, journalists) that see their authority under threat “because the internet makes knowledge and expertise accessible to everyone”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ “weil das Internet nun Wissen und Expertise für alle zugänglich macht”.

(Bunz 2012: 45).²⁵⁰ It is in the context of this development of a perceived democratisation of knowledge and expertise that forms like the *Blackmarket* and the lecture performance have to be considered, a development that I have described as coinciding with a conception of knowledge as resource in which academia increasingly follows an economic logic.

How is the *Blackmarket* a black market? What is non-knowledge? And when is it useful?

While the *Blackmarket* can be described as an attempt to create an “alternative space” for knowledge production, it does not react to the economisation of knowledge production by merely abolishing the logic of the market. Instead, the reference to black market suggests a more informal structure that is however still economic in nature. And indeed, a monetary transaction is involved in establishing relations in the *Blackmarket*. In order to book a conversation with an expert, participants have to pay a small amount in the currency of the country in which the respective *Blackmarket* is held: one pound, one euro, one Swiss franc. It is a primarily symbolic transaction: some kind of payment has to be made in order for the structure of a market to be established. Like any symbolic transaction, it brings with it a set of rules and responsibilities. That the amount is so small though means that there is no financial risk involved – a conversation with an expert at the *Blackmarket* is still much cheaper than a regular theatre ticket, or even a drink at the bar. Or, in other words, paying a symbolic amount of, say, one euro in the context of an art event means that the event still remains just that, an art event emulating a market situation; the symbolic payment makes the market symbolic as well. Fittingly, upon making their payment at the reception area, the participants receive a chip, a kind of casino token, that they then use to pay the expert before the start of the conversation. Right away, real money is turned into toy money. However, this toy money is required to

²⁵⁰ While Gardner starts out her account with describing her experience of writing a blog, she does not consider the relation between changed notions of expertise and the increased access to expertise on the internet. It is what she mistakenly identifies as a “pulling down [of] the fourth wall” (Gardner 2008) that she considers to be the significant contribution of these new forms of theatre and performance, a development that she also perceives to impact on “the world of conference”: “Over the last decade theatre has been busy pulling down the fourth wall and with the world of conference starting to do the same, it is no surprise that the two are moving closer together.” (Gardner 2008) Of course, the world of conference has never known a fourth wall, and in theatre, too, the fourth wall did not only fall in the last decade. Gardner, here, seems to mistakenly imply that for the fourth wall to come down, some sort of dialogue or conversation has to occur, when it is enough that the audience in the auditorium or theatron is addressed directly, which of course occurs in any lecture situation and in many contemporary performances.

complete the transaction. All these aspects point to the structural ambiguity of the *Blackmarket*. The ambiguity is already evident in the title, in its use of the term “non-knowledge”. No explanation is given either during the event itself or in the programme notes for what the organisers mean by “non-knowledge” in the context of the *Blackmarket*. But by making “non-knowledge” something that is traded in the *Blackmarket* a difference is introduced (at least on a terminological level) to how knowledge is usually considered as a commodity or resource, and to how its usefulness is defined in this context. The play on the opposition of “useful” and useless “knowledge” and “non-knowledge” challenges the premise that such distinctions are possible or, indeed, useful.

Rancière shows how positing a distance between knowing and not knowing is instrumental in establishing the authority of the “master” or “explicator”. The distinction between knowledge and non-knowledge is constitutive for what Rancière (albeit employing a different vocabulary) describes as the “explicative order”: the “explicator” practices the “art of *distance*” (Rancière 1991: 5) by determining that which is not yet known or understood by the student in terms of a distance that needs to be abolished, yet that the “explicator” himself defines. The title *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge*, on the other hand, suggests that knowledge and non-knowledge here not only coexist, but also have the same currency or usefulness in the context of the event. While the category of usefulness is thus upheld, as one would expect in a “market” setting, it is applied to knowledge and non-knowledge simultaneously, thus also transcending this setting by suggesting the potential usefulness of non-knowledge. The question that remains, however, is how this distinction manifests in the event itself, and how the concepts of knowledge and non-knowledge are negotiated there. This leads us back to the figure of the expert and its prominent position in the *Blackmarket*. Is the expert not a variation of Rancière’s figure of the “explicator”, who defines a distance between his knowledge and that of the non-expert?²⁵¹ Yet if the title *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge* is to be taken seriously, it suggests that expertise is also something that can be constituted through non-knowledge.

²⁵¹ Maybe the changing notion of what constitutes expertise that I have already mentioned in chapter 2 becomes relevant here again: Bunz describes that it is no longer through factual knowledge that experts can distinguish themselves from non-experts, as this type of knowledge is increasingly easier to attain, which in turn means that the distance between knowledge and non-knowledge not only can be more easily bridged, but also that expertise has to manifest itself outside of this distinction since it can no longer be simply measured in terms of a gap in factual knowledge. (Bunz 2012:41ff.)

This question has to be answered by looking at how, in the *Blackmarket*, the conversations between experts and audience are staged, how knowledge is communicated in these conversations, what kinds of relationships are established and what roles are available.

Storytelling, etc.

Each *Blackmarket* is organised around a specific theme. “Our money: On the gradual dematerialisation of a medium of exchange”²⁵² was the theme of the 15th instalment of the *Blackmarket* series, which took place in Bern in 2012 and in which I participated as an audience member. It will serve as my main example. In Bern, fifty-seven experts were invited to engage in conversations about a vast range of topics relating to the overall theme (occasionally, two experts were teamed up to present a topic together). There were three rounds of conversations, with two consecutive time-slots scheduled for each conversation in each round. Thus, in one round visitors could pick between eighteen different conversations, which took place on eighteen small tables in the centre of the main space. In addition, visitors could choose to pick up receivers and headphones, sit down on one of the stands assembled for them on three sides of the main space and listen in to selected conversations (six conversations at a time, twelve in each round) that were broadcast live on the “Schwarzradio” (“black radio”).

Participants could navigate their way through the evening with the help of two programmes: one double-sided A4-sheet listed the names of all experts and the time-slots for the respective conversations on one side, and those conversations that were broadcast on the six radio channels on the other side (this list also included the titles for the conversations and their table number); and a poster-sized fold-out index of all the conversations, arranged according to a number of alphabetically organised categories, from “Arbeit” (work) to “Zukunftsszenarien” (future scenarios). The larger programme included the title for each conversation alongside biographical information about the experts.

The purpose of all this information was evidently to give audience members an idea of what to expect from each conversation, and interestingly the focus was on the individuals rather than on the content of the conversations, although in most cases the

²⁵² “Unser Geld: Über die allmähliche Entstofflichung eines Tauschmittels”.

biographical information also provided some clues on the prospective content. For instance, the first conversation I booked was with the artist Marina Belobrovaja, and it was entitled “You’re only allowed to bet at the stock exchange”²⁵³. While the title alone could have suggested a conversation about stock trading and betting, the biographical information explained that Belobrovaja had been sued by the Swiss betting commission for her project *kunstwette* (*art bet*). The project was indeed the focus of the “conversation” (that, however, for the most part was not conversational but took the form of an artist talk for one audience member). While the information provided was essential for navigating the complex programme, it also had other implications: firstly, the often very descriptive titles set the theme for the conversations, which implied that beyond choosing a specific conversation visitors had little influence on what was being talked about. And secondly, the biographical information also served as proof of the expert’s expertise, legitimising their status by referencing their credentials. Contrary to Gardner’s “mistrust of expertise”, this illustrates the premise of the *Blackmarket* to facilitate conversations with experts on their areas of expertise: experts in the *Blackmarket*, as it stated in the Bern programme notes on the fold-out index, “offer an excerpt of their knowledge that can be told and learned in 30 minutes”²⁵⁴. This aspect, however, seems to contradict the second part of the self-characterisation of the *Blackmarket* in the same programme notes as a “showroom and production space, in which narrative forms of knowledge transfer are tried out and presented, as well as a transdisciplinary investigation into the learning and unlearning of knowledge and non-knowledge”²⁵⁵. How exactly non-knowledge and unlearning feature in the *Blackmarket*’s structure remains unexplained. Bojana Cvejic, in an essay about the *Blackmarket*, sees this aspect realised in the narrative form of the knowledge transfer. Storytelling, she posits, “[...] leads away from the academic methods of analysing, commenting and verifying information. In fact it detaches knowledge from information and defines it somewhere in the middle between that which one knows as the object of knowledge, of

²⁵³ “Wetten darfst du nur an der Börse”.

²⁵⁴ “bieten einen Ausschnitt ihres Wissens an, der sich in 30 Minuten erzählen und erlernen läßt”.

²⁵⁵ “Schau- und Produktionsraum, in dem narrative Formate der Wissensvermittlung ausprobiert und präsentiert werden, als auch als transdisziplinäre Recherche über das Lernen und Verlernen von Wissen und Nicht-Wissen”.

research (savoir), and that through which one becomes a subject, namely experiences and encounters (connaissance).” (Cvejic 2007: 53)²⁵⁶

Without referencing it explicitly, Cvejic’s remarks on narration echo Walter Benjamin’s famous essay, ‘The Storyteller’. For Benjamin, storytelling communicates experience rather than information. Information, which Benjamin (writing in 1936) calls a “new form of communication” (Benjamin 1999: 88), is partly responsible for a “decline of storytelling” (87), because it has to “sound plausible” (88) and be immediately verifiable, whereas the “intelligence that came from afar [...] possessed an authority which gave it validity, even when it was not subject to verification.” (88) On the few occasions when Benjamin talks about knowledge in his essay, he usually mentions “wisdom” in the same breath – wisdom for Benjamin is the “the epic side of truth” (86), it is the type of knowledge that is communicated in storytelling. Interestingly, Benjamin considers wisdom in terms of usefulness as “[c]ounsel woven into the fabric of real life” (86). “[B]orn storytellers” are characterised by an “orientation towards practical interests” (86), and every “real story” “contains, openly or covertly, something useful. The usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim.” (86) Benjamin’s conception of usefulness, because it is characterised by a proximity of practical and moral concerns, might provide an alternative to a notion of usefulness as associated with knowledge as a resource. However, his invocation of “born” storytellers and “real” stories also shows that his conception of storytelling rooted in an oral tradition is very narrow. This calls into question whether Benjamin’s thoughts on storytelling can really be usefully applied to what happens in the *Blackmarket* events. This is most explicit in Benjamin’s consideration of storytelling as an art that has to avoid explanation:

Actually, it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it. [...] The most extraordinary things, marvellous things, are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he [sic!] understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks. (89)

²⁵⁶ “[...] führt weg von den akademischen Methoden des Analysierens, Kommentierens und Verifizierens von Informationen. Tatsächlich löst es Wissen von Informationen und definiert es irgendwo in der Mitte zwischen dem, was man als Gegenstand des Wissens, der Forschung, der Disziplin kennt (savoir), und dem, wodurch man zum Subjekt wird, nämlich den Erfahrungen oder Begegnungen (connaissance).” (Cvejic 2007: 53)

While an interesting parallel could be drawn here between the pedagogical approach that Rancière describes in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and Benjamin's conception of storytelling as the passing on of knowledge without explanation (a knowledge that is generated through the interpretative labour of the reader), I propose that storytelling is only one of many forms of communication that can be found in the *Blackmarket*, and often in the course of one single conversation.

The fact that what is happening between the experts and the audience is labelled a "conversation" would indeed suggest that the exact form of this conversation cannot be known in advance, as audience members might have their own ideas about the direction of the conversation. Moreover, the experts themselves (although individually briefed about the nature of the *Blackmarket* beforehand) might have different approaches to the conversations. And while there is room for anecdote and storytelling, there are also moments of explanation and of information – in short, there is a constant shifting between different modes of presentation and conversation. Rather than, as Cvejic suggests, being located "somewhere in the middle" between the subjective and the objective, knowledge in the *Blackmarket* appears in very different ways, differing not only from conversation to conversation, but also in each individual conversation, on either end of the spectrum that Cvejic opens up. And while knowledge is often filtered through personal experience, some experts also speak in the name of institutions or specific agendas that detach what is being told from this personal perspective.

Cvejic states that the *Blackmarket*, because of its reliance on "subjectivisation"²⁵⁷ (Cvejic 2007: 54), puts the focus on the "less visibly circulating aspects of knowledge [...], namely [...] assumptions, convictions, opinions, habits, facts, information, methods etc." (54)²⁵⁸. She proposes that it is here that the relation of knowledge and non-knowledge is being negotiated, in the "gap between ignorance or opinion and that which is idealised as their opposite [...] – namely knowledge."²⁵⁹ (54) This is done in the "encounter"²⁶⁰ (54) of the conversations. But Cvejic does not specify what respective role the experts and the participants have in this negotiation, or how knowledge or non-knowledge are distributed

²⁵⁷ "Subjektivierung".

²⁵⁸ "weniger sichtbar zirkulierenden Aspekten des Wissens [...], nämlich [...] Annahmen, Überzeugungen, Meinungen, Gewohnheiten, Fakten, Informationen, Methoden etc."

²⁵⁹ "Kluft zwischen Unwissen bzw. Meinung und dem, was als ihr Gegenteil idealisiert wird [...] – nämlich Wissen."

²⁶⁰ "Begegnung".

among them. Through subjectivisation, the *Blackmarket* for Cvejic seizes the potential of an “individual ability of knowledge and knowledge transfer”²⁶¹ (54), which appears linked to “partisanship and partial insights”²⁶² (54), i.e. it explores the role of the non-objective in the production of knowledge. A “reader”, spectator, audience member never does anything but “interpret things the way he understands them”, even if an interpretation is “forced” on her, according to Cvejic. But the fact that attempts to convince, influence, persuade have a place in the *Blackmarket* (which is implied in Cvejic’s inclusion of “convictions” and “opinions” in her list of “aspects of knowledge”) shows that it is actually the “etc.” at the end of Cvejic’s list that best describes the variety of ways in which knowledge is communicated in the *Blackmarket*. That partiality is an important aspect of the circulation of knowledge in the *Blackmarket* was also my experience of the second conversation in which I engaged. This conversation took place with Renate Schwob, Deputy CEO of the Swiss Bankers Association, and was entitled “About politically exposed bank customers, duty of care and self-control: Curricula vitae of dictator’s assets”²⁶³. My counterpart, in contrast to me, had evidently a lot of experience in talking about this topic, and as a lobbyist was speaking not only for herself but in the name of the organisation she represented. I was thus in the strange position of being lobbied while obviously not being the appropriate addressee, with my conversation partner constantly trying to counter a criticism I had not yet enough information to even articulate. Which leads me back to the issue of non-knowledge – here in the sense of an ignorance of the topic –, which prevented me from entering into a more controversial (or at least more balanced) discussion.

