

When Camp becomes a Method

a conceptualization of conversational performatives and
curatorial agencies within 'the camp-eye'

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Abstract

The aim of following thesis is to demonstrate the potentials of reassessing camp into a question of method. While others have argued for the definition of camp to lie in: an aesthetic; a question of taste; the extravagant theatrical; the male gay sensibility; or as an expression of parody, this thesis suggests that camp is to be found in the performative act of readings. With emphasis on 'decoding language', 'the signifier/signified' and 'the camp eye' I will argue for the relevance of 'camp as method' and situate former stated in relation to Bhabha's concept of 'conversational art'; a deconstructional examination of values of aesthetic experiences set into dialogue. Demonstrating for such conceptualization three theoretical approaches and themes will be outlined. First, a historical overview of camp followed by a reassessment of camp into a method. Second, an examination of possible extensions to the concept of rereading strategies within camp, including theories on queer phenomenology; queer space and time; topias and non-places; theories of curatorial methods and its agencies. And last, I will do an analysis of Moyra Davey's video *Hemlock Forest* and show how Davey's use and reference towards Chantal Akerman can be read as camp and constitutes 'camp as method' according to suggested reassessment.

Keywords

Camp, queer phenomenology, curatorial methods, self-reflexiveness, queer time and space, Hemlock forest, Moyra Davey, Chantal Akerman.

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1. Introduction

The mainstream reference of camp would probably be pop art - which also explains why it is often confused with kitsch. This (mis-)conception were performed at last year's Met Gala, wherein Susan Sontag's probably most cited note "camp sees everything in quotation marks"¹ figured as headline. When Sontag wrote camp into the academics, the traces of pop art were still primal, and the need of solidarity through humour differed from a later on post-Stonewall² situated camp.³ When camp emerged in the early 60's it was presumably associated to the pop revolution, as "camp, in the form in which it came to be received and practiced (...) symbolized an important break with the style and legitimacy of the old liberal intellectual."⁴ It was a statement itself. This association between camp and kitsch, campy and pop, became a way in for the ones who were former excluded from aesthetic expressions - by providing 'low art' with 'high value'. In resemblance to pop, and legitimized by it; camp "is art that proposes itself seriously, but cannot be taken altogether seriously because it is "too much."⁵ As the history of camp goes, especially during the queer theoretical expansion about 30 years later, the conceptualizations of camp would become more about readings than beings. Camp is still under debate, wherein some wishes to declare its death, while others insists on its foreverness (because of its inherent changeability). Not only does the different assessments disagree, but most often, their proposals are built upon contradictions. The constant elusiveness of camp makes such contradiction inevitable as it is always playing with surrounding discourses. Its mobility of contextuality becomes inescapable, and everything else would be a denial of its possibilities.

While others argue for the definition of camp to lie in: an aesthetic; a question of taste; the extravagant theatrical; the male gay sensibility; or as an expression of parody with the subversive possibilities of irony, this thesis aim to turn towards what all of these suggests but out of different arrangements – camp as a way of reading. This constitutes for several key

¹ Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp", The Partisan Review (1964) no.10.

² The Stonewall riots were a serious of demonstrations by members of the LGBT-community in response to a police raid; starting point 28th of June 1969.

³ David Bergman, *Camp grounds: Style and homosexuality* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993) and Andrew Ross, "Uses of camp" in *Camp grounds: Style and homosexuality*, ed D. Bergman (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993)

⁴ Ross, 318.

⁵ Sontag, no. 26.

concepts historically mentioned within camp, but that has not been combined into a theory of method. Readings, out of a camp matter, requires for communication; as camp happens within the dialogue between the positioned subject and situated object. According to a camp discourse, this required positionality lies in already suggested concepts of camp being; a ‘coded language’, where certain knowledge is needed in order to see ‘between’ what we read. And then, in line with the coded ones, the ability to reflect upon ‘the signifier’ and ‘the signified’, and how these are under a potential shifting depending who’s the reader. Thirdly, ‘the camp eye’, which celebrates interpretation through ‘the eyes of the beholder’; which provides for self-reflexivity and how we are positioned when we read. Together, they are all to be found under Bhabha’s concept of ‘conversational art’; a deconstruction examination of the validations and values of aesthetic experiences, where the viewer and the viewed are forced into dialogue.⁶ Moving away from traditional statements on camp, while holding on to these deconstructional notions and using its own suggested strategies upon itself, we can find these elements between their different manifests and approach camp as highly performative; as they all propose for rereading’s. Then, camp neither lies within the object or subject, but instead in the meeting of those and their common knowledges. Searching for commons and reaching for the connotational, as it relies upon shared know how’s, camp uses strategies of references. This sort of referring is not uncommon within the arts – especially not in the field of essayistic cinema. There is a long line tradition of homages between artists, where the referential strategies in ‘camp as method’ could be proposed. In the aim to demonstrate how this method is applicable to the moving image and provide for its relevance Moyra Davey’s video *Hemlock forest* (2016)⁷ by will be examined.

Davey, perhaps most known for her photographs, works with mixed media; creating landscapes across photography, text and video - often found within the same piece. Her films usually reference to others, preferably by notes, but in the light of a portrait of herself. While her referential outline brings our mind to the video essay, her haltering voice-over reminds us of an essay film. In all her intertextuality, her work becomes hard to define. This unclarity and the fragmental way of presenting becomes somewhat her signature, allowing for mistakes and the process to be at display. Davey’s transparency of making notes on notes is what

⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, “Conversational Art,” in *Conversations at the Castle: changing audiences and contemporary art*, ed. Mary Jane Jacobs and Michael Brenson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998).

⁷ *Hemlock forest* is currently available at: <https://vimeo.com/169375334> (last visited August 2020)

caught my (camp) eye - especially *Hemlock forest*. This essayistic art-video barely over 40 minutes guides us through the thoughts and theories of many while showing us images of a pacing Davey; letting mirrors, shadows and reflections remind us of her presence. Meantime, we are offered the presence of another: of Chantal Akerman. *Hemlock forest* is an examination and portrait of Davey; of and through the imagined eyes of Akerman. And as my analysis will show; this could be argued extending them both and manifest for new values through the power of connotations; set in the interpretational complexion of camp. Reaching for such readings, three themes will be conceptualized:

- A reassessment of camp into a question of method.
- An examination of possible extensions to the concept of rereading strategies within camp.
- And finally, an analysis of how Moyra Davey's video *Hemlock forest* constitutes camp by redoing's and references to Chantal Akerman's artistry.

This thesis will demonstrate for how the readings of camp have shifted depending on theoretical beliefs as it always been under reconstruction. Arguing for its somewhat inherent reassessing qualities, I will not only provide for a historical outline but also a rereading of its former discourse, meanwhile, show how each proclaims for common approaches when it comes to camp as performative. Presenting and performing as it goes, camp will function as a meta-text to its own examination and stay in line with the conceptual strategies it suggests. In order to provide for such abstraction, further framework is needed. As stated, I consider 'camp as method' to rely upon four mains; the subject, the object and the conversational reading between; and their contextual preferences. Aiming to reflect upon these conditions and how they might be reconceptualized by camp I will discuss relevant theoretical approaches under 'theories as method'; demonstrating for how these can be reread through camp and become its extension. Arguing for the importance of positioning when claiming camp, I will first discuss possible configurations of 'self-reflexivity'. But as much as camp is about a self I wish to move away from any establishment of the subject as fixed and instead introduce concepts on the possible movements of subjectivity. Camp will therefore be dispositioned within the framework of queer phenomenology. This will figure as both its possibilities and its shortcomings. By allowing for phenomenology, we can approach camp by its 'doings and readings' and make notions of experiences, memorization and orientations fundamental. But it also becomes its demarcation - as queer phenomenology could be argued to both begin and end within itself. Avoiding the gap of self-fulfilment, there are other

theories needed, and in order to make such conceptualized conceptions useful, I will discuss works on time and space, and demonstrate for a queerified reassessment. This way, the need of contextualization when arguing for camp can be approached. To remark the importance of upper mentioned and giving it common ground, I like to introduce a concept rarely mentioned within the field of cinema: theories of curatorial methods. My aim is that all these together, intervened and enlightened, will constitute what I consider to be ‘camp as method’. Presenting theories otherwise placed elsewhere, I hope to design an intersection which declares for new readings and allows critical concepts to entrance the many thoughts on essayistic cinema.

Camp and cinema are not unacquainted, but most often, they fall into a gap of reproducing consumable cinematics with objects of kitsch. And when not, it tends to restrict itself to ‘queer cinema’ and circle around campy expressions. In best case, it flourishes around a ‘queer sensibility’, but that often proposes for a need to define oneself with the ‘queer theme’. As much as I find all of these to be out of relevance, I believe the possibilities of camp as performative gets reduced to a ‘queer belief’ highly restricted to one perception of a ‘queer state’. By introducing theories of ‘queer orientation’; as a subject of time and space; we can approach the ‘queer conversational and curatorial’ within the moving image and establish a methodological prospect useful in the reading of film by providing for the method of camp’s four requirements. Putting those in dialogue, I aim to demonstrate how the concept of ‘camp as method’ is already out there if one is willing to reread and redo. The difficulty with such task is its phenomenological and inventory outline, which requires me to reassess as it goes. Being a meta-conceptualization, every concept interpreted will affect its outcome and its methodological fallout. By claiming camp by its reassessed agencies, I wish to establish not only a new reading of camp, but a way of reading through camp, arguing for its potential strategies of interpretation within the field of cinema. Being changeable, performative and deconstructional at once, each time it gets applied it will take new forms; just as camp desires. When reading and rereading *Hemlock forest* I will provide for how queer phenomenology and theories of curatorial methods are crucial concepts when rethinking references; which are all to be found within camp. There is no question that ‘camp as method’ is possible. What I aim for is to show its potential.

2. Camp – definitions and its methods

2.1 Background on (queer) Camp; all roads lead to Sontag

Even when texts on camp agrees to disagree, it seems timeless to pink note its (queer) mobility, as camp is partially defined by “its indefinability, its elusiveness, and its changeability.”⁸ Its origin stays unknown, even if speculations have been welcomed. Rodgers suggests that camp is a sixteenth-century spin-off from the French term *campagne*; a place where mime troupes performed,⁹ while other scholars claims its origin from the French reflexive verb where; “*se camper* is to present oneself in an expansive but flimsy manner (like a tent), with overtones here of theatricality, vanity, dressiness and provocation.”¹⁰ Or, as Meyer suggests when re-examining Ware’s definition of camp by Victorian slang; “actions and gestures of exaggerated emphasis. Probably from French, used chiefly by persons of exceptional want of character”¹¹ which not propose for a etymological proposition of such, but instead “that the actual and specific gestures he describes have been imported from France.”¹² Regardless its heritage, and before entering the universe of Sontag, there is one more quotation to be made of what probably is the first finding of the contradictory complexity of camp, in description by Isherwood, “Camp always has a underlying seriousness. You can’t camp about something you don’t take seriously. You’re not making fun of it; you’re making fun out of it. You’re expressing what’s basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance.”¹³

If there were to be one common tendency within the history of theorizing camp, it would be Susan Sontag's first, and surprisingly humble, notion. As a starter of her otherwise rather rumbling 58 notifications, she roughly begins with an overview, stating that “camp is a certain mode of aestheticism. It is one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon.

⁸ Bergman, 123.

⁹ Gregory W. Bredbeck in Moe Meyer, *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 45.

¹⁰ Mark Booth, *Camp* (London, UK: Quartet, 1983) 33. and Ross, 145.

¹¹ Meyer, 1994, 65.

¹² Ibid., 66.

¹³ Christopher Isherwood, *The World in the Evening* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) 110.

That way, the way of Camp, is not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization.”¹⁴ Whichever interpretation of camp we are to face, there are three recurrent themes presented: Sontag’s notes, Sontag herself and camp by aesthetics. Aiming for a brief overview, this will go by ‘notes on notes on notes’: with emphasis on (queer) aesthetics.

A common exposition of camp is sensibility, especially as a way of seeing. The comprehension of this sensibility takes as many turns as there are assessments of camp. Often referenced, both in agree and disagreement, are Babuscio and Dyer. In resemblance, they both points out this sentiment towards the characteristics of gayness.¹⁵ According to Babuscio, the male gay subculture is essential for camp as it is “a relationship between activities, individuals, situations, and gayness.”¹⁶ In agreement, Dyer states that “camp is one thing that expresses and confirms being a gay man.”¹⁷ Moving towards camp as a gay-coded strategy, they are both identifying it as a function as a tool for surviving. Dyer considers camp to be a desire out of homosexuals need to ‘make some impression’ upon the culture they live in.¹⁸ Then, Babuscio describes gay sensibility as “a creative energy reflecting a consciousness that is different from the mainstream; a heightened awareness of certain human complications of feeling that spring from the fact of social oppression.”¹⁹ Another, yet similar take on camp, proposed by Tinkcom, is that instead of sensibility we should approach the potential in tactics - not mainly by its subversive tendencies as such, but as a way to comprehend how one can or cannot “participate in the labor of humans to produce the world for themselves, famously, under conditions not of their own making.”²⁰ This lies in the “tactics through which queer men of a particular historical epoch have made sense of their frequent omission from representation and sought to invent their own language to appear.”²¹ Throughout some ambivalent reflections on Sontag’s ‘homosexuals’, they all seem to agree that camp relies upon connotations “that marks a specific political identity”²² which, in this case, solely refers to ‘gay camp’

¹⁴ Sontag.

¹⁵ Jack Babuscio, “Camp and the gay sensibility”, in *Gays and film*, ed. Richard Dyer, (London, UK: British Film Institute, 1977).

and Richard Dyer, *The culture of queers* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁶ Babuscio, 20.

¹⁷ Dyer, 49.

¹⁸ Ibid., 52.

¹⁹ Babuscio, 19.

²⁰ Matthew Tinkcom, *Working like a Homosexual: Camp, Capital, and Cinema* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002) 4.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Meyer, 100.

This lite formation of camp is thoroughly criticised, there among by Robertson. Robertson does a solid work to “de-essentialize the link between gaymen and camp”²³ by pointing at women’s frequently exclusion (except from being subjects of performance) from the discourse of camp. Moving away from sontagian understandings of the male gay subject, Robertson wishes to approach the nature of camp; as a subversion of gender constructs; by its performances and readings. By doing so, we can comprehend the possible uses of camp as aligned with a feminist practice.²⁴ Moving away from what Meyer refers to as ‘classics’; where the idea of camp having the “notion of an essentialized gay individual”²⁵ and towards a butlerian addition of discursive performatives, Robertson reaches what she would name ‘feminist camp’.²⁶ Even if Robertson merely touches upon the subject of lesbian women, she consistently provides for a reading of and by the queer women gaze. She emphasizes the importance to “reclaim camp as a political tool and rearticulate it within the theoretical framework of feminism”²⁷ as it not only reassesses camp itself, but also adds for new ways of critiquing gender constitutions.²⁸

The idea of camp as some sort of disturbance is possible to locate through all of its history - but how it disturbs and its potential changes as the waves transforms during the different decades. As queer theory flourishes under the 90’s, so does the reassessments of camp. It goes from being explained through things, as something that is, to become investigated by the performative; as something that does. This specific shift and its debates seem to find its way throughout the theoretical existence of camp, but through different meanings. It went from ‘a camp’²⁹ to ‘camp’ with subtitle.³⁰ This queered approach to camp is well summarized by Bergman, who states that the key tactic of camp is to decompose the binary logics while providing ‘the other’ with meaning and expression outside the principles of the normative.³¹

²³ Pamela Robertson, “The kinda comedy that imitates me”: Mae West’s identification with the feminist camp”, in *Camp grounds: Style and homosexuality*, ed. D. Bergman (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993) 156.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Meyer, 1994, 100.

²⁶ Robertson, Pamela. *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna*, (London: Tauris, 1996) 6.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Sontag.

³⁰ Robertson (1996), Meyer (1994)

and Fabio Cleto, *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject – A Reader*. Ed. Fabio Cleto (Edinburgh: Edinburgh university press, 1999)

³¹ Bergman.

This is not without complications though, because “at best camp can be a strategy to win room, freedom for different ways of conducting one’s life; at worst, it can give the illusion of freedom when in fact it only repeats in a different key the old prescriptions.”³² As any queer suggestion, to read camp when queering, comes with compromises. But in difference to common queer theory, camp is not to be found in the horizon, but instead “exists in tension with popular culture, commercial culture, or consumerist culture.”³³ The strategies of camp is often found in the use (and resistance) of mainstream pop culture; instead of searching beyond its context, it reassess what is already there by reinforcing subjects found within the tension between cultures.

