

**THE BOOK  
AND THE RHIZOME:**

**The implications of and alternatives to  
linear logic, with special reference  
to artist books**

**Tuscani Cardoso**

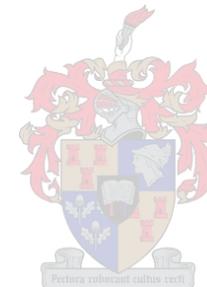
*Supervisor:* Prof. Keith Dietrich

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logic, with special reference to artist books

by  
Tuscani Cardoso

*Thesis presented in fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree MA in Visual Arts  
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*Supervisor:*  
Prof. Keith Dietrich

## DECLARATION

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DATE: 27 October 2014

## ABSTRACT

This thesis entails an explorative and argumentative study that is concerned with the importance and relevance of artist books, as substantiated by art-historical research into the way in which people present, organize and interpret knowledge about their world as observed in the history of the ever-evolving book; as well as related critical and theoretical discussions surrounding language and art.

The structure of the thesis is based on the triadic treatment of book types as presented in philosophers Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the Rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). Each book essentially stands for a particular system or paradigm of thought that is described in terms of a biological structure. These are the Root book, the Fascicular book and the Rhizome. The root and fascicular structures are shown to be ubiquitous within dominant Western habits of thought, emphasised by the tendency to organize elements around a singular, central motif and, as a result, to create binaries. Although useful for certain practices in life, these patterns of thought have potentially problematic socio-political implications, and they are especially limiting with regards to creative work. An argument is developed in defence of the third book type, the rhizome, as a means of thinking in a non-linear, a-centred and more complex and connected way about art, oneself and one's world. At its core, this thesis works towards establishing a theoretical framework for the practice of artist books, showing how, in numerous ways, artist books encompass this rhizomatic way of thinking.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis omvat 'n verkennende en argumentatiewe studie wat gemoeid is met die belang en relevansie van kunstenaarsboeke, soos gestaaf deur kunsgeskiedkundige navorsing oor die maniere waarop mense kennis aanbied, organiseer en vertolk, soos dit in die geskiedenis van die altyd-veranderende boek gesien word. Die tesis sluit ook verwante kritiese en teoretiese besprekings rondom taal en kuns in.

Die struktuur van die tesis gebruik as basis die drievoudige indeling van boektypes in die filosowe Deleuze en Guattari se teorie van die Risoom in hulle werk *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). Elke boek verteenwoordig in essensie 'n bepaalde sisteem of paradigma van denke wat in terme van 'n biologiese struktuur beskryf word. Die drie tipes is die Wortelboek, die Fassikulêre of Trosboek, en die Risoom. Die wortel- en trosstrukture word uitgewys as alomteenwoordig binne dominante Westerse denkgewoontes, waar dit beklemtoon word deur die geneigdheid om elemente rondom 'n enkele sentrale motief te organiseer, en sodoende binêre opposisies te vorm. Alhoewel dit nuttig mag wees vir sekere lewenspraktyke, hou hierdie denkpatrone potensieel problematiese sosio-politiese implikasies in, en hulle is besonder beperkend vir kreatiewe werk. Die tesis ontwikkel verder 'n argument ter verdediging van die derde boektype, die risoom, as 'n wyse om op 'n nie-lineêre, a-sentriese en meer komplekse en verbonde manier oor kuns, die self en die wêreld te dink. Die kern van die tesis is gemoeid met die vestiging van 'n teoretiese raamwerk vir die praktyk van kunstenaarsboeke, en dit wys hoe kunstenaarsboeke op velerlei maniere die risomatiese wyse van denke omvat.

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## Introduction

This thesis forms part of my research for my Master's of the Arts study in Visual Arts and serves as a conceptual and theoretical framework for my practical work. In essence, my research revolves around the thought systems that govern presentations of knowledge. I look at the historical development of the book and connected discourses surrounding language and art that specifically inform my own artistic practice within the field of artist books.<sup>1</sup> This research is a culmination of all that has interested me most in my journey from Graphic Design to Fine Arts and it occurs somewhere at the intersection between the two.

As knowledge about the complex world in which we live has changed and developed, so too have the ways in which we have organized, presented and interpreted this knowledge. However, the historical influence that those in positions of privilege and power have had on the production and distribution of information often renders past forms of presentation at least

1. I will be explaining what this field of practice and study entails throughout this thesis. Broadly speaking, the terms artist's books or artists' books (singular, plural), book art, or book objects all refer to artworks that are informed by the book or are realised in the form of a book (Dietrich 2011:5). In this thesis I use the term artist books to refer to the practice so as to avoid any confusion, as well as the term *bookworks* at times to describe specific artworks.

too limited and at most highly problematic for today's connected and expanding world. This is the first part of my research problem; it revolves around the limitations that have been imposed on creative thinking, productions of subjectivity and contemporary art practice by certain habits of thought. I focus specifically on Western society's propensity for hierarchy, order and fixity, as demonstrated in the formal and conceptual aspects of books and approaches to art.

The second concern of my research problem is the widely acknowledged lack of a suitable and intellectually rigorous theoretical framework for artist books. Most critical projects focus primarily on artist book practice and work to categorize or provide definitions for them. This situation is partly due to the fact that the artist book is a relatively unheard-of and new field of art production and study, thus requiring such validation; and partly because of the practice's elusive nature in connecting with and combining other practices (e.g., painting, literature, design, sculpture, etc.), which allows for it to be too easily subsumed within theoretical frameworks of which the primary focus is really on those other fields.

Although pedagogical projects are necessary, the deficit in research that grapples with critical and philosophical ideas, devalues the importance and relevance of artist books as an independent field of contemporary art practice. Furthermore, and perhaps even more upsetting, is the fact that it neglects important aspects of understanding and analyzing artworks and practice of some of the world's most celebrated artists (including Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, Jo-

seph Beuys and John Baldessari, for example).

My aim is to extend existing knowledge of the thought systems behind the way that people have presented and interpreted knowledge, and to explore the potential of what these can be through practice-led research. I accomplish this by following the same strategy used by philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their seminal work *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987:3-25)<sup>2</sup> in which they describe and problematise<sup>3</sup> certain types of books to contrast these against an idealized type detailed in their theory of the *Rhizome*. Each book type generates a historical and theoretical discussion regarding presentations of knowledge, with an emphasis on books and related discourses that surround language and art, and the socio-political implications of these fields. I wish to assimilate deductions about the significance of my own work, as I practice within the field of artist books in response to the concept of the Rhizome.<sup>4</sup> I am concerned that artists need to be sensitive to whether they are either perpetuating, or challenging and moving forward from the traditional and dominant modes of thought that limit creative thought and are behind problematic social structures, as a result of the way in which they produce and design their work. My argument is that artists can fall into the latter category by thinking 'rhizomatically' and creating work that is rhizomatic in nature, and I demonstrate how artist books in many ways embody such a rhizomatic practice. I might say that I stand on the shoulders of giants,<sup>5</sup> as I develop the defence of the rhizome through the mode of artist books, and in doing

2. From this point I will be referring to the book as simply *A Thousand Plateaus*, as it is commonly referred to in most supporting theoretical analyses.

3. That Deleuze and Guattari *problematise* the book-types is perhaps not a sufficient description of their approach. The book-types represent thought that the philosophers wish to go beyond and provide an alternative to in the concept of the Rhizome. That they use these book types to create *contrast* with the rhizome book, which they argue for, is certain. Nevertheless in order to create some understanding of this contrast I use this term.

4. A Rhizome is a botanical term defined as a "continuously growing horizontal underground stem which puts out lateral shoots and adventitious roots at intervals". Deleuze and Guattari use the image of the Rhizome to describe thought and literary or creative work that has the same characteristics in all senses of the definition: 'Underground' might imply hidden knowledge or a sense of rebellion, 'horizontal growth' and 'lateral roots' implying non-hierarchical thinking in terms of social structures, and so on. I have of course only provided very flip-pant descriptions here; part of the work of this thesis is to understand what this theory means and what the concept of the Rhizome might offer to the artist.

5. Deleuze and Guattari et al.

so I argue for their relevance and the relevance of my own work.

In my undergraduate degree I studied graphic design, and it was during this time that I developed a passion for typography and editorial design.<sup>6</sup> The graphic designer is inclined and expected to interrogate both images *and* words as essential tools for communication. In the preface of his book *Meggs' History of Graphic Design* (Meggs & Purvis 2006:ix), historian Philip Meggs explains that “[s]ince pre-historic times, people have needed to give visual [as opposed to only verbal] form to their ideas and concepts, to store knowledge in graphic form, and to bring order and clarity to their information so that they might better communicate”.<sup>7</sup> People from various fields have attempted to meet these needs but, as Meggs continues, “[i]t was not until 1922, when the outstanding book designer William Addison Dwiggins coined the term graphic design to describe his activities as an individual who brought... visual form to printed communications, that an emerging profession received an appropriate name” (Meggs & Purvis 2006:xi). Hence, the convergence of language, words and ‘the visual’ is really at the very core of graphic design. My time of practice in this field undoubtedly propelled me to interrogate the theme on a deeper level. Furthermore, the widespread perception that graphic design’s contribution to society is predominantly ‘wasteful’, in terms of simply promoting a harmful consumer society, is not only a view that is detrimental to the creative world, but also one that is naïve. The call to take *responsibility* for one’s ca-

6. I designed infographic posters that mapped the production process of paper, a series of zines that explored the Japanese aesthetic *Wabi-Sabi*, and even practiced designing two of my own typefaces. In retrospect, language and the book have undoubtedly been recurrent and ever-present within my work.