The art of not knowing

In a short video introduction to the *Blackmarket*, which was filmed for an online platform hosted by the television network arte, Hurtzig defines non-knowledge as “something one does not yet know, or has forgotten again, one could say as well

²⁶¹ “individuelle Fähigkeit des Wissens und Wissenstransfers”.

²⁶² „Parteinahmen und Teileinsichten”.

²⁶³ “Über politisch exponierte Bankkunden, Sorgfaltspflicht und Selbstkontrolle. Lebensläufe von Potentatengeldern”.

something one knows in an unutterable way”²⁶⁴ (Hurtzig 2013). For Hurtzig, thus, non-knowledge is not the mere opposite of knowledge but a kind of preform of knowledge, something anticipatory or dormant that can be activated. But more than that, non-knowledge for her is also something akin to art, as confirmed in her final statement in the same video:

And how does all this now become a live event, an experience, or, as we say, the intoxication in which appropriation is possible? Only if one can trust that all the people who are gathered here this evening, and this can be up to [...] 1000 people, adopt the means, the techniques, the manners of non-knowledge, and do so baldly. And the manners of non-knowledge are repetition, belief, in this situation [of the conversation] one has to believe [...] that there is knowledge, there are experts, and that knowledge transfer is possible, otherwise this process does not work. And this offering here [of all the different conversations], which has been arranged as small micro-dispositive, which in themselves actually form a monstrosity because they all are incompatible with each other, can only be connected in a hallucinatory process, and the agora [Hurtzig here refers to the space where experts and participants meet] is so to speak the dreamy space where one wishes to imagine that there is a collective appropriation of knowledge, which is: everyone could be an expert, if I listen to him long enough.²⁶⁵ (Hurtzig 2013)

Non-knowledge here then appears as something beyond rationality, which triggers what Peters has described as a “circulation of the imaginary” (Peters 2011: 190), or in Hurtzig’s words, a “hallucinatory process” that connects all the separate incompatible elements in an idea of a “collective appropriation of knowledge”. Between these two cited statements, Hurtzig gives a detailed description of the structure of the *Blackmarket*, focusing in particular on the process of finding experts locally that have a specific knowledge to pass on. Nothing in her description, however, explains the shift between the two different conceptions of non-knowledge that Hurtzig proposes here. Nor does she address the turn from individual conversations (and a reliance on subjectivity as

²⁶⁴ “Nicht-Wissen als etwas, was man noch nicht weiß, oder wieder vergessen hat, man könnte sagen, auch etwas, was man weiß, auf eine nicht-sagbare Weise.“

²⁶⁵ “Und wie wird das Ganze jetzt zu einem Live-Event, zu einem Erlebnis, oder, wie wir sagen würden, zu dem Rausch, in dem Aneignung möglich ist? Nur dadurch, wenn man sich darauf verlassen kann, dass alle Leute, die hier an diesem Abend versammelt sind, und das können manchmal bis zu [...] 1000 Leuten sein, die Mittel, die Techniken und die Weisen des Nicht-Wissens anwenden, und zwar unverblümt. Und die Weisen des Nicht-Wissens sind Wiederholung, Glauben, in dieser Situation muß man glauben [...] dass es ein Wissen gibt, dass es Experten gibt, dass Wissensübertragung möglich ist, sonst funktioniert dieser Vorgang nicht. Und dieses Angebot hier, was so in kleine Mikrodispositive zusammengesetzt worden ist, die in sich eigentlich eine Monstrosität bilden, weil sie alle unkompatibel miteinander sind, können nur in einem halluzinativen Vorgang miteinander verbunden werden, und die Agora ist sozusagen der träumerische Raum, wo man sich vorstellen möchte, dass es eine kollektive Aneignung von Wissen gibt, die da heißt: jeder könnte ein Experte sein, wenn ich ihm nur lange genug zuhöre.“

described by Cvejic) to a “collective moment of learning” (in Cvejic: 58), as Cvejic quotes Hurtzig with a similar statement.

On a structural level, the distribution of knowledge and non-knowledge in the *Blackmarket* is defined as uneven: the experts have a specific knowledge that they pass on to the visitors who do not yet have this knowledge. For Hurtzig’s proposition that “everyone could be an expert if I listen to him long enough” to manifest, everyone would have to be in the position of being listened to, which is something that the structure of the event cannot guarantee. As Hurtzig also suggests, every participant might theoretically be able to take over and dominate a conversation, but would have to do so in an area in which the person they are talking to is structurally defined as an expert. The experts have been given the role of presenting “an excerpt of their knowledge that can be told and learned in 30 minutes”, which as a task corresponds to Rancière’s description of the “explicative order”. This implies that the “distance” of which Rancière is so wary is inherent to the premise of the *Blackmarket*. At this point, however, it is important to consider that the *Blackmarket* is not simply a pedagogical set-up, but that it blurs the contexts of pedagogy, art and economy, i.e. it is also an art event and a market situation. This in turn affects the relationship between experts and audience and the roles they take on. As Cvejic describes, audience member and expert enter into a contract which puts the audience member in a position to “demand this performance”²⁶⁶ (53) that has been agreed on from the expert. They both perform the role they have been assigned in the event, and are being observed by other participants as they are doing so.

While I have previously described the *Blackmarket* as an art event emulating a market situation in which small amounts of money are traded for “excerpts of knowledge”, I want to argue now that there is a parallel economy operating in the *Blackmarket*: namely an “economy of attention”²⁶⁷ (Franck 1998). This is manifest in the fact that experts are competing for the audience’s attention – although it is very likely that there are takers for each conversation, some are of course more popular than others. But more importantly, by paying an expert our attention as audience members, we are at the same time getting her attention, and might in turn get the attention of the larger audience listening in.

²⁶⁶ “diese Leistung [...] einzufordern”.

²⁶⁷ “Ökonomie der Aufmerksamkeit” is the title of a book by Georg Franck that describes how attention can be understood as an economic category.

In her book *Die Fiktionen der wahrscheinlichen Realität* (*The Fictions of Probable Reality*), sociologist Elena Esposito describes how limited knowledge or ignorance are constitutive elements of any market, as without this non-knowledge there would be no room for speculation and no promise of profits:

In fact incomplete knowledge is a precondition for the functioning of economy, which is why all transactions to a certain degree are an 'exploitation of ignorance' [Shackle]. Every actor attempts to use the incomplete knowledge for his purposes; he does so on the basis of second-order information, which he obtains from the mutual observation of the actors who observe others and simultaneously observe how they themselves are observed.²⁶⁸ (Esposito 2007: 93–94)

We cannot know how all the actors will act in a given context, not least because their actions are influenced by their observations of the other actors and by being observed themselves. In her video statement, Hurtzig describes directing the *Blackmarket* as an administrative process (Hurtzig 2013). This means that the organisation of the event too is characterised by a non-knowledge of the course it will take in its realisation, because it cannot be known in advance who will be paying attention to whom or how attention will be distributed in the event. What also comes into play here is the plenitude that is displayed in the *Blackmarket*: participants will only be able to witness a small fraction of what is happening throughout the evening, so that the question to whom to pay attention also invites an element of distraction. Eighteen conversations are happening in parallel. While the general audience is listening to select conversations on the radio, their attention may be directed somewhere completely differently. As they are listening on headphones there is no way of knowing to which conversation they are listening. Within a situation that at first glance is characterised by individualisation (one-to-one conversations, audience members isolated through headphones), moments of collectivity can appear. At the *Blackmarket* in Bern, people listening to one particular conversation on the radio suddenly started laughing, and did so repeatedly. And because this laughter shifted the attention in the space, other audience members started changing channels to find out what they were laughing about. The people who were laughing

²⁶⁸ "Tatsächlich ist unvollkommenes Wissen gerade eine Voraussetzung für das Funktionieren der Wirtschaft, weshalb alle Transaktionen immer zu einem gewissen Grad eine 'Ausbeutung des Nichtwissens' [Shackle] darstellen. Jeder Akteur versucht, das unvollkommene Wissen für seine Zwecke zu nutzen, er tut dies auf der Basis von Informationen zweiter Ordnung, die er aus der gegenseitigen Beobachtung der Akteure, die andere beobachten und dabei gleichzeitig beobachten, wie sie selbst beobachtet werden, ableitet."

noticed and told the others what channel they were listening to. This illustrates that within this specific economy of attention there is also room for collective action and generosity – by calling somebody else’s attention to something interesting that is happening. And it is a specific kind of non-knowledge that is overcome in this instance, as suddenly we get to know to what the other person is paying attention. I am not sure whether this situation is best described as “hallucinatory” (Hurtzig 2013), but collective learning indeed becomes a factor here, if only a collective learning of how to engage with this specific situation of learning.

Public thinking

To observe others in a situation of knowledge transfer makes this knowledge transfer itself the object of attention. It is this aspect that for me warrants a discussion of the *Blackmarket* in the context of this thesis: the *Blackmarket* emerges from and inhabits the same context as the lecture performance in its concern with the performative production of knowledge, and like most lecture performances it both reflects on and participates in this context. Despite the conversational format, there are elements of lecturing in some of the interactions in the *Blackmarket*, and many of them have a presentational element; in almost all the conversations I listened to, the experts first started out by presenting themselves and some of their ideas or experiences relating to a specific topic they themselves had chosen to discuss within the wider thematic frame of the event. Some of the encounters in the *Blackmarket* tend more towards the conversational, others more towards the presentational, but more important than this distinction is the range or scope of different forms of “knowledge transfer” (to follow the organisers’ nomenclature), that can inhabit the space of the *Blackmarket*, and the fact that despite the one-to-one format, others are always potentially watching or listening as well. The *Blackmarket* does not only stage encounters in which different people present their knowledge in a wide variety of formats that can all manifest in a conversational structure, but is also stages the engagement with these formats through various ways of interacting with what the experts are presenting.

In her video statement, Hurtzig herself describes the space thus created by the *Blackmarket* as an *agora*. This reference to the origins of democracy and to assemblies and debate as its constitutive elements mirrors Peters’s assessment that the context in

which both projects like the *Blackmarket* and the lecture performance as a form evolve, is driven by an interest in “new forms of assemblies”²⁶⁹ (Peters 2011: 191) and the attempt to “rediscover theatre as public space”²⁷⁰ (181).

The question is, however, what conception of public or the public the *Blackmarket* is based on; or how the *Blackmarket* constitutes its audience as a public. Again, because of the structural ambivalence of the format, the answer to this question is not without ambiguity. Hurtzig speaks of a “democratisation of all knowledge that is available and on offer there”²⁷¹ (Hurtzig 2013), and the reference to the *agora* as well as the dialogical structure of the event suggest that what Warner has termed “parliamentary forensics” (Warner 2002: 115) plays a role in constituting the *Blackmarket’s* public. But how does this relate to the structure of the *Blackmarket* as a market? In a footnote in her book on probability, Esposito makes a link between the “idea that public opinion is in principle rational”²⁷² (Esposito 2007: 39) and Adam Smith’s idea of the “invisible hand” of the market on which liberal economic thinking is based. In his book *Das Gespenst des Kapitals (The Spectre of Capital)*, Joseph Vogl outlines in detail how the idea that the operation of the market creates balance and even justice despite – or indeed because of – the divergent (and necessarily selfish) individual interests of all actors, became a “commonplace of bourgeois moral philosophy”²⁷³ (Vogl 2010: 39) in the 18th Century. The idea of a “unity of public opinion” (Warner 2002: 117) that comes about through the interplay of divergent subjective positions is from this perspective mirrored in the idea of the “invisible hand” that regulates the divergent interests that manifest in the market. Both Hurtzig and Cvejic point out the incompatibility of all the positions assembled in the *Blackmarket*. This incompatibility, however, which Hurtzig describes as “monstrous” (a formulation that Cvejic also uses (Cvejic 2007: 57)²⁷⁴), can also be considered as part of an ordering principle, as summarised by Esposito: “chaos on the micro level can create a stable order on the macro level”²⁷⁵ (Esposito 2007: 40). How is the idea of a “hallucinatory process” that allegedly connects these incompatible elements and that is

²⁶⁹ “neuer Versammlungsformen”.

²⁷⁰ “das Theater als öffentlichen Raum wieder entdecken”.

²⁷¹ “Demokratisierung allen dort vorhandenen und angebotenen Wissens”.

²⁷² “Vorstellung der prinzipiellen Rationalität der öffentlichen Meinung” (Esposito 2007: 39); she mentions Habermas as one representative of this opinion.

²⁷³ “Gemeinplatz bürgerlicher Moralphilosophie”.

²⁷⁴ Cvejic also speaks of the *Blackmarket* as establishing a “cross-section of society” (Cvejic 2007: 57). [“Schnitt durch die Gesellschaft”].