Camp is traditionally placed within the aesthetics of pop art and its emergence during the pop revolution at the 1960s. This would constitute two assumptions of camp that is still presumed: that camp must be out of humour and that camp is consumable. When restricted to those and ascribed to kitsch, camp becomes depreciated from its political readings. Even if this everyday recognition of the term was of importance in question of acknowledgement, it is crucial to bring clarity to their differences. Turning against a concept of ‘pop-camp’, Ross states that such mixture is contradictive itself, and that the queering of camp becomes lost in translation when restricting its value through the commercial. Camp, Ross points out, is located in the taste of a minority elite, while pop “was supposed to declare that everyday cultural currency had value, and that everything had more or less equal value.”³⁴ Accordingly, camp, even when suggested as restricted for those with high degree of cultural capital,³⁵ is not necessarily something out of sophistication, but instead, something that is in need of certain knowledge to even be readable. Then, as everything within the concepts of popular culture, when acting as gateway for new expressions, are always produced and found at other places. And somewhere when pop turned into camp it reconceptualized its definability for its own needs. Camp, who might found a way of acceptance through popular culture, also lost some of its inherencies when pop art used its articulations in other aims, as “the possibility that camp offered to muddle up categories and to mix audiences, in the exhilaration brought forth by the simultaneous challenge to the settled hierarchies of taste and sexuality.”³⁶ When pop art tried to renew camp into something mainstream and relatable, its

³² Ibid., 15.

³³ Ibid., 4f.

³⁴ Ross, 318.

³⁵ Ross, 1993.

³⁶ Cleto, 303.

sensibility became misplaced. As Sontag notes (between her notes) “one may compare Camp with much of Pop Art, which -- when it is not just Camp -- embodies an attitude that is related, but still very different. Pop Art is more flat and more dry, more serious, more detached, ultimately nihilistic.”³⁷

Going from ‘gay-camp’ to a ‘feminist-camp’, and towards conceptions of ‘pop-camp’, we have finally reached what might be considered most recent establishment within the family of camp: ‘queer-camp’. In difference to former mentioned subcategories, queer-camp seem to find its way into most of the readings, at least significantly from the 1990s and forward. Obviously, but perhaps not as frequently, there are more modern and specific takes, such as ‘lesbian-camp’ or ‘the personal in camp’,³⁸ but in a historical manner, let us continue with the queer emergence of camp. There is no dated beginning of ‘queer-camp’, but when searching for its golden days, the decade where queer theory bloomed must stand central. Except from obvious connects between the two, there is another turning point in the history of camp and its merging with queer that ought to be, with all respect, mentioned. During this decade, several critics and intellectuals declared the death of camp as “it had lost its utility as both a political statement and a subcultural practice.”³⁹ One of the reasons was the changing winds caused by the AIDS epidemic. Queer communities and politics would never look the same, and the changes of camp became inevitable. This would be the time when (new) camp came to stay. Sadly, “it took AIDS and poststructuralist theory to make camp intellectually and politically respectable again.”⁴⁰

Key names within this change of discourse are Cleto and Meyer. Both, as many before them, searches for the root of camp within the aesthetics. Here, camp never died, and the principles of ‘what camp was’ as something that existed to be “attractive to a certain type of personality”⁴¹ is dismissed within the blink of an eye. In Meyers interpretation, there are some similarities to Longs definition of camp as a carrier of hope and a system of signs: a

³⁷ Sontag.

³⁸ See Katrin Horn, *Women, camp, and popular culture: serious excess* (Cham: Springer international publishing ag, 2017)

and Aymar Jean Christian, “Camp 2.0: A Queer Performance of the Personal”, *Communication, Culture, & Critique*, no.3 (2010)

³⁹ J.M Wolf, “Resurrecting camp: Rethinking the queer sensibility”, in *Communication, Culture, and Critique*, no. 19 (2013) 287.

⁴⁰ Bergman, 9.

⁴¹ Galef, D., and Galef, H, “What was camp”, *Studies in Popular Culture*, no. 13 (1991) 19.

language of its own and place where ironies connects,⁴² but in difference and in reference to Hutcheon's postmodern redefinition, Meyer sees a political potential of parody and thereby the subversive possibilities of irony; especially within camp.⁴³ Neither Cleto or Meyer denies the value of former explanations of camp as extravagant, theatrical or its taste for exaggeration, but instead of categorizing its characteristics out of travesty, humour, pop or kitsch, they are seen as expressions out of camp, and camp as an expression out of queer expressivity;⁴⁴ "it means that all queer identity performative expressions are circulated within the signifying system that is Camp. In other words, queer identity is inseparable and indistinguishable from its processual enactment, or Camp."⁴⁵ Therefore is camp everything but apolitical.⁴⁶ Cleto, as many before him, also examines the concept of camp through the functions of aesthetics, not in the name of style and taste but instead, how camp operates through queer aesthetics, i.e. how "camp works by contradiction, by crossing statements and their possibility of being."⁴⁷ To some extent, this is in agreement of Meyers idea of camp as queer parody in question of a queer discourse; a space where camp is a production of queer social visibility:⁴⁸ they are both investing through codes and signs. But in difference, Cleto's viewpoint is found in a slippage between language, meaning and interpretation; in deconstructionist jargon; within the instabilities.⁴⁹ While Meyer searches for redefinition, Cleto aims for deconstruction.

The history of camp is still under construction and the ambivalent discussions of who and what is camp is never ending. Whether it is about the sensibility of gayness; the repulsion of gender constructs; a question of elitistic taste; the tension between cultures; between language, codes and signs; a deconstructionist interpretation; about the queer aesthetics: there seem to be one thing they all agree upon - camp is not for everyone.

⁴² Scott Long, "The loneliness of camp" In D. Bergman (Ed.), *Camp grounds: Style and homosexuality* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).

⁴³ Meyer, 1994.

⁴⁴ Moe Meyer, *An Archaeology of Posing: Essays on Camp, Drag, and Sexuality* (Chicago: Macater Press, 2010).

⁴⁵ Meyer, 1994, 4.

⁴⁶ Sontag, no. 2

⁴⁷ Cleto, 29.

⁴⁸ Meyer, 1994.

⁴⁹ Cleto, 19f.

2.2 Camp as a method: notes on notes on notes

I see two fundamental approaches when claiming ‘camp as a method’. First off, it is in need of a reassessment, not only in the aim of creating methodological restrictions of the concept, but also, because camp is always under reconstruction; defined by its ‘elusiveness’, ‘changeability’⁵⁰ and inevitable shifting; constituting for its non-fixation. Secondly, claiming camp is all about the performative, relying upon the ‘the camp eye’, because when providing for camp we must approach the four dispositions of: the subject, the object and the conversational reading between - and their contextual preferences. ‘The camp eye’ then, besides constituting value to ‘the eyes of the beholder’, also intend demonstrating for the agencies of camp as dialectic; being both about positionality and also out of the means in question of intention; both regarding object being read and from the subject reading. When constituting for rereadings, we can establish the process (of all kind) as central, wherein the principals of interpretation is crucial. With that in mind, let us reach for the agency of camp, moving towards the aesthetics of (in-)between, beyond stylization and explicit taste.

A repeated definition of camp is its being (and reading) as relational,⁵¹ and thereby, forever contextual. Camp does not exist by its own, but is in the becoming when intersecting, which is driven by its affectiveness, or the desire of one. Camp lies in the reception, perception and the making of those, as “camp effect requires a fit between performances and perception, between object and audience.”⁵² This is found in Meyers statement of camp as queer parody, a queer discourse, in terms of communication and identity performance/performativity; regardless if it suggests for ironic moments or not.⁵³ Through its agencies, camp is highly strategic, beyond style or sensibility, which makes it political.⁵⁴ This does not exclude sensibility and its affects from camp, but rather; invites for new connotations of (queer) emotions and its political tendencies. Queer is performative, and it is through different significations, and reading of those, social visibility is produced. Recognizing this as movement, the intersection between camp and queer subjects can be presupposed.⁵⁵ Camp then, is all about the total body of performative practices and strategies; wherein all queer

⁵⁰ Bergman, 123.

⁵¹ Horn.

⁵² Bergman, 123.

⁵³ Meyer, 1994.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 4.

performative expressions exists within the signifying operatives of camp.⁵⁶ That is why camp and queer, by performances between beings and readings, in the interpretation between the ones signifying and the ones being signified, are always indistinguishable and mostly found in the states that already constitutes in-between.

When claiming camp as a method we must acknowledge camp as a doing, and as a resulting in a being, and not the other way around. Claiming for 'a camp' or 'the campified' is to erase its agencies down to the capitalistic of popular culture, imposing it into an extreme aestheticization, wishing for its apolitical state. Camp is built upon its power of resistance, its power as a cultural critique. Camp "cannot be said to reside in objects, but is clearly a way of reading, of writing, and of doing that originates in the "Camp eye," the "eye" being nothing less than the agent of Camp."⁵⁷ Combining this comprehension with Cleto's motion,⁵⁸ which offers both constructed ideological and evaluative dimension together with possible readings of aesthetics, we can approach 'the camp eye' through semiotic and hermeneutic meanings. Going back to the betweenness of the signified and the signifier, believing in camp as a relational (and elusive) state, we can see how camp not only desires but also practices through a semiotic destabilisation, creating "the unavoidable overlapping of subject and object of perception, of read object and reading subject, with the overstructure of preconceptions and pre-understandings that the subject brings to the object."⁵⁹ When reaching for camp as a doing and something between somewhat slippery positions, we can move away from any concepts confirming camp through 'high' - or 'low art', and instead move towards its methodological impulses. Meanwhile it is groundless; a queer twisted discourse constantly in change; its mobility is its stability. As much as it is in 'the eyes of the beholder', camp do propose for collective (and performative) acknowledgement, often situating itself in the limelight, wishing to be read; to be camp. This, often confused with the theatricalization of objectification, is an act of transformation, wherein the process of dressing up⁶⁰ (read: shifting) suggests for other (read: new) intentions, or at least ambiguous ones. Being a process, camp as method is never in the past, but rather timeless, and is simultaneously founding its confirmation in assumed assumption while deconstructing its own codes and signs by suggesting for new ones. But in order to reach for this shifting, it must go from one

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Meyer, 1994, 10-11.

⁵⁸ Cleto.

⁵⁹ Cleto, 10-11.

⁶⁰ Cleto, 25.

point to another, therefore, camp must have references to beings other than queer horizons. If pushing it, one could say that camp exists between the possible and the potential.

An example of this is all the rereading's of the readings of camp; the explicit notes on notes and the desire of taking everything slightly further. In Pellegrini's article "After Sontag: Future notes on camp" we are not only offered ten new notes, but also a thoroughly deconstruction of Sontag's 58 ones, slowly, quite mockeristic, mashed down into its smallest of formats.⁶¹ Another one, recently released anthology, includes an article that reduces down the notes to, scornfully enough, 52 notes, ending with "52. It's universal because it's queer... Of course, one can't always say that. Only under certain conditions, those which I've tried to sketch in these notes. (These are the last two sentences of Sontag's "Notes on 'Camp.'")."⁶² Here, by using what is out there while suggesting for something else, they are situating camp as a doing, contextualizing its potential subversiveness of everything, re-evaluating who/what is the signifier and who/what is signified. And that is how camp as method constitute for subversion and disturbance.

Camp never settles for less than its own indefinability, as asking for camp is to recognise its fluidity yet acknowledging its cultural temporality by putting them in synonymity and face towards the potentials of queer parodies. Given that camp puts everything within quotations marks,⁶³ and queer phenomenology wishes to end every sentence with a question mark, together, they create destabilization by repulsively dismiss anything that promises for 'the nature of being' (object/subject). This might be the reason for the numerous failing attempts to 'a camp' something; giving it inherency within a subject, in an object, as camps potential disturbance as constantly shifting frightens us. "Given camp's simultaneous investment in incommensurable opposites, a feature that may appear variously ludic and threatening (and everything in between), and one that plays serious havoc with categorical separations foundational to (...) dualist thought (...) and seeks to include, even embrace, otherwise uninhabitable terrains of shame."⁶⁴ Here, it is important to once again point out the affective

⁶¹ Ann Pellegrini, "After Sontag: Future notes on camp", In *A companion to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer studies*, ed G.E. Haggerty & M. McGarry (New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell. 2007)

⁶² Christopher Reed, "Ladies Almanack showing their Satire and Irony; Sorrow and Sentimentality; Ridiculousness in relation to Sexual Identity; as well as reflections on Alison Bechdel's Fun Home—or, Notes not on "Camp", in *Queer difficulty and in art and poetry: Rethinking the sexual body in verse and visual culture*, ed. Jongwoo Jeremy Kim and Christopher Reed (New York: Routledge, 2017)

⁶³ Sontag.

⁶⁴ Hotz-Davies, Vogt and Bergmann, 4-5.

tendencies of camp, as camp by its methods of readings are reassessing ‘emotions’, not only as connotational, but also as critical for the objects/subjects validation as being. This cross-over of affect and matter is strongly suggested in camps performativity and changeability through perception and reception. Existing in the sensible, camp plays with the known by addressing the unknown. By doing this, camp does not aim to distinguish the two but rather to fusion them into one state. And that is how we ‘do camp’.⁶⁵

Sontag states that to talk about camp is to betray it, but “if the betrayal can be defended, it will be for the edification it provides, or the dignity of the conflict it resolves.”⁶⁶ Camp becomes as it claims, and let us approach this as we claim our rights to (re-)read (through camp). This makes camp as a method both complex and inconsistent, and there is no determined way of how this can be conceptualized. Instead, it becomes as it goes; you are forced into dialogue, wherein silence might be the greatest of informants. We must listen. What camp offers is knowledges of (in-)betweenness, eyeing itself and what is being observed, which “are visible at the same time, and the challenge is not so much the discerning of either one or the other but rather the task of thinking the two together.”⁶⁷ It is important not to get scared by its inconsistencies, and to find comfort in its ambivalent characteristics. It is when we are getting displaced, yet with the lines in sight, we might find new ways of orientations and confirmations as another sort of validation; a way to read through camp. It is impossible to read (and reread) camp without getting read, and in that sense, camp relies upon self-reflexiveness. One cannot position the possible poses of camp without position (or posing, if preferred) oneself, because camp by its agency is all about ‘the doing’ (when reading). As confusing this might sound, this is the road to deconstruction;

The reason for this lies in the fuzziness of the phenomenon of camp that figures both as a mode of reception (it lies in the eyes of the beholder) and a mode of production (someone is camping it up), and which has been approached again and again both by its practitioners and its critics phenomenologically through reference to its manifestations.⁶⁸

Camp have the ability to shift potentialities into possibilities, by (re-)considering the powers of aesthetics; to reread, rethink and redo; camp is most definitely political; camp is all about

⁶⁵ Ibid., 6-7.

⁶⁶ Sontag.

⁶⁷ Hotz-Davies, Vogt and Bergmann, 7-8,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7-8.

(queer) reorientations. When claiming for the suggested above, one must announce oneself present - if using camp as method, it will not only be highly subjective (as any method out of connotations), but it will also be out of a discussion on subjectivity. Camp does not allow for subjectivity without self-reflexiveness. Methodological, camp requires for communication between object and subject, in order to reassess it into a strategy of resistance. I am therefore forced into position myself as a rereader when claiming, camp does not leave room for any suggested intentions, instead, camp is a deconstructing examination which embraces the reader to be part of its outcome (remember: camp wants to be read; it lies in 'the eyes of the beholder'). Giving myself the permission to read out of camp, I aim to outline how Moyra Davey's *Hemlock forest* attempts to redo Akerman's artistry and how that is translatable into the strategies of camp. Meanwhile, her redo requires me to reread: and that is why camp is conversational. To demonstrate the traces of Akerman, we need to approach what is in the images as much as what is absent; camp is also about what is not said, and it is through its methodological impulses we are able to reassess the signifier and the signified (and their in-betweens). Camp is all about conceptualizing interpretations as they go.

3. Theories as method

3.1 Queer phenomenology: possibilities and shortcomings

Upcoming theoretical framework constitutes the principles of this thesis as it demonstrates for phenomenology while deconstructing it, which overlaps the approach used (and claimed) within the analysis; a try-out of the methods of camp. Using Sara Ahmed's concept of queer phenomenology, we can move away from its tradition and apply its own tendencies upon its own beliefs. By merging some of Ahmed's key issues along theories about space, utopias (and its heterotopias) and the imaginative, we can expand on the thought of the elusive and extend concepts on shifting as a strategy within 'camp as method', and get closer to what this text considers being the (un-)powering state of in-betweens. Through queer phenomenology, we can reach this through three main principles. First, how phenomenology historicizes its objects (images) by connotational methods and thereby transform its position from object, to subject, to potential artefact; the becoming of a monument. Second, a queer phenomenology, except from putting the upper stated in transparency, also invites for affective evaluations, which would not only change the concepts of the past, but more importantly guide us in the writing of queer time and space; an opening for the reread of being in-between. And thirdly, images contain phenomenology within themselves i.e. they have inherent tendencies of questioning its own and its viewers orientations; it is all about interpretation. Note that these will not be discussed in this particular order, as "to queer phenomenology is also to offer a queer phenomenology"⁶⁹ which requires us not to insist on any given starting point, but rather, to stay in its cluster where nothing stands isolated, and will, at some moment, intersect the lines (in order to be imaginable).

3.1.1 Hunting for orientations: reachabilities and readings

⁶⁹ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, 4.