7. Written words have always been linked to visual images. “Sumerian scribes who invented writing, Egyptian artisans who combined words and images on papyrus manuscripts, Chinese block printers, medieval illuminators... all became part of the rich heritage and history of graphic design” (Meggs & Purvis 2006:ix).

8. In 2012, my first year of Fine Arts practice, I began questioning paper as a material form that occupies space. I created large prints that I warped and hung in non-traditional spaces within a room, such as in a corner or on the ceiling. The graphic designer is always working with paper but does not often question it conceptually. Paper to me now became an artwork in and of itself, allowing me to examine traditional print forms and ideas of curatorship. I also spent a lot of time designing and conceptualising the theoretical essays and exam documents that were to be handed in, into books, which was not required at the time. In retrospect those works bridged my move from editorial design towards Artists’ Books.

capacity to add to the mass of imagery and visual stimulus is one that should apply to both artists and designers, but has certainly been addressed and re-addressed historically by designers.

In 1964 graphic designer and educator Ken Garland published his *First things First manifesto* which, when renewed in 1999, was signed by many big names in the industry at the time, including Jonathan Barnbrook, Steven Heller, Erik Spiekermann and others. The manifesto was a challenge as to what design practice could be and a provocation to all that design should not exist to promote inconsequential, consumerist and purely commercial pursuits. Garland puts it well when he proposes a reversal of priorities toward “more useful, lasting, and democratic forms of communication...” (Garland 1964 cited in Beirut, Drenttel & Heller 2002:5). I align myself with this approach, where taking responsibility for one’s expertise is what inspires me to understand the book, language and communication as a means to be more successful in this attempt.

After completing my degree, I decided to expand my studies into Fine Arts.<sup>8</sup> During this time I was introduced to artist books, the field of art production in which I now work. Artist Keith Dietrich describes how “[a]rtists’ books lie at the intersection of disciplines in both the visual arts and literature and include poetry... graphic design, typography [etc.]” (2011:5). The freedom that the practice of artist books gives me as both a designer and artist has greatly influenced my decision to make it my core practice and to orientate my research around it. Part of my work in this thesis involves exploring the characteris-

tics of artist books in more depth, and so I will not say any more about them here, but I would like to quote Johanna Drucker when she writes that “[i]t is remarkable how little comprehensive critical work has been done in the field of Artists’ books” (1994: xvii). She hopes and calls for “further writing and research with historical and theoretical dimensions” (1994: xvii). In this thesis, I aim to do exactly such work.

I  
RESEARCH  
METHODOLOGY:  
PRACTICE-LED

Estelle Barret and Brabara Bolt, key thinkers on studio inquiry, propose that “artistic practice be viewed as the production of knowledge or philosophy in action” (2007:1). In their book *Deleuze Reframed* (2008), visual arts theorist Damian Sutton and film theorist David Martin-Jones explore some of the implications of Deleuze’s theories on art and film. Sutton explains that Deleuze and Guattari viewed artists almost within the same breath as philosophers, for whom “[a]rt [not only] exists to reveal and give shape to the problems and concepts with which philosophy grapples... it [also] throws up new challenges as it presents these concepts and problems afresh... it is able to ask some of the same questions of culture that philosophy does, even if it gets different kinds of answers” (2008:65-66).

With this view I selectively mention only some of my artworks in this written component, alongside my thoughts and readings. As practice-led research that is presented while still finalising my practical body of work, all of this

written exegesis is concerned with discussions that *inform* and connect to my own thoughts, my artworks and my approach as a whole, rather than attempting to give an explanation or interpretation of each of my artworks (which would suggest that these do not in any way stand for themselves, a notion that I address in this thesis). My view is that art research and understanding must involve a complex range of approaches, and that one should be weary of arguments that claim which one is the right approach. The artwork has more to do with *mapping* the potential of different ideas rather than standing in for a theory or idea (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:5) and it can be understood as a complex system in this sense, with which multiple interactions should be allowed as a way of “thinking *with* the world” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:11) in all of its complexity. As will be seen in my last chapter, the acknowledgement of complexity is an approach taken from philosopher and complexity researcher Paul Cilliers in his article *Complexity, Deconstruction and Relativism* (2005). It is one that allows for a better understanding of the world, by not claiming to be able to know *anything* completely (2005:259).

I allow for my readings to not only influence my practical work or to help me understand my practical work, but also allow the same for the opposite, where ‘doing’ the work has equally propelled and directed my investigation. I would liken myself to Donald Schon’s notion of the ‘reflective practitioner’ as is the focus of his book *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (1983). In their book *Visualising Research: A guide to the Research process*

in *Art and Design* (2004), Carole Grey and Julian Malins explain what this reflective practice entails:

Reflective practice therefore attempts to unite research and practice, thought and action into a framework for inquiry which involves practice, and which acknowledges the particular and special knowledge of the practitioner. It is a framework that encourages reflection in different ways. Retrospective reflection – ‘reflection-on-action’ – is a critical research skill and part of the generic research processes of review, evaluation and analysis. ‘Reflection-in-action’ is a particular activity of professional practitioners and involves thinking about what we are doing and reshaping action while we are doing it. In this sense it is improvisational and relies on feeling, response and adjustment (2004:22)

## II

### AIMS OF RESEARCH

I structure my chapters based on the triadic treatment of book types presented in Deleuze and Guattari’s theory. Throughout this study, and in being made aware of these types (or also in making the reader/artist aware of these), my overall endeavour is to prompt a search for *alternatives* to the dominant and traditional modes of presentation or systems of thought that I will demonstrate perpetuate problematic social structures. I align my argument with the image presented by the third book type, the rhizome, which is an image of non-linear, de-centred and complex thought. It is thought that has the potential to break down problematic social hierarchies by means of approaches to creative work

that, too, reflect this thinking formally and conceptually. Firstly, I aim to develop the case for rhizomatic thinking within art practice, and secondly I further aim to show the relevance and importance of my own practice by demonstrating the various ways that artist books embody a rhizomatic practice, or provide a space in which the rhizome theory can flourish.

## III

### THEORETICAL APPROACH & SCOPE OF STUDY

The premise of my argument is based on Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of the rhizome and their criticism of the dominant traditions of Western thought. My stance could accordingly be understood as predominantly post-structural in this sense, although Deleuze and Guattari do not *entirely* fit into this group, which is something I address at the end of my first chapter. The rhizome is the core theory upon which my argument is based, but this is an explorative and argumentative study that is also substantiated by art-historical research into the evolution of books and accompanying presentations of knowledge. In this survey, I further integrate theoretical discourses surrounding language and conceptual models for thinking about art, namely representation and the creation of dualisms like ‘word and image’.

In my last chapter on the rhizome, I briefly draw on Paul Cilliers’ stance on complex systems (2005) and the notion of *liminality* according to anthropologist Victor Turner (1967), along with Homi Bhabha’s ‘Third space of enunciation’ (1994). Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome, and re-

lated concepts such as complexity, have obvious parallels with the World Wide Web and the new digital technologies that accompany it. I have not investigated these comparisons in depth in this thesis, but the theme has started to play a bigger role in the thinking around some of my latest artworks.

Furthermore, there is a thread of feminist thought that runs through many of my artworks, and so in conjunction with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas about the production of subjectivity, I mention those ideas surrounding the identity of the woman, such as Judith Butler's concept of *performativity* (1990). The idea of language as socially constructed is generally associated with second-wave feminism, while Butler's ideas of women being active in constructing their own identity is associated with third-wave feminism.

#### IV LITERATURE SURVEY

Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Deleuze & Guattari 1987) serves as the seminal source on which this thesis is based and with which my argument concerning creative production is aligned. More specifically, my research is based on their 'first plateau' (or first chapter) that details the theory of the rhizome. The ideas presented in this text are brought in throughout the thesis, supporting my argument about rhizomatic thinking in art, but the core concept of the rhizome itself becomes the focal point of my concluding chapter. I have grappled with the original text as my primary reference and actually thoroughly en-

joyed the reading (which is infamously a matter of 'you either love it or hate it'), but have made use of invaluable assisting sources in order to validate my own interpretation. It is important to note here that a sense of openness is required in reading *any* interpretation of the dense and labyrinthine text that is *A Thousand Plateaus*; it opens up an innumerable amount of discourses and can be (and has been) applied to disparate fields of study, from Botany to Computing and Ethnography.