²⁷⁵ “Chaos auf der Mikroebene kann auf der Makroebene eine stabile Ordnung erzeugen”.

based on the exercise of non-knowledge different from the idea of the “invisible hand”? As Vogl shows, the idea of the “invisible hand” is based on the assumption that order and balance are achieved through the regulating force of the market and thus through opacity:

Bourgeois society, which constitutes itself as a milieu around economic men, is governed by opacity, by a principle of invisibility; there is no good political actor who can with overview and insight want and do the universally good. And it is precisely the blindness of self-centred interests that guarantees more than any clear-sightedness or clear view the pursuit of a common purpose.²⁷⁶ (Vogl 2012: 40-41)

Vogl here describes how a specific kind of non-knowledge is constitutive for the idea of the “invisible hand”: the actors follow their individual interests without a clear view of a common purpose, but in their collective selfishness a balance is reached. An analogy could here be drawn to the actors in the *Blackmarket*, who also follow their own often competing agendas and interests in the event and who also do not have a clear overview of all that is happening; moreover, what has to be considered in this context is that the organisers themselves do not declare an agenda with regard to the theme or formulate a position in relation to the positions gathered at the *Blackmarket* (Cvejic talks about the *Blackmarket*’s “not ostensibly critical nature”²⁷⁷ (Cvejic 2007: 58). This means that the partiality of many individual contributions (on a micro level) is counterbalanced with a seemingly impartial authority that organises the event as a whole (on a macro level). These analogies, however, are only possible because the *Blackmarket*, even in constituting itself as an “alternative space for knowledge production”, enters into a dynamic relation with existing contexts of knowledge production, i.e. it adopts a market setting, with which it then plays, rather than creating a situation in which knowledge appears from the outset as being free of economic considerations. Because of the structural ambiguities that are thus created, the multiplicity of addresses and agendas remains intact, and the element of plenitude and diversity is not dissolved into a unity of opinion or into some kind of balance or consensus. It is never exactly clear on whose

²⁷⁶ “Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft, die sich als Milieu um den ökonomischen Menschen herum bildet, wird durch Intransparenz, durch ein Prinzip der Unsichtbarkeit regiert; es gibt keinen guten politischen Akteur, der mit Überblick oder Einsicht das allgemein Gute wollen und tun kann. Und gerade die Blindheit eigensüchtiger Interessen garantiert mehr als jede Klar- oder Übersicht die Verfolgung eines allgemeinen Zwecks.“

²⁷⁷ “nicht vordergründig kritischer Natur”.

behalf, or in whose name, the actors in the *Blackmarket* are acting: their own, an institution's or in the name of the idea they represent, or even in the name of the art event in which they are participating. What Hurtzig calls a "collective moment of learning" might or might not occur, but the format does not allow for any position or idea to appear definitive, as it puts the focus on the communication of knowledge and its production in this communicative setting. Knowledge thus appears as an open-ended process that incorporates a number of potential feedback loops in the doubling of the position of spectatorship: an expert is communicating her knowledge to a participant, and this process is being observed first by other spectators and finally in the documentation of the event. The *Blackmarket* thus functions as the lecture does according to Masschelein and Simons, namely as a "form of public thinking": "The auditorium and the public lecture are the place and the time where people are without a clear position, where they are outside of the time of production and mobilisation, because they are decelerated by a challenge/provocation to think, to commit to a topic and question it."²⁷⁸ (Masschelein and Simons 2010: 59) Even if subjective positions and agendas permeate the *Blackmarket*, they are at the same time suspended because all participants engage in a "form of public thinking". They adhere to the "provocation to think" publicly, a process in which, as Masschelein and Simons put it, "words and things are released from particular uses and specific interests and are, so to say, freely placed at everyone's disposal."²⁷⁹ (58)

Dissemination/circulation

Masschelein's and Simons's conception of the lecture as a "form of public thinking" is clearly based on an understanding of the lecture as a live event. Only in the presence of others does the activity of thinking itself become a "public matter" (49). And it is because everybody present in the event of the lecture, regardless of her respective position, is engaged in the same activity (of thinking), that something like an "egalitarian ethos" (49)

²⁷⁸ "Der Hörsaal und die öffentliche Vorlesung sind der Ort und die Zeit, wo Leute ohne klare Position sind, wo sie sich exponieren, wo sie außerhalb der Zeit der Produktion und Mobilisierung stehen, weil sie durch eine Herausforderung zum Denken verlangsamt werden, durch die Provokation, sich an einen Gegenstand zu binden und ihn zu hinterfragen."

²⁷⁹ "Tatsachen und Ressourcen werden zu Themen und möglicherweise zu Dingen von Belang, indem Worte und Dinge von bestimmten Verwendungen und spezifischen Interessen losgelöst und sozusagen frei zu jedermanns Verfügung gestellt werden".

manifests itself: in a lecture, the scholar or professor “addresses the others under the premise of equality”²⁸⁰ (49). In the *Blackmarket*, such an “egalitarian ethos” is clearly envisioned, but there are also factors that work against it, in particular because the ideas of knowledge transfer and a communal activity of thinking are not necessarily compatible. In the programme notes to the *Blackmarket*, knowledge is characterised as something that is predefined and then passed on in the conversations rather than something that only emerges or is only produced in the encounter. The market situation and the characterisation of knowledge as useful (which is very much compatible with a “teleological conception”²⁸¹ (Masschelein and Simons 2010: 51) of learning, but is here of course counterbalanced by the fact that non-knowledge is also characterised in this way) factor in here as well, because even if the experts address their audience “under the premise of equality”, their activity is defined as a service that has to be paid for.

Moreover, the situation of the conversation itself would not suffice for thinking to become a “public matter” – two people are not a public. It is thus only because the *Blackmarket* does not limit itself to one-to-one conversations that it can appear as a “public form of thinking”. And while Masschelein and Simons see deceleration as a means to counteract the dictate of efficiency to which academic discourse is subjected today, there is too much happening in too little time in the *Blackmarket* to speak of such a deceleration. Instead, distraction becomes as important a factor as attention in the *Blackmarket*, and it is exactly this element of distraction that can be seen to counteract the demands of teleology and efficiency – albeit in a way that is very different from the concentrated engagement with a topic that Masschelein and Simons have in mind for the lecture.

Because the process or activity of thinking itself has to take place in the co-presence of the live situation in the case of Masschelein’s and Simons’s conception of the lecture as a “form of public thinking”, this raises the question of how the live event of the lecture relates to its documentation. Two aspects are important here, both of which I have already previously discussed: Firstly, even though the lecture situation is based on co-presence, the attention is at the same time directed to something outside of it that is made present, the Goffmanian “world out there”, which, as Masschelein and Simons have it, “becomes a real and common topic” (Masschelein and Simons 2010: 59). Secondly, as

²⁸⁰ “er spricht die anderen unter der Voraussetzung der Gleichheit an”.

²⁸¹ “teleologische Auffassung”.

Warner describes, even the address that constitutes a public in the live moment of a performance must aim to circulate beyond this moment (Warner 2002: 114).

Many hundred conversations from past *Blackmarkets* have been made available in an online audio archive (Blackmarket Archive 2013), which can be navigated according to themes, key words, experts and languages. Here, the conversations appear detached from the context of the event, but their form as conversations remains intact. And while I have described how, in the live event, it is essential to have a larger audience for the conversation for it to become the “form of public thinking” that the lecture would be automatically, this dynamic seems reversed by the process of documentation. By engaging with the audio or video document of a lecture, we have to imagine the live situation and the co-present public, even if we might hear or see them in the document. We are thus in a position to focus on the event itself that would actually require us to divert our attention to the “world out there” that is made present as a topic. In the documentation of the *Blackmarket* conversations, the audience position is already doubled, because at least one person in the conversation is always already listening. We are thus more easily taken into the situation exactly because we are not directly addressed. While we are still an individual member of the scattered public addressed in the document and do not enter into a relation of co-presence, we are nevertheless witnessing a process of thinking that, through our own participation as (one of many potential) listeners, can be described as public. And because we do not have to imagine ourselves as the addressee of what is being said, we are also more easily taken beyond the particular situation into a consideration of the “world out there” as a topic.

The Many-headed Monster and Life Lecture

In 2009, Joshua Sofaer’s *The Many Headed Monster* was published, which is described by the publishers as “an original and inventive resource for anyone interested in contemporary performance practices and their relationships with audiences” (Live Art Development Agency 2013). In 2011, Sofaer’s *Life Lecture* went online, described on the website itself as “an online resource which structures and directs an audience to deliver a lecture to themselves about themselves. It aims to create a collective autobiography of the audience while simultaneously challenging our understanding of what autobiography

is.” (Life Lecture 2013) Both projects are attempts to establish a framework that allows others to independently deliver a lecture about a specific topic.

The Many Headed Monster takes the form of a boxed set, containing a booklet with the lecture text, instructions for its delivery and notes that further contextualise and comment on the lecture text, a DVD with video examples of performance works that each “should illustrate a particular point and that as a group [...] should showcase a range of strategies for engaging with audiences” (Sofaer 2009: 74), and a set of image cards depicting different kinds of “audience encounters” (3). The instructions are placed on the first pages of the booklet and then continued alongside the lecture text (on the verso pages), specifying what videos to show at what point and suggesting questions for discussions and a series of tasks based around the images on the cards. Following the introduction, the first instruction that accompanies the lecture text reads “use as appropriate” (6) – nevertheless, the situation envisioned for the delivery of the lecture text seems to be that of a conventional lecture, which can be extended “to an entire ‘module’ on audiences in higher education contexts” (3) with the help of the additional resources that are provided in the set.

Sofaer’s *Life Lecture*, in contrast, envisions a collective process of lecturing:

It can be used as a tool for research into theories of the self, questions of memory and confession between truth and fiction, but also - as the authoritative lecturer is missing in this setting - into questions of collective knowledge production, lecture performance, group behaviour and structures of communications. (Life Lecture 2013)

In *Life Lecture*, a section of the website itself is used to facilitate the delivery of the lecture. By carrying out the instructions, the participants are invited to go through a process that is structured into four sections – an introduction, warm-up exercises, the lecture itself and a discussion. The website is supposed to be projected or viewed on the computer screen as the lecture goes on, showing images and texts as the participants go through the prepared materials, with the opportunity to occasionally decide themselves on the lengths and order of various parts. Most instructions are provided via sound files in the form of texts read by a number of different speakers, who also read out quotations and other texts that are presented in the lecture. The main part of the lecture, however, is supposed to be filled in by the participants themselves, who are invited to respond to a series of provocations, most of them in the form of quotations by famous authors, each

accompanied by a question. Participants are asked to respond either to the quotation or the question or both, and the response can be either personal and take the form of a story, or it can be theoretical. “It is up to you” is a phrase that is repeated as the instructions are given to the participants.

By compiling materials, instructions and suggestions, both projects aim to provide everything that is needed for the delivery of the respective lecture, requiring no or at least very little preparation. My discussion of the two projects is based on these materials, instructions and suggestions, not on any realisation or performance of the lectures. I have witnessed a presentation by Sofaer based on *The Many Headed Monster* at Kampnagel in Hamburg in 2010²⁸², where audience members were asked to deliver the different parts of the lecture themselves, and I even read one part myself. But this presentation, as Sofaer stated on this occasion, was different from the approach that he had originally envisioned, which was one person taking on the role of the lecturer. The presentation thus realised a potential of the material that was not intended in the instructions, and I will therefore focus on the source material and only take this presentation as a further reference point in the discussion of the project rather than as a definitive manifestation. This means that I will focus on the intentions for the use of *The Many Headed Monster* and *Life Lecture* rather than the actual use, but always bearing in mind that there is no cause-and-effect-relationship between the two. This aspect is also articulated by Sofaer in the instruction to “use as appropriate” and in the assertion that “it is up to you”, but while provisions have thus been made for different ways of engaging with the materials, the intentions behind the materials are nevertheless clearly defined in each case.

Finally, before entering into the discussion, it has to be noted that both projects, while experimenting with the lecture form, are not defined as lecture performances. I assume the reason for this is that the envisioned context for both projects is primarily that of teaching and research, i.e. the performance of the respective lecture is not primarily envisioned as an aesthetic event. In the case of *Life Lecture*, according to the description of the project, the focus is more on aspects of research: it is described not only as a “resource” but also as a “tool for research”. ‘Lecture performance’ is mentioned therefore as one of the “questions” that can be researched with this tool, but the lecture

²⁸² The presentation was part of the conference *Die Performance der Lecture im Netz (The Performance of the Lecture on the Web)*, which was organised by Peters.

itself is not described as a lecture performance. That *Life Lecture* is characterised not only as a resource for communicating existing research but that performing or executing it is in itself considered research, however, illustrates a conceptual difference to *The Many Headed Monster*, where such a claim is not made.

Participating public

“Good morning, Good afternoon, Good evening and welcome to *The Many Headed Monster*. Over the next hour we are going to consider some of the many different forms of relationship that exist between artists and audiences in contemporary performance and live art practices.” (Sofaer 2009: 7) In these introductory remarks, the audience is welcomed and the theme for the lecture is established. While these two sentences could be described as a conventional introduction to a lecture, a few aspects however require further consideration. What catches the eye first is that a provision has been made for welcoming the audience regardless of what time of day the lecture is delivered, and we have to assume that the person enacting the role of the lecturer will pick one of the three greetings available. This is the only instance in the lecture text where it is evident that the lecture has not been written for a specific occasion but so that it can be delivered by anybody on any occasion²⁸³; this aspect is, however, only evident to the person delivering it, unless this person decides to read out all three greetings and ignore the actual time of day at which the lecture is performed. It seems very unlikely though that anybody would deliver the lecture without acknowledging that it has been written by somebody else, which in turn means that it is very unlikely that the introductory remarks at the beginning of the lecture are actually the first words that would be spoken on the occasion of its delivery. We therefore have to assume that the audience will be welcomed twice, that there will be a double introduction. This will likely remain the only reference to the lecture’s defining characteristic, which is that the person delivering it is not its author. This aspect is not acknowledged or thematised in the lecture text itself, and from this text it is not immediately evident that in the case of *The Many Headed Monster* the speaker

²⁸³ There is one more element in the introduction that might illustrate this aspect. The audience is welcomed to *The Many Headed Monster*, rather than to a lecture with that title, which is a type of welcome that seems more appropriate to a performance than a lecture. It would probably have seemed strange if Austin had welcomed his audience to *How to do things with words* or if Derrida had welcomed his audience to *Title (yet to be specified)*.

only performs one of the three functions of the lecturer that Goffman has identified, namely that of the “animator”, or “the thing that sound comes out of” (Goffman 1981: 167). The person performing *The Many Headed Monster* is not its author, and therefore not the “principal”, the person who according to Goffman “believes personally in what is being said and takes the position that is implied in the remarks” (167). Although, again, it is difficult to imagine that if the person who delivers the lecture were in disagreement with any of the ideas articulated in it this would not be acknowledged at some point in the delivery. Such acknowledgment would, however, mean interfering with the predefined structure of the lecture. What is at stake here is the “authority” of the lecturer, which for Goffman depends on the assumption that she fulfils all three of these functions. The “we” that is introduced in the second sentence of the welcoming remarks, then, not only implicates the audience in what is being said, but here also describes a relation between lecturer and audience that is different from that of a conventional lecture. The lecturer’s position in the case of *The Many Headed Monster* differs from that of the audience only insofar as she is reading as they are listening, but not with regard to the authority over what is being said – again, something that is not evident in the lecture text itself. Thus, in a lecture that aims to “consider some of the many different forms of relationship that exist between artists and audiences in contemporary performance and live art practices” – and that does so by creating an unusual relationship between author, performer and audience – it is striking that the relationship cannot be inferred from the material itself. Whilst knowledge of that specific relation might turn a performance of *The Many Headed Monster* into more than a communication of examples of and ideas about different artist-audience relationships, this potentiality would remain suspended in a literal adherence to the instructions. This means that the lecture itself might not become a demonstration of or example for what it is addressing, although it actually is one, or can be one – as was the case in the demonstration at Kampnagel referred to earlier, where the fact that different audience members had to volunteer to present different parts of the lecture allowed them to switch roles between being a performer and being an audience member. This in turn led to the relation between performer and audience being negotiated in the performance of the lecture itself.