What queer phenomenology constitutes is a way out of the fixed and a way into the process. Accordingly, everything becomes through validation by a course of action. Everything we claim to know is in affect of ruling normative agencies, which by repetitiveness becomes assumed as truths; or at least, stays unquestioned. Phenomenology offers a deconstruction of how such assumptions gets attached to certain subject and objects, until the moment they are considered as given inherencies. By comprehending connotations as moving and not fixed, queer phenomenology aim to demonstrate for its performative characteristics and how moments of uncertainty can provide for new set of knowledge; and subvert beliefs of natural qualities and values. Here, Ahmed proposes a deconstructional concept of orientations; and the potentials of disorientations. Orientations constitutes the paths we are handed within specific context, which regards all assumed and preferred behaviours we are encouraged to follow. These will not be noticed if we stay in 'line' as they been repeated until given and offers us a gateway 'to pass'. As stated above: who, how and when something passes is contextual, but the more beneficial values one carries, the easier to cross-board some lines and still 'pass as validated'. The different lines also determine different hierarchical values, which constitutes for a various degree of possible movements. By following accepted lines; and embodies the invisible (remember, it does only become visible when it disturbs), one can reach for objects and subjects outside that certain orientation and expand what might be considered acceptable within given context. When searching for new connotations we might enter a state of disorientation. Disorientation can be out of choice and out of force, but either way, it overwhelms us with 'unfamiliarity'; which can bring us into uncomfortableness; because of how we feel or because of how we are being read. We disturb as we disorientate. When putting this under the notions of queer, we are able to set mark of this state as a process of shifting; in difference to change where one position transform to another, shifting offers to examine this as a performative moment that comments on the importance of 'non-fixed'; giving value to the in-between. Approaching queer phenomenology as moments and shiftings we can demonstrate for how process and reachabilities lies within the four mains that constitute 'camp as method'; the subject, the object, their readings and context according to the agencies of 'the camp eye'.

Being performative and aiming for staying in process; "a queer phenomenology might find what is queer within phenomenology and use that queerness to make some rather different

points.”⁷⁰ This suggests for a shifting, wherein moments of disorientations are read through their potentials, being renamed under queer moments making itself recognizable beyond negations and boldly proposes for the queer (non-)state to be the starting point of phenomenological applications. Here, affect and emotion, often dismissed to secondary positions, are recognized as crucial in the shaping and becoming, and allows for new meanings to be made. Ultimately, it can change possible directions and orientations, which altogether, will question function of time and space. To be more explicit, affect works persistently across time, and compels past- present- and future-oriented desires to lose its spatial longings and go beyond any given linearity.⁷¹ This becomes a question of queerifying temporalities and to provide the gaps with meaning through emotions. Here, emotions suggests for both an ability of shaping the subjective and collective body,⁷² and as a thought-emotion; an interpretation travelling between souls.⁷³ This comprehension opens up for the dialectics that phenomenology requires, it dares us into what Freccero describes a place where “haunting would be reciprocal in that it would entail a willingness both to be haunted and to become ghostly, and insofar as the reciprocal penetrability entailed would also be sensuous - a commingling of times as affective and erotic experience - it would also be queer.”⁷⁴

Any outline of the definition of queer will not be mapped within this text. Instead, I will show the potential agencies of queer by putting its existence next to phenomenological discussions on time and space. Though, I want to pay attention to the fact that this is not an examination of identities, whereas queer will not be discussed as such, even when it is followed by terms as subjects and beings. Here, subject is not a question of an identity, but rather a way to identify in order to investigate how values are shifting in the naming and distinctions between object and subject. Subject, in short, indicates on subject of matter where queer is to contextualize the following ‘of matter’. Here, queer is an act, act of (re-)readings, (un-)becomings and (re-)writings; it claims by ending everything with a question mark. It is therefor, as Ahmed marks, a definite disturbance of order when making something queer.⁷⁵ The potential effects of queerifying, and its affects, is uneven and various, depending on

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Carla Freccero, “Queer Times”, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106:3 (Summer, 2007) 488-489.

⁷² Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004.

⁷³ Michel Foucault, “La pensée, l’emotion”, *Dits et écrits*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard Quarto, 1982/2001/).

⁷⁴ Freccero, 2007, 488-489.

⁷⁵ Ahmed, 2006, 161.

where, when and why; its space, time and directions. When rereading, we have to recognize what is before us, what we assume because of its reachability, and which objects within we are reproducing through our gathering and yearning of extensions.⁷⁶ It becomes a disturbance as it questions historization by aiming for new horizons⁷⁷ and is a verbally and adjectivally unsettling force against anything defined as stable; “so theoretically anything can queer something, and anything, given a certain odd twist, can become queer.”⁷⁸ This is where the phenomenological understanding of queer, and the other way around, becomes critical. It offers us a queer angle which brings life to objects otherwise considered as lost,⁷⁹ by reconsider their failure consequently bound to eras - and ‘spoken time’ as something constructed (while it is happening).

Throughout Halberstam's thorough re-evaluation of failure we can find useful formulations about the positions of in-betweens. Here, failure is positioned both between and through logics of success, but “under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world.”⁸⁰ Accordingly, one could say that the queer act is an art of failure itself, as the logics of the world is built upon the concept of success. The reassessment of failure is reflected through Hall’s work on low theory as it aims to uncover and present all the in-between spaces that could spare us from the danger of given hegemony.⁸¹ Again, through phenomenological readings of the imaginable as shifting, always under possible deconstruction; the in-betweens becomes a potential resistance itself if it is allowed interpretation. Using low theory also invites us to reconceptualize the idea of low art as kitsch, and thereby understand low art as camp and camp as everything but kitsch.⁸² When we approach low theory, we can go beyond low and high culture as contradictions, and instead approach the subversive tendencies that the in-betweens offers and call on knowledge through disorientation. Queer phenomenology requires us to question “in order to push through the divisions between life and art, practice and theory, thinking and doing, and into a more chaotic realm of knowing and unknowing.”⁸³

⁷⁶ Ahmed, 2006, 161.

⁷⁷ See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969)

⁷⁸ Freccero, 2007 485.

⁷⁹ Ahmed, 2006, 165.

⁸⁰ J. Halberstam, *Queer art of failure* (Durham and London: Duke university press, 2011) 2-3.

⁸¹ Ibid., 2.

⁸² See ‘Background on camp’.

⁸³ Halberstam, 2011, 2.

Often put as synonym to losing, failure could be considered a course of action with the goal to lose one's way. What is often assumed is that failure stands in contrast to success, but herein, failure does not constitute the results, but rather, is the conception of processes between oneself, chosen object and the eying of contextual restrictions. While success is imagined given by nature, losing is an art.⁸⁴ It does not only question which way we are facing, but also, what is around us during that eye-catching moment; what we are turning away from in order to turn towards. If "to be orientated is (...) to be turned toward certain objects, those that help us to find our way"⁸⁵ then losing our way requires us be disoriented, or at least, if only for a second, desire something else then what was handed to us. And that calls for movements in directions where our bearing loses meaning, which puts us in a state of unfamiliarity. Now, the feeling of being something unfamiliar will be terrifying, which is why the impulses by many will be total avoidance. But it is also a state of possibilities, as queer moments allow us to see familiarity as a result of constructed knowledge i.e. relies upon our bearings to be the same. Therefore, this place of disorientation might be our only way to question what is known and at what cost by a potential moment of clarity through failure; which eventually could generate new forms of know how's.⁸⁶

As an example, Halberstam turns towards the misconception of the naive as an act of stupidity. This 'nonsensible' approach is often problematized within notions of ethics, as brightness also is rightness. But if we understand this categorization as a result of structural power, we can also see how the naive (and partly ignorant) might lead to these new forms of knowing - wherein different knowledge practices can take their shape.⁸⁷ In this sense, the 'nonsensible' is not as much a question of lacking sensibility as it is a way of creating a space open for chaos; a momentum where the production of knowledge gets twisted into a knowledge of production, and a resistance of upper institution. When getting to this place of chaos, we can finally reach for what queer phenomenology yearns for, and establish suspicion towards (the process of) memorialization. This must not get confused with questioning memory per se, by being a subjective construction of moments (of space, of time), but rather aims to shed light upon the concept of memorialization as a monumental

⁸⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁸⁵ Ahmed, 2006, 1.

⁸⁶ Halberstam, 2011, 7.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 12.

testimony. History is built upon the notion of turning points, whatever these might be, that we are expected through a collective memory to learn by and orientate ourselves through. The greater problem of such collectiveness is not within the emotional reaction in the potential sorrow of witnessing, but instead, how memorialization has its tendencies erase disturbing history.⁸⁸ Then, memory becomes a ‘ritual of power’⁸⁹ as it filters events as it pleases, and thereby constructs its own narrative as it fits during that political period. These disciplines are themselves based on contradictions, in the illusion of creating depths, and somewhat a feeling of truthfulness. But it always seems to find its way of portraying the histories of triumph, no matter.⁹⁰ Here, it is inevitable to mention the act of forgetting; as a state of in-between; as a place of resistance. In line with Halberstam's notion, the agency of forgetting can disturb former logics as it “unleashes new forms of memory that relate more to spectrality than to hard evidence, to lost genealogies than to inheritance, to erasure than to inscription.”⁹¹ Forgetting does not only eye the structure of memorialization, but does also invite for new ways of memorizing, and more importantly, opens up for other subjects to be memorable.

To become memorable makes one languagable; namely, a subject of interpretation. According to Ahmed, there must not be a differentiation between strange and familiar, as it does not have to be a contradiction to be a subject of both.⁹² Whether a place is recognizable or not does not rely on the familiarity of that certain space, but rather whether there are objects within our reach that can guide our orientation in a way that makes us comfortable. The love of ease is essential when desiring recognition, as the process of acknowledgement is a two-way street. The object of reach becomes one's extension as much as one expand that object, and that is, in simple terms, how memory (and its affectiveness) acts out of stickiness; and travel between bodies. Assuming that memory is established through language, thought and emotion cannot be separated, since memory stands tied to affectiveness. Or at least, when rereading the memory on queer archival bases, where the denial of queer lives requires the concept of affect to be ‘saveable’, as the revolution through queer phenomenological

⁸⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁹ See Michel Foucault, *The order of things*, translated by Tavistock/Routledge (London and New York: Routledge Publish, 1966/2005)

----- *The archeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon books, 1982)

----- “The historical a priori and the archive” in *The Archive*, ed. Charles Merewether, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2006)

⁹⁰ Halberstam, 2011, 15.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ahmed, 2006, 7.

existence understands the interpretation of emotions as orientations; connotated and communicated between subjects.⁹³

Here, I would like to suggest that queer phenomenology requires low theory in order to be comprehensible. This, as a theoretical knowledge (and resistance of it) encourage for detours: a mixture and coalition of the known and unknown, without any ambition to keep those apart.⁹⁴ It desires for involvement rather than the explainable, since it asserts itself by the principle that including results in excluding; the moment of insight depends on the moment of losing oneself. This detour does not get us nowhere but elsewhere, which allows us to shift between disorientation and reorientation, perhaps even stay in what we could call a de-orientation, an in-between without know-hows who finds its stability in the process of chaos. Low theory does not only propose for the unplanned, unexpected and unknown, but promote for their values as strategies. At the same time, they allow for the ambivalence within. Besides being a theory that reaches for accessibility, it also refuses to confirm “the hierarchies of knowing that maintain the high in high theory.”⁹⁵ Moving away from any fixed belief of what a telos should or could be, queer phenomenology asks us not only to be aware of what we are facing - but how we are faced.⁹⁶ Facing what is being faced is choosing to be within process, and much like failure, requires us into positioning; and to be aware of the fact that we will always be facing towards something; and be faced back. This requests for self-reflexivity and that is why failure is an art.

3.1.2 Queer space: when we leave linearity

Queer theory, especially about time and space, often establishes itself through reassessments: wherein academics of different interests are interacted and provides for thoughts found within the tension between those. In this act of reaching, terms and words tend to become beholders with different, and sometimes conflicting, meanings. In the tradition of queer theory, I will suggest other understandings than both its origin and queer theoretical take, and more times, use it in a double sense; as queer is of a double nature. This double nature, as much as it

⁹³ See Ann Cvetkovich, “In the Archives of Lesbian Feelings: Documentary and Popular Culture” *Camera Obscura*, vol.17, nr 1 (2002)

⁹⁴ Halberstam, 2011, 15f.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 16.

⁹⁶ Ahmed, 2006, 171.

constitutes queer philosophy, is also what risks to begin and end within itself as it by its own suggestion proposes ‘the impossibility to be queer within a queer space’. To change that discourse we must approach space through camp and remember tensions as a productive characteristic, and then, queer within different conceptions can be put into dialogue. As stated before, this is not a text on identities, but (the potential of) identifications. Here, in the spirit of phenomenology, notions are mainly used to show on concepts and contexts in terms of orientations, and not formations. Family indicates on familiarity, i.e. how we categorizes the ‘belonging of others’, and subject is used for ‘subject of matter’ (note: this matter can be about identities) and space is everything but its synonyms - it is about the capacity of expansions. I cannot, nor desire, to list possible (re-)readings, but as this is out of hermeneutic cause, it must be mentioned. If it is of interest read following text, or in its totality, through explicitly, I do welcome such incidence. This is, after all, an examination out of interpretation.

When queerifying time, space becomes queer and queer becomes spatial; if queer time is a sort of temporality grounded in the postmodern distance from former assumed life patterns, and that queer space refers to a practice wherein queer activities promotes for queer counterpublics (again, notice its double nature).⁹⁷ Then, queer time and queer space does not only exists as contradiction to straight lines, as often interpreted, but also contests those lines by denying their reliability (as history-markers). Here, as Halberstam states, the postmodern also contain contradictions, it is, as any era, a stabilization of form and meaning: which in the eyes of the (queer) beholder, should be avoided at any cost. But it is also an opportunity, as it by its post-nature tend to rethink and redo practices, that in the end of the day questions all sorts of power dynamics.⁹⁸ This is about time and how we can reconceptualize the experience of temporality by rephrasing surfaces as something beyond our skin; when space becomes our extension, and where embodiment also includes the imaginable. Thinking in line with Freccero, experiencing time always touch upon a notion of death,⁹⁹ and how we as a future dead person writes ourselves out of time in devotion of writing oneself into history. Time then, past, present and future, becomes substantive conditions: it might be something that we

⁹⁷ Halberstam, 2011, 6.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Carla Freccero in “Theorizing queer temporalities: a roundtable discussion”, *GLQ: A journal of gay and lesbian studies* 13:2-3 including Carolyn Dinshaw, Lee Edelman, Roderick A. Ferguson, Carla Freccero, Elizabeth Freeman, J. Halberstam, Annamarie Jagose, Christopher Nealon, Nguyen Tan Hoang (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) 184.

do or do not have.¹⁰⁰ But it is uncompromisingly at stake of losing. This is an important aspect of queer time, not only its nonlinearity, but also its comprehension of time as something possessable, and therefore often inaccessible. I do not wish to quote Edelman's understanding of queer, as I find the concept of the death-drive not only out of date but also counterproductive within this framework as we try to move away from the restrictions of 'for better or for worse'.¹⁰¹ But with that said, I do find Edelman's critique on 'turning towards time' interesting. It is not uncommon that queer is positioned towards something and acts out as oppositional gaze. To be turned is to face and to face is to be faced.¹⁰² If we rephrase and move away from any movement 'toward time' and instead orientate to movement 'of time': can we then approach the construct of authorial origins of time being a historical unstoppable procession? When assuming its 'how's and why's' to be the fundamental of a narrative, we also implicate two positions, that "time is historical by "nature" and history demands to be understood in historicizing terms."¹⁰³ What then, if this framing of 'turning towards time' instead reinforces the powers it aims to resist, and repeats the structuring of social realms which constitute the guarantee of temporal normative beings? Time is not for everyone.

The significance of space relies upon a double process of naturalization and neutralization.¹⁰⁴ First, it is adapted in relation to use values (see values of success; failure; naming of objects and so forth): we assume that our space is the only space and if there would be others, they gather around and not within. Secondly, we compulsively subordinate space to time, as space cannot exist beyond our consciousness, which can only be perceived when being alive. When we die, it connotes to time by making our experienced space imaginable but is not temporal. This does not deny our capability to leave marks that expand subjects of other times, but the space as expansion of ourselves does in its subordination to time change and rather becomes a question if we were able to extend history to that point that we were memorable. The challenge here is that historical time was multiple - and these multiple temporalities have coexisted out in any historical formation¹⁰⁵ which determines the process of the memorization where the chaos is out sorted by the ones who triumphed (succeeded). But if we assume that

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ See Edelman *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham : Duke University Press, 2004)

¹⁰² Ahmed, 2006, 171

¹⁰³ Edelman in "Theorizing queer temporalities: a roundtable discussion", 180-181.

¹⁰⁴ J. Halberstam, *In a queer time and place: transgender bodies, subcultural lives* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005) 8.