The most helpful of assisting sources, and one to which I constantly refer and with which I align my views, is Simon O'Sullivan's book *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (2006). O'Sullivan meticulously relates Deleuze and Guattari's ideas (and not only those within *A Thousand Plateaus*) to thinking about the potentials of art practice. Additional sources include *Deleuze and Guattari's 'A Thousand Plateaus': A Reader's Guide* (2013) by Eugene W. Holland, which gives an easily comprehensible analysis of the text; Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones' book *Deleuze Reframed: A Guide for the Arts Student* (2008), which likewise has some useful, clear explanations of certain themes; and Claire Colebrook's book *Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed* (2006), which I found to be the most difficult and dense of assisting texts, but which nevertheless was useful as it examines a range of concepts related to Deleuzian thought.

In my third chapter I liken the practice of artist books to the rhizome and draw on notions such as *liminality* as it is considered by anthropologist Victor Turner in his article *Betwixt*

and *Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage* (1964), and complexity, which I came to understand by reading key author Paul Cilliers' text *Complexity, deconstruction and relativism* (2005).

Estelle B. Freedman's book *The Essential Feminist Reader* (2007) is a collection of feminist essays that proved to be very useful in accessing various important feminist arguments that could inform my discussion of a woman's subjectivity. Judith Butler's argument on *performativity* and the gendered construction of language, in her renowned book *Gender Trouble* (1990), likewise aided my understanding of this topic.

Throughout this thesis I thread a historical investigation into the development of the book and knowledge visualisation. Historians Philip Meggs and Alston Purvis' book *Meggs' History of Graphic Design* (2006) was an indispensable source, since it recounts visual art history specifically through the lens of graphic design. As such, the detailing of typography and editorial development was not only helpful for my understanding of this history but kept the research process extremely interesting for me throughout. Alongside this reading, but not as directly referred to in my writings, was Nicolaus Ott, Bernard Stein and Friedrich Friedl's book *When, Who, How Typography* (1998) which focuses more on typography within this history. Manuel Lima's writings in his books *Visual Complexity: Mapping Patterns of Information* (2011) and *The Book of Trees: Visualizing Branches of Knowledge* (2014) aided my historical research into knowledge/information visualizations, especially in the first chapter.

The final set of seminal writings to which

I refer, especially in my final chapter, are those surrounding artist books. Johanna Drucker's extensive survey of artist books in her *The Century of Artist Books* (1994) reads like a handbook on the practice, and her categorisation of the different characteristics of artist books orientated my own method of likening these to the characteristics of the rhizome. Artist Keith Dietrich's lecture *Intersections, Boundaries & Passages: Transgressing the Codex* (2011) provided much needed clarity when I was first introduced to the practice. It is especially useful in resolving definitions of what artist books are. Furthermore, Dietrich's ideas have undoubtedly helped to shape the thinking that goes into my own artworks. Both texts are significant to my arguing for the importance of the practice in challenging traditional ideas and problematic social hierarchies, and as such, the importance and relevance of my own work. Drucker's frequent engagement with gender, and her navigation of her position as a woman in the field also appeal to my own sensibilities in this regard.

## v

## OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

In their introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), philosophers Deleuze and Guattari use botanical metaphors in order to describe certain models or systems of thought. They then extend these metaphors to book types, where a book is classified according to how it reflects a system of thought. The first type is the root-tree, or the "arborescent model"; the second is the fascicular-root; and the third is the "Rhizome".

Following Deleuze and Guattari's classification, I begin each chapter of this thesis with an introduction to one of the books, which in turn opens up a number of related ideas and discussions surrounding the mode of thought.

These discussions are always with reference to and including some of the history of the book, which grounds the theory in practical examples and provides a historical underpinning of my own practice in artist books. The first and second chapters explain and for the most part criticise the arborescent and fascicular systems of thought respectively, while the third chapter entails a detailing of artist book practice and examples, integrated with an unpacking of the rhizome's features.

#### CHAPTER 1: THE ROOT-BOOK

The first book Deleuze and Guattari present is the 'Root-book' (1987:5). It essentially presents the image of the tree, or an 'arborescent' system of thought. This system is organised around a single and central motif by which everything else is ordered in a hierarchal manner and organized using a dualistic logic. I demonstrate how the tree-image has been prolific in the dominating Western tradition of thought as seen in the ways in which people have historically presented knowledge.

The chapter comprises three parts, in which principles of arborescent thought are identified and related to discussions that inform my work (e.g. books, language, art).

In the first part I examine how the image of the tree has been used to present and interpret sacred spheres of knowledge. The principle of centralism is introduced by observing the control that the medieval church had over the

production, design and distribution of illuminated manuscripts. In this way I observe some of the conventions of the book itself that served this purpose.

In the second part I examine the way in which the tree image has dominated visualisations of epistemic spheres of information. The centralism observed in the church shifts to the state, and education and philosophy are 'rooted' within this power structure. I examine how tree-logic exists in our language as an inevitable result of the tree image dominating the way in which people have presented and organized knowledge. The notion of dualism is introduced as I examine gender constructions of language and theoretical concepts of 'coding' or 'over-coding', which relates to the way problematic images are repeated. Here I introduce the idea of '*becoming*' in which the artist, or a woman is involved in her own production of subjectivity.

The third and final section examines how the arborescent system can likewise be observed in traditional approaches to art, primarily in representational thought but I also observe how even criticisms of such thought might be involved in creating a binary, and a new convention of thought. The chapter concludes with a call for a more inclusive system of thought.

#### CHAPTER 2: THE FASCICULAR BOOK

The fascicular image of thought serves as a pre-emptive response to ways in which the rhizome-book might still be said to be 'arborescent'. In this chapter I provide a general overview of what rhizomatic thought entails: thought that acknowledges the complexity of the world and the things and situations in it, thought that at-

it, thought that attempts to make connections between various concepts and materials, and so forth. I explain Deleuze and Guattari's notions of the 'natural reality' and 'spiritual reality' of the book, relating to its formal and conceptual aspects. Under 'spiritual reality' I indicate three key ways that a book or artwork that is moving towards being rhizomatic, might nevertheless return to an 'arborescent' state with all the problems associated with this image of thought. These are through the control or intention of an author, the direction of movement (i.e., sequence) of the bookwork, or the way in which the work is presented or exhibited. I also introduce the *Livre d'artiste* and liken books made within this genre to the fascicular image of thought. I conclude by introducing some of my own initial concerns about the rhizomatic approach and then by alluding to a solution to these traps that is to create work that operates through the *milieu*, a French term Deleuze and Guattari use meaning 'surroundings' or 'middle'. This is essentially a call to think rhizomatically. This is a relatively short chapter, but it is an important step in consolidating the defence of the rhizome approach to making art, which occurs in the third chapter.

CHAPTER 3:  
THE RHIZOME

My last chapter is based on the Rhizome, which is to be the model presentation of a book/bookwork and reflection of thought. I begin by introducing what it is exactly and then systematically proceed to describe the characteristics of artist books, likening them to the principles of the rhizome, or rather to key ideas of the rhizome, such as *connectivity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity,*

for example. In doing so, I demonstrate how artist books break from the problems associated with the arborescent and fascicular model, including; centralism, the problem of a controlling author, dualism, linear narrative/movement, and a controlled space of exhibition.

I conceive of this last chapter as a sort of *mapping* where various characteristics should always be thought of in connection with the others, and I signpost these connections throughout. Artist books constitute a rhizomatic practice by being conceived of as occupying a *liminal* space, as a space in which the artist can perform and produce their own subjectivity, by their form, function, political effectiveness, and by making connections to various other fields and forms over time. Within this *mapping*, examples of artist books are selectively described in order to substantiate these connections. More than anything else, each and every one of these discussions relate to ideas that I associate with in my own work.

# 1

## The Root Book

The tree is already the image of the world, or the root the image of the world-tree. This is the classical book, as noble, signifying, and subjective organic interiority (the strata of the book) (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:5)

The ‘tap-root’, ‘root-tree’ or just the ‘root-book’<sup>9</sup> is the first type of book that Deleuze and Guattari introduce and it presents to us what they call the ‘Arborescent’ system of thought (1987:5,16).<sup>10</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate that the tree structure is ubiquitous within the dominant and traditional thought processes of Western society.<sup>11</sup> Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones succinctly describe the dominant model of Western thought as “causal, hierarchal and structured by binaries (one/many, us/them, man/woman, etc.)” (2008:3). Such characteristics are a result of the Western thinker’s tendency to organize information and systems around a single, central motif, principle or point of origin. The tree with a “strong pivotal tap-root” that gives rise to a centred, foundational trunk from which super-

9. These three terms are used interchangeably by Deleuze and Guattari.

10. *Arborescent* means ‘growing into a tree’, associated with the Latin word *arborescere*, from *arbor* meaning ‘tree’.

11. Because of this, I tend to delimit my study accordingly.

ordinate and further subordinate branches stem, understandably became the most suitable figure used to represent this kind of thought.