It also implied that the attention was shifted to that performance, that what was happening in the space demanded the audience’s attention – while the lecture itself tried to focus that attention onto examples of performance work presented via video

documentation and spoken text, and to their artist-audience relation. As I have already outlined, Masschelein and Simons, like Goffman, conceive of the lecture as a form that demands from its audience that it focus its attention “beyond the lecture towards the subject matter, towards the world and thus to be here as well as there” (Masschelein and Simons 2010: 59). While the same can be said for the lecture performance, the focus in its case shifts again towards the “here”, because a lecture performance demands attention for the situation of the lecture itself. I have thus suggested that lecture performances could be described as a “form of public thinking” *about* public thinking.

The Many Headed Monster, if it is presented or performed as envisioned in the instructions, only implicitly makes the situation of the lecture itself a “common topic”. The script or score (the lecture text and the instructions) show little or no explicit consideration for this aspect. While the lecture text itself proposes that in “contemporary performance practice, these contractual conventions [between audiences and artists] are often pushed, inverted, or challenged” (Sofaer 2009: 17), the audience of *The Many Headed Monster* might well remain unaware that in the situation they are witnessing this is also the case for the contract between lecturer and audience – unless the speaker diverts from the score or inserts her own introduction at the beginning. And unless everybody involved in *The Many Headed Monster* is aware of this contract, the lecture does not become a “form of public thinking” *about* public thinking. For it to become such a form, according to Masschelein’s and Simons’s conception, it would have to be assumed that the person delivering the lecture fulfils all the functions that Goffman identifies for the lecturer, i.e. that it is her thinking that is being made public (and I am here re-quoting):

The lecture is thus the place where somebody offers something to think, because he also offers his own thinking or demonstrates and shows his own thoughts. In this instant, ideas and words are exposed, they become public, and because people are gathered around them, they no longer belong to anybody, but everyone (or no one in particular). (Masschelein and Simons 2010: 70)

The lecturer in *The Many Headed Monster*, however, is distinguished from her audience in relation to the lecture she presents only insofar as she is presenting it; and as she is primarily presenting it, rather than presenting her thinking, it would follow that she is not engaging in the same activity of thinking as her audience. If historically, the lecture

developed from a passing on of pre-existing knowledge to a “form of public thinking” when the lecture practice of “reading aloud from existing compendia or textbooks for the purpose of annotation and copying by hand”²⁸⁴ (Peters 2011: 26) became redundant with the flourishing of publishing in the 18th century, *The Many Headed Monster* seems to suggest a recourse to the earlier lecture paradigm. However, if the specific situation that *The Many Headed Monster* creates between audience, author and performer is acknowledged, this would allow for a negotiation of its content and form on equal terms. It would not merely be a way of passing on pre-existing knowledge (“a collection of facts and resources”, which it also is), but the lecture here could really function as the “third thing that is owned by no one” (Rancière 2009: 14-15) and “to which they [student and teacher] can refer to verify in common what the pupil has seen” (14-15). Such an activity, however, would either have to be deferred to a discussion following the actual lecture, or would require its interruption. A structure of deferral is nevertheless inherent to *The Many Headed Monster*, because another actor or element is interpolated in the process by which “ideas and words are exposed, they become public” so that “they no longer belong to anybody, but everyone”. According to Masschelein and Simons this process only begins when “people are gathered around them”. Although it is envisioned that people will be “gathered around them”, the “ideas and words” in *The Many Headed Monster* have already been made public prior to the delivery of the lecture, and since everyone could take up the position of the lecturer, “they no longer belong to anybody” even before the lecture has started.

As a lecture addressed to a public not yet gathered, *The Many Headed Monster* resonates with Warner’s idea that “all discourse or performance addressed to a public must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate and it must attempt to realize that world through address” (Warner 2002: 114). From this perspective, the fact that the original author of the lecture (Sofaer) is not present in its presentation does not necessarily prevent *The Many Headed Monster* from becoming a “form of public thinking” (again, if this relation is acknowledged), but it dissociates this “form of public thinking” from the presence of the author (or, in Goffman’s terms, the “author” and the “principal”). Not only is the authority of the lecturer thus called into question, but also that of the author, who here does not take on the role of “animator”. In the combination

²⁸⁴ “Vorlesen aus existierenden Kompendien und Lehrbüchern zum Zwecke der Kommentierung und der handschriftlichen Vervielfältigung”.

of these roles, however, an “invocation/convocation of thinking”²⁸⁵ (Masschelein and Simons 2010: 69) can nevertheless occur, and the “egalitarian ethos” of the lecture would then extend between the author, the performer/lecturer and the audience as “a participating public”.

That merely by listening to a lecture, the audience becomes “a participating public” is an idea that echoes Rancière’s conception of an “emancipated spectator” (even though Rancière does not consider the activity of the spectator in relation to concepts of publics). Sofaer in the lecture text (employing the same vocabulary but not referencing Rancière) considers the “emancipation of the spectator”, in contrast to Rancière, in terms of an activation: “Contemporary culture is marked by the emancipation of the spectator and the transformation of the audience from passive recipient to active participant.” (Sofaer 2009: 7) The lecture itself is therefore consequently a presentation of selected performance examples “dealing with audiences in innovative and creative ways” (7), i.e. performances that in Sofaer’s understanding can be considered as examples for this transformation.²⁸⁶ Seen from this perspective it is striking that *The Many Headed Monster*, even in establishing a framework that enables anyone to take up the role of the lecturer (a framework that might not be evident to its audience in its enactment), seems to confine the audience to a role that, according to Sofaer’s own definition, would be deemed that of a “passive recipient”.

Participating public II

While an audience of *The Many Headed Monster* can be described as a “participating public” in spite of Sofaer’s own conception of what constitutes participation, *Life Lecture* offers all participants the chance to actively take up the role of a speaker. The main content of *Life Lecture* thus has to be provided by the participants. The “provocations” to which they are invited to respond draw from a wide range of categories around the themes of biography and identity (“childhood”, “family”, “dreams & fictions”, “places & objects”, “memories”, “self-awareness”, “transformative

²⁸⁵ “Invokation/Konvokation des Denkens”.

²⁸⁶ They work as examples, i.e. each of these works is selected so that a “point” can be made. The lecture is structured into three sections, “pre-performance” (Sofaer 2009: 11ff.), “performance” (31ff.) and “post-performance” (49ff.), and examples are selected according to when the interaction between artists and audiences primarily takes place (or, more precisely, to what point in the process the “point” that Sofaer wants to make refers).

moments”, “selling yourself”, “names” and “futures”). While most of the “provocations” take the form of statements or quotations by artists, writers or theorists (from Proust to Barthes to Warhol), some of them are also anonymous statements or jokes. Each of these “provocations” is accompanied by a question or task, and sometimes participants are also invited to respond to a drawing.

It is envisioned that by responding to one of the provocations, participants will “step up to the lectern or designated area” (Life Lecture 2013)²⁸⁷ (there is an on-screen clock keeping time). The introduction states that “everyone will be given the opportunity to tell stories about their life”, and this focus on storytelling is later expanded on to include theoretical reflection and opinion as well: “Your response could be personal, based on your own life experience, or it could be theoretical, based on your research or opinion.” But there are still more possible ways to respond: if nobody decides to speak, “there will be silence”, suggesting a moment of quiet collective reflection; and finally, some of the provocations ask for a non-verbal response, for instance “Try to express one of your earliest memories without using words”. Interestingly, this last instruction – taken from the section on memory – accompanies a quote by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, which focuses on the relation between memory and storytelling: “Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers and how one remembers it in order to recount it.” While recounting memories is envisioned as the participants’ main contribution to *Life Lecture*, they are here asked to respond “without using words”, and thus in a way that is different from what the quotation itself suggests. The participants are thus invited to respond in very different ways to the various provocations. I consider this diversity of possible responses as an attempt to make it easier for participants to join in and take up the position at the lectern (a task they already have been prepared for in the “warm-up exercises”). The introduction acknowledges that some people might be less inclined to speak than others: “We very much hope that all of you will want to speak. You will be in control of what you say and how much you reveal.” While this statement suggests that the focus of *Life Lecture* is on the activity of speaking, provisions are made for participants who might be more inclined to respond non-verbally. This also means that in *Life Lecture*, different types of knowledge and different ways of communicating this knowledge can coexist, and personal narrative, theoretical reflection and physical enactment are

²⁸⁷ All the following quotations in the discussion of *Life Lecture* are taken from the project website (Life Lecture 2013), unless otherwise referenced.

considered equally appropriate contributions to the research process that *Life Lecture* as a “tool for research” organises. Not only are there, as it says in the introduction, “no right or wrong answers”, there are also no right or wrong forms these answers can take.

But what is the relation between this freedom with regard to possible responses on the one hand and the predetermined structure of *Life Lecture* on the other? The form of *Life Lecture* resembles in many aspects that of the PowerPoint presentation, with the important difference that the parameters with which participants are presented are developed in a way that allows for them to be adopted to the specific situation in which *Life Lecture* is performed (duration, choice of questions and themes). And, of course, other than in most PowerPoint presentations, the speakers cannot know in advance exactly what they are expected to speak about, and will only decide to speak if what they are presented with (or the situation they find themselves in) compels them to formulate a response. These differences notwithstanding, *Life Lecture*, like many PowerPoint presentations, can be seen as a tool that facilitates extemporaneous speaking (or, in Goffman’s terms, “fresh talk”). As Peters proposes:

On the one hand, the slide projection in the PowerPoint presentation is often used to enable the extemporaneous speech by [...] assuming the function of a lecture structure that includes materials. The PowerPoint presentation would thus be an extemporaneous lecture whose template is made public.²⁸⁸ (Peters 2007: 46)

While many PowerPoint presentations are also used to accompany the presentation of scripted lectures, all the aspects that Peters here describes can be found in *Life Lecture*: a structure enabling extemporaneous speech, the presentation of materials, and a template that is made public. The question “Who is actually presenting whom here?”²⁸⁹ (Peters 2011: 143), which for Peters arises from the PowerPoint presentation’s status as a “presentation of a presentation”²⁹⁰ (144), is also at the heart of *Life Lecture*. In *Life Lecture*, too, the speaker is “part of the setting”²⁹¹ (142), and as such not only the subject of the showing but also its object, a structure that corresponds to the lecture’s theme of biography and identity. The participants in *Life Lecture* not only interact with each other,

²⁸⁸ “Zum einen wird die Lichtbildprojektion in der Powerpoint-Präsentation vielfach dazu eingesetzt, die freie Rede zu ermöglichen, indem sie [...] die Funktion einer Vortragsgliederung mitsamt Materialien übernimmt. Die Powerpoint-Präsentation wäre demnach ein freier Vortrag mit öffentlich gemachter Vorlage.“

²⁸⁹ “Wer präsentiert hier eigentlich wen?”.

²⁹⁰ “Präsentation der Präsentation“.

²⁹¹ “Teil des Settings“.

but also with the presentational set-up; they do not only present themselves but they are also being presented. This specific structure of *Life Lecture* also means that there are different levels of address: firstly, the address to all actual and potential participants in the introduction, an address that is both aimed at any actual gathering of the “7 to 30 people” that are envisioned as the ideal number of participants for *Life Lecture*, but that also aims to circulate beyond any concrete gathering because it is also directed at any potential future gathering; and secondly, the address to the 6 to 29 people that any given participant formulates when taking up the position at the lectern, an address that is in this instance exclusively directed at the group that has actually gathered for an enactment of *Life Lecture*.²⁹² This doubling of the address means that the constitution of the public that is envisioned in the first address is actualised and tested in the second.

In Masschelein’s and Simons’s conception of the lecture as a “form of public thinking”, it is important that the person lecturing “offers his own thinking or demonstrates and shows his own thought”. It is clearly envisioned that in the enactment of *Life Lecture* such “public thinking” occurs. The provocations that aim to initiate this “public thinking”, however, are (unlike the questions that accompany them) all quotations from a variety of different people, i.e. while they are obviously somebody’s “own thought”, this someone is not the author of *Life Lecture*. This can be read as an attempt to avoid any single authoritative voice, which corresponds to the multiplicity of voices that is thought to manifest in the responses to these provocations. The quotations present the material by which the “world out there” is envisioned to become a “common topic” in the enactment of *Life Lecture*.²⁹³ They constitute an address to the participants, especially as they are accompanied by questions and instructions. But the fact that they have the form of quotations (and thus of secondary material in the context of a lecture) can be read as an attempt to delegate the “power” to address the public to that public. A group discussion to which the audience is invited after the lecture part of *Life Lecture* poses a question that references this attempt: “Is it possible to use the web to engage

²⁹² While Warner posits that the address in a performance must attempt to circulate beyond the actual event, which would then of course also apply to the address directed by one participant of *Life Lecture* to the other participants, the address that *Life Lecture* itself formulates, prior to any actual event, aims to circulate in its performance.

²⁹³ They could also be described as the “third thing” in Rancière’s terms; the participants themselves, once they decide to speak, could however also be described to have that function. *Life Lecture* would then be another example for a performance where too many “things” could simultaneously be identified as the “third thing” for them to still be called the “third thing”.

audience participation effectively given that power is handed from a 'charismatic host' to a collective of strangers?"