¹⁰⁵ Freccero, 2007, 486.

our present contain multiple temporalities, and when refusing any linear historicism¹⁰⁶ by acknowledging that past, present and future as shifting as it goes, we could conclude that time itself is multiple. If time is something we experience, queer time would allow time to be affective rather than just effective. Presume this to be our guideline, we have the possibility to touch across time, not just by imagination but also through the image: an ‘instant of truth’; dedicated to one moment yet reaching for another. Let us hold on to the phenomenology of images (and their not existing death drive) for a while longer.

If modernity is a conception of attitudes, and queerness is in its clearest state a sort of temporality; in terms of being (a disturbance of) a moment; queer would, according to its phenomenological tendencies, have the power to both establish and resist time as we know it. Continuing with Halberstam, queer is the relation between temporalities and ways of being which is always persistently present.¹⁰⁷ The notion behind ‘what if’ might be what conceptualize the differentiation of the potential and the possible in a general matter, as ‘what if’ states itself by being imaginable and therefore potential, but reinforce itself by queer horizons where the possible always is to be found within the potential. But it is also critical, because ‘what if’ demands protection, which is only given to those who ‘have time’.¹⁰⁸ Being given time requires being given space, that is, to be given the opportunity to expand oneself on the behalf of someone else. Given that history is somewhat fantasmatic as it is written through fantasy; in the form of ideology,¹⁰⁹ there are only certain subjects that are allowed the substantive conditions of time. To be aware of this as potential beholding’s, it must be possible to imagine your death as a result of being given (an acknowledged) life. Avoiding getting way to butleristic again, let us wrap it up with some endnotes on queer time. All courses mentioned above have their own rubrics and therefore their own contradictory positions when it comes to temporality. When queerifying time, we can shift our attention away from the embodiment of time as played out by former recognized knowledges,¹¹⁰ and move towards an understanding of history as something that touches upon past time.¹¹¹ To make narrative history beyond what is formerly given, we need to rework linear temporality. This will challenge our senses to be out of different order, which can expand the idea of

¹⁰⁶ Dinshaw in “Theorizing queer temporalities: a roundtable discussion”, 178.

¹⁰⁷ Halberstam, 2005, 9-10.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁹ Freccero, 2007, 488.

¹¹⁰ Halberstam in “Theorizing queer temporalities: a roundtable discussion”, 182.

¹¹¹ Dinshaw in “Theorizing queer temporalities: a roundtable discussion”, 185.

temporal experiences; “experiences not regulated by “clock” time or by a conceptualization of the present as singular and fleeting,”¹¹² but instead, experiences as orientation; a way of mapping, touching upon all of the elements time desires. That is how queer time becomes through the contextuality of space instead of the other way around. Making it less abstract, let us put this in the light of the moving image. Herein, time relies upon the capability to experience time and to adjust that potential emotion into a comprehensible storyline. In that sense, film is in need of our connotational tendencies to be in line with whatever that space desires, as it is about what we can see as much as about what happens in-between: we need to be able to picture ‘what if’. Even when this imaginary space reconstitutes normative orientation within itself, it can still be a question of queer time when placed in real time; as the experience of them will most probably differ. If we want to continue with time, we need to get deeper into space and how topias, just as the moving image, can invite (and restrict) for memories imaginable beyond our own; and how these places and images can become extensions to our storyboard.

3.2 Atopic and atopian spaces

To make upcoming discussion comprehensible, we need to establish some rather basic notions of the concepts. These will be further discussed and deconstructed as we contextualize their potential possibilities and possible potentialities. First, utopia is, in its simplest of deconstructions, based upon two terms; ‘ou’ and/or ‘eu’, meaning ‘no’ and ‘good’; followed by ‘topia’, translated into ‘place’. It is also of importance that topia, besides being translated into ‘place’ (or occasionally, ‘scenery’) can be interchanged with *topos*,¹¹³ which in itself have the complexity of referring both to ‘place/turn’¹¹⁴ and as a definition of traditional theme and formula within narratives. *Topoi*, according to aristotelianism, is the characterization which highlights places where the writer might locate which arguments that are useful within its given subject; as such, *topoi* is a strategy of invention. Dystopia then, does not need any further introduction, accept that ‘dys’ translates, without any fuzz, into ‘bad’. Then, we have the complex of atopia, stated as neither u- or dystopic but what some

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/utopia>

¹¹⁴ Note Ahmeds thoughts on ‘face/faced’ and Edelmans ‘turning towards time’.

would state as ‘reality’, and by others; as something moving between those two (im-)possible places. About ‘atopia’, I also want to put some notion on the ‘atopic’; as inherent in toposian philosophy, which within this context aims for what Butler and Dolan describes as “unclassifiable, out of place, perhaps out of order (...) the measure of the break with the past, seeing it as an opportunity to think anew rather than to lose our bearings.”¹¹⁵ Reaching for the aesthetics, we will touch upon Foucault's theory on heterotopias, but according to a phenomenological belief. This will, in line with Ahmed's queerification, be outlined a bit twisted from its origin. All to reach a point where queer topias hopefully can help us move towards the image as time-disturbing, both with and without the possibility to possess; to ‘have time’.

3.2.1 Topias and other places

Utopias, in common queer belief, does not aim for a space of (total) happiness, but instead, searches for spaces that are liveable without (total) compromised orientations. These places, located in different spaces, are offering a potentiality for the future, which according to Jones, might not result in any emancipation, but at least a moment to breathe.¹¹⁶ There are not unusual that the utopian is considered naive, and in some sense, passé. To avoid that sort of connotation, either the use of utopia needs to be exchanged or the concept of the naive. As suggested earlier, naivety have the power to disturb the ordering principle of success and could assumingly (re-)read the utopian as a resistance of the ordinary. Upcoming briefing will not position utopias as naive or not, but instead try to create clarification of how we can approach topias as a conception (and reception) of phenomenology. If it is, as Jones proposes, that queer utopias aim for a space in which to breathe, this is a text of how this moment makes all the difference.

Drawing from the work of Foucault, Jones suggests that ‘queer heterotopias’ are places wherein the normative regime can be questioned, and thereby become a space of resistance. This space has the potential to celebrate differences, but unlike utopias, can have a physical

¹¹⁵ Judith Butler and Frederick Dolan, “Atopia: philosophy, political theory, aesthetics” at <https://www.sup.org/books/series/?series=Atopia:%20Philosophy,%20Political%20Theory,%20Aesthetics> (last visited july, 2020)

¹¹⁶ Angela Jones, *A critical inquiry into queer utopias* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013) 3.

existence. Heterotopias, in its most positive of reading, can engage for radical politics of subversion and invite for dislocation of normative configurations.¹¹⁷ But just as any space of resistance, it also a result and (re-)producer of its own restrictions; promising for a potential other, on the premises of its firsts. In order to outline the potential of utopias, rather than circulating around its (im-)possibilities, former connotations of its teleological ideas must be separated from its actual potential. To become a space of interest, we have to approach queer space in emancipatory ways that does not aim to fix its utopian dreameries, but instead establishes a possible potentiality for a queer future.¹¹⁸ Narrowed by Muñoz, this concept relies upon the distinction between possibilities and potentialities because;

... possibilities exist, or more nearly, they exist within a logical real, the possible, which is within the present and is linked to presence. Potentialities are different in that although they are present, they do not exist in present things. Thus, potentialities have a temporality that is not in the present but, more nearly, in the horizon, which we can understand as futurity.¹¹⁹

This quotation needs further deconstruction. First off, it clarifies the possible as a state of 'logic real', which must be bound to the presence. In terms of temporalities, possibilities have to be in our now become doable, i.e. it requires you to be acknowledged within its current space, as you can only be present if noticed, and only reach for the object if you are willing (and offered) to extend/be extended by this possibility. Possibilities, according to this reading, is therefore only an option if it is wider recognised, and more importantly, possesses the history to become recognised. It is thereby mainly about the past then the present. In difference, potentialities exist by their connotations to and of present things, which in its abstraction, gives it a different fluidity. As stated, it does not have its being within the present, but instead invites for the concept of futurity, or in Muñoz words, have its temporalities in the horizon. Going back to earlier take on Husserl, this is what makes the potential a disturbance, as it questions historization while reaching for (new) horizons. New horizons ask us to reorientate, to (re-)act queer - to become a disorder.¹²⁰

Now, let us compare the potential possibilities and the possibility of potentials in terms of

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009) 99.

¹²⁰ Ahmed, 2006, 161.

utopia. If looking at the gallery space, or the cinema for that matter, I would argue that both are to be found, if so in its simplest of meanings. First, the white cube and cinema itself aims for the potential of possibilities. The art/film institute, no matter its physical appearance, does invite for both the past and the present. It has, for some time now, established itself as an accepted channelling of expressions, provided that those expressions have emotional accepted connotations (according to the history of acknowledged feelings). This exhibition- and screening space could be compared to any archival tendency by providing history (as we know it). It promises success, as this space, in all of its glory, determines whether something is considerable possible, by making it desirable, just slightly out of reach: but enough to make you comfortable. Therefore, it is a space which (by exclusion) searches for the potential of possibilities. Then, it is what occupies the space, that yearns for the possibility of the potential. The object itself does not establish such determination, but becomes of such, when being placed in reach of the possible, as it then is a being of a 'logical real'. The presented artform, included the art of failure, aims for the potential and nothing but. Art, just as camp, is in the need to be read, and in this reading, it does reach for the horizon beyond its performance as a material object. It is as much about knowledge as it is about the gap of it. I will come back to this in 'theories of curatorial methods'.

I do not wish for this theoretical framework to draw too much upon the theories of Muñoz. Still, there are some valuable thoughts to mention - as this is about the power of (re-)readings. The examples throughout *Cruising Utopias* tends to move towards art that explicitly redoes (oftentimes referred to kitsch). Even if the purpose of the empiricals within its context is clear, a deeper declaration of those within this framework could misguide upcoming aim - as it would state kitsch as the main key of subversiveness. With that cleared out, let me put some notes on Muñoz suggestion of queer as utopian, yet of forceful importance. What is crucial here, is Muñoz compulsive need to refuse any separation of the aesthetic from the political; what the performance can perform is a dialectical thinking and invention of emotions otherwise lost in the traditional differentiation of the art and the social (-political).¹²¹ Subtextual, we are also offered a blurred line between history and imagination, as the texts suggests for a new 'now', which resists any prevailing dominant version of the 'present' that claims all possible versions of our 'now' as (historically) given, through its past

¹²¹ Muñoz.

into the future.¹²² As an alternative to the un-reached, Muñoz gives of the concept of ‘not-yet’, a new imaginable; a wish for other knowables; that is, when looking closely, already ‘here and now’. Accordingly, both in the read of Muñoz and Halberstam, in the eyes of phenomenology, the future queerness is not of necessity what to come, but a way to reread our present, by still desire for potentiality, and accompany those into contemporary possibilities.

Utopias are partially queer; somewhat embodied somewhat desirable. A queer utopia then, could suggest for the potentiality within the utopia as something of present being. Utopia would then be as much of a yearning as it is a critique of the ‘here and now’. Following Jones, “queerness is a refusal; it is a dismissal of binaries, categorical, and essentialist modalities of thought and living. Queerness is always being made, remade, being done, being redone, and being undone.”¹²³ Jones points out that the subject as being is able to establish temporal, yet non-fixed, utopian spaces.¹²⁴ Naming these states ‘moments’, we might be able to approach what I earlier described as ‘the philosophy within the moments themselves’, a shifting state aware of its own shifting: a documented or performed moment that desires nothing but, and yet exists after its moment of shine. Whatever this second might contain, once it has tried its orientations, that moment does no longer exists in the disorientation, but instead; invites for reorientations. One could, if being bold, argue for this in-between of possibility and potentiality to be what some would call atopian (according to others; reality) and through a twist of Arendt’s thought on photography, be readable as ‘instants of truths’.¹²⁵

It might be hard to see the distinction between this chapter and the previous, and truth to be told, it is highly similar but with one distinctive bridging, which will allow us to approach the image (and its phenomenology): the theory of heterotopias. Before heading towards Foucault's attempt to exemplify this spectacle, I need to end this with some encouraging notes. To begin with, when merging the concept of queer time and space, and the wanting of the utopian, the limits are within the politics and not the emotion. This is no denial of emotions as political or the politics of emotions, but rather a call for the emotion through the naïve; and the naïve as a way of resistance. Also, if we are able to question what Halberstam

¹²² Ibid., 1ff.

¹²³ Jones, 12.

¹²⁴ Jones, 13.

¹²⁵ See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973)

describes as “our sense of time as ‘natural’.”¹²⁶ we can approach the plurality of time, not only by its historization, but also in our plenty ‘now’s’ and perhaps, deconstruct everything that tries to construct linearity as essential.

3.2.2 Heterotopias and non-places

In “Of other spaces” Foucault lines six principles that distinguish heterotopic spaces from others. I will run those by before approaching this theory by the framework of (queer) phenomenology. When examining heterotopias by Foucault's other, seemingly discrepant, ideas of the ‘thought-emotion’, we can get closer to the concept of the possibilities of potentials - and draw some useful key notes to the phenomenology of an image of an image; the movements of in-betweens. This will lead us to how these connotations of potential values are travelling between spaces; where the built up of monuments gets eyed; in the power of the curatorial. Together, they will outline the power of interpretation; the possibilities of (re-)readings; the importance of reassessments.

The first principles states that all cultures manifest heterotopias, more often than not, as sacred places. Second one says that each of those has a precise and determined function - that might shift and change over time. Thirdly, heterotopias have the capability of “juxtaposing in a single real place different spaces and locations that are incompatible with each other.”¹²⁷ Here, the cinema is used as one of many examples, as a place that invites for another space. But that the film could inherent those qualities itself is not up for suggestion - which I find to be the greatest example of such heterotopian state - but I will hold on to that one a little bit further. Forth, and may I boldly propose, the most progressive and perhaps provocative one, is that heterotopias often are, or at least act upon, ‘slices of time’.¹²⁸ Fifth principle is that some heterotopias requires rites of passage while other once come across as accessible, i.e. there are no spaces without restrictions. And finally, “the last characteristic of heterotopias is that they have, in relation to the rest of space, a function that takes place between two opposite poles.”¹²⁹ They are both performative as they constructs a space of illusion, which

¹²⁶ Halberstam, 2005, 7.

¹²⁷ Michel Foucault, “Of other spaces: utopias and heterotopias”, *Rethinking architecture: a reader in cultural theory*, ed. Neil Leach (New York: Routledge, 1997) 336.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 335.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 336.

put transparency upon other spaces as even more illusory. They constitute spaces like no other, at the same time as they are reflecting upon wider cultural and structural patterns of social orders and restrictions.

Arguing for the relevance of the heterotopia, we first need to delineate some thoughts on the phenomenology within images, both stills and the moving ones. As the discussion goes, the ‘slices of time’ will take form, not only as heterotopian, but also in the confirmation of topias; between and out of temporalities. What is interesting with the image is its sense of ‘double nature’ (much as the queer), it seems to confirm its do-abilities both by constructing; deconstructing and most importantly; reconstructing our perception of time. When the gaze travels (like a thought-emotion) so does the constitution of witnessing. The ability to preserve a moment, to capture time, except from its entertaining function, makes the camera a beholder of question marks (or was is quotations ones?). I do not claim it to be with omnipotence, that would be rather foolish, but I do believe that we need to recognize its power of questioning our former fundamentals regarding memory, especially set into time. If history, as former stated, builds upon (imagined) narratives, red threads drawn between acknowledged connotation, most often restricted to (imagined) artefacts, then the image could be understood as a space where new documentations of former denied subjects took place. This is not whether the camera is an extent of the subject or not, but rather, how image can be seen as a possible one. One could say, if a bit ‘naive’ (note its contextuality), that it challenged our conception of what and who that are able to ‘bare witness’. Proceeding in the name of low theory, the image are both ‘instants of truths’ and yet testimonies of the impossibility of truth as anything beyond the imaginative.¹³⁰ Touching upon the sixth principle,¹³¹ images provides us both with an illusion of its own being, but also possess the power of recognising wider social systems by being considered objects of evidential values; beyond everything we thought that we knew. The images were shot, they somewhat did happen, and their travelling between being taken and being interpreted (recognised), their state as in-between provide them with resistance much similar to the queer utopias, in reference to Didi-Huberman: “their phenomenology, from their specificity, and from their very substance”¹³² proves their possibility of changes. Continuing in the belief that images

¹³⁰ George Didi-Huberman, *Images in spite of all: four photographs from Auschwitz*, trans. Shane B. Lillies (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003) 31.