In this chapter I look at the image of the tree, as it exists as one of the most ancient and prolific images used to present, describe and interpret the varying aspects of human knowledge, from theological to epistemic. By observing the dominant traditions of how people *present* knowledge, one might gain valuable insight into the way in which they think about the world and themselves in it.<sup>12</sup> For a designer or artist, it is especially important to be aware of these traditions in order to move forward with the way in which she/he wishes to present knowledge. My discussion concerning theological, or rather, sacred trees allows me to begin sketching out the history of books and the traditional paper codex (to observe conventions of the ‘classical’ book,<sup>13</sup> in a sense), and I refer almost entirely to the writings of historians Philip Meggs and Alston Purvis in their book *Meggs’ History of Graphic Design* (2006) for the historical underpinning of this section. Throughout the chapter I reveal and explore the various conceptual notions associated with the arborescent system of thought, principally, *centralism* and *dualism*. In doing so, I consider the socio-political implications of the root-tree model as it can operate within and through the book, and I continue this line of inquiry into the next section on trees of epistemological knowledge, albeit now with a focus on language. The end of the chapter involves looking at theoretical discourses surrounding visual art, and I conclude by questioning the level of productivity or creativity of this

12. It seems I must accept and *go through* a representational way of thinking in order to interpret the traditional presentations that I discuss in this chapter (where in essence the traditional or rather, habitual role of the book and art has been understood to represent different forms of knowledge and thought). This is the very kind of thinking that went into creating them. In other words, the traditional and dominant Western way of thinking was and is still representational, as Simon O’Sullivan notes, “[w]e are, if you like, representational creatures with representational habits of thought.” (2006:16). In chapter three I discuss the rhizome, which provides a different way of thinking about approaching knowledge presentation, art and the book.

13. A note on the use of the term ‘classical’ here: Deleuze and Guattari do refer to classical philosophy and reflection in their discussion of arborecent thought but this does not mean they are necessarily ascribing this kind of thought only to books and thinking of the classical period. They maintain that arborescent thought dominates many fields of knowledge production today. Thus it is helpful to understand the use of ‘classical’ here according to its other meaning as well, that is, “long-established” or “traditional”.

criticism (i.e. of structure), or indeed of most traditional approaches to theorising about art, and especially art that explores language.

## I SACRED TREES

14. Trees and similar symbols that indicate information stemming from a centre, are prevalent forms of religious iconography. For example, Hinduists had the tree of *Jiva* and later, *Ashvatha* while Buddhists revere the Bodhi tree and also have the *Dharmachakra*, the ancient image of a wheel which symbolizes various aspects of Buddhist teachings and practice.

15. I chose to refer to the tree of life from the Bible because as a book it is a good reference point for discussing pivotal aspects the history of books (i.e., illuminated manuscripts, typographical books) and their role in the proliferation of knowledge in Western society. I narrow the discussion to Western knowledge because this is what Deleuze and Guattari specifically associate the tree form with. In *A Thousand Plateaus* a comparison between East and West goes on for two pages (18-19) but they later reject or rather, wish to simply ‘pass through’ the dualism of “here and there” (1984:20).

16. Revelations 22:2: “On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations”.

The tree has long been attributed with sacred and pagan meanings, venerated by numerous civilizations and religious groups, both Western and Eastern, throughout history.<sup>14</sup> In his book *Visual Complexity: Mapping Patterns of information*, designer and author Manuel Lima introduces trees as the historical precursors to network and systems visualization. He cites tree mythology researcher Fred Hageneder, who explains that many ancient teachings believed that the whole universe comprises a spiral or circular movement around a central axis, known as the *axis mundi* (world axis) and this is often depicted as *arbor vitae* (the Tree of Life) or the *Universal Tree* (cited in Lima 2011:23). Following Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of arborescent systems as “hierarchal systems with centres of significance and subjectification, central autonoma...” (1987:16), it appears that much of ancient wisdom viewed the entire universe as a hierarchal system. Western society would most popularly recognize the motif of the venerated tree of life in one of its most sacred texts, the Bible.<sup>15</sup>

Although the Bible has many references to sacred trees, the most notable are the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* and the *Tree of Life*, found in the book of Genesis, and later in Revelations.<sup>16</sup> These trees, along with the scene of Adam and Eve’s fall, have become among the

17. Manuel Lima notes this in his work *The Book of Trees...* (2014) where he describes what is believed to be a sixteenth-century frontispiece for the New Testament that elaborately depicts *The Fall of Man* (fig. 1).

18. Biblical literature formed the foundation of education for monks and the elite clergy (Lima 2014:27). The development of Universities that arose out of medieval Europe was also at first tightly interwoven with the church. For further reading see Kimberly Georgedes' (Chair of the dept. of History and Anthropology at the Franciscan University) paper *Religion, Education and the Role of Government in Medieval Universities: Lessons learnt or lost* (2006).

19. I quote here from Meggs and Purvis as they write about the history of illuminated manuscripts (2006:44). These were decorated and illustrated hand-written books often decorated with gold-leaf and ink and colour and which was made from fine materials such as minerals, animal or vegetable matter. They were bound with wooden boards usually covered in leather and sometimes embellished with gold and silverwork, jewels or ivory carvings.

most widely depicted images in Christian theological iconography (Lima 2014:21),<sup>17</sup> (fig. 1-3) and one can most notably trace this back to the early Christian era of the Middle Ages, when Biblical literature and liturgical texts formed the foundations of academia throughout Europe.<sup>18</sup>

Manuel Lima reiterates and expands on the first view associated with the tree that is the notion of centralism or centralization. He writes that “[centralism] expresses either an unequivocal concentration of power and authority in a central person or group of people, or a particular system in which most communications are rooted through one central hub” (2011:43). During the early Middle Ages, Christian monasteries became the “cultural, educational and intellectual centres”<sup>19</sup> and that central hub, where nearly all books were created, was the monastic *scriptorium*, or ‘writing room’ (Meggs & Purvis 2006:43-44). The books produced here took the form of illuminated manuscripts.

I will not go into great detail about illuminated manuscripts, but it serves as a useful departure point for beginning to sketch out ways in which the arborescent structure can operate in and through a book, thus providing the historical underpinning of my argument and my work.<sup>20</sup> I mention some brief points about their medieval creation, as it emphasizes the authority of the church over the book and artist at the time.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, many practitioners in the field of artist books look to the tradition of illuminated manuscripts and their latter influence on the Arts and Crafts movement (which saw some of the earliest forerunners of book artists such as English artist and poet William Blake

(Dietrich 2011:6)) as inspiration for their own work. I am always enticed by the immaculate design of these books, but I’m usually more interested in learning from the theoretical implications of their production.

In his book *Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘A Thousand Plateaus’: A Reader’s Guide*, social theorist Eugene W. Holland discusses the arboreal model in direct relation to books. He writes that “[t]he tap-root book is organized around a single principle of coherence or meaning (often the intention, genius, or authority of the author) in order to represent the world or a privileged perspective on it... it is perfectly coherent internally, and yet it also relates to the external world by reflecting or *representing* it [own emphasis]” (2013:38). One can observe this model in the tightly controlled politics behind the manuscripts’ production. In the monastic *scriptoria*s, the *scrittore* (a well-educated scholar) was the head, responsible for art direction and editing. Under him were the *copisti* (or letterer) and the illuminator (an artist who would ornament key letters and illustrate images *in support* of the texts). The *scrittore* would tell the artist not only where to illustrate (often demarcating a space on the page) but also what to illustrate (by providing small annotations) (Meggs & Purvis 2006:42).

Deleuze and Guattari’s intent is to bring attention to the traditional *images and forms* through which arborescent thought is made manifest. They make a direct link between this thought and the ‘classical’ book,<sup>22</sup> not only in terms of the content, style of writing or meaning within the book,<sup>23</sup> but also in terms of the book as a physical entity; they write, “[e]ven the

20. Illuminated manuscripts are considered the earliest precursors to artist books. The first illuminated texts were created by the ancient Egyptians to foretell what would happen to their dead in the afterlife. *The Book of the Dead* was written on papyrus and it would later influence the work of Greeks and Romans of early classical culture (Meggs & Purvis 2006:14). Manuscripts evolved with the use of parchment or vellum and the codex format (traditional book format) but when the great Greek library at Alexandria burnt down during the time of Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.), only a few fragments of manuscripts survived. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in A.D. 476, the general European population became illiterate and impoverished and nearly all knowledge of the classical world was lost. During this time then, as historians Meggs and Purvis continue, “the Christian belief in sacred religious writings became the primary impetus for the preservation and making of books.” (2006:43-44). Among some of the oldest illuminated manuscripts are the *Garinia Gospels* (c.330-650 AD), (fig. 4) preserved in an Ethiopian monastery it sheds light on how early Christianity had spread into sub-saharan Africa, the *Vatican Virgil* (c.400AD) (fig. 5) which is the earliest surviving manuscript from the late antique era and which contains poetry and narratives from the time, and the *Book of Kells* (c.800) (fig. 6) which was not the earliest fully designed and ornamented Celtic book (*The Book of Durrow*, created in c.680 was) but was indeed the masterwork of the epoch (Meggs & Purvis 2006:45).