While phrased as a question, one of the intentions behind *Life Lecture* is here made explicit: to enable a "collective of strangers" – which, with Warner, we can read to mean "a public" – to deliver a lecture that is different from other lectures in so far as it is not, in Goffman's words, an "extended holding of the floor in which one speaker imparts his views on a subject" (Goffman 1981: 165). Instead, the roles of both lecturer and spectator are available to the participants. While the question I have quoted refers to the audience's counterpart in a lecture as a "charismatic host", what is negotiated here, rather than charisma, seems to be the authority and expertise of the speaker. The "authoritative lecturer" is referred to as "missing" in the description of *Life Lecture*, and how this "expertise can be shared in a public forum" is investigated by another question for the group discussion: "What are the ways in which autobiographical expertise can be shared in a public forum without any preparation or resorting to the confessional?" The expertise that participants are invited to share publicly is here characterised as "autobiographical expertise", and thus something that does not require institutional legitimisation. The "theme", the "common topic" of autobiography, seems not least chosen so that everyone can contribute ("Can you imagine other subjects that would work using the collective lecture format?"). What, however, constitutes "autobiographical expertise", especially considering that expertise, as Bunz describes, is no longer primarily constituted by factual knowledge?

At this point, I would like to briefly return to Cavarero's and Butler's theories of the constitution of the self, because both authors stress the impossibility of telling one's own story, the inability of the "I" to, as Butler puts it, to "give a final or adequate account of itself" (Butler 2005: 67).²⁹⁴ The account of the self requires the other to be realised: "I will tell you my story in order to make you capable of telling it to me." (Cavarero 2000: 114)

"Autobiographical expertise" could from this perspective be described as something that manifests itself not so much in a specific factual or theoretical knowledge of the self. Rather it manifests in the ability to navigate the "structure of address in which the

²⁹⁴ Butler, as I have quoted before, gives two reasons for this inability: The "I" "cannot return to the scene of address by which it is inaugurated and it cannot narrate all of the rhetorical dimensions of the structure of address in which the account itself takes place". In the context of *Life Lecture*, participants are both addressed as an "I" by being asked about, for instance, their memories and their ideas, and in the same instance find themselves in the position of being thus asked to give an account of themselves.

account itself takes place” (Butler 2005: 67), as according to Butler it is this structure whose “rhetorical dimensions” the “I” “cannot narrate”, a structure that *Life Lecture* experiments with. In *Life Lecture*, provisions are made to have one’s story told back to oneself, as participants can pick up certain threads of previous contributions, and can again comment and reflect on them in the “group discussion” – “At what points did you identify with other people’s stories?” is another one of the questions that are up for discussion.

Life Lecture provides no instructions for how the concluding group discussion should be organised, only a series of questions relating both to the content of *Life Lecture* and the process of engaging in *Life Lecture*. It is envisioned that participants both discuss their experience of *Life Lecture* (the lecture situation) and what they have learned about the “common topic”, which, as they themselves are this topic, is not simply “the world out there”. The idea of a “here” and a “there” that Masschelein and Simons introduce to describe the relation between the situation and the topic of the lecture can thus not fully describe the particular structure of *Life Lecture*: firstly, because participants can both be speakers and spectators; secondly, because situation itself, the here, the “structure of address in which the account itself takes place”, can become a “common topic”; and thirdly, because the same can also be said for the participants, who, in speaking about themselves, can focus the audience’s attention on themselves (the “world out there” will also feature in their account.

Conclusion

Joseph Beuys’s *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* is one of the iconic pieces of performance art, and has only been retrospectively, and somewhat randomly, labelled a lecture performance by Archey. The *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge* is referred to by its instigator, Hannah Hurtzig, as an “installation” and by reviewer Lyn Gardner, who explicitly contrasts the event with the format of the lecture performance, as a “live performance installation”. *The Many Headed Monster* is described by its creator, Joshua Sofaer, as a “resource”, *Life Lecture* as an “online resource” and a “tool for research” into (among other things) the lecture performance, but also as a “collective lecture”. All the works I have analysed in this chapter have thus previously already been considered in relation to the lecture performance, but none of them were

originally labelled as such. In the Introduction to this thesis, I have argued that, rather than examining works in terms of their “belonging” to a specific genre, research into the lecture performance should investigate how different lecture performances participate in their respective genres and contexts. This approach implies a consideration of how other types of work participate in these contexts, not least because it is this participation that establishes and defines the contexts. For instance, I consider *Life Lecture* a lecture performance, but I propose that it is more relevant to an understanding of how the lecture performance relates to its contexts to note that *Life Lecture* may not be called a lecture performance possibly because it is envisioned to be performed in an educational rather than an artistic context. And while I have in this chapter occasionally identified certain formal characteristics that the works under discussion have in common with the lecture performance – for instance, the presentational dimension of the “conversations” in the *Blackmarket*, and their address to a wider audience beyond the one-to-one encounter facilitated by them –, again the more relevant observation is that the *Blackmarket*, as Peters proposes, has to be considered in the context of a search for “alternative spaces of knowledge production”, in which the lecture performance also participates.

I have proposed that the performance examples I have discussed in this chapter not only generate a discursive context (like any performance potentially does), but that this discursive context appears in the work itself. In my discussion of Beuys’s work, starting from the proposition (by Beuys himself and others) that “discussions” generated by Beuys’s practice are actually “part of” the work, I have described the discursive context in terms of an engagement with the work beyond what would usually be considered as the frame of the event. I have also stressed the importance of distinguishing between works that generate discussion and those in which discussion is “nearly the whole production”. Discussion is evidently not the only form in which the discursive context can manifest. Yet because this context transcends the frame of any actual performance event, the question whether discussion takes place as part of or after the performance is only one aspect of how a performance negotiates its relation to its discursive context.

In an essay entitled ‘The Viral Ontology of Performance’, Christopher Bedford proposes that “*there is no performance outside its discourse*” (Bedford 2012: 77). Taking Burden’s *Shoot* as an example, he describes how performance is actualised again and again “through discourse and reproduction” (86). As I have proposed elsewhere, what

thus comes into view is the question “[...] how the different forms of knowledge that circulate about a (past) performance relate to each other and how knowledge is produced about and through this performance on all levels of its reception by the different people who are involved (present or absent)”²⁹⁵ (Ladnar and Pilkington 2013: 193). This became one of the guiding questions in an essay entitled *Die Kunst des Nicht-da-Seins (The Art of Not Being There)*, in which Esther Pilkington and I try to provide a counter-model to the ultimately exclusionary conception of performance as singular event. We argue that performance, because it is potentially actualised in a “multitude of *accounts* and *accounts of accounts*”²⁹⁶ (202), has to be understood as “the product of a dispersed collective”²⁹⁷ (202). Butler’s and Cavarero’s theories of the account provide a model to conceptualise the activity of this “dispersed collective”. Because of its relevance to my argument, I wish to quote at length here from the essay:

To speak of performance documentation as an account for us also means to foreground this structure of address. While documentation seems to promise access to a past (and missed) event, this promise is constantly challenged in the discussion around performance documentation because the live moment and the documents that capture it are assumed to be too different. Butler’s and Cavarero’s theories, too, focus on the simultaneous possibility and impossibility of the account. What comes into view here, however, rather than the attempt to capture the past event, are the difficulties of the address which the person who gives an account cannot have an overview of or cannot account for. Following Cavarero’s argument, however, the account can be continued and passed on by the other. Giving an account can produce many other accounts. In this context, referencing Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Storyteller’, Cavarero uses the concept of a ‘web of stories’ (Cavarero 2000: 125). The accounts not only intersect in this web, they (re)produce each other because of the necessity of a retelling by the other (Cavarero 2000: 125). Warr’s ‘audiences of posterity’ that add new accounts to the account of the performance thus appear not only as a possibility but as a necessity of performance: ‘I will tell you my story in order to make you capable of telling it to me’ – here, this also means that the accounts of those who have conceptualised or carried out the performance have to be understood as mere templates for future accounts. Giving an account is thus never an individual matter, but the beginning of a collective labour. And this also means that in the account performance transcends the mode of the event and re-enters into a processual mode,

²⁹⁵ “[...] wie sich die verschiedenen Formen von Wissen zueinander verhalten, die über eine (vergangene) Performance kursieren beziehungsweise wie Wissen durch und über diese Performance auf allen Ebenen ihrer Rezeption von den verschiedenen Beteiligten (an- oder abwesend) produziert wird.“

²⁹⁶ “Vielzahl von *Accounts* und *Accounts von Accounts*“.

²⁹⁷ “Produkt eines zerstreuten Kollektivs“.

leaving behind the temporal and spatial frame of the event that defines its exclusivity.²⁹⁸ (Ladnar and Pilkington 2013: 196-197)

While I have previously in this thesis referred to the account in the context of works such as *Life Lecture*, which negotiate questions of autobiographical narration (as an “account of oneself”), there are three aspects that make the ‘account’ an interesting model for describing how a discursive context can be created around a performance as a series or “web” of accounts: its relationality, its “structure of address” and its potential to provoke further accounts. Because an account can take place both in and beyond the performance, it transcends the opposition between performance and documentation. What is thus revealed is how performance can engage both present and absent audiences, and how these audiences can in turn generate further accounts.

Seen from this perspective, the claim that Beuys and his commentators make for his work, i.e. that the discussions it generates are actually “part of” it, can be applied to all performances, because any performance can be seen to generate a discursive context that transcends its manifestation as event. What characterises all the works I have discussed in this chapter, however, is that they negotiate their relation to this context in the frame of the event, which, conversely, also means that the event has to open up a perspective beyond itself.

In the *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge*, there are many factors that allow for such a widened perspective. As a series, its basic structure can be

²⁹⁸ “Von Performancedokumentation als *Account* zu sprechen bedeutet für uns also auch, diese Struktur des Adressierung hervorzuheben. Während Dokumentation einen Zugang zum vergangenen (und verpassten) Ereignis zu versprechen scheint, wird in der Diskussion um Performancedokumentation genau dieses Versprechen stets hinterfragt, zu unterschiedlich seien der Live-Moment und die Dokumente, die diesen festhalten. Auch in den Theorien von Butler und Cavarero geht es um die gleichzeitige Unmöglichkeit und Möglichkeit des *Accounts*. Hier aber rücken anstatt des Versuchs, das Vergangene festzuhalten, die Schwierigkeiten der Adressierung in den Vordergrund, die derjenige, der den *Account* ablegt, nicht überschauen kann bzw. über die er keine Rechenschaft ablegen kann. Jedoch kann – Cavareros Argument folgend – der *Account* von dem Anderen weitergeführt und weitergegeben werden. Einen *Account* abzulegen kann viele andere *Accounts* hervorbringen. Cavarero verwendet in diesem Zusammenhang – in Anlehnung an Walter Benjamins ‚Der Erzähler‘ – den Begriff des Netzes, eines „web of stories“ (Cavarero 2000: 125). In diesem Netz jedoch überschneiden sich die *Accounts* nicht nur, sondern (re)produzieren sich gegenseitig durch die Notwendigkeit des Weitererzählens durch den Anderen (Cavarero 2000: 125). Warrs „audiences of posterity“, die dem *Account* der Performance neue *Accounts* hinzufügen, erscheinen somit nicht als Möglichkeit, sondern als Notwendigkeit der Performance: „I will tell you my story in order to make you capable of telling it to me“ – das heißt hier auch, dass die *Accounts* derjenigen, die die Performance konzipiert oder durchgeführt haben, nur als Vorlage für weitere *Accounts* zu verstehen sind. *Giving an account* ist somit nie die Sache eines Einzelnen, sondern der Beginn einer kollektiven Arbeit. Und das bedeutet auch, dass die Performance im *Account* aus dem Modus des Ereignisses wieder in den Modus eines Prozesses übergeht und die zeitliche und räumliche Begrenztheit des Ereignisses verläßt, in der sich dessen Exklusivität begründet.”

reapplied to different locations and themes; that the *Blackmarket* in Bern was the 15th instalment of this series was, for instance, advertised in the evening's programme. Furthermore, select conversations of each instalment are made available online as audio recordings, which means that their circulation or dissemination outside of the event is part of the *Blackmarket's* concept. While such future dissemination might not be evident in the live situation itself, the live transmission of the conversations via headphones already introduces an element of mediatisation into the performance and thus allows different levels of involvement for the participants: listening in, listening in via radio, observing, having a conversation. The multitude of positions introduced in the *Blackmarket* means that participants will only ever be able to witness a fraction of everything that is going on. The scope of the event hence already implies that there is a wider discursive context to explore, which is also evident in the fact that the experts are only presenting an "excerpt of their knowledge". The "world out there" thus not only becomes a "common topic", the event itself appears as an "excerpt" of this wider discursive context that exists in the "world out there".

In *The Art of Not Being There*, Pilkington and I argue that the lecture performance can be seen as an "example for a different conception of the temporality of performance beyond the singular event"²⁹⁹ (Ladnar and Pilkington 2013: 200), because here the "live performance often only presents an episode, a manifestation, an account, a form of public presentation of a research process"³⁰⁰ (200), and because it engages its audience in the consideration of something outside of the event. This dynamic is to an even greater degree at work in the *Blackmarket*.