¹³¹ Foucault, 1997, 336

¹³² Didi-Huberman, 33.

are beholders of connotations as well as becomings of connotations, they are constituting a montage - which readability (and believability) functions differently depending on the archive. Going back to Ahmed's stickiness, the image is cooperative, clinging to the archive while claiming its own archival tendency.¹³³ Phenomenologically speaking, the image cannot become without interpretation as "to speak of an image without imagination [the archive image] means literally to cut the image off from its activity, from its dynamics."¹³⁴

Let us return to Foucault, but in continuation of (queer) historical formation. The archive is all about the counter-concept, being produced as it produces.¹³⁵ In excessively simplified, the principle of the archive lies in a historical continuity and regulations of (historical) meaning. In other words, within series and events.¹³⁶ It is in those events we can not only discover but also (re-)invent shiftings. By not taking any movement for granted, or ahmedian spoken; linear; Foucault aims to defamiliarize historical material as we know it, and show upon its assumed value as constructed.¹³⁷ Seeing this material as fragments of information, applying it to the tendencies of images, we could approach this as a montage-sequence; as these 'evidences' together writes history by being put into discourse, and then perform its archival aim of both being productive and restrictive.¹³⁸ Keeping up with Foucault, the discourse would be the practices of rules that sets the conditions (of beings), which confirms history as reproducing; according to the concept of linear time. The montage then, is not only comparable to history and its archives but also an establisher of how we are facing the world¹³⁹ and what our telos should be. Let us not get lost in the archive. Leaving the said/unsaid and moving towards reassessments (such as failure) we can proceed investigating the possibilities of 'gaps'. Maintaining phenomenological, the only way for anything to be complete is if we stay in one direction and only orientate ourselves accordingly. But this is about queer horizons, therefor, the memory is all about the 'gaps'; and its potential lies in its incompleteness. Every time something new is collected (i.e. documented or considered being a document) it rewrites former meanings. There is therefore no such thing as fixation, even if that is of common belief, and everything that enters the archive, images or not, are just instants of time, that will, as Didi-Huberman points out, create new surfaces and thereby

¹³³ Ahmed, 2006, 7

¹³⁴ Didi-Huberman, 113.

¹³⁵ Michel Foucault, 1982.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 102

¹³⁸ Foucault, 2006, 26.

¹³⁹ Ahmed, 2006, 171.

other narratives.¹⁴⁰ It seems as we are back to time through the strategies of camp.

Considering images as beholders of knowledge, and openers of such (when getting interpreted); they do not only constitute for a moment of seeing, but also a cause of experiences.¹⁴¹ It is when we place those in the archive, it becomes with inner and outer conflict, as the experiences no longer lies in its moment of becoming, but also in its moment of becoming of a 'now'. When contextualizing images, we make them imaginable, perhaps even fetishized, by ascribing them a nature they did not intend. The intention will never be known, as it goes beyond its originator and that is the heart of its phenomenological qualities within, as an inherency and self-confirming validation. Yet, it is yearning to be read to reach any sort of self-reflexiveness. It is when we 'think the image'¹⁴² while keeping it as 'instants of truths'¹⁴³ that we finally can put this in a heterotopian awareness. Not that the image is of heterotopian matter, but instead, it moves (in-)between the heterotopia and the utopia. The heterotopia can let us approach the image as a beholder of 'double nature' and comprehend its numerous of readabilities. Because even when we were absent, it did happen, and as this fairy goes, our history (and the images/imagination of it) are of multiple temporalities. Images themselves are not unimaginable, but like utopias, reminds us of the unreachable. But by being present, both through possibilities and potentialities, it invites for heterotopian tendencies by letting its 'gap' be the 'witness' (of our absence and itself).

Even if I do not consider the image itself to be of heterotopian tendencies, it certainly plays upon those rules. Comparing this to the heterotopian yearning of gathering artefacts, playing with time by outlining our past; in order to restrict our future;¹⁴⁴ images also invites us elsewhere. The moving image tends to act utopic that way reminding us of the imaginable but still unreal; sort of impossible yet always as desirable. Besides being bodies in and out of space, they are with most certainty signatures of time; tied to what happened but always of outreach of what will (be-)come. Still, it is restricting (and restricted). It is this time bending operation that is constituting the heterotopian; a space of examination; a creation of surfaces; a passage for each and every artefact to become by being lined up according to the principle of ordering things. And just as they become, we become. What differs the image from the

¹⁴⁰ Didi-Huberman, 99.

¹⁴¹ Didi-Huberman, 84.

¹⁴² See Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London and New York: Verso, 2009)

¹⁴³ See Arendt.

¹⁴⁴ Foucault, 1997, 4.

heterotopian, is its state of shifting, and somewhat always resisting inherency; images recognizes truths as ambiguous. This orientates the image away from the heterotopian and slightly towards the utopian. Even if they are sites with no real place; a yearning slot presenting itself to perfection; turning something (often everything) upside down; they cannot be real by the 'logical'.¹⁴⁵ Still, they are indicators of other sites, showing upon our restrictions, and they are, without exception - inviting for other ideas.¹⁴⁶

Approaching the image, both still and moving, through the conception of bended time; a beholder of both now and then; being captured in one moment but never bound to that instant, in its ability to be read and in its disguise as utopian; imaginable yet unreachable; always phenomenological; and never still; let us line out some of the principles of Foucault's 'thought-emotions'. First off, a quick mark as this reading goes: this state is only possible after the shifting of the subject; the subject of knowledge; a space where we are spectating while getting spectated. It is the concept of modern age, where anyone who observes stays in line to be observed¹⁴⁷ (remember the 'double nature' of our facings). As the image is both in its moment of being captured and in the becoming of value by its potential future placing, it is always touching upon both grounds - and somewhat comparable to this subject of modern age. When we are orientating through and towards the image, we are no longer visitors on the premises of viewing, we become reader-spectators, and are invited to a possible 'thought-emotion'. This, as Foucault romantically induces, is a case where emotions travels and makes our soul euphoric; impulsively spreading from one soul to another.¹⁴⁸ Perhaps a daring thought, but what if we were to suggest that this tendency of the 'thought-emotion', in similarity to its own phenomenological currency, where to be located within the moving image itself, as a traveller (in-)between the utopian and heterotopian, willingly atopic, would this call on new experiences, demanding for new sorts of knowledges? This would invite the concept of the experiences to be out of two different, yet co-dependending, meanings. On one hand, experiences would have the capability to eye the knowledge which Foucault explain as the 'sets of conditions'; knowledge as the construction which culture stands upon.¹⁴⁹ And on the other, it would suggest for experiences to behold the possibility to ease the subject from

¹⁴⁵ Muñoz, 99

¹⁴⁶ Foucault, 1997.

¹⁴⁷ Foucault, 1966/2005, 48.

¹⁴⁸ Foucault, 1982/2001, 1067f

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 1065

given norms¹⁵⁰ and offering an outpacing with the potential of alternative courses, and thereby, new sorts of resistance.

Given that images are ‘instants of truths’, ‘moments of time’, a fragment of totality, providing its being beyond knowledge and towards experiences we can deconstruct the events it was intended to preserve by giving it potentials over time (between narratives). First, we have to approach the image as a part of a montage that is always under (re-)construction where the linearity of time is proven imagined.¹⁵¹ The ‘thought-emotion’ invites us for other potentials, as it travels through the experienced and by experiencing. Even if the image encourages for time and experience to be becomings side by side, and to some extent occasionally merged, they are never of the same world. While time exists by shifts and turns (fading’s and deaths), the ‘thought-emotion’ is (in-)between, consistently stronger than time alone, searches its way into the ‘wrinkles of time’.¹⁵² It is in these wrinkles we can shift from potential possibilities to possible potentialities, by providing our ‘gaps’ with value, letting the chaos of unknowing occupy for new experiences. Allowing for these to exist through interpretations of moving images, ‘camp as method’ constitute other readings of montages as what we can and cannot see, acknowledging them to be out of equally great importance; letting the ‘slices’ question positions of the signifier and the signified. Aiming to reach and deconstruct this duality we need the curatorial; the discussion of self-reflexiveness and positionalities.

3.3 Theories of curatorial methods

Now, let me begin with an important notification: the curator is not translatable into the director. But with emphasis on the process of curating (except for the discourse of ‘the artist as curator and the curator as artist’) there are an enormous amount of similarities within their methodological practises, most significant, the necessity to be aware of being in process and what your position is within that context. In a simplified attempt to explain these grounds one could refer to three steps: the gathering, its selections and the exhibit. It goes without saying

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 1065

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 1068.

¹⁵² Ibid., 1069

that this process is as much about excluding as including, and to truly comprehend such exclusion, we need to approach theories of curatorial methods; the movement between these choices. Then, if we allow ourselves, we can see how curating is of as high relevance within the department of cinema as within any art: as curating, comparable to the moving image, aims to explore as it exposes; to decontextualize by reframing. In one sense, according to curating, everything acts as ready-mades, yearning for some sort of coherency, a space where it can be attached to experiences and become alive through another's interpretations. This is the power of the curator, the acknowledgement that shifts an object to a subject (of matter), recognising its possibility to possess a surface: giving it its skin. When an object gets provided with a skin, it transforms into an artefact; something occupied, loaded and powered by values. This is its manifestation as well as its death; its power of movements; its sorrows of becoming. Travelling from one position to another never goes without pain, as new orientations always requires a moment of being in-between; becoming denamed; an instant of disorientation. This is not about methodology; this is the theories within them; a seek for its phenomenological approaches and potential (de-)framing of space. This is the theory which position us as extensions to *Hemlock forest* when we finally reach the analysis. But first things first, this is the final addition on the conceptualization on subjectivity and the conversational.

3.3.1 Contemporaneity (and its agencies)

The linguistic root of curating is to be found in the latin etymological root *curare*; to take care of. This undertones what Obrist states; “making art is not the matter of a moment, and nor is making an exhibition: curating follows art”¹⁵³ as something living, constantly moving and always under reconsideration; as we take care of in relation to something and within everything. It is in the sense of taking care that nothing becomes something, where objects are given values; going from being anything to becoming artefacts. When we curate we higher their position, as “it is the use we give them, socially determined and created that has the potential for being critical/political or to become, for the purpose of this discussion, a curatorial activity.”¹⁵⁴ Curating as agency searches to establish meaning through action,

¹⁵³ Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Ways of Curating* (London: Penguin, 2015) 24f.

¹⁵⁴ Luis Silvia in *Curating media/net/art*, ed. Sabine Hochrieser, Michael Kargl, Franz Thalmair (Vienna: Norderstedt, 2007) 69f.

giving order to things by new linearities creating an effect as the affectiveness occurs.¹⁵⁵ It becomes a sort of place making of a world picturing, investigating its connectivity, claiming its (possible) contemporary being. When asserting somethings currency by contemporaneity, we are shaping our present meanwhile we valuing our past, in the desire to locate and determine our future.¹⁵⁶ Curating asks for the narrative surrounding the object, and searches beyond temporalities and revalidates the white cube, aiming for spaces, as “it must encompass all other art: art from any and every past, current art that is not contemporary, as well as projective, future art.”¹⁵⁷ Accordingly, curatorial methods aim to shift and keep the object moving; meantime she has to stay put, deepen her knowledge and act intermediary in the process. Keeping record, aiming for transparency, an exhibition can reach for a collective discourse, reconsidering orientations by formulating its own desired guidelines.¹⁵⁸ Curating is enmeshed in time but not restrained by its being, it is embroiled to temporalities but still not imprisoned. Always devoted to space yet constantly anxious about place. There are no rules, but plenty of assumed approaches, emerged from former orientations. One could say that “to exhibit (in the broad sense of show, offer, enable the experience of) contemporary presence and the currency that is contemporaneity as these are manifest in art present, past, and multitemporal.”¹⁵⁹ While contemporary art often relates to date of birth, contemporary curating is not connected to time-bound imperatives, but rather construct time-given narratives to one certain space, regardless outer time-based restrictions.

Curatorial methods intend to change through exchange, without deluding the self-reflexivity curating itself demands.¹⁶⁰ When exhibiting we are putting a selection of own choice into new existence; demanding one or several objects to share space, shedding new light to this certain constellation: creating new meanings. It is a space entangled to a ‘thought-emotion’ travelling between subjects¹⁶¹ that collectively investigating the objects. A parsing, under constant translation from the curatorial, to exposure, and therein, an interpretative language.¹⁶² This is no different than the work of language in everyday use, in the idea that it creates realities through a production of meaning rather than being pre-reflection of former

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012) 28.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹⁵⁸ Franz Thalmair in *Curating media/net/art*, 55.

¹⁵⁹ Smith, 29.

¹⁶⁰ Obrist, 16.

¹⁶¹ Foucault, 1982/2001.

¹⁶² Smith, 30.

meaning itself. This requests the subject to go from being a viewer into becoming visitor, transform itself into and within context; to become an expansion of that (curated) field.¹⁶³ It is in that specific expansion the space becomes contemporal, blurring the time frame beyond the art itself, creating a spatial and phenomenological movement collectively constructed; an on-going discursive space wherein different temporalities can be produced, displayed and experienced. Endowing this is not in the power of the curator, but making the process of such visible, putting contemporaneity on the map in the aim for deconstruction, is within the capacity of curatorial methods.¹⁶⁴

In a comprehension of a space as carrier of meaning through the construction of curating - knowledge must be understood as the element which those artefactual tendencies relies upon. If we approach knowledge as something unfixed and moving, in its mobility as well as its affectiveness, we can see how the production of knowledge is experimental as it always searches and enforces itself through experience. Mary Jane Jacob, in reference to Dewey, states how this is realized through the concept of art by getting materialized through experience while requiring to be experienced (in order to be). Art can be seen as a manifestation of experiencing experiences, an experimental and progressive process of mapping knowledge.¹⁶⁵ This is notable in the fact the art never claims itself to be true, but is rather claiming by the right of interpretation: and to be embodied by being interpreted. To experience art is in that sense to think of art, to consider its potential meaning because “first, knowledge creation is a dialectic process. It moves between doing and reflecting, making and thinking (...) Secondly, knowledge creation is a relational process. It is the making and articulating of relationships or connections to knowing in the world that constitutes thinking as an experience.”¹⁶⁶ Curating offers guidelines of that potential meaning and dares us to put that thought on display; the act of thinking. Curatorial methods reaches for a sort of affective insight, asserting its power of being cotemporally and to become identified through that act.¹⁶⁷

Art (of any sort) is incorporated in its making and reflectiveness, always dialectic, given

¹⁶³ Obrist, 21.

¹⁶⁴ Smith, 30f.

¹⁶⁵ Mary Jane Jacob, “Experience as Thinking”, in *Art as a Thinking Process*, ed. Mara Ambrožic and Angela Vettese (Berlin: Sternberg Express, 2013) 100f.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Smith, 31.

connections along the way, as disconnected as it is reconnected; staying and aiming for the relational.¹⁶⁸ This continuity of always being under reformation is what makes it progressive. Those tendencies confirm the arts inherent state of being curatorial within themselves, as it never assumes anything beyond its current temporality. To curate these states, letting imaginations be of relevance, expands and challenges the concept of ‘the death of the author’¹⁶⁹ by never affirming anything as finished, but instead highlighting the interpretation as the act of construction - and inviting the visitor to become a participant; a co-creator of the art itself.¹⁷⁰ The writing becomes as we read, and the blurred line between the author and the reader are embodied through the curatorial concepts.¹⁷¹ It is sort of delineative, the curator’s notebook, in constant movement, desiring for shapes without linear thoughts; always somewhere in between the deductive and inductive; staying in the process of refining and filtering.¹⁷² It is in that movement the boundaries of time are getting lost, as it is as much about the moment the art was captured as it is in the moment it is exhibit; and in all of that nonlinearity, it is about what moment of time the image aimed to re/de-construct.¹⁷³ Once again, space differs from place, as space reconcile those otherwise separated fragment into one breath of existing. When we are losing time, or at least the hierarchical concept of such, new orientations are made (possible). By re-orienting never versed paths, values and their connotations also shift its motion, and thereby change their significance of emotion. In other words: invites us to consolidate through language formerly unknown (or partially unvisited).

The concept of curating constantly searches for what could be described as the coexistence criterion, wherein all artwork is seen as producers of sociability and as transposers of realities, or the conveyance of such realities. The fundamental in the reading of those transaction lies in the question of how one could exist within that space the art defines, and how art is be characterized by its surrounding space (as we enter).¹⁷⁴ This entering is comparable to how Smith discusses the curatorial as a way of thinking about the art of our time, or another time, and the devotion to manifest those elements as elements through public visibility. In this, somewhat imaginary model, curating allows for the presence of the audience to be of true meaning and to become the potential reassessment of former art-

¹⁶⁸ Jacob, 2013, 109.

¹⁶⁹ See Roland Barthes “The death of the author” (London: Fontana, 1977).

¹⁷⁰ Yueh Hsiu Giffen Chengin in *Curating media/net/art*, 76.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 81.

¹⁷² Thalmair in *Curating media/net/art*, 55.

¹⁷³ Smith, 40.

¹⁷⁴ Thalmair in *Curating media/net/art*, 97.

historical significance.¹⁷⁵ It is essential that the visitor is allowed for a critical interaction, and it is of great importance that the curator provide the current space of such disagreement, in itself and as an encouragement to whoever enters. This danger of losing reputation, according to Thalmair, is what frameworks curatorial methods as something codependently living.¹⁷⁶ It lies in the necessity of doing every object to a subject (of matter), presenting works through former critical and historical judgment, and deconstruct those through dialogue. There is a high risk by doing so, both rely on judgement while claiming different significance; to stay transparent in its appreciation, understanding, interpretation and finally - its greater impact.¹⁷⁷ Curators plays with assumption that is not possible to confirm, and constructs the narrative accordingly. What is recurrent in the different depictions of curating is its position of being in 'the gap' - or to be 'the gap'. 'Gap' in the meaning of not belonging, in the sense of playing with time, in the concept of (de-)construct between positions that are essentially unknown and always guessed.