21. It cannot be simply stated that the medieval church had *unequivocal* power at the time. To understand the shifting of power between church and monarchy and the intricacies of *how much* control they had during the thousand year period that is the Middle ages, would require more explanation than what is possible here. But I nevertheless wish to point towards the authority and dominance of the church as an example of bibliographic centralism that was evident more during that time than any other in Western history.

22. Again, it is helpful to understand the use of ‘classical’ here according to its other meaning of “long-established” or “traditional”.

23. This is even clearer as Deleuze and Guattari apply their own rhizomatic way of thinking to their writing style, and likewise discuss the forms and formal conventions that possible *rhizomatic* books might have. I discuss this in Chapter three.

book as a natural reality is a tap-root, with its pivotal spine and surrounding leaves” (1987:5). In this sense, the tap-root book directly refers to the traditional paper codex.<sup>24</sup> This style of binding progressively became the standard, a transition that can largely be attributed to the rapid spreading of the Christian faith through these manuscripts. Most illuminated manuscripts, in form, were at first small enough to be transported in a saddlebag from one region to another for this very reason, so that the Christian faith, but also classical knowledge could be widely distributed. The manuscripts developed and differed in style from region to region and over time (e.g. Celtic, Gothic, Spanish),<sup>25</sup> but their characteristic exquisite embellishment is attributed to the same motive behind the opulence of the famous St Mark’s Basilica, for example, that is, religious reverence and a belief in the educational value of images and ornament to advance and spread spiritual understanding (Meggs & Purvis 2006:43).

From the politics behind its production, to the size and format (classical codex with a centred spine and “surrounding leaves”), and even to the fine details of how the words were written and related to image and ornament,<sup>26</sup> there was a clear organizing structure and a decisive intention behind the creation and intended reception of these books. To be slightly reductionist, object and subject harmoniously aligned. For these reasons, if I wanted to speculate about what the original image of a ‘root-book’ looked like, I would suggest that one looks at the illuminated manuscript of the Middle Ages.

24. Codex specifically refers to the traditional form that a book takes, with a bound series of pages and front and back covers, as opposed to even more ancient forms such as rolled layers of papyrus, for example.

25. Again, I mention ‘Western’, European, and specifically Christian manuscript examples here, to keep a narrower focus and to continue within the discourse of traditional Western thought. This is not to say that these were the only examples; the form took many styles, from Judaic to Islamic and was created for many purposes; but nevertheless, the spread of religion was the primary impetus behind this book form.

26. Typically, great attention was paid to creating visual hierarchy via a number of design techniques, sometimes to the point of standardization. For example, Certain figures would be surrounded by borders and placed at the centre of other surrounding figures, sometimes a grid was created (as with Celtic designs which divided a spread using four guidelines), the use of paragraphs developed, and as did the differentiation between capitals and small letters (Meggs & Purvis 2006:50).

## II TREES OF KNOWLEDGE

27. Manuel Lima’s work in *The Book of Trees...* (2014) and *Visual Complexity...* (2011) details this history to a great extent. Different conventions of classification include ontological (of species), informational (of information), biblioeconomical (of books) and gnosiological (of knowledge). (German philosopher Alwin Diemer 1974; cited in Lima 2011:25) Notable examples include: Ramon Llull’s *Trees of science, morals and great art* (c.1515); Joachin of Fiore’s trees (see *The Trinitarian Tree circles* which represents part of the history of Christianity (1202)) (fig.7); Charles Darwin’s *Tree of Life* (1837) that was the first of its kind to show that all species on Earth are related and that they evolved from a common ancestor and was presented in his *Origin of Species* (1859) (fig.8); Ernst Haeckel’s *Pedigree of Man* (1879), which depicts man at the zenith of evolution; and Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond’s *Encyclopedie...* (1751) (fig.9).

28. *Categories* was the first of six works from the logical treatise *Organon*, in which Aristotle looked to structure all of knowledge. Categories divided the concept of being into ten categories: substance, quantity, quality, relation, location, time, position, possession, doing and undergoing.

Manuel Lima distils the use of the tree symbol as an *epistemological* model into two key domains, namely classification and genealogy. Whereas classification refers to taxonomy, hierarchy, regularity and order, genealogy refers to notions such as subdivision, linearity, memory and tracing (of ideas, subjects, people or societies) (Lima 2011:25). I will very briefly mention classification (as I have already begun discussing hierarchy and order in relation to the centralism of the medieval church) and then I will introduce Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptions of dualism, tracings and the production of subjectivity as indicated by the domain of genealogy. This is in line with my understanding that discussions of traditional systems of presentation (the tree structures that organize knowledge) will help us understand the traditional and dominant system of thought and the components of the root book.

Deleuze and Guattari make the link between the root-tree and “classical reflection” (1987:5). One can observe a rich history of various kinds of knowledge classification that has been represented in tree form,<sup>27</sup> but the earliest attempt to classify *universal* knowledge was Aristotle’s philosophical treatise *Categories* (ca.40BCE)(see fig.10).<sup>28</sup> Through the ages, this work would greatly influence significant philosophers and the way in which they organized their thoughts, including Porphyry, Rene Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz, Immanuel Kant

and Martin Heidegger (Lima 2011:27). The High Middle Ages (c.1000–1301) saw a great influx of such ancient classical literature and with a changing social and political environment, the representation of knowledge too, naturally evolved (Lima 2014:27).

Without doubt the most significant contribution to this evolution took place between 1450 and 1455, at the dawn of the Renaissance, when Johann Gutenberg of Mainz, Germany would labour for years to print the first typographic book by using movable type.<sup>29</sup> It was, of course, the forty-two-line Bible, commonly referred to as the Gutenberg Bible (*fig. 11*). This innovation revolutionized the production of books to such an extent that seventeenth-century writers referred to books created in the period thereafter as *incunabula*, a Latin word which means ‘cradle’ or ‘baby linen’ in a clear reference to the biblical content of the first European movable-print book (Meggs & Purvis 2006:78).

Indeed typography saw the book reborn. The new form of printing allowed for books to be more easily produced, greatly reducing their price and causing literacy levels to boom. More people now had access to knowledge and were able to interpret various texts for themselves. Furthermore, printing of edition after edition of the Bible allowed for new and multiple theological interpretations to be printed and spread, which ultimately led to the reformation of the Christian church (Meggs & Purvis 2006:79).

The democratization of knowledge fostered the spirit of individualism and humanism that still dominates Western society today, but this is not to say that arborescent thought

would diminish. Manuel Lima explains that, in order to organize and rationalize the new information, people began to move more and more towards diagrammatic representation, and it was during this time that the arborescent model and henceforth arborescent thought, as a foundation for *knowledge* organization and assimilation, had reached its *pinnacle* in the Western world (2014:20).<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, centralism gradually shifted from church to state, and it is here that one can begin to understand the disapproving view of centralism. Where the church had clearly understood the potential of visually enhanced books to propagate a single idea of truth (i.e., to evangelize and glorify God at the centre of human knowledge), the state would capitalize on that same potential for political gain and often with damaging effects. As Lima points out in his description of centralism, it is often associated with notions such as authoritarianism, totalitarianism and absolutism (i.e., severely oppressive systems) (2011:43).

In the foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus*, its translator Brian Massumi, who is also a social theorist and philosopher, demonstrates the influence of the state on the philosophy of more recent times. He examines the goals laid out for the University of Berlin, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century was to become the model for higher learning throughout the Western world. Massumi reveals elements of a clear arboreal structure as he quotes the University’s goals (1987:xii):

“spiritual and moral training of the nation,”  
to be achieved by “deriving everything from

29. Invented by alchemist Pi Sheng, moveable type in the form of hardened clay and glue replaced hand cut woodblocks in China circa 1045 AD. China’s invention of paper, along with printing, spread slowly westward and the first European paper mill was established in the small town of Fabriano, Italy in 1276. With paper more readily available and a growing demand for more books at the end of the Middle Ages, book production needed to be mechanized and type had to be cast out from metal alloy (as wood was too fragile for repeated use) (Meggs & Purvis 2006:41,63-70).

30. In *The Book of Trees...* (2014) Manuel Lima also writes, “...the most critical stage in the development of the tree metaphor took place during a time of bustling scholasticism in the medieval Europe.” (2014:20).

31. They maintain that “[t]he tree is already the image of the world...”; “[it is] the most classical, well reflected, oldest, and weariest kind of thought.”; and “[i]t is odd how the tree has dominated Western reality and all of Western thought, from botany to biology and anatomy, but also gnosiology, theology, ontology, all of philosophy...” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:5, 18);

32. They write that “[e]ven a discipline as ‘advanced’ as linguistics retains the root-tree as its fundamental image, and thus remains wedded to classical reflection (for example, Chomsky and his grammatical trees, which begin at a point S and proceed by dichotomy)” (1987:5). Noam Chomsky developed a system of transformational grammar outlined in his *Syntactic Structures* (1957). The different sections of his tree illustrated sets of rules with ‘cause and effect’ connections that would all come together like a sort of linguistic arithmetic to generate and define a grammatically correct ‘S’ (which stands for Sentence).