Sofaer's *The Many Headed Monster* and *Life Lecture*, in contrast, seem to reverse this logic. Both works already circulate in the "world out there" as publications, as "resources" that exist independently of their performance, but can be actualised as performances at any time. While in *The Many Headed Monster* this structure is not

²⁹⁹ "Beispiel einer anderen Konzeption der Zeitlichkeit von Performance jenseits des singulären Ereignisses" (Ladnar and Pilkington 2013: 200). Discussing durational work, Adrian Heathfield describes how such different conceptions of the temporality of performance have often been ignored in performance theory: "The aesthetics of duration and the understandings of temporality these aesthetics live out have been underaddressed in art theory. Durational aesthetics might also suggest a somewhat different temporal concept from the model of the time of performance that has prevailed in performance theory. Following Peggy Phelan's far-reaching and field-defining work it has become commonplace to emphasize Performance and Live Art's qualities of transience and ephemerality, allied to a force of disappearance, and thereby to ascribe to performance a singular temporality: that of the event." (Heathfield 2009: 13)

³⁰⁰ "Live-Performance oftmals nur einen Abschnitt, eine Manifestation, einen *Account*, eine Form der öffentlichen Präsentation des Forschungsprozesses darstellt" (Ladnar and Pilkington 2013: 200).

negotiated in the event of its actualisation or enactment (or at least it is not envisioned as something to be negotiated), in *Life Lecture* it is part of the enquiry. The accounts that participants are asked to give of themselves also focus attention on the “structure of address in which the account itself takes place”, and *Life Lecture* thus can be assumed to produce knowledge not only of the self and of questions of autobiography, but also of the ways in which this knowledge can be communicated. The accounts in turn might generate further accounts outside of the event. But unlike in the *Blackmarket* there is no provision made for them to be disseminated otherwise. What all these works have in common, though, is that they assemble a group of people to publicly engage in the consideration of a “common topic” and transcend the frame of this assembly or gathering through, albeit very different, strategies of dissemination. In the context of works like the *Blackmarket*, Peters describes the lecture performance as a “rehearsal for the unlikely assembly”³⁰¹ (Peters 2011: 191). A similar structure I have also described for Sofaer’s works, which address a public whose constitution is actualised and tested in the performance. Peters develops this idea in relation to Warner’s emphasis on the role of the imaginary in the constitution of publics – and it is important to reiterate once more that the address that constitutes a public according to Warner aims to circulate beyond any actual gathering.

While Hurtzig and Sofaer (at least in *Life Lecture*) both seem to delegate the responsibility for and authority over the event to its participants (or, to be more precise, participants and experts in the case of the *Blackmarket*) – which can be seen as an attempt to encourage participation by taking a seemingly neutral position, by not believing “personally in what is being said” or by letting others speak – it is in this imagination of a specific public that is envisioned in the events that they address their audiences.

The Many Headed Monster creates a situation where the person delivering the lecture is not the “principal” or “author”, and instead everyone is put into a position to play the role of “authoritative lecturer” or “charismatic host”, albeit potentially without authority or charisma. The *Blackmarket* and *Life Lecture* engage with this authority on a different level. Even if, on occasion, something like an “explicative order” might manifest in the *Blackmarket*, both works allow for different types of knowledge to co-exist and circulate in the event. I propose it is in this co-existence rather than, as Gardner suggests,

³⁰¹ “Probe auf die unwahrscheinliche Versammlung” (Peters 2011: 191). This also shows that, unlike Gardner, Peters does not see a need to differentiate between these works and the lecture performance.

in their dialogical structure, that both works challenge established notions of what constitutes expertise. And last but not least, both works also make the situation in which this knowledge is communicated and produced a “common topic”, thus producing an expertise of how to navigate the respective situation of knowledge production, They therefore become what I have called a “form of public thinking” about public thinking.

6. To conclude...

WOULD JOSEPH BEUYS HAVE USED POWERPOINT?

At this point, I would like to invite you to watch the video documentation of my lecture performance *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* on the DVD provided. The recording was made on the 17th of September 2011 at *Performing Science* in Giessen, the competition for lecture performances and presentations by artists and scientists that I have already referred to in the introduction to this thesis.³⁰² The recording has been published on a DVD box set documenting all ten of the presentations shortlisted for the prize and performed at the event. I will discuss my lecture performance in its different contexts and will also briefly consider the *Performing Science* event as one of these contexts – but only after you have watched the video...

³⁰² I would also like to point you to two other documentations of the performance that can be accessed online: firstly, another video recording of the piece was made when I performed it as part of *Talk Was Cheap: the Rise of Performance Lectures*, the lecture performance programme of the *Salon Suisse* series at the Venice Biennale in 2013. The video documents all the lecture performances presented on the evening: *Salon Suisse 2013*. And secondly, a documentation entitled 'Behind the Scenes of PowerPoint - 25 screenshots from the lecture performance 'Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?'' has been published in the artist publication *Finding a New Order* (Prlić et al. 2013) as well as online: *Finding a New Order 2013*. It consists of screenshots of several slides of the PowerPoint presentation used for the performance, but instead of being depicted as they would be projected the slides are shown in the so-called 'presenter view', i.e. they are shown as the person presenting the lecture performance would see them when using this tool: the image of the slide currently projected is accompanied by notes, a running timer and a small image of the upcoming slide.

In context I – a textbook lecture performance?

...thanks for watching. There is no doubt that what you have just watched was a video of a lecture performance. When *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* won the Performing Science Award in 2011, the jury, represented by performance scholar Gabriele Klein, even called it a “lecture performance as if from a performance theory textbook” (Uni Giessen 2011)³⁰³.

I am citing this statement here for two reasons. Firstly, because the textbook that would explain what constitutes a lecture performance (still) does not exist, Klein’s statement suggests that the lecture performance is by now so well-established that there is no need for an actual textbook to know what it is or what it should be like. Or, put differently, the statement implies that the lecture performance is no longer considered to be something extraordinary. Secondly, the idea that there could be something like a textbook lecture performance suggests that the criteria for what constitutes a lecture performance – Derrida’s “norms and interdictions” (Derrida 1992: 224) – are equally well-established.

Starting from Derrida’s idea that the relation of a work of art to a specific genre is characterised by participation rather than belonging, I proposed in the introduction that I would analyse how the lecture performance participates in different genres (especially the two genres that give it its name, the lecture and the performance) rather than focus on the criteria or “norms and interdictions” of belonging or not-belonging. I argued that because it participates in more than one genre, the lecture performance challenges established ideas about each of these genres. Participation – other than belonging – is something that can be achieved in relation to more than one genre, which also implies the possibility of redefining and shaping the “limits” by which a genre is constituted, according to Derrida. I have therefore decided to extend the scope of the enquiry to include an analysis of the lecture performance’s participation in different contexts. For instance, if we consider how the lecture performance participates in the genre of the lecture, this immediately raises the question of its relation to the history of lecturing, to a changing academic context characterised by an economisation of knowledge, to the increasing importance of presentational formats outside of the established sites of knowledge production – and, as context according to Derrida is essentially “limitless”, to

³⁰³ “eine Lecture Performance wie aus einem performancetheoretischen Lehrbuch“.

many more contexts, some already in existence, others defined or established by the lecture performances themselves. But this is only (or not even) half the story, as the lecture performance's participation in the context of artistic performance raises just as many issues, opens up just as many further contexts. Yet it is exactly its participation in contemporary performance practice that remains underaddressed in the sparse academic discourse on the lecture performance.

I propose that in the case of Peters's extensive writing about the lecture and the lecture performance, this neglect arises from an attempt to address yet another blind spot, i.e. the role of the lecture in the context of academic practice. Because of the particular focus of her research she places the lecture performance in a tradition of an "art of lecturing" rather than in an art tradition. This approach provides a new perspective on the history of the lecture and also, as I have shown, many insights into the lecture performance as an artistic practice. But there is also a danger in thinking about the lecture performance primarily in terms of knowledge production: not because it neglects the lecture performance's artistic or aesthetic aspects – those can be accounted for in a consideration of the lecture performance as producing different types of knowledge compared to conventional lectures (e.g. embodied knowledge, experiential knowledge etc.) – but because it too clearly attributes a function to it. The claim that it produces knowledge is, as Vujanović points out, a way of legitimising artistic practice today (Vujanović and Vesić 2009: 51), and is as such in line with the idea of knowledge as a resource that I have described in chapter 2. I have therefore tried to focus my discussion of the lecture performance on aspects that arise specifically from considering the lecture performance in the context of artistic performance, not so much as an alternative but more as a supplementary approach to that of Peters's.

It is important to note, however, that when discussing examples of lecture performance work, there is no definitive way of keeping these contexts distinct. One always informs an understanding of the other. Accordingly, the Giessen jury followed their characterisation of *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* as a "textbook" lecture performance not by identifying specific formal traits. Instead they described the lecture performance as located somewhere along a spectrum of (partly conflicting) terms or concepts, thus defining it by relations rather than limits: an engagement with "the relation of presence and representation, of performance and documentation, of

knowledge presentation and knowledge generation” (Uni Giessen 2011)³⁰⁴ was mentioned as constitutive for the lecture performance. These relations, in turn, resonate in the contexts I have touched upon in the course of the thesis. I will now re-rehearse some these contexts by asking how *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* participates in them. Rather than an exhaustive analysis, what follows will thus be a consideration of the lecture performance not only in relation to these contexts, but also in the context of this thesis – bearing in mind that, as I have briefly mentioned before, *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* was developed as part of the same research process that has culminated in this thesis.

In context II – other lineages

Early on in *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?*, I explain that I do not intend to answer the question whether Joseph Beuys would have used PowerPoint, but that I have chosen the title to highlight the historical dimension of my enquiry:

This question merely marks out two coordinates in an exploration of the changing relations between knowledge production, art, business and technology that this presentation engages in, Joseph Beuys on the one hand, and I here mean not so much the artist or person but certain ideas and positions associated with him, and PowerPoint on the other hand, the software and presentational format. Furthermore, the question opens up a time span for this enquiry: from the 1960s and 70s, a period essential to the formation of what came to be known as performance art, up until today.

I thus refer to historical practices and discourses that have also been quoted elsewhere as belonging to a “lineage” of the lecture performance. While Archey wrongly credits Beuys with having created the first lecture performance (Archey 2010), Peters – in constructing a different lineage outside of an arts context – acknowledges that Beuys’s work, or at least a specific historical context with which it is associated (“the conceptual and performance art of the 1960s” (Peters 2011: 180)), constitutes an important reference point for many artists making lecture performances today. Yet it is not the history or any assumed lineage of the lecture performance with which *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* engages. On the level of content there is no reference to

³⁰⁴ “das Verhältnis von Präsenz und Repräsentation, von Aufführung und Dokumentation, von Wissenspräsentation und Wissensgenerierung“.

the lecture performance as a format. Instead, a different lineage is constructed, namely one leading from Beuys's artistic practice to the development of PowerPoint. In the lecture performance, I highlight some similarities between the visual style of some of Beuys's works and PowerPoint slides. I quote a statement in which Beuys argues for simplifying one's language when speaking "to people who don't understand" (in Filliou 1970: 168) and juxtapose it with similar statements about the need for simplicity taken from PowerPoint how-to-guides. I remark that PowerPoint was commercially released in the year following Beuys's death, and hint at the possibility of reincarnation – the only point where my argument is deliberately insincere. And I also point out differences between PowerPoint and a medium that Beuys often used, the blackboard. My main argument, however, is that advocates of PowerPoint make claims for democratisation and participation that are similar to those that Beuys made for his practice, which I read as representative of a wider development in which discourses of democratisation and participation that initially seemed emancipatory are appropriated or incorporated by capitalism. *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* thus does not approach Beuys's work as part of a lineage of the lecture performance, but in relation to a contemporary context to which the lecture performance form itself responds and in which it participates: the context of the 'presentation society' to which I have referred in chapter 2.

Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint? is thus also a piece about the lecture performance – despite the fact that no explicit reference is made to the format in the performance itself. Simultaneously a lecture performance and a PowerPoint presentation, *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* participates in both of these genres and in the contexts in which these genres participate. The historical example, Beuys's work, in turn becomes important not only as a reference within the context of art history, but also as a foil for contemporary developments outside of this context.

I started each of the case studies chapters of this thesis (chapters 3, 4, and 5) with a discussion of a work or practice that pre-dates the emergence of the term 'lecture performance' – Burden's *Shoot* and its later recontextualisation as part of the video *Documentation of Selected Works 1971-1974*, Fraser's *Museum Highlights*, and Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*. In the case of Burden and Beuys, these examples served as a historical reference point that also allowed me to highlight established notions about performance that the lecture performance challenges – such as the idea of

the primacy of the live event or the idea that performance is initially experienced as a shock while understanding is deferred. *Museum Highlights*, the most recent of these “historical” examples, is the only performance that I have looked at in detail in which the speaker takes on a fictional persona. It is the one where it is most evident (although maybe not to the live audience, who is left in the dark about this) that the person delivering the lecture (or, in this case, the guided tour) is not taking the position of “someone who believes personally in what is being said and takes the position that is implied in the remarks” (Goffman 1981: 167), which Goffman identifies as one of the roles of the lecturer. There are contemporary examples for such a strategy³⁰⁵, but this strategy is even more frequently found among works cited as early examples of the lecture performance: Robert Morris lip-synching to a lecture by Erwin Panofsky (1964), Baldessari “singing” Lewitt (1973), Fraser posing as a fictional museum guide (1989). These performances all playfully deconstruct the authority of the speaker that Beuys in contrast is criticised for assuming – as I have described not only in *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?*, but also in chapter 5. With Beuys, there seems to be no doubt that he “believes personally in what is being said and takes the position that is implied in the remarks” – or, put differently, Beuys’s practice is based on blurring the distinctions between persona, work and ideas. Numerous contemporary lecture performances retain a level of ambiguity with regard to this position – Peters, for instance, identifies a strand of lecture performance work that she describes as “docufiction”³⁰⁶ (Peters 2011: 204), and Wagner-Feigl-Forschung’s *Encyclopaedia of Performance Art* might not exist outside of the lecture performances in which it is presented. But many artists working with the lecture performance have also embraced the position of, simply put, saying what they think, and assume that function alongside the other functions of the lecturer according to Goffman (“author” and “animator”). The lecture performance thus offers two approaches to negotiating the authority of the lecturer: to deconstruct or subvert or at least play with this position of authority, or to appropriate it in a gesture of self-authorisation. In a context in which knowledge is considered a resource, however, to publicly say what you think also implies positioning or presenting yourself as what Vesić refers to as an

³⁰⁵ I have for instance mentioned *I in disguise*, a lecture written by Florian Malzacher and advertised under his name, but delivered by Mårten Spångberg. Other than the earlier examples that I will refer to in what follows, Malzacher’s lecture performance is concerned more with questions of identity and biography rather than with a deconstruction of the authority of the lecturer.

³⁰⁶ “Dokufiktion”.

“entrepreneurial unit” (Vujanović and Vesić: 52) on the market in which this resource is traded.