It all comes down to knowledge; as knowledge opens for further questions as it is a creation of a dynamic process.¹⁷⁸ To know is to wonder, and to keep it open-ended is to challenge time and space. Rather than being stated, knowledge is referential and changing. Or as Jacob puts it, "knowledge production is not just about attaining the condition of having knowledge, but also about being in the process—the process of having an experience that holds the potential for meaning beyond itself."¹⁷⁹ Again, we can locate to the experience of thought and the essence of thinking of experiences. Claiming knowledge as process requires us to linger to the unknown while staying awake for potential references that might occur through new events. A curated space depends on (con-)text; a cluster of knowledge that informs, by language and by the unsaid. Something exhibited comprises endless of voices, and the only power a curator possesses is which voices to be raised.¹⁸⁰ The curatorial works spatial, as it assumes by settings, and physical, mentally, affective and in some sense imagined, and temporal; by presuming (self-)reflexiveness through those settings. This is what makes curatorship all about the conversational, and, as Smith notes, makes it comparable to theories of semantics as it engender and provoke meaning by the relationship between upper

¹⁷⁵ Smith, 40f.

¹⁷⁶ Thalmair in *Curating media/net/art*, 57.

¹⁷⁷ Smith, 44-45.

¹⁷⁸ Jacob, 2013, 102.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 102-103.

¹⁸⁰ Smith, 47.

mentioned elements.¹⁸¹ Curating, much as camp, becomes its brightest when generating twists, turns and tensions through and within chosen space, because that is when it causes knowledge: by being a process.¹⁸² This definition of knowledge is the process Smith suggests as the qualitative difference between curating and the curatorial, whereof the last “carries a potential for change.”¹⁸³ About the political, as previously noted, it is impossible to include without excluding. The balance and awareness of these two, where exclusion is bound to happen, is what confirms the curatorial as political. This act is somewhat mandatory and requires the curator to bear notion of the complexity as this is the principle of making a selection.¹⁸⁴ Then again, the curatorial can be discussed as ‘thought’; a critical thought that avoids any embodiment, but instead, stays in question.¹⁸⁵

When it comes to the concept of the contemporary, we must acknowledge its potential antithetical inherency. The contemporary act out of two misconceptions. First, it embraces the most up-to-date as a definite of all that is present and thereby determines an imagined future, and simultaneously, it questions every part that constitutes the idea of something as up-to-date.¹⁸⁶ It determines something contemporaneity both by time and by the idea of time. This is good exemplified in the art - attached to its own time and responsible for the marks it makes - regardless time of interpretation. In this we can define two settings. One is when we are in contemporary with the artist and we can approach the artwork in its own claim of time; in other words, when we share temporality. The other one is if we are not contemporaries and the artwork instead opens up for another sharing, in a past time; at least an imagined other time, which could in terms of experience act temporary, but according to timeline cannot be.¹⁸⁷ Contemporaneity is a state of the present filled with different pasts, each bound to its time and place through the conceptualization of space. It is experienced in the united significations that is otherwise discussed as ‘memories’.

Then it was that definitional problem about the curator, as this title is on constant move in its reassessment of settings for artistic, curatorial and critical practices; and as all of these are praxis’s themselves, the curatorial is fixed in an interrelationship. Perhaps it has extended

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 48-49.

¹⁸² Jacob, 2013, 102.

¹⁸³ Smith, 51.

¹⁸⁴ Silvia in *Curating media/net/art*, 55f.

¹⁸⁵ Smith, 51.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 142.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 144f.

above anything para-curatorial and instead has “become what might be called “the infrastructural.””¹⁸⁸ Leaving the curatorial subjectivity, in the knowledge of this being something constructed, we can approach the possibility of curatorial intervention. By moving towards what Krya coins as ‘curatorial agency’,¹⁸⁹ we can comprehend how contemporary art equals contemporary life through the restrictions and visions of past contemporaneous.¹⁹⁰ If knowledge exists in a relation between the making and the naming (of this making); and thinking is an experience:¹⁹¹ does not all attempts to constrain curatorial time become impossible as experiencing a thought always is as perishable as it is corruptible? Yet “the world has so be made to mean”¹⁹² and that it is to be found in moment of losing time as linear. The curatorial never aims for the present without the past, and either does it deny its subjective stand.

... perhaps the main agency in curating is non-agency or the shortstop of agency [...] Curating stops the continuous flow of information (art, etc.) in a subjective way to issue a (political, poetical, theoretical,...) statement about what is happening right now and perhaps to create a "cumulus" of discourse around this statement at a certain given time and place.¹⁹³

3.3.2 Conversational art (and the silence/d)

The concept of conversational art seeks to explore how silence often claims itself into spaces wherein objects are conceived and labelled as art. When the objects shifts in label, and titled as art by getting contextualized and (re-)read by interpretation, the silence always screams with its presence. This, according to Bhabha, is often assumed to be the appropriate behaviour around aesthetics.¹⁹⁴ Silence is also of ‘double nature’, and it is of great importance to underline the difference in silence and silenced, as the first can invite for expanded inclusion while the other exclusively exclude. An awareness of silence as didactic, and a state where knowledge reaches beyond language, can also encourage for resistance within: through

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 253.

¹⁸⁹ Josia Krysa in *Curating media/net/art*, 56.

¹⁹⁰ Smith, 253.

¹⁹¹ Jacob, 2013, 101.

¹⁹² Obrist, 13.

¹⁹³ Thalmair in *Curating media/net/art*, 58.

¹⁹⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, “Conversational Art,” in *Conversations at the Castle: changing audiences and contemporary art*, ed. Mary Jane Jacobs and Michael Brenson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998) 39-40.

the power of subjective imagination.¹⁹⁵ Silence is embedded in all moments of aesthetics, sometimes fragmental and sometimes in its absence. The instance of silence is also that space where spectatorship itself gets formulated, establishing the distance between the viewer and the viewed; it is that distance which separates object from subject; an affective condition much similar to a presence of someone silent. In the presence of object/silent subject, the ideological notion of audienceship becomes constituted.¹⁹⁶

Comparable to the foucauldian archival theory of the unsaid, silence works in both ends, in being the distance between and the possible reformulation. Silence, as uniting and dividing, requires acknowledgement of the language of criticism.¹⁹⁷ Conversations, as a collective act, builds upon the idea that the former mentioned distances can be overcome, or even subvert, by a radical shifting; embedded in the curatorial (as metaphor). Here, the curatorial is referred to its constant shifting of state, as ongoing (r-)evolution of the discursive experience of being in dialogue “there can be no shortcut to the democratization of artistic production or circulation.”¹⁹⁸ Democracy relies upon a culture of common belief that the questions of value and knowledge is to be found in cultural practice and the public policy, and finally, in the concept of ‘good citizenship’.¹⁹⁹ Art, respectively, is embedded in issues of ethics - and restrained to ‘expected readings’. We have to acknowledge that what intermediates between intentions and expectations is the compulsion and extension of the art itself, which could in that sense be understood as a space for the unplanned.²⁰⁰

Conversational art, aiming to (de-)construct its objects and its viewer through dialogue, is devoted to examine contextual probabilities by defining the validations and values of aesthetic experiences. When accomplishing conversation as curatorial process, it shifts the distance otherwise established between art and audience; between intention and expectation by challenging our idea of space within the artwork itself. It makes us reconsider, rethink and rephrase the constructions surrounding and regarding aesthetic values. The conversational aims to rise and approach questions as “what kind of “knowledge” do we expect from the practice and the presentation of art? How does conversation change our relation, as artists and

¹⁹⁵ Jacob, Mary Jane, “The Curator’s Task: opening up space and time”, in *Curator the museum journal: focus on awake*, vol. 49, no. 3, (2006) 284.

¹⁹⁶ Bhabha, 40.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 39-40.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 40.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 40f.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

audiences, to cultural experience and the social transformations of our times?”²⁰¹ When visiting the space of the art, different meanings are connotated from various of experiences which gets connected by the art. The space itself is a way of connecting experiences, and the thought of such; and becomes memorable as something elsewhere and has the power to locate memories in the time being; to become the memory of a place where memories were collected. The art then, which triggered those connections, also becomes images of an actual life beyond its own intended being.²⁰² If we then move towards the act of conversation, we can move away from the idea that values lies in a confrontation of objects, or that it would contain any sort of predetermined truth, and instead approach a conversationalist view where linguistically, symbolic and metaphorical tendencies play along in the construct and concept of interpretation.²⁰³

The widely confusing and bizarre idea that art would present and end itself and be a barrier of any kind of truth regardless, is well exemplified in Hito Steyerl’s meta-concept of the ‘occupation of art/the art of occupation’. Here, the meaning of occupation is twisted and turned until it reaches the most minimal definitions possible.²⁰⁴ For one, occupation does not necessarily articulate for any result or aims for any conclusion at all. That does not make occupation out of value, but rather, allows it to be what it aims to be. Occupation is only made possible when it claims out of something else; occupation is somewhat socially didactic which questioning other states just by its being. In one end, occupation is potentially never-ending process, as its value depends on outer perception. But it also confirms its own narrative, as one meaning of occupation is that it both begin and ends within itself.²⁰⁵ If we were to change work of art into occupation of art, would we be able to distinguish the different theories of art as inherent and art as readable? Could occupation lead us towards art as performative, an activity, a process and a barrier to the deconstruction of knowledge?²⁰⁶

When approaching the terms silence and occupation as suggested above, we can suggest for an even more complex understanding of Bhabha's concept of conversational art. Even though they are mainly discussed as shortstops, those two have not yet been put into dialogue. If we

²⁰¹ Ibid., 40-41.

²⁰² Jacob, 2006, 285.

²⁰³ Bhabha, 41.

²⁰⁴ Hito Steyerl, “Art as Occupation: What Happens to Knowledge?”, in *Art as a Thinking Process*, ed. Mara Ambrožic and Angela Vettese (Berlin: Sternberg Express, 2013) 224.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 225.

were to read those within the contextual contingency that conversational art suggests, their quality as shortstops might also be their power to generate subversion by the tension between them. Let us say that the occupation is comparable with the object, and the subject observing this object symbols the silence; what conversational art then indicates, is that the space between those two states shrinks as the social and cultural predetermined values are exposed. And, if pushing this one step further, are equally capable of experiencing/be experienced. At least in a phenomenological understanding of the connotational as attachable on every surface (skin included). They are both representing reproduction, reflection and reality.²⁰⁷ The art contains a past, revealed and translated into the conversational through its installation. It is both the subject and the object; both present and absent at the same time,²⁰⁸ and the shifting of identification between art and audience; history and memory; past and present; as the dialectical strategies become unavoidable. When we fusion those positions, through shifting and by the conversational, we can reach what Jacob describes as ‘the mind of don’t know’, i.e. a creative space that encourage for the unknowing and that lets unsurety strengthen the creative chaos as a process of importance.²⁰⁹ Or, the creative chaos as a knowledge of importance.²¹⁰ If we are able to enter this place, time can widen and the feeling of space can go beyond its physical dimensions, we can reach the space of time.²¹¹ The curatorial, as a subject of conversational art, can open up for the space of time by staying unsettled in their own experiences and letting chaos, in question of both past and present, to fill ‘the gap’ that otherwise distance the subject from the object. Once again, we are back to time, the time in creating and the time in experiencing. “Having time and space can lead us to other realms beyond the moment and the place we occupy as we bring our own meanings to art.”²¹²

Contextual contingency, in the spirit of conversational art, makes itself visible as it addresses the time and place for both the art and the audience. It is a question of negotiating cultural and social diversities, without forgetting its privileges or reaching for any sort of totality. While guiding, it also must stay open for unplanned directions.²¹³ It manifests both a personal testimony and aims for political witnessing; it is pleased in being unpleasant. It must be imperfect, or at least desire the imperfection, to be productive. The practice of the

²⁰⁷ Bhabha, 42.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 43.

²⁰⁹ Jacob, 2006, 285-286.

²¹⁰ Jacob, 2013, 102.

²¹¹ Jacob, 2006, 285-286.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Bhabha, 44.

conversational is all about the political as it searches for the representational. It enables us to approach shared beliefs, otherwise embedded in cultural judgement, as just one potential significance of the arts and not as its entire truth. The art, by conversations “seek an identification with their “subjects” that is profoundly ambitious and ambiguous.”²¹⁴ The art of conversation then, does not attempt to make the world whole, but rather to read its contradictions and to challenge the rhetoric idea of inclusion and exclusion as opposites.²¹⁵ Accordingly, the conversational is an act of occupation, as it tries to converge these two states into one agency, aware of that its claiming also was inhabited by someone else before.²¹⁶ It does not deny the past as relevant, but rather, suggests its way of thinking as something experienceable for others. It should go without saying that one of the constitutions of a conversation is the knowledge of listening, not just the act of how to listen, but also, the awareness of what listening, in terms of didactics, can create. This goes beyond the concepts of object versus subject, being observed or to become the observer (who’s who stays unknown), this is about the state in-between. Listening is to receive from someone what is missing in ourselves; or at least, to be aware of our own ‘gaps’ through the presence of this other. When listening, we might be able to acknowledge our sameness through differences, or the other way around.²¹⁷ One might even say, that listening is the highest state of the conversational - since it ties our experiences together, even when they are not read as combinable. This sort of listening is maybe the state of silence Jacobs refers to, as a place of ‘the mind of don’t know’²¹⁸ as a possible source of chaos; a space of knowledge (production).

Theories of curatorial methods, with emphasis on the conversational art, is my final example of how ‘camp as method’ uses strategies of readings in order to establish itself. In line with former chapter, this also suggests movements and reflexivity; a placement of object and subject into context in order to interpret. But in difference, this insists on the crucial value of positioning oneself and suggests for power of reading out of subjectivity, no matter what the art itself proposes. This highlights the aspect of camp to be an act out of claiming; the proposal that camp is something we ‘do’ as we ‘read’. Again, in terms of ‘silence’, we are handed the importance of what we cannot see; allowed to reread between lines; to approach images between images; to let the film be out of several dimensions; through time; through

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 45-46.

²¹⁶ Steyerl, 226.

²¹⁷ Bhabha, 46.

²¹⁸ Jacob, 2006, 285-286.

space; through oneself and in this case; through Moyra Davey (and Chantal Akerman).

4. Analysis and further conceptualization

There is now time to demonstrate the appliance of camp. Showing for the methods of camp as; a possibility between ‘coded languages’, a shifting positioner of ‘the signifier’ and ‘the signified’, and a requirements of self-reflexiveness by ‘the camp eye’, we have now reached the point where all of this will be put into a potential discourse of *Hemlock forest*. I will manifest how ‘camp as method’ can help interpret Davey’s redo’s of Akerman’s artistry into questions of rereading’s and how those traces play upon connotations relying on a shared knowledge of Akerman. This will also be mirrored in how Davey positions self-reflexivity through the imagined subjectivity of Akerman; until they are completely merged. By demonstrating for such fluidity, I hope this can reflect upon how ‘camp as method’ both becomes our way to deconstruct *Hemlock forest* and be read as Davey’s method within. As suggested by ‘the conversational art’, it is in the many dimensions of viewing; and being viewed. Conceptualizing what constitutes the four unities of ‘camp as method’, we must now approach: the subject, the object and the conversational reading between; and their contextual preferences.

4.1 Introducing Davey

Despite the many refusals of Sontag, including my own, her name seems to find its way into most of my findings, including this one. As all roads lead to her notes, so does Moyra Davey's attempts to search for her own artistry in “Notes on photography and accidents.”²¹⁹ In the essay, written in 2007, Davey confesses early on “to never having had a handle on Sontag's *On photography*.”²²⁰ Yet, her name and thoughts appears to guide her many insecurities in the validation of photography and the happy accidents of their existence. Davey's lovely essay on death is built upon fragments; fragments of quotes, fragments of thought, fragments of life. Fragmentary of such has become the signature of the Canadian artist whose work moves across photography, text and video, often within the same piece. For this examination of ‘camp as method’; by its doings and readings, one of her more recent works has drawn my attention: the video *Hemlock forest*. In addition, her artists book *Les*

²¹⁹ Moyra Davey, “Notes on Photography and Accident”, in *Long Life Cool White: Photographs and Essays by Moyra Davey*, ed. Helen Molesworth (New haven: Yale University Press, 2008)

²²⁰ Ibid., 83.

goddesses/Hemlock forest, which is partly based upon *Hemlock forest*,²²¹ will be considered sourceful as it provides for a further dimension regarding the propulsive fixation of ‘images X images’; images within images; images of images; images replicating images; images historicizing images; over all, images remembering images by being; connotational; referential; performative; reflexive; and yet subjective. Applying camp, I hope to demonstrate how camp is not only the method of my reading, but also the method of Davey’s creation and how these curatorial wise stands combined. As my deconstructing reading will show for, I believe the answer to ‘X’ is a conceptualized Chantal Akerman - and how her (non-)presence is what defines Davey's essayistic methodology.