33. Lima goes on to write here that even the word “knowledge” itself comes from words for wood. In English, words like ‘wits’ (having your wits about you), ‘witch’ and ‘wizard’ all stem from the ancient Scandinavian word “vid” which means “wood” (as in forest, not timber) (2011:27). Deleuze and Guattari also reflect on how the West has a special relation to the forest and deforestation (1987:18).

34. Two major themes or concepts of Structuralism.

35. Of course, ‘duality’ and ‘hierarchy’ are not really separate ideas, but for purposes of the flow of this thesis, it worked to begin by talking about hierarchy as it introduces and emphasizes centred structure, points of unity and control or central authorities (“the one” as put by Deleuze and Guattari which linked in very well with the medieval church and the first kinds of books in which word and image met (Illuminated Manus.)). I separated this from my discussion on duality which emphasizes “the one that becomes two” so that I could then focus on this logic as it operates within language and theorising about art.

36. The rhizome, in this sense, is a post-structuralist concept where notions of ‘centralism’, ‘hierarchy’ and ‘dualism’ are revised in a critique of structure (structures with centres and points of control) (O’Sullivan 2006:14).

37. One must recall that *natural reality* refers to the form of the book, thus it seems what is being referred to here is perhaps the conceptual philosophy of the root-book.

an original principle” (truth), by “relating everything to an ideal” (justice), and by “unifying this principle and this ideal in a single Idea” (the State). The end product would be “a fully legitimated subject of knowledge and society”—each mind an analogously organized mini-State morally unified in the super mind of the State... the “arborescent model” of thought (the proudly erect tree under whose spreading boughs the latter day Plato’s conduct their class) (1987:xii).

Deleuze and Guattari point toward this history of philosophy as a whole,<sup>31</sup> but they specifically work to bring attention to the linguistic branch of knowledge.<sup>32</sup> Evidence of how easily the root-tree structure has infiltrated Western thought might facetiously be revealed in the English language. Manuel Lima, for example, observes how ingrained arboreal schemes are in people’s minds by noting the use of figurative phrases such as “the root of the problem”, “the root of scientific research”, “...an off-shoot of thought” or “branches of knowledge”, which is evidence of how people constantly allude to this structure when organizing or thinking about information (2011:26–27).<sup>33</sup>

It is here that I would like to introduce dualism; the second notion (if the first is centralism)<sup>34</sup> associated with the causal nature of the tree.<sup>35</sup> The very structure<sup>36</sup> of root to trunk (“root-tree” or “tap-root”) and trunk to branch and so forth, the very nature of cause and effect that organizes hierarchy (one above the other) demonstrates duality. Deleuze and Guattari write that dualism is the *spiritual reality* of the root-book.<sup>37</sup> A binary logic is what they are referring to, and this logic is overwhelmingly

evident in the English language, something I already suggested in the beginning of the chapter by quoting Sutton and Martin-Jones who mention the tropes: “one/many, us/them, man/woman” (2008:3).

In many languages the dichotomy of “man/woman” is extended to word classifications, in a system called grammatical gender, where seemingly genderless objects and even places are designated as masculine, feminine or neutral.<sup>38</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into these fully, systems of grammatical gender, along with numerous other binary structures and operations that exist within language, have significant political implications in terms of power and identity relations. Brian Massumi suggests that the state, in its relationship with the university, has even more insidious potential to be endlessly reproduced and disseminated on every social level (1987:xii). Post-structuralist analyses provide a great deal of criticism of the role of language in this regard. For example, deconstructionist-influenced feminists might refer to “Phallogocentrism”, which is the privileging of the masculine within linguistic constructions of meaning (1987:xii).<sup>39</sup>

In her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999), philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler calls into question the identity-politics behind grammar and style whilst reflecting on her own writing. She refers to like-minded feminist theorists<sup>40</sup> who suggest that ‘received’ grammar (which are the rules we learn that govern “normalized” language) can be limiting for someone with radical views (i.e. views that are in opposition to

38. In Spanish, for example, masculine nouns usually begin with ‘el-’ and end with ‘-o’ so *el plato* refers to “the dish” and is designated as masculine. Likewise, feminine nouns usually begin with *la* and end with ‘-a’ and so *la revista* refers to “liberty” and is designated as feminine. These cannot always be predicted and are not always as stereotypical as expected (e.g. “dress” is *el vestido*) but this is nevertheless a useful example of gender operating even within language. German too is particularly complex in this regard, with the masculine article ‘der’, the feminine ‘die’ and the neuter ‘das’.

39. Phallogocentrism is a concept appropriated from philosopher Jacques Derrida’s criticism of ‘logocentrism’, in his book *Of Grammatology* (1967). Massumi gives the examples of feminists such as Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray who attack this concept. See Cixous’ essay *Sorties* in her book *A Newly Born Woman* (English tr. 1986) in which she writes, “Thought has always worked by opposition... Wherever an ordering intervenes, a law organizes the thinkable by (dual, irreconcilable; or mitigable, dialectical) oppositions” and that this is true for the “ensemble of symbolic systems-art, religion, family, language” (1986:90–91).

40. Namely, American philosopher Drucilla Cornell and French author Monique Wittig.

the norm) in that ‘received’ grammar imposes constraints upon thought and the “thinking self” (Butler 1999:xix). As such, it is suggested that gender becomes naturalized through grammatical norms and therefore, in order to contest these norms, grammar itself needs to be contested (Butler 1999:xx).<sup>41</sup>

The premise upon which Butler’s argument is based is that language influences thought and has potential to re-organize, to warp or to reinforce social constructs. This idea is what I questioned in my works *Imbokodo* (2013) and *Yuen-Fen* (2013) (fig.12-14).

In *Imbokodo*, the idea was specifically extended to thought about women and ways in which the subjectivity of a woman might be distinctly produced according to different languages.<sup>42</sup> The meaning of the Zulu word *Imbokodo* is complex: it literally means “rock” but it also means “woman”. Amongst Zulu speaking peoples, the word points directly to a popular adage, “*If you hit a woman, you hit a rock*”. The word *Imbokodo* thus instantly ascribes the quality of strength to a woman. There is no one equivalent word for this in common English parlance.<sup>43</sup> Instead, only a lengthy, ‘wordy’ description in English that attempts to get *closer* to what the word means, will suffice and I have provided this in colloquial wording on a plaque next to the works. These are light-hearted works that allude to an interesting struggle in dialogue and translation that occurs in real life. At the same time, I am playing with the more serious question of whether an English speaker (or any non-Zulu speaking person in this case) thinks about women differently as a result of his or her lan-

guage? More critically even, how can one’s own subjectivity be produced through language?

I use the word ‘play’ because there are, of course, multiple factors that contribute to thought and operations of subjectivity among different groups of people (the concept of ‘multiplicity’ is one that I go into in depth in the third chapter of this thesis). Nevertheless, the intention of these works is to propose questions about the role that words, when used in an artwork, might play in thought and power relations. In this sense, I again agree with what Damian Sutton states while explaining Deleuze’s conception of art, namely that “[a]rt exists to reveal and give shape to the problems and concepts with which philosophy grapples... it presents these concepts and problems afresh” (2008:65). My constant engagement with and appropriation of language in my artworks (as well as in my design practice) has led to my curiosity about such linguistic matters.

Subjectification can be said to be connected to the subject/object binary, where the identity of social subjects are produced or degraded to the status of objects (i.e., objectification). The production of subjectivity was of special interest to Felix Guattari, since much of what traditional psychoanalysis had to say about it is based on the tree structure:

Arborescent systems are hierarchical systems with centres of significance and subjectification, central automata like organized memories. In the corresponding models, an element only receives information from a higher unit, and only receives a subjective affection along preestablished [sic] paths (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:16).

41. Butler was likewise influenced by Derrida’s method of Deconstruction.

42. Thinking about power related processes of subjectification can be linked back especially to the work of philosopher Michel Foucault (e.g. In his essay *The Subject and Power* (1982), or his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975)).

43. As an English-speaking South African myself, this is the point of reference from which I ask.

Again, I return to the ‘grandfather’ of visual representational models, the tree, but now with reference to the domain of genealogy. In his chapter *Art and the Political*, in his book *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (2006), artist and visual theorist Simon O’Sullivan notes that Guattari’s conception of subjectivity was in opposition to traditional psychoanalytic methods proposed by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, who ascribed all diagnoses (concerned with memory, the unconscious, or experience, for example) to a preceding, ‘pre-established’ origin (e.g., Oedipus Complex) (2006:91). Genealogical trees are thus dominated by the principle of *tracing*: a tracing back to the past, a tracing of something that has already been there from the start (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:12). Guattari actually viewed Freud’s psychoanalysis as a *regime*, emphasized by a focus on the past, phallogentrism and domestic representations; and to Guattari, this mode was not very productive (O’Sullivan 2006:91).<sup>44</sup>

While discussing ideas about the relation between desire and the image in her book *Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed* (2006), cultural theorist Claire Colebrook describes how the image of the woman is *coded* and refers to the fact that ‘the woman’ is defined from such genealogical and familial arrangements (mother-father-child), where woman is the other of that “higher unit”, man (2006:141).<sup>45</sup>

It is ‘man’ as the image of reason, thought, representation and action that has allowed the flow of life’s images to be centred on a single governing image. If one image-‘man’-becomes the ground of all imaging then life’s

potentiality for connection, creation, mutation, deflection and becoming, becomes limited by that image through which we perceive all other images... If life is a potential for imaging then that potential can only be maximized by not allowing any single image [even the self] to govern all others (Colebrook 2006:141) (see fig. 15).