If we consider the contemporary context that *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* presents and in which it participates, where, as it says in the lecture performance, “values of what used to be a ‘distinctively artistic lifestyle’ (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 420), like the pursuit of self-fulfilment, creativity and autonomy, are no longer exceptional but have instead become a demand posed on everyone”, this also points to the question to what extent the lecture performance as a form follows the constant demand for self-presentation that goes hand in hand with this development. Even if a particular lecture performance might take a critical position to it (something that *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* attempts itself), the lecture performance is as a form nevertheless in many respects compatible with the context of a ‘presentation society’, in which knowledge is considered a resource – which opens up a new perspective on a possible lineage leading from Beuys’s practice to the lecture performance. While it is often wrongly assumed that lecture performances are easily produced, they can be produced with little resources (thus admittedly making them an ideal format for precarious cultural workers), only employing what Virno calls “the fundamental mode of virtuosity” (Virno 2004: 55), namely “*the activity of the speaker*” (55). They can often fit on a memory stick and they do not weigh down your luggage. They make anything presentable. They are highly adaptable to different contexts, and they make it easy to participate in these different contexts. This, however, in turn makes them a useful tool for addressing exactly the relation of both artistic and academic practice to a larger socio-political context. Because lecture performances by definition participate in more than one context (lecture and performance, but also, for instance, lecture performance and PowerPoint presentation), they always necessarily transcend any single context. And in doing so, they can reflect on the nature of that participation. Moreover, because this reflection takes the form of a participation, lecture performances might also – at least temporarily – transform these contexts. And finally, whether the person delivering a lecture performance says what she thinks or not, lecture performances also put a focus on how she says it, and thus on how the form of this saying affects what is being said and what is being thought. These qualities of the lecture performance, which allow both for a participation in the context of today’s ‘knowledge’ and/or ‘presentation society’ and for the attempt to (re)negotiate the parameters of that

participation, I suggest explain the emergence of the lecture performance ‘trend’ in the late 1990s as well as the continued relevance of the form.

In context III – the contexts of showing

That the lecture performance always participates in more than one context is also reflected in the events in which lecture performances are shown. As I have described in the introduction, lecture performances are often presented as part of larger events or programmes that might themselves be hybrid in nature, consisting of both artistic and academic formats. Furthermore, in the cases where such a distinction is possible, the same lecture performance can also be presented one time in an academic and another time in an artistic context. The occasion for which I initially developed *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* was the Performance Studies international Conference in Utrecht in 2011. Although lecture performances, as I have remarked in the introduction, are nothing foreign to performance studies conferences, *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* was presented there alongside conventional papers (on topics such as, for instance, Hamlet’s Ghost) in a regular panel³⁰⁷ with the title *Technologically Mediated Performance – Past – Present – Future*. The way it was programmed generated discussion about its form and some self-conscious remarks by other panellists about their use of PowerPoint. At least for a while, the fact that one presentation in a panel was a lecture performance – that moreover engaged with a presentation format that the other presentations also employed – seemed to suspend the “rules of irrelevance” (Peters 2011: 38) for the other presentations as well.

The next context in which I performed the piece was the second instalment of the PANik series (2011), a programme initiated by the then newly founded Viennese artist initiative Performance Art Network (PAN). Here, the piece was performed alongside a number of other lecture performances – which in this case made me self-conscious about the tone of the text, which, in large parts, is that of a conventional academic paper. In fact, portions of that text appear in chapter 2 of this thesis – and, as I have mentioned in

³⁰⁷ In the introduction to this thesis, I have mentioned the Shift formats that had been introduced at the Performance Studies international conference in Zagreb. This format was continued in Utrecht, making the Shifts the part of the conference programme where an audience would have more likely expected to see a lecture performance.

the same chapter, that they sound “like a chapter from a PhD being read aloud” (Harvey 2009) is according to John Harvey a characteristic of the “worst papers”. There is no equivalent guideline for lecture performances, but it seems to be expected that the lecture performance has to adopt traits of the lecture (it has to exhibit its lecture-ness) while at the same time transcending the lecture form towards artistic performance to be considered a lecture performance. While the use of a lectern and a microphone for instance are sufficient to signify lecture-ness, a lecture performance’s artistic character might not be as easily discernible. In the case of a work like Fraser’s *Museum Highlights*, the fact that it is not immediately recognised as a piece of art is part of its artistic concept. This in turn poses the question whether there is also the possibility of a lecture performance that is not immediately recognisable as referencing the lecture form or as participating in a lecture context – which leads me to mention the subtitle of the event in Vienna: *Performance als Lecture (Performance as Lecture)*. This title presents a reversal of the more common approach of understanding the lecture as performance, seemingly implying that every performance can also be understood as a lecture.³⁰⁸ There was, in the event, no performance or lecture performance that could have served as an example for such a proposition, and there also is no such example among the works I have discussed in this thesis. Among all the lecture performances I have seen, the work that comes closest to enacting such a claim is a piece entitled “Dance”-“Lecture” by Petra Sabisch, presented – as a lecture performance – at the first instalment of *Performing Science* in 2007. The piece consisted of a short introductory statement, which Sabisch delivered from a lectern, enacting the situation of a conventional lecture, followed by a performance by Frédéric Gies of an excerpt from his choreography *Dance*. The choreography, which constituted the main part of the lecture performance, was not only framed by Sabisch as a citation, it was also itself of a citational character, incorporating a number of dance styles both from pop culture and from the history of dance: “The choreography of Frédéric Gies, so the argument of the lecture, is itself a lecture without words.” (Veranda Productions 2007) Peters, who was a co-organiser and jury member at the Giessen event in 2007, recounts how this performance was received: “Even though no one was really able to account for what should constitute a lecture performance

³⁰⁸ It has to be noted that the title might not have been chosen to make such a claim, but because the event was part of a series that all had titles of the same structure: *Performance as Concert* and *Performance as Documentation* where the titles of the series’ first and third instalment. However, a similar reversal can be observed in these titles as well.

according to the invitation at the first instalment of the competition, there seemed to be general agreement that this contribution did not meet the criteria.”³⁰⁹ (Peters 2011: 212) Being called a “textbook” lecture performance, *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?*, in contrast, obviously met the criteria at the *Performing Science* competition in 2011, the third context³¹⁰ in which I presented the piece.

It has to be noted, however, that the invitation to the competition not only listed lecture performances, but also “scholarly presentations” as possible submissions, and almost half of the finalists indeed were scientists. In the lecture performance, I read out a lengthy quote from a conversation between Beuys and Robert Filliou, to which I have already briefly referred in this conclusion:

Therefore I must strongly differentiate the language depending upon who I am talking to. When I talk to someone who knows scientific terminology, then I use scientific terminologies. However, when I speak a language to people who don't understand, then I am very much obligated to speak a language which they do understand. But really, even the scientific language can be transformed into a simple language and be made understandable. (in Filliou 1970: 168)

Interestingly, the kind of simplification that Beuys here propagates was criticised heavily in the jury discussion with respect to some of the scientific presentations. It illustrates that in the Giessen event two different approaches met, approaches not simply to the lecture or the lecture performance but to dealing with the demands of today's 'knowledge society': one that concerned itself with making science and scholarship accessible to and interesting for a wider non-expert public, often by reducing complexity; and another that made the production of knowledge itself part of the enquiry, thus potentially increasing complexity. What Beuys's statement, however, illustrates is that – at least from a historical perspective – the delineation between these two approaches cannot simply be equated with that between science and art, or between lecture and lecture performance. Regardless of the differences between these two approaches, it seems that the co-existence of scientific presentations and lecture performances in the frame of one event was more easily acceptable than the inclusion of Sabisch's “*Dance*”-

³⁰⁹ "Obwohl bei dieser ersten Ausrichtung des Wettbewerbs kaum jemand wirklich darüber Rechenschaft abzulegen imstande war, was eine Lecture-Performance im Sinne der Ausschreibung eigentlich auszeichnen sollte, schien man sich weitgehend einig, dass dieser Beitrag die Kriterien verfehlte."

³¹⁰ After this performance, I have performed the piece again in other contexts: conferences, performance events, salons.

"Lecture" in a lecture performance programme four years earlier. Although I have mentioned a few examples of works whose categorisation as lecture performances is not without ambiguity, this is the only incident I am aware of where such a categorisation has actually been contested. So while it seems that the lecture performance cannot be too much like a lecture, it evidently can be too little like one, or maybe too much like a performance. Or, put differently, a choreography, like the ones that Le Roy presents in *Product of Circumstances*, only has a place in a lecture performance as a demonstration, i.e. when it is not perceived as an equivalent to lecturing – saying what you think cannot easily be replaced by dancing what you think. And though I assume that Sabisch's proposition of "a lecture without words" would have been even more challenging without the contextualising frame of her introduction (i.e. if it had not only been the choreography that was "without words"), I would like to propose that it is worth considering the possibility of a "lecture without words" – or rather a lecture performance without words – because this poses the question how far a work can leave the conventions of the lecture behind and still be called a 'lecture performance'. And while even the proposition of a lecture performance without words does not necessarily avoid defining the lecture performance primarily by way of the lecture, or in terms of knowledge production, it can possibly (more directly than other lecture performances) be understood as a negotiation of how meaning or knowledge is produced in artistic performance rather than in the lecture. Or, put differently, it confirms that it is not only those performances that are immediately recognizable as lecture performances that produce meaning in ways that are different from, for instance, the production of a shock that defers understanding. The recognition of a specific dance style in Gies's choreography could easily be described in terms of the production of evidence ("the event of a synchronisation between showing and understanding that is experienced as the presence of that which is to be shown" (Peters 2007: 38)). Moreover, despite the judgement that Sabisch's piece did not meet the "criteria" of a lecture performance, it was shown in a lecture performance context, and is thus a perfect example of how a participation in a context (and in this case also in a genre) can call into question the limits and conventions of this context.

In context IV – the “incessant movement of recontextualization”

In the course of this thesis, I have discussed the lecture performance’s participation in numerous contexts, starting out from the contexts of lecturing and performing, and from there moving on to other contexts, sometimes zooming in on aspects of these original contexts, sometimes extending the scope beyond them: contexts of making and watching performance, contexts of addressing and instituting, contexts of assembling and disseminating. I will now revisit these contexts by asking how *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* participates in them.

In chapter 3, I looked at lecture performances that were all in one way or another *about* other performances. I discussed these lecture performances in the context of the on-going debate about the relation between performance and documentation. I argued that in being *about* something (even if that something was not a performance), and in presenting this something through secondary materials, lecture performances challenge the idea of performance as a singular, isolated event. Instead, they present themselves as manifestations of a larger creative and/or research process. Because in the case of the lecture performances I discussed in this chapter the something they were about was performance, I also looked at how these performances envisioned the relationship between artist-performer and spectator. I argued that they established a context in which the activities of making performance and watching performance were shown to be generative of each other and thus of future performance work. I furthermore suggested that Rancière’s model of performance as a “third thing that is owned by no one” (Rancière 2009: 15), from which he develops a seemingly symmetrical structure of artist – performance – spectator, not only conceals the hierarchies involved in the fact that what Rancière terms the spectator’s “own poem” usually remains unheard, but also falls short in accounting for all aspects of these performances. Specifically, if lecture performances, like lectures, are always *about* something, and in most cases that something is also made present through documentary materials, then these materials could also be described to have the function of the “third thing” with which spectators and artists can both engage on equal terms.

Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?, too, is a lecture performance *about* other performances, engaging with a specific artistic practice – Beuys’s – that is described as paradigmatic for its time. But while there is mention of two concrete performance

examples – Beuys’s *Fat Transformation Piece* and *How to Explain the Pictures to the Dead Hare* –, and visual documentation of some of Beuys’s pieces is shown in the form of the blackboards he created as part of them – this is only one of many things *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?*, engages with thematically. The performance relies heavily on secondary materials from a variety of sources: in addition to the documentation of some of Beuys’s works, there are examples of PowerPoint slides, some of them from research training courses, a few materials referencing popular culture, and numerous instructions from online-how-to-guides about presentations and in particular PowerPoint presentations. In the lecture performance itself, it is explained that the ubiquity of the how-to-guide “is indicative of a development where knowledge is considered a resource, where the focus has shifted from knowledge towards know-how”. What is not made explicit is that, by being carried out as they appear in the projection, these instructions are in turn construed as a reference to performance history.³¹¹ While I now usually omit the subtitle *A PowerPoint Instruction Piece* that I had originally intended for the piece, this subtitle hints at a formal reference to a history of performance art that is often neglected by the discourse of immediacy and ephemerality that I have sketched in chapters 2 and 3: that of the instruction piece or score, which was for instance popular with artists associated with Fluxus. That many of the earliest examples of what later would be considered performance art had the form of scores written to be potentially performed by others – such as for example Yoko Ono’s famous *Cut Piece* (1964) – makes evident that the idea of a primacy of an original unrepeatable event has not always been central to performance practice. By appropriating found instructions from how-to-guides on PowerPoint presentations as performance instructions, I am implicitly referencing that history, while at the same time raising the issue of, as Peters has it, “Who is actually presenting whom here?” (Peters 2011: 143). I will not analyse the relation of instruction piece and how-to-guide in detail, but would like to instead point out that – more interestingly for a discussion of the lecture performance – these instructions, as found materials, both represent a research process and are examples for the process of recontextualisation (of archival or documentary or illustrative materials) that is inherent in the lecture form and, by extension, in the lecture performance.

³¹¹ The only explicit reference in the lecture performance to the field of performance in relation to the how-to-guide is that to Beuys’s *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, because of its title rather than because of any potential similarities with actual how-to-guides.

As a formal element, the instructions suggest the possibility of being executed by anyone at anytime. Thus, the claim for a democratisation that is made both for PowerPoint and for Beuys's practice is (implicitly) also raised on the level of form. While some of the performances I have discussed in chapter 3 invite the audience to make a performance of their own employing similar means, in *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* there is no explicit invitation to follow or use these instructions in another context or situation – although, again, this is something suggested through the use of instructions itself. The lecture performance, or at least the final spoken part of it, ends with the suggestion that the question “how to use PowerPoint” cannot be answered by referring to any how-to-guide and therefore still remains open. This is not a very radical ending, but it does imply somewhat tentatively a resistance to the normative function of the how-to-guide. This resistance, I believe, does not need to be propagated more explicitly in the context of the lecture performance as one main principle of the performance already enacts it: throughout the performance, the instructions are both arranged and interpreted in a way that either exhibits or subverts their original intention – the instruction to “Let the smiles and nods coming from the audience help you feel calmer”, meant as a strategy against nervousness, once projected, helps conjure up these smiles and nods. The ending furthermore points to a continuation of the research process outside of the frame of the event.