4.1.2 Davey’s artistry: sneaking up on Hemlock forest

“Not long ago, I asked my son if he kept a diary, and he answered: “I’d rather live my life than narrate it.” I’m piecing together fragments because I don’t yet have a subject.”²²²

As I repeatedly re-watches *Hemlock forest* in an attempt to narrow it down into a comprehensible format, there is this one characteristic of Davey’s aestheticism that I, almost repulsively, comes back to: her capability to address dailiness, without becoming ordinary. There is simplicity to the expressions, yet always complex by thought. This combination is somewhat thrilling, as I find myself resting while thinking of thoughts and quotes I believed I had forgotten all about. Through the history of Davey’s films, there are several characters that reoccur. One, which drives the (non-)narrative of *Hemlock forest*, but is also to be found her other works, as *Less goddesses* (2011), *Blue notes* (2015) and her most recent project, *i confess* (2019), is her echo-acting voice over. While she paces back and forth - most often in her New York studio - she reads out loud what comes to her by in-ear: a pre-recorded text, written and read by herself. The recording does not only occasionally slip through, it also gives a halting to the voice, an obviousness to its parallel of existences: a reflectiveness of self-reflexivity. Another one is to be found in her references to others, always by note, and often through her reflections of life in relation to their creations (and sometimes, to their

²²¹ First chapter illustrates her former video *Les Goddesses* (Moyra Davey, 2011) while the second contain text and images from *Hemlock forest*.

²²² Davey, Moyra, *Less goddesses/Hemlock forest* (Brooklyn: Dancing foxes, 2017) 98.

biographies). *Hemlock forest* contain several of anecdotes; from her life and others, whereas an examination of the life of Chantal Akerman appears to be the closest thing we will get to a narrative in the otherwise non-linear and fragmental video slightly over forty minutes. The scenery of Davey's films always reflects upon everyday life, almost flirting with the restrictions of photography, most often shot by a fixed camera. She plays with the paradoxes between an essay film and the video essay, rehearsing while shooting, often self-portraying through reflections of mirrors and windows. It relies itself upon a montage, reusing previous work while providing a research serving for self-discovery and establishes itself somewhere between an act and a re-enactment (of herself). The images and their imagery are compelling, but any general summary of her aesthetics seems impossible. It is as she is claiming her methods as she tries them out, examining nostalgia yet heading for the future, letting the process to become the framework.

Somewhere, in the centre of the quotidian, the beauty of life arises by its many flaws and failures. Despite its heavy work on memory, the film comes across as unsentimental. Even when Davey's films take place out through highly personal events, the crossovers between paraphrasing and remembering invites for other and outer emotions. It is as I am taking notes by following hers (which I am) as every topic presented already feels familiar, as I knew where her knots and knits reached for. In all her imperfection, playing with the concepts of others in the aim of understanding her own, the videos take form. They are always fragmental. Requesting for my re-experience of others, my know-hows of processes is widened, hearing her questioning what she reads (and somewhat beliefs) makes me wondering about our perceptions of the life of arts; and the art of life.²²³ We must be aware of the reoccurring wanderings, that in its repetitiveness goes from pacing to a flânerie between fragments, letting us be a part of her examination of trying out a method, or perhaps, just a passing thought. By rewriting, rereading and redo her patterns over and over, the hierarchies between her different references and her own gets blurred out, as any thought matter. I believe that this might be the core of her signature, the extension of her artistry, what makes the dailiness everything but ordinary. There is nothing in her art that puts me in place, instead, it makes me want to be a part of that videos cinematic space. Examining herself through meditations on works of others, Davey explores questions of 'you and I's' and invites for an essayistic experience disembodied the self as an expression of subjectivity: and

²²³ Halberstam, 2011.

instead able for the essay film as form to stay centred. The visions and voices of *Hemlock forest* enforces me and I keep wondering about her images in images; her images of another's images. I cannot stop thinking about Chantal Akerman and her images between images.²²⁴ Driven by what comes across as artistic impulses, Davey's work provides for fragments of different lives to collide, and it is through close attention those accidents have been captured and reread so many times they finally became something else.

4.1.3 Reaching for Akerman

"We loved each other, we went our separate ways, I don't remember why, and now we love each other. Even our shadows are in love when we walk."²²⁵

When reading Davey there is something inevitable in her references to Akerman that cannot be overseen, it is almost as she is curating herself through the image of her. In the voice of *Hemlock forest* there is not as much an urge of Akerman as there is a self-validating confession through her art. It is as the gaps and lacks of Davey's arts becomes reachable by playing with the films (and memory) of Akerman. It invites for new knowledge (and arts) by acknowledging its restriction, and endless possibilities, through the methods of interpretation.

The amount of interpretations of Akerman's films and installations are close to endless and most often crossovering. They provide for numerous of readings and does not seek for categorization of any, but instead, aims for possible threads within her artistry. Some

²²⁴ See Anne Eakin Moss, "A Woman with a Movie Camera: Chantal Akerman's Essay Films", *The Essay Film: Dialogue, politics, utopia*, ed. Elizabeth a. Papazian & Caroline Eades (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2016)

and Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Durham: Duke university press, 1999)

²²⁵ Chantal Akerman, *My mother laughs*, trans. Daniella Shreir (London: Silverpress, 2019) 187.

examples of the recurrent themes are feminism,²²⁶ psychoanalysis,²²⁷ identity politics,²²⁸ deconstructionism²²⁹ and deleuzian epistemology²³⁰; all intervening with the intertextual work of Akerman. And then, there where the themes of phenomenology²³¹ and time²³²; and their common ground and examination of Akerman's reach for hyperrealism. Regardless sectioned as avantgarde (whether it is French or American) or within the more general terms of essayistic cinema (and the more explicit takes on essay film) they all seem to have one common denominator: they all suffer from 'akermania'.²³³ At least if we were to assume that 'akermania' is another conception of subjectivity; a reframing wherein the different uses and contextualization of the term are put into dialogue on one single premise - to narrate the life and films of and by Akerman.

That Chantal Akerman's work surrounds itself with expressions and questions of subjectivity have probably been stated over a thousand times. Sometimes it is discussed through her own appearance and sometimes through her mother; most often, by their relationship. Other times

²²⁶ Mayne, Judith, *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990)

and Rich, B. Ruby, "In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism", *Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Diane Carson, Linda Dittmar and Janice R. Welsch (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994)

²²⁷ Stephen Heath, "Difference", *Screen*, vol.19, no.3 (1978) 51–112.

and Brenda Longfellow, "Love Letters to the Mother: The Works of Chantal Akerman", *Canadian Journal of political and social theory*, vol.13, no.1-2 (1989) 73-90.

²²⁸ Janet Bergstrom, "Chantal Akerman: Splitting", *Endless Night: Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories*, ed. Janet Bergstrom (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999)

and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, *Identity and Memory: The Films of Chantal Akerman* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books., 1999)

²²⁹ Ivone Margulies, *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyperrealist Everyday* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996)

and Alisa Lebow, "Memory Once Removed: Indirect Memory and Transitive Autobiography in Chantal Akerman's D'Est", *Camera Obscura*, no.52 (2003) 34–82.

²³⁰ Maria Walsh, "Intervals of Inner Flight: Chantal Akerman's News from Home", *Screen*, vol. 45, no. 3 (2004) 190–205.

and Bruno, Giuliana, "Projection: On Akerman's Screen, from Cinema to the Art Gallery", *Sense of Cinema*, no.77 (winter 2015)

<http://sensesofcinema.com/2015/chantal-akerman/projection/>

(last visited july 2020)

²³¹ Veronica Pravadelli, *Performance, Rewriting, Identity: Chantal Akerman's Postmodern Cinema* (Torino: Otto Editore, 2000)

and Jenny Chamarette, "The disappearing work: chantal akerman and phenomenologies of the ephemeral", *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3 (2013) 347–356.

----- "Burlesque Gestures and Bodily Attention: Phenomenologies of the Ephemeral in Chantal Akerman", *Phenomenology and the Future of Film: Rethinking Subjectivity beyond French Cinema*, ed. Chamarette (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 143-186.

²³² Ivone Margulies

and Andras Balint Kovacs, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950-1980* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 2008).

²³³ Saito, Ayako "Akermania: Movement, Subjectivity, and the mother in the films of Chantal Akerman", *The Meiji Gakuin Review*, part 1 - 3 (March, 2003 - 2005)

it is found in the aesthetics of the concept of an essay film and now and again it shows itself in the duration of time; in the hyperrealism. It is an artist with many names, but I like to read them all into self-reflexivity. Because when trying to create an algorithm, there is none, except from her presence (non-presence included).²³⁴ Any attempt to compress all of the work of and by Akerman within this space would be ridiculous, hence I will narrow it down into the three films explicitly mentioned and/or replicated several times in *Hemlock forest*; all being objects of subjectivity, time and space. First, we have Akerman's first feature film, *Je, tu, il, elle* (Chantal Akerman, 1974), constructed by sections of three first person titles, followed by an enigmatic and an ambiguous tu/you. The film circles around 'Julie', played by Akerman herself, restlessly pacing between emotions in the most sparsely furnished room. We get to follow her attempt to write and rewrite letters, arranging them on the floor, taking her off her clothes, just to put them back on. She rearranges the furniture, she lies at the mattress, she eats sugar; without any changed set of affection. It is somewhat a montage of (non-)happenings, like photographs, glued together by a rhythmic voice-over, challenging the voyeuristic by challenging the perspectives. The second film I would like to pay attention to is *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (Chantal Akerman, 1975). To some, this might be the most undramatic 201 minutes of film they will ever conquer, as the storyline could be summarized into one sentence. The plot takes place during three days in the life of a widow in her home, being one with the daily routines, caring for the household, her son, and the sexual needs of lonely men; whereas she slowly becomes detached to what she has always done; to her own being. This is a film about time, a story of being trapped in time, or at least, being aware of it. Lastly, the film that entries *Hemlock forest*, more particularly, is *News from home* (Chantal Akerman, 1977). The film, often put into the category of avant-garde documentary (this remains questioned), consists of long takes of locations in New York while we are being guided by the voice of Akerman as she reads out letters from her mother between 1971-1973. I am given a documentation of space; of the city, of their distance, of the images and the voice; a space of attach- and detachment.

This is not another text about Akerman, this is a text on Davey's work. Neither is it a text on what camp was, it is a text on what camp can be. Allowing for new grounds, I do not wish to compare those one by one, instead, I aim to show how claiming camp is all about claiming

²³⁴ Eakin Moss, 167-191.

camp, and how the work of Davey is conceptualizing such belief; practicing the core of the agency of camp. All through the moving image, and those in-between.

4.2 Hemlock forest: images of images and 'low-hanging fruit'

The morning after Davey films 'the subway shot', a replica of an image in Chantal Akerman's *News from Home*, she learns of her death. *Hemlock forest* circles around this image, the anxiety she feels in her desire to recreate the scene - the fear of 'failure'. The heart-breaking news will become the landmark in Davey's attempt to decide upon a subject, what would turn out to be the subject of herself; of and through Akerman. In all of her elusiveness, Davey finds comfort in the exploration of subjectivity within Akerman's films, pushing it until her own uses of 'you' merges into *Je, tu, il, elle*. As she travels between narrators, her essay balances between an imagined memory and the loss of a potential one, it is a playfulness where questions of the curatorial (by space) and subjectivity (by time) fusions. She extends *Hemlock forest* by letting it take place within the rules of *Je, tu, il, elle*, in reference to herself, to her son, to Akerman; all in constant shifting; all within a conception of another's concept. This is where I want to begin, at the 'you's' and the dreadful 'low-hanging fruit'; and how its mobility is its stability.

The first scene in *Hemlock forest* is a traveling shot capturing the trees and vines, while Davey states "the shot seem promising, but when I look at them later, they are absolutely ordinary. I call this type of filming "low-hanging fruit," and it rarely adds up much because so little is at stake."²³⁵ Still, this image is her opening scene by choice. The voice is as monotone and jagged as it is for the rest of the video, it is a scene built on the complexity of being about nothing yet everything; an opening which reveals that this is about subjectivity; also to be found the strategies of aesthetics. At the second scene, she retells fragments from *News from home*, giving it glory and letting us know her urge to re-create 'the subway shot', and as the thought crosses her mind she gets aroused, she gets anxious, because "this scene is the opposite of "low-hanging fruit" ²³⁶ she says while filming her pacing shadow, so present

²³⁵ *Hemlock Forest* (00:00:00-00:00:32) and Davey, 100-101.

²³⁶ *Hemlock Forest* (00:02:35-00:02:55) and Davey, 98.

yet not within frame. The reflections of the sun give us a hint of what to come (by shadows, by mirrors, by voice), can one be self-reflexive within a self-created heterotopian space? About 8 minutes in, Davey is still and 'I' and her son figure as 'he' while Akerman mostly goes by name. But this is when the 'tu' in *Je, tu, il, elle* becomes the 'X'; the gap, the fluidity, the memory and the witness of the reader-spectator.²³⁷ The camera is fixed and in the foreground we have Davey, going back and forth, in and out of the picture, constantly out of focus. Instead, a window in the back is sharpened, and on this window there is a photography of a young man: perhaps an image of her son, perhaps an image taken by her son, it does not matter, what matters is what it symbolizes; her son. This artwork, "Untitled (Eric, after Hervé Guibert)" was part of Davey's exhibition "Portrait / Landscape", a collection of images that frequently appears in *Hemlock forest*. May I also mention that the chapter on *Hemlock forest* in *Les goddesses/Hemlock forest* starts with a still from precisely this scene; while this might be the breaking point in the video, it has become the starting point in the artists book. While pacing, she says what I consider to be the fusion of them all, Davey states "and now Kollwitz's reality is upon me, as is the reality of Akerman's mother when Chantal moved to New York and didn't answer her letters"²³⁸ and the scene is cut into an image of a bed covered in handwritten pages - much like in *Je, tu, il, elle*. Giving herself the permission of the format of a letter, Akerman turns into the 'you' that both includes Davey, and if one wishes, her son. From now on, Akerman will not go by name, and just a moment later, before entering 'the subway shot' Davey sighs "eventually it sinks in that you're no longer here to give us more."²³⁹ This is the embodiment of an instant between the signifier and the signified - this is without doubt a moment of camp, it is "the unavoidable overlapping of subject and object of perception, of read object and reading subject, with the overstructure of preconceptions and pre-understandings that the subject brings to the object."²⁴⁰ Not only does Davey perform the act of camp as she reads, she situates me as a body of perception. This suggests for self-reflexivity; in her art, in my reading, in our meeting. Putting this under the lens of queer phenomenology the lineation of the three becomes what Ahmed introduced as extensions where Akerman represents the space and Davey the subject, while I remain as the invisible visitor (yet invited to act upon the curatorial i.e. given the power of interpretation). This is a two-way-street, to conclude, 'the space of Akerman' is of recognition and thereby a

²³⁷ See Barthes.

²³⁸ *Hemlock forest* (00:07:42-00:08:05) and Davey 100.

²³⁹ *Hemlock forest* (00:11:45-00:11:55) and Davey, 104.

²⁴⁰ Cleto, 10-11.

positioner of acknowledged orientation. By reaching for her, Davey allows *Hemlock forest* to expand; to become a subject (of matter). When extending through the art of Akerman, *Hemlock forest* also expand what is considered reachable within ‘the space of Akerman’, and allows for reorientations (read: rereadings).²⁴¹ Here, the concept of subjectivity becomes of other meaning - because of presence of camp. This is about the space and the subject; but it is also about time and ‘low-hanging fruit’.

4.2.1 Hemlock forest: derailed by Akerman (and time)

Cut in from a black frame, we are once again fronting photographs by Davey, the three of them are taped to the wall, touched by the sun, framed by the shadows. This is the moment Davey confesses her ‘akermania’, this is when she indulges with what she has become, she is “now officially derailed by Chantal Akerman.”²⁴² She continues by referring to Ivone Margulies, picking apart her theories on Akerman, declaring her struggle to find the essence of her word combinations, and retells on all the failure of those who tried. This is the part where Davey will mention *Jeanne Dielman* for the second time by quoting ‘you’ on how to not “compromise between myself and others.”²⁴³ This differs from the first time when Akerman still was Akerman and they had not yet merged. Then, Davey was shooting a train from the outside between the trees and vines, jump cutting back to the window with the photography of/by her son, even more central than before, just to state that *Jeanne Dielman* is epic (and Akerman’s grief of having made the perfect film at the age of twenty-five).²⁴⁴

In difference to *Je, tu, il, elle* and *News from home*, *Jeanne Dielman* does not find its way into *Hemlock forest* by image, instead, it exists by its reputation: the assumed knowledge of its holiness. Not only does it differ from the essayistic and aesthetic format, the (non-)presence of Akerman is also contrasting. Besides guesting as the voice of the neighbour, Akerman is mainly displayed by auteurism, by being a filmmaker. Even if this is highly representative of subjectivity, this is not where Davey finds comfort, instead I would argue it lies within two distinctive expressions. On one hand, she finds it in the portrait Jeanne

²⁴¹ Ahmed, 2006.