In my own interpretation and creative iterations (or re-iterations rather) of certain texts, I must also be wary of the danger of *over-coding* and its role in influencing productions of subjectivity. In his own discussion concerning Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘multiplicity’,<sup>46</sup> which is an opposing notion to the single structure (i.e., the root-tree), Eugene Holland alludes to the semiotics of “structuration” and explains the concept of ‘over-coding’:

...structuration or unification, by contrast, occurs as the result of “over-coding” by the signifier (e.g., the phallus, the name of the father... and/or a corresponding process of subjectification (involving e.g., a castrated subject, an obedient child [etc.]” (2013:39; see also Deleuze & Guattari 1987:8).

It appears that *over-coding* refers to either a constant re-iteration or over-interpretation of certain codes (of thought, values, law etc.) and that this occurs through various ‘modes of coding’ (e.g., political or economic), which are implied by forms (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:7, 21, 41).<sup>47</sup> To elucidate then, I might say that with regards to the image of women, over-coding would refer to an excessive re-iteration of codes (e.g. behaviours, values, body language) that occurs through modes of coding such as family or poli-

44. I wish to remind the reader here that all of this information is important to understand the theory of the rhizome, which works against traditional modes of thought. These discussions help set up the examination of the rhizome in chapter three as an alternative, in terms of what it has to offer for art and thinking about the implications of visual presentations (which is one of the key aims of my argument). For example, for Guattari, subjectivity is always in process and thus its production is informed by a multiplicity of factors (rather than just looking to the past) (O’Sullivan 2006:90-91). Multiplicity is a key feature of the rhizomatic approach, and indeed a useful one for art, especially political art.

45. A prominent Feminist argument originally pioneered by Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (1949), in which she too rejected Freudian views as she writes, “One is not born, but becomes a woman”. She demonstrated various cultural constructions of women with the view that, “She is defined and differentiated with reference to man...He is the Subject, he is the Absolute-she is the other” and later, “It is easy to see that the duality of the sexes, like any duality, gives rise to conflict” (cited in Freedman E. 2007:252-262)

46. A ‘multiplicity’ is one of the key features of a rhizome. Conceptually, it seems to describe a complex state of connectivity or of having multiple connections, but in quite a unique way that could possibly be likened to felt fabric or a mesh of fibres. I will explore this concept in more depth in my discussion of the rhizome in Chapter three.

47. In light of the extreme difficulty of Deleuze and Guattari’s writing, it would be best to note here that this is my best interpretation of what is meant by the notion of ‘over-coding’, from reading both their original text as well as Holland’s.

tics and forms that might include film, books, ‘normalized’ grammar, art, music, and so forth.

For Deleuze and Guattari, identity is always in motion, the subject is always changing and being formed by experiences, even by such authoritarian, social and environmental forces that organize him or her (Sutton & Martin Jones 2008:45). Thus Deleuze and Guattari propose their own idea of ‘*becoming-woman*’ or more generally ‘*becoming-minor*’ (to be applied to any minoritarian group). The term “becomes woman” suggests that a woman’s difference to man, or her identity as ‘other’ to man must be understood as only “symbolic and artificial” (Sutton & Martin Jones 2008:47). This is in line with the arguments of feminist theorists such as Simone Beauvoir (1949), and with Judith Butler’s third-wave feminist notion of *performativity*, which I address in chapter three.

The first part of *becoming* is when one becomes aware of this fact, and aware of the operations behind the arboreal centre. One must feel this difference not as essential or natural but as constructed.<sup>48</sup> The second part is in claiming this difference, to distance oneself from one’s difference and see it anew, to see the agency that this difference gives. This is the process of ‘*becoming-woman*’. In my own work, through the process of going through some study of arboreal, majoritarian images of power, and by then navigating from my own position, I attempt my own *becoming*. I will discuss this further and refer to how it relates more specifically to the practice of artist books in the next chapter.

Thus far I have established how dominating the tree structure has been in both theologi-

cal and epistemological spheres of knowledge. The Western world habitually thinks in this way: it focuses on centred origins, single images and binaries, and I have linked this argument to discussions that inform my own works. I would now like to discuss the point at which this structure comes into the established, traditional theoretical approaches to art and design, and situate my own approach.<sup>49</sup>

The law of the book is the law of reflection, the One that becomes two... it is what presides over the very division between world and book, nature and art? One becomes two: whenever we encounter this formula... what we have before us is the most classical and well reflected, oldest, and weariest kind of thought (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:5).

49. From here, I make an interjection in order to, in a sense, ‘stand back’ and reflect upon the theoretical framework through which I just passed in order to provide contrast to, and begin thinking about, less traditional modes of approaching art and art theory.

50. This is made clear in *Truth in Painting* (1987) but can be clearly observed in his thinking behind other works, as suggested earlier, see: *Writing and Difference* (1967), *Of Grammatology* (1967) and *Speech and Phenomena* (1967).

### III

## THEORIZING ABOUT ART

In *Truth and Painting* (1987), Philosopher Jacques Derrida argues that all art discourse is premised on a binary relationship between content and form; meaning and object; or to put it in other words, of ‘representation’ (1987:21–22).<sup>50</sup> This is largely due to the influence of semiotics from the beginning of the twentieth century, and most notably linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure’s ‘sign’ made up of a binary of that which represents (‘signifier’) and that which is represented (‘signified’).

I echo artist Simon O’Sullivan’s observation that people tend to think about artworks in one of two ways. Firstly they think of it in terms of representation, where one still engages with

48. Damian Sutton demonstrates, for example, how some feminist artists’ works such as Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party* (1974–9) (fig. 16–17), highlight ‘man’ as the majoritarian canon and set the canon of ‘woman’ in opposition to this. Chicago’s work does this by honouring historically important woman, while at the same time (as Sutton argues) setting a social context that alludes to the traditional domestic propriety of women set in place by patriarchal order (Sutton & Martin-Jones 2008:71). Sutton writes: “This illustrates the power of the patriarchal system that has man as its standard – it even constructs the very terms of opposition, the terms of difference itself” (Sutton & Martin-Jones 2008:71). Chicago also evokes the female sexual organs on the place settings of the table, suggesting that it is only this basic difference that separates the canons (Sutton & Martin-Jones 2008:71).

51. As suggested, Deconstruction, for example (of Jacques Derrida or Paul de Man), shows how these promises, that artworks will mean something, are always being broken (O'Sullivan 2006:15).

52. In his discussion of this line of thought, Simon O'Sullivan points out some other key binaries that artists are used to thinking in, "depth/surface, essence/appearance, soul/body, unconscious/conscious, reality/ideology and so on" (2006:15).

53. For example, in my works *Imbokodo* (2013) and *Yuen-Fen*, (2013) I ask how language relates to thought. In the start of creating those works, I thought predominantly in terms of representation. I began to study Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous work (the ideas in which he himself later rejected) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), in which, as Bertrand Russell writes in its introduction (1921:7-10), Wittgenstein was interested in finding the conditions for accurate symbolism, that is to say, the conditions in which a sentence, which is a combination of symbols, would mean something definite and unique and hence, would make sense. He wanted to find "a logically perfect language", the syntax of which would prevent nonsense. Later, I re-evaluated theorizing about my works in this way, and rather turned to criticism in post-structural feminist theorists such as Judith Butler who saw the ideological implications on thought immanent in such logocentric views. I am still interested in the relationship between language and thought but no longer attempt to find the 'right' formula or set answers for understanding the relation.

54. The information in the following paragraphs that summarise what post-structuralist criticisms generally involve is adapted from Simon O'Sullivan's informative analysis (2006:9-16).

55. He later proposed a focus on the "affirmative character of works: they are not in place of anything; they do not stand for but stand; that is to say, they function through their material and its organization (1989b:158).

the question of 'what does the artwork mean?' and as such the work becomes limited to the promise that it *means* anything at all (O'Sullivan 2006:15).<sup>51</sup> Secondly, they tend to position their thinking within a criticism of representation that is against the idea that an artwork is constituted by meaning or determined always in terms of something outside of the artwork itself (art objects as 'signs').