At several points throughout the lecture performance, there is video footage projected of me taking notes on a blackboard as the performance unfolds. Therefore the recorded video documents what I speak live – a kind of documentation before the fact. Sometimes, there are short moments of interaction between me on stage and me on the video. The final video shows me erasing this drawing. That the video document is shown as the performance unfolds, thus reversing the relation of performance and documentation, points to a temporality of performance beyond the singular event. This, as I have argued, is a quality of many lecture performances, which is achieved through the use of secondary materials, through the development of taxonomies and structures within which these materials are arranged and presented, by the reference to a process outside of the event, or simply by their being *about* something, by focussing attention on the “world out there”, i.e. through the shifting of contexts and through strategies of recontextualisation.

A different kind of recontextualisation was the focus of chapter 4, in which I looked at how lecture performances participate in specific institutional contexts and at how they conceive of their audiences as different kinds of publics. Through various ways of addressing their audiences, these lecture performances aim to establish their own context, often within or in response to an existing one. The main reference here was Warner's idea that it is through the address that a specific conception of the public is imagined and potentially called into being, a process he describes as "poetic world making" (Warner 2002: 114). Puchner's insight that the manifesto relies on elements of both theatricality and performativity can also be applied to this structure by which according to Warner a public constitutes itself – it has to be addressed as if it already existed and this address is at the same time aimed at performatively calling it into being. This logic is, in different ways and to varying degrees, at work in many lecture performances: one audience can be addressed as different kinds of publics within the frame of one performance, it can be addressed as a public or as an audience of a different kind than the one that has actually gathered, or it can be addressed as the pre-figuration of a public not yet in existence – as for instance in lecture performances that aim to initiate a process of participation. Such lecture performances can furthermore be seen to illustrate that, as Warner purports, the address by which a public is constituted always aims to circulate beyond any occasion at which it is initially formulated.

While the public according to Warner relies on the imaginary to come into being, an imaginary element can also be found both in the persona the artist takes on in a lecture performance and in the way she articulates her relation to the institutional context of the performance (the question "in-the-name-of" whom is the artist actually speaking). This is the case, for instance, when an artist presents reenacted elements of both a number of choreographies and of a scientific presentation as if they addressed their original audiences, but frames them with the help of another – autobiographical – narrative (*Product of Circumstances*); or when an artist assumes a fictional persona and takes an "unsuspecting" public on a fake guided tour (*Museum Highlights*). In these examples, the address is at the same time directed at a live audience, thus envisioning how this audience might constitute itself as a public, and has a citational character, i.e. it makes reference to other addresses.

In *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?*, too, the use of the found instructions that are carried out as they are projected introduces an element of

citatoriality on the level of address. When I follow the final instruction – “Indicate that your presentation is over. An acceptable way to do this is to say ‘Thank you. Are there any questions?’” – by doing just that, i.e. by saying “Thank you. Are there any questions?”, then the audience is twice addressed – on the slide and by me. Both of these addresses are citational: the projected instruction is a citation from a how-to-guide which is in turn cited by being carried out.

What kind of public, then, is envisioned in such a double address? If the address is citational, this seems to suggest that the public envisioned in that address, too, has a citational character – in other words, the audience is not only addressed as envisioned by a how-to-guide, it is thus addressed as that audience that is envisioned by a how-to-guide. In fact, many of the instructions are intended to influence the audience’s reaction, like the instruction to “Make eye contact”. However, because the instructions are projected, the cards are on the table, as it were. I have described that in the lecture performance I take on a position that enables me to subvert the meaning of some of the instructions. Yet even if I follow them as intended, the fact that they are projected for the audience to see demonstrates how they are supposed to function. Thus, the audience is also asked to consider or imagine themselves as the audience as envisioned by the how-to-guide, and to sometimes play along and take on that role. If, with Warner, “our partial nonidentity with the object of address in public speech seems to be part of what it means to regard something as public speech” (Warner 2002: 78), then this non-identity is here, like in many lecture performances, also a structural factor – because there is more than one identity to choose from. If, as I have stated earlier, the instructions envision a specific kind of audience, it is striking that they do not reflect on the institutional context of the presentation, i.e. at least in the examples I have chosen the instructions are the same for a business presentation as for the presentation of academic research; there is not even a consideration for the possibility that a presentation might be adjusted to either of these contexts. This speaks of the ubiquity of presentational formats (and PowerPoint presentations in particular) across disciplinary boundaries that is also a theme of *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* Furthermore, in the lecture performance I reflect (again on the level of content) on the institutional context in which it has been developed: this research project. The institutional context in which it is presented, however, is not reflected on in *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* – though, as a PowerPoint presentation, it can easily participate in many different contexts.

What I have described here for *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* as well as for the lecture performances discussed in chapter 4 – the doubling or citational character of the address, the participation in different disciplinary or institutional contexts – can again be thought of in terms of different strategies of recontextualisation. The focus on the address furthermore opens up the question of its circulation outside of the frame of the singular event, which was central to my enquiry in chapter 5, in which I discussed works that not only generate a discursive context, but that negotiate their relation to this context as part of the work itself, thus also opening up a perspective beyond themselves and beyond any singular event.

I chose to discuss this aspect by looking at performance examples not originally labelled as lecture performances. This decision might on the surface have seemed to perpetuate the idea that lectures and lecture performances are, in Gardner's words, about the passing on of "straightforward expertise" rather than a horizontal, dialogical communication. However, a dialogical structure in itself is no guarantee for a horizontal communication, and I have argued that works cannot be described as negotiating the discursive context they create as part of the work simply because they incorporate elements of discussion.

Moreover, I have proposed that the two works by Sofaer discussed in that chapter have not been referred to as lecture performances merely because they are intended to be performed primarily in educational contexts. Hurtzig's *Blackmarket* series, on the other hand, has emerged from a context in which the lecture performance also participates (the search for "alternative spaces of knowledge production" (Peters 2011: 182) that Peters describes).

These works all assemble a group of people and at the same time aim to transcend the frame of this assembly through different strategies of dissemination – e.g. by developing a lecture to be presented by anyone or one to be presented by everyone together or by staging numerous conversations that are broadcast live via headphones at the event and that are then made available online. I looked at the "account" as a concept that can describe how performance engages both present and absent audiences and that can also account for the different ways in which this process can continue. Another concept that was important in my discussion of the works in this chapter was Masschelein's and Simons's conception of the lecture as a "form of public thinking" that is established in the consideration of a "common topic" – Goffman's "world out there".

Since they also make the situation in which knowledge is communicated and produced a “common topic”, I have referred to these works as a “form of public thinking” about public thinking. While for Masschelein and Simons the co-presence of lecturer and audience is a prerequisite for such “public thinking” to occur, the strategies of dissemination employed by Sofaer and Hurtzig might point to a conception of “public thinking” that accounts for Warner’s proposition that the address to any public must aim to circulate beyond any concrete gathering.

That these works can be characterised as a “form of public thinking” about public thinking is something they have in common with all lecture performances. Unlike most lectures, however, Hurtzig’s *Blackmarket* series and Sofaer’s *Life Lecture* delegate the position of responsibility and authority usually associated with the lecturer – who, in Goffman’s words, “is assumed to have knowledge and experience in textual matters, and of this considerably more than that possessed by the audience” (Goffman 1981: 167) – to a number of experts in one case, and to everyone in a particular gathering in the other. This difference to the lecture, however, not only makes a discussion of these works in the context of the lecture performance useful, it is also exactly why they might after all be characterised as lecture performances – because they negotiate and try to change the way in which such an authority is assumed in conventional lectures. They invent models of dissemination that focus on the process of knowledge production rather than – or at least as much as – on any predefined content, and that allow for different ways of accessing this process in and outside of the event.

When I created *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?*, defining the mode of its possible future circulation was not a central concern. I have already outlined the different contexts in which I have presented this lecture performance. At its first performance at the Performance Studies international Conference in Utrecht, one of the questions I was asked afterwards was whether I thought that what I had just presented could also be conveyed as text. My very spontaneous response was a simple “No”, followed by the remark that for a publication I would have to come up with a new format in order to account for the elements of the piece that were not text. In hindsight, I think this statement reinforced assumptions about the difference between lecture and performance that I have highlighted in chapter 2 – not because there was anything wrong with the proposition that not all elements of this lecture performance could be translated into text form, but because the same could also have been said for all the other papers

presented on the panel. Moreover, I should have realised then that, as I have outlined in chapter 2, the text form, so important for Goffman, is not necessarily the norm anymore for how lectures are documented and for how they are circulated after the event, but that many lectures these days are instead available as videos to be watched online (Peters 2011: 151ff.), i.e. they are documented as performances.³¹² And, with regard to the question raised in chapter 2 of who is actually in the position to define what constitutes a presentation of knowledge today, it has to be mentioned again that it is not only universities that make this type of video documentation of lectures available, but that it is increasingly also outside of the field of academia that such formats are developed.³¹³ Interestingly, however, there is usually little consideration of how these lectures are affected by being encountered through audiovisual documentation (173). In a way, then, despite acknowledging the lecture's status as performance, the trend to document lectures via video without consideration of what is lost (or gained) in documentation seems to perpetuate Goffman's idea that it is the content of a lecture that is of prime importance. Paradoxically, however, as I have shown in chapter 5, the video documentation takes the viewers right into the situation instead of "right past the auditorium", as Goffman claims for the lecture – I would like to recall here Burden's rejection of film and video because they too closely resemble the "actual experience".³¹⁴ Considering the conventions of the lecture rather than performance opens up a new perspective on the question whether the document succeeds in representing the event – because if it succeeded, it would paradoxically focus the audience's attention on something other than what was intended in the event thus represented.

By deciding to include a video documentation of *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* here instead of, for instance, representing it through text, slides, and some kind of stage directions describing my actions during the performance, I am asking you to imagine yourself in the situation of the lecture performance, despite my awareness that, in Burden's words, "you're not seeing the actual experience". In the case of *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?*, or – if I am right in considering every lecture performance as a meta-lecture or "lecture on the lecture" in Bourdieu's sense – indeed in any lecture

³¹² This aspect that could be explored in a sequel to *Would Joseph Beuys have used PowerPoint?* with the title *Would Erving Goffman have used YouTube?*

³¹³ In chapter 2, I have mentioned the TED-talks as an example for this development (Peters 2011: 163ff.).

³¹⁴ Burden's criticism of video and film as too successful at simulating the event might also be directed at the video documentation of lectures, which could in turn explain the lack of consideration given to their status as documentation.

performance, the situation, i.e. that which the (video) document invites us to consider and the conventions of the lecture invite us to neglect, cannot be clearly distinguished from the lecture's topic. Or, put differently, the audience is asked to consider this situation itself as a "common topic" – which, in the logic of Goffman and of Masschelein and Simons, also means considering it as part of the "world out there". Not every lecture performance, however, is solely a "lecture on the lecture", for two reasons: firstly, even if an investigation of the lecture is the topic of a lecture performance, it is difficult to envision a lecture performance that does not thematically extend beyond this investigation, or at least beyond the particular situation of the lecture at hand; and secondly, as I have argued, every lecture performance can also be considered a performance about performance. This in turn allows us to consider the extent to which artistic performance (its "medium is no longer the frame" (Mersch 2005: 35), Mersch says about performance art) is actually characterised by its participation in the "world out there" rather than a confinement to the frame of a singular event. And maybe this is what is lost in documentation – the openness of performance to its context, to the "world out there", while the documentation in many instances, even though it allows for a constant recontextualisation of the work, asks the viewer to envision a work in its original context, a context that however now appears limited by the frame of the documentation.

These often seemingly paradox entanglements of event and document, of world out there and world in here, of different orders of representation and mediatisation that I have tried to outline can already be found in both lectures and in performances, whether they are encountered live or mediated. And it is never simply one – documentation, mediation – following the other – the performance. The lecture performance not only makes evident how the conventions of lecture and performance often privilege one manifestation of a work over the other. It also shows how this, in Derrida's words, "incessant movement of recontextualization" (Derrida 1988: 136) is at work in both forms – precisely by participating in it.

"Thank you. Are there any questions?"

I see no evidence today for Gardner's statement made in 2008 that the lecture performance is outdated or is being replaced by other formats. Indeed, the lecture performance is possibly even more established today than when I started writing this

thesis. From a personal perspective, lecture performances have been around for about as long as I have been interested in performance, and the format has allowed me to move back and forth between the contexts of art and academia, to a point where distinctions become blurry.

Making an example of themselves, participating in several contexts at once, calling into being different kinds of publics through different ways of addressing an audience, turning product back into process, transcending the frame of the singular event through the use of documentation, dissemination and/or discourse, negotiating the relations between showing and telling as well as between the “world out there” (privileged by the conventions of the lecture) and the world in here (the live situation privileged by the conventions of performance) – these are central artistic strategies of the lecture performance that I have identified in this thesis. And all of these strategies are related to processes of (re)contextualisation or of a shifting of contexts. But because context is essentially “limitless”, as Derrida states, this list can make no claims for being exhaustive or complete. Instead, with every new lecture performance, the list might be extended and the contexts of participation might shift. The same can also be said for the contents of lecture performances. In this thesis, I have engaged with the content of many lecture performances, as writing about lecture performances always also means writing about what they are about, engaging with the argument that is made as well as with the form in which it is presented. In writing about these lecture performances, I have learned about the materials and activities of performance art, about being a spectator, about the Lebanese Civil War, about the museum as an institution, about cancer research and choreography, about banks, about money, about participation, about life, and about many other things, in short, and again: about the “world out there”. And I have learned equally as much about the world in here, about how meaning and knowledge are produced in the live situation of the lecture performance, and about how this meaning and knowledge can in turn circulate again in the world out there.

“Thank you. Are there any questions?”

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