²⁴² *Hemlock forest* (00:14:45-00:14:55) and Davey 104.

²⁴³ *Hemlock forest* (00:16:20-00:16:35) and Davey 105.

²⁴⁴ *Hemlock forest* (00:05:25-00:06:25) and Davey, 99.

Dielman. One could argue for the explicit remarks and their connotations, such as the home and (the imprisoned) space, her son and (the potential) loss, her pacing and (the portrayed) time; all to be recollected in the ordinary of *Hemlock forest*. But on the other, I believe it is to be found in the absence of *Jeanne Dielman* - a showcase of another monumentalization different from the fragmental: a contrast of experiencing time and to montage it. This is where *Jeanne Dielman* becomes a memory more than anything else, and by recalling it as such, it becomes one out of many pieces in another storyline, just as history always been written. Always remember to stay connected to the reachable memories in order to create new ones. I have now reached the other aspect of 'X'; Akerman's images between images and Davey's images within images. Let us move towards the curatorial and the possible success in (queer) failure.

As any montage of images, there must be images between, that is the glory of it all. The images themselves are 'instants of truth'²⁴⁵ as they constitutes 'slices of time'.²⁴⁶ This is why the film, and not only the cinema (as suggested by Foucault) could be seen as a heterotopian, as its format could illustrate "a function that takes place between two opposite poles."²⁴⁷ The film invites for such illusions, both in itself and when being situated. And as the curatorial proposes, the object then (read: the image), always comes with a past, a present and a potential future. All of these under the consideration of shifting, as their positions changes depending on narrative; the conversational. Simpler said, the film is forever dialectic. This is of course not visible when we stand as viewers but when allowing ourselves to be visitors, to be part of the context, our readings become an expansion of that field.²⁴⁸ When interacting, the time frame becomes blurred, creating a phenomenological movements: both collectively and subjectively, which welcomes for different temporalities and affects to be experienced. The curatorial then, might be considered the essence of the images between images; never letting anything to stand isolated.²⁴⁹ Even if I would like to suggest that this potential lies within all moving images, there are strategies of aesthetic allowing us for this interpretation more than others. One of these are durations - the invitation of experiencing time.

That Akerman is considered an artist of durations is definite. How this is pictured differs, and

²⁴⁵ See Arendt.

²⁴⁶ Foucault, 1997.

²⁴⁷ Foucault, 1997, 6.

²⁴⁸ Obrist, 21.

²⁴⁹ Smith, 30f.

so are the readings of these. Even if *Jeanne Dielman* might occur as the obvious choice of discussion, I rather want to face towards *News from home* and *Je, tu, il, elle* as these are the one reinterpreted, at least by image and imagery, in *Hemlock forest*. There is a slowness in them so compatible yet oppositional. But in their differences, there are also similarities, such as the narrating voice-over: both translating and contrasting the images. Same goes for the camera's fixity, in its humbleness, almost photography-like, letting what is being in front be its only movement (with a few exceptions so small and tracking, it does not come across as moving). It is in this stillness I am allowed to the 'thought-emotion',²⁵⁰ given time to connote; to search for the phenomenology of the images; to find the images between. The time gives me permission to infuse to that space and to context myself into its storyline. *News from home* and *Je, tu, il, elle* is as much about what we can see as it is about what is absent, just as any moment (of time)²⁵¹ - just slightly durated. Now, I believe these states of Akerman's images between images is what Davey tries to recreate by montaging, as she is "piecing together fragments" because, quote on quote "choosing is easier than inventing."²⁵² In the eyes of camp I will now propose for these recreations to be located within two quite different expression in *Hemlock forest*, one in an explicit redoing and the other in an implicit rereading, let me begin with the redo's.

First, we have to go back to 'the subway shot', the scene which I claim to be the core of *Hemlock forest*, the outburst of a much more complex story than one of just replicating. This scene is approached by several attempts and expressions. We are early on informed about Davey's "urge to recreate this scene" and the anxiety it evokes as "this is not how I have worked, I've always done my own scenes."²⁵³ Davey's wish to recreate a contemporary version somewhat falls short - not because it does not success in its aims - but it becomes rather ordinary, it becomes another image of 'low-hanging fruit'; it is just another replication without any re-association. The success of the production is her queer moment of 'failure', which will be what puts value to her other fragments, the images surrounding 'the subway shot'. By voice-over Davey makes her process visible and invites for deconstruction, and by 'failure' she allows herself to reach the capacities of the curatorial methods,²⁵⁴ not letting it be out of result but to stay rather chaotic and open for new knowledge, and letting 'the

²⁵⁰ Foucault, 1982/2001.

²⁵¹ See Bhabha, Jacob, Arendt etc.

²⁵² *Hemlock forest* (00:04:10-00:04:30) and Davey 98.

²⁵³ *Hemlock forest* (00:02:00-00:02:25) and Davey **.

²⁵⁴ Smith, 30f.

subway shot' to become her own. About 25 minutes in we are for the last time displayed this haltering attempt, but this time it cuts into the scene, which we can only assume is the original, from Akerman's *News from home*; the opposite of 'low-hanging fruit'. It was never about recreating the image; it was about the process of reaching for Akerman, who's image now becomes another's image between images. The second redo, less of a replication yet very similar to the original, is a scene where Davey undresses herself, sitting on a bed, eating and writing in silence. This communicates to the scene in *Je, tu, il, elle* where Akerman, placed on a mattress, eating sugar. What differs this attempt from the one in *News from home* is what I believe to be Davey's yearning to reach for Akerman rather than the image, much like *Jeanne Dielman*, Davey identifies with the portrait. Again, it is all about process, as she is situating herself into the scenery surrounding Akerman, reminding us about the fusion of 'tu'; there are no longer any distinction, everything we are about to see and hear is under fluidity. This image is as well cut into the one from *Je, tu, il, elle*, for a few second, just to cut back to Davey.²⁵⁵ But this is not the sequence of Akerman eating, instead, it is when she writes, and as their writing merges, Davey plays upon the act of Akerman, letting the silence highlight the embodiment and the images differences becomes displayed. This is as much an image between images, where the portrait of Akerman lies between the portrait of Davey. Remember, allowing for camp is allowing for redo's, which by interpretation extends not only the object intended, but the story and subjects surrounding it. This is why time within the expressions of camp cannot be seen linear as history is forever changing by its readers; letting the in-betweens take new course.

Now, for the implicit (re-)readings, I want to face towards Davey's photographs; the anchor of her piece. As I have shown, these images are recurring throughout the video, almost rhythmically manifested. When Davey announces being derailed by Akerman, she turns to Margulies, finding it "necessary to mention terms and phrases familiar to me" and paragraphs following: "Cinematic praxis. Freud's Dora. Lacanian theory. Reified allegory. Reflexivity. Split nature of subjectivity. Strategies of distanciation. Subject formation. To-be-looked-at-ness. Visibility. Visuality. Will to allegory."²⁵⁶ While listing, a jump cutting montage of her photos are on display, but they are not covering the image, instead they are a part of it. The photographs are consistently contextualized. Some of them are taped next to each other in

²⁵⁵ *Hemlock forest* (00:18:50-00:25:00)

²⁵⁶ *Hemlock forest* (00:14:45-00:16:35) and Davey, 105.

varying formations. Others are portrayed alone. But they are never without reflections of their space; the space of the video. Framed by light, shadows and their movement, and most often, touched by the breath of Davey herself. She brings them ‘contemporaneity’:²⁵⁷ adding new life. While these might have been ‘happy accidents’²⁵⁸ of their time, she now validates them within the time of that space; she is showing us the power of images within images and letting the description of Akerman become a possible reading of herself; she provides for a rereading.

The photographs becomes one of many expressions declaring Davey’s presence, insuring us that she was never lost. These photos are the pitstops of *Hemlock forest*, the guidelines of Davey’s examination of a ‘reorientation’. What began as framework (the work of Akerman) ends up being her ‘desorientation’²⁵⁹ wherein she loses her subject. Re-finding and defining her subjectivity Davey mirror herself, by image and by reflection. The only time I am detached to Davey and deprived from her artistry, is in the centre of it all; it is in the nagging ‘subway shot’. Because this non-presence, one of the many aesthetics of Akerman, does not translate well - it is too close. Not only do I lose Akerman, I am about to lose Davey. This might be the reason of the consolidated ‘tu’: in order to interpret, Davey must leave the concept of re-creating, and instead, letting her work play upon the connotations of Akerman. *Hemlock forest* offers us images of Akerman; of Davey; of her son; of their ‘you’. “She’s fascinated by you, doesn’t want to be a voyeur, knows she is doing just that”.²⁶⁰ While Akerman’s films allows our mind to wander between images, Davey’s photographs is what saves her from being just a voyeur of this state, and instead, establish for new connotations gathered from her own storyline, curating her process while pacing between fragments. There is no fine line to draw, there are only abstractions. But when she lets herself go from the restrictions of another, she will find that “you are the opposite of low-hanging fruit”²⁶¹ and the ‘you’ does not lie in the embodiment of anyone, not even in Akerman - but in *Hemlock forest* (and the images within). This is why the ‘X’ is only a conceptualization of Akerman and why her (non-)presence becomes Davey’s essayistic aesthetic rather than her protagonist. She concludes that “she feels alive when she’s behind the camera, when she’s shooting her

²⁵⁷ Smith.

²⁵⁸ Davey, 2008.

²⁵⁹ Ahmed, 2006.

²⁶⁰ *Hemlock forest* (00:37:45-00:38:40) and Davey, 115.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

own scenes, when she is making something”.²⁶² This is a documentation of reaching for that conclusion. If anything, the phenomenology of *Hemlock forest* is what camp is all about; the queerified time; the atopian space; the curatorial formation. It is a video which not only provides us with redoing’s but also encourage us to reread what Davey once has read.

²⁶² Ibid.

5. Camp as method: final discussion and new beginnings

The main aim in this thesis could be narrowed into two headlines; first, to prove that ‘camp as method’ is possible, and second, provide for the potentials of ‘camp as method’. This was examined by three themes, beginning with a reassessment of camp into a question of method, followed by an examination of possible extensions to the concept of rereading strategies within camp, and last: a conceptualization of upper through an analysis of how Moyra Davey’s video *Hemlock Forest* constitutes camp by redoing’s and references to Chantal Akerman’s artistry. By demonstrating for theories of queer phenomenology and connotations: queer space, time and topias: and theories of curatorial methods, its agencies and the concept of ‘conversational’ art, I expanded what I consider to be the essence of camp; ‘(de-)coded language’ and the ability to read in-between; the shifting of ‘the signifier’ and ‘the signified’ and what such disturbance can constitute; and ‘the camp eye’, where ‘the eyes of the beholder’ becomes a signature of self-reflexivity and positionality within the agencies of camp. While the section on camp was to suggest for new readings of camp into method, establishing its possible functions through existing outlines, the chapter on ‘theories as method’ became the extension demonstrating for how these possibilities could be furthered expanded into potentials within a larger philosophical discourse than camp itself. Making such suggestions useful the conceptualization on *Hemlock forest* was crucial, giving these philosophically phenomenological aspects a context. This section embodied ‘camp as method’ as useful beyond its own being; verifying that camp, in contrast to ‘occupied art’, would not ‘begin and end within itself’, but instead, demonstrate how each and every attempt to apply its tendencies has the possibility to extend the concept even further.

When I first started with this thesis, my original idea was to examine *Hemlock forest* in comparison to Davey’s artists book *Les goddesses/Hemlock forest*. I believed this to be a strong case for demonstrating for how shifting of material based upon the same empirical could be read as a referential potential within itself. I am still curious of how that could play out considering it would be even more of metaconceptual by referring to her references towards her own artistry and then back. I believe this to be possible – within another context. But as I re-watched and reread, it became clear that Akerman’s presence was not to ignore.

Realizing how Davey redid performances of Akerman's so highly subjective and self-reflexive work brought attention to 'my camp eye'. If approaching Akerman's films; *Je, tu, il, elle* by its fluid personas, restless motion and pacing rhythm, *Jeanne Dielman* out of its durations, imprisoning and portrait, and *News from home*, not only for 'the subway shot' but especially its narrative structure by letters - aren't they all camp? *Je, tu, il, elle* is often mentioned within a queer spectrum; both for its portrait of sexual desire and shifting characters. *Jeanne Dielman* becomes compulsively categorized within feminist films (despite her disagreements) and its political potential. And *News from home*, except being a beautiful postcard, is questioning what is to expect of a moving image and not – and is consistently referring elsewhere by being structured by the words of her mother. They all share what I considered being the key of *Hemlock forest*, a self-reflexive; self-examining; self-positioning portrait – out of presence and out of absence. I would argue that Davey does not only aim to re-create Akerman's camp-confirming themes, she also reread Akerman's embodied experiences into something reachable within her own art. And is that not an act of the conversational; a deconstructional examination of aesthetic experiences; putting object and subject into dialogue; shifting the signifier and the signified? There is no doubt that Davey has practiced 'camp as method' in her art. What became difficult where to provide for my reading through 'camp as method' while defining hers as such.

What I came to realize when executing the performative of 'camp as method' while analysing *Hemlock forest* were how crucial the prospects of the curatorial was. As a former scholar in 'curating - towards video and film' I have earlier been surprised how its concepts and considerations often stays within its own field. Whenever touching upon cinema, it tends to be out of the obvious - restricted to the screening as phenomenon. Curating as theory, when described within the agency of the curatorial, is rather ideological while also inviting for positioning - of yourself and object of choice. I am aware of the risks when turning towards what might be out of self-fulfilment, but I do also believe that the theories of curatorial methods, when read out of camp and guided by queer phenomenology, can provide for theories and understandings often lost in the translation into film. When merging critical theory into dialogue with the curatorial agencies we are able to expand possible readings and make new experiences reachable when interacting with art. Introducing such concepts I believe the curatorial to be a potential contribution within moving images as it suggests for theories of: the moving image and the exhibiting platform: the moving image and the montage within: the moving image and the audience; overall, another format of perception,

reception and what experiences they might constitute. This is comparable to what I outlined as the four mains of ‘camp as method’: the subject, the object and the conversational reading between: and their contextual preferences. What differs and is a contributing factor of camp into the curatorial is the emphasis on references. This is not non-existing within a curatorial agency, but is rather embedded in the connotational to one’s own experiences, while camp prefers finding these in common memories or the re-enactment of those, which provides for the moving image to be a beholder of such connotations alone. Then again, ‘camp as method’ can approach memories and commons out of a wider spectrum, where experiences do not rely within the subject or object but in the communication between.

Taking upper manifested towards questions of memories and the film as a carrier of moments, even the forgotten ones, ‘camp as method’ and its potential readings of culture references, are useful in a much broader context than what is exemplified herein. It traces archival uses and contextualizes these findings within concepts of self-reflexivity; wherein one’s subjectivity is significant and require us to expand founded traces with experiences of different sorts. In other words, ‘camp as method’ asks us to rethink reusing’s as rereading’s and redoing’s. This could be argued applicable at every film out of an intertextual nature, perhaps it is, but such argue would also be a simplification of the many dimensions camp offers. From this point forward, in agreement with outlined theories and methods, I would suggest for further research to develop a more explicit extension in the continuing on the four foundations that ‘camp as method’ proposes. Avoiding getting lost in the circuits of queer theories; wherein everything can be queer if situated as contradictive; if the subject is not confirmed by context: camp constitutes for the conversational of that space; claiming for the queer moment as a place of new knowledge rather than a subject of being. Accordingly, ‘camp as method’ cannot be set into practice without providing for all four domains, which is also its contributing factor as both theoretical, methodological and performative. Continuing on the empirical herein, it would have been natural to expand on the examples from Akerman, but also to turn towards Davey’s book *Les goddesses/Hemlock forest*, and the screening of *Hemlock forest* at La biennale de Montreal; and perhaps, even her exhibition “Portrait/Landscape” which photographs are at display within *Hemlock forest*. This contextual analysis would also highlight the great importance and potential of curatorial methods; within its own field and as an extension of the field of moving images. When it all goes down, besides its theoretical contributions, I want to claim ‘camp as method’ as a potential practice of curatorial agencies; if this where to be constituted, we would also be

provided with a further expansion of the theoretical: as it is out of the performative and conceptual.

Staying true to camp, the possibilities is somewhat endless; which is probably the conflicting announcements of its death; and its immortality. What I have demonstrated is most inevitably conceptual, hoping to testify for its mobility and the potentials of that state. As the method suggests for intersections of interpretations its concepts are constantly debatable, changeable and discursive. As all before me, I agree to disagree, with only one definite conclusion in reach: camp must be out of sensibility and camp is not for everyone - but the potentials of 'camp as method' can be.

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