I personally have been quite used to thinking about my work predominantly within the framework of representation, of 'word' and 'image' and accompanying dichotomies, such as the content that I internally think about, and the external image that I perceive or that 'visualizes' my thought (when creating an artwork for example); signified and signifier; subject and object; seeing something versus reading it; speech versus writing; or, the author (perhaps with intentions) versus the book (a product of those intentions), and so forth.<sup>52</sup> As I continued to study, I became aware of the various criticisms of this line of thought,<sup>53</sup> and observing what these criticisms involve is a very important part of situating my approach to my own artworks.<sup>54</sup>

A prominent view from the side of criticism is that representation itself is *premised* on a crisis. In his essay, *Beyond Representation* (1989), philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard writes:

This methodological nihilism, which transforms entities of language, painting [or artworks in general]... into signs or groups that *stand for* something else,<sup>55</sup> and therefore treats the material and its organization as a surface to be penetrated, one finds the same prejudice: the notion that works have a substitutive or vicarious function. They are only

56. In his article *Semiosis and Mimesis...* (2010), art historian Stefan Beyst argues that the subsumption of the image under the sign is problematic. He makes a strong case for distinguishing the difference between: an image, which he argues shows us a world and is an end in itself; and a sign (including an "imagesign"), which refers to the world, or makes statements about the world. His argument might possibly be a more *useful* plea for an "iconic turn", (i.e., theories of images in opposition to logocentric theories, which honour language as the fundamental expression for meaning) than those of W.J.T Mitchell, Gottfried Boehm or Nelson Goodman.

57. 'Bookness' is a term coined by Philip Smith in the 1970s in his essay *The Whatness of Bookness, or What is a Book?* (1996). 'Bookness' has to do with all the various aspects that constitute a book, where part of working within the field of artists' books requires engagement with cultural, metaphysical or formal and aesthetic questions regarding the identity of the book. That many of my works take on the traditional codex form of the book means that interpretation of these artworks are inevitably embedded within the traditional representative 'reading' of books: one might search for narrative, a story to be told, a lesson to be learnt, a meaning.

58. This I something I briefly address in the third chapter on the rhizome. I am not referring to the broad usage of the term 'aesthetic' here, that has to do with the philosophy of art, or artistic or visual convictions and preferences. Rather, the aesthetic account of art that I am referring to (and that the rhizome theory encourages) has to do with how art addresses the spectator or the effects that the art object has on its beholder/reader. As O'Sullivan explains, here art does not necessarily have to point to some 'beyond' or lead to some transcendental experience (as is usually the case with art positioned in aesthetic discourse), but it can name the sideways movement, the fostering of transversal connections between different semiotic registers, fields, different organisations of power and between spectators and artist (O'Sullivan 2006:17).

there in place of a missing object, as the accepted formula has it; and they are there only *because* the object is missing (1989:158 cited in O'Sullivan 2006:163).

I often get the sense that my own art, which includes entities of language as well as images, becomes lost within the complex web of representational theories. Within this view, my art pieces are not approached simply as they are, but instead are often understood only in terms of how they relate to something else, for example, a separate meaning or idea that is being referred to, or a separate object that is simply being presented by the art object.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the *bookness*<sup>57</sup> of many of my artworks only exasperates such interpretation. The conceptual model of representation often comes at the expense of appreciating the art object for what it is, for its aesthetic qualities, for example.<sup>58</sup>

As Simon O'Sullivan observes, many philosophers and theorists have reacted to the socio-political problems associated with particular binaries of representation by either simply reversing those binaries or by soliciting a method that includes a removal ("deferral") of the privileged term, as with Barthes' move from work to text (author/book criticism), Lacan's critique of Freud, Jean Baudrillard's critique of reality versus image, and, not least of all, Derrida's critique and reversal of the speech and writing dichotomy (along with the countless theorists who have been influenced by his deconstructive approach, many of whom I have already indicated) (O'Sullivan 2006:15).

Likewise, in the visual arts world, many hold the view that logocentric understanding of

art presents a threat to the ‘visuality’ of a predominantly visual practice and that a resolve to this is, in essence, to rather privilege the visual over the verbal (this concept is phrased in different ways, for example, ‘image over word’, etc.). Theorists might refer to this tradition as heralding an ‘iconic or pictorial turn’.<sup>59</sup> In her essay *The Critical ‘Languages’ of Graphic Design* (2001), artist Johanna Drucker points out that many of these approaches nevertheless tend to adopt or are *premised on* traditional representational ideas and/or linguistic analogies despite their intended rejection of these (cited in Bierut, Denttel & Heller 2001:170).<sup>60</sup>

Drucker provides a useful and detailed analysis of this history. In the critical rhetoric that dominated design and visual arts from the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, “*languages of design*” and “*visual communication*” were commonplace notions.<sup>61</sup> In an attempt to privilege a visual mode over a verbal one and legitimize their profession in the academic world, designers fell into a systematic mode of thought similar to that of modernism in the visual arts, where they set out to find a set of universals, or a system of rules that would organize *visual* expression, as demonstrated by the Bauhaus school, for example (Drucker 2001:170). Such an approach was influenced by analytic philosophy and the sciences, and paralleled the formalization of natural languages that was happening at the same time. Even in the latter half of the twentieth century, when artists and visual art theorists began to draw from deconstructionist theory that was against logocentrism, semiotic theories were used si-

multaneously and artworks (or nearly all cultural artefacts, even events) were to be conceived of as *texts* to be *read* (Drucker 2001:170).

These arguments of deconstruction and ideological criticism are very important, as O’Sullivan writes, for exposing socio-political ‘transcendent’ claims of authority and resultant marginalizations that can occur from these (2006:15). Indeed, in order to break from the tree structure one must break from the pivotal centre of power. Feminist theory does this by pointing out the problematic, centred image of man and then expressing a different experience to that of man. Visual theorists like Drucker point out the problems in using structural scientific and linguistic thought in approaching fields of art and design that are, she argues, essentially creative and visual. In this chapter, I have analysed and then reflected on these approaches, since they undeniably inform my own work, and it is important to be aware of them in this regard. However, I have come to learn that this kind of thought *by itself* can be problematic.

Criticism of one system of knowledge (indeed of *any* central motif), along with an attempt to venerate a different system (even one that was previously made to be subordinate) has the potential to cause a greater division, a greater dichotomy, and thus inhibit the possibilities for a more *comprehensive* approach to art or thought in general. Furthermore, writes O’Sullivan, these critiques might “police the *possibilities* of thought” (2006:16), where criticism becomes all-consuming for the one who is

59. A term coined by visual culture theorist W.J.T. Mitchell in his book *Picture Theory* (1995). Countless theorists and philosophers have influenced or contributed to this line of thought, in a variety of ways that include engagements with ontological or aesthetic questions, see: Owen Jones’ *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856); C. S. Peirce’s conception of an ‘iconic sign’ (1931-58); Ludwig Wittgenstein’s reactionary work *Philosophical Investigations* (1953); of course, Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (19-76); Raymond Geuss’ book *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and The Frankfurt School* (1981); Susanne Langer’s differentiation between discursive and non-discursive symbols, see her book *Feeling and Form...* (1953); and Nelson Goodman’s *Languages of Art...* (1976).

60. Cited in the compilation of essays *Looking Closer Four: Critical Writings on Graphic Design* (2001), edited by Michael Bierut, William Drenntel and Steven Heller.

61. Drucker maintains that “[t]he phrase ‘languages of graphic design’ inscribes that analogy in such familiar terms that the assumptions underlying it almost disappear. She argues that the paradox results from the fact that the fundamental visuality of graphic design [etc.] is sacrificed when its specificity is subsumed within a critical framework premised on concepts of language” (2001:168).

62. This approach redundantly becomes arboreal in nature, with a centred focus or the creation of a new dichotomy, or a new order of hierarchy.

criticizing, and that which is criticized just re-asserts a new position of power, “a centre of significance” to some degree (O’Sullivan 2006:16, Sutton 2008:72).<sup>62</sup> This cyclic and redundant kind of movement is in essence what the second book type, the fascicular-root, indicates.

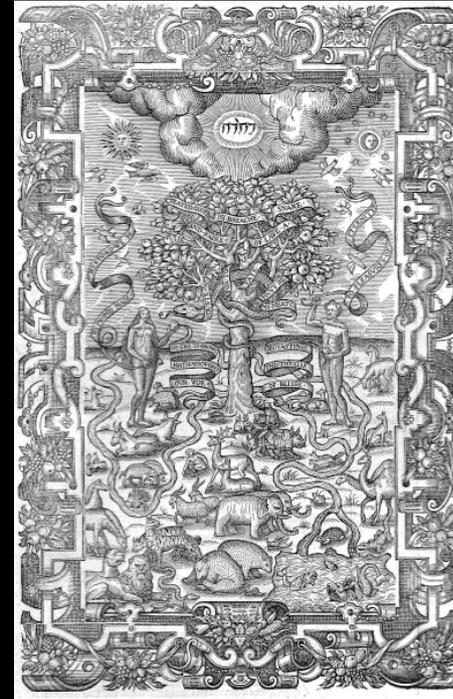


Fig. 1. *The Fall of Man* (c 16th Century) Illustration believed to be the frontispiece to sixteenth century edition of the New Testament. © The Trustees of the British Museum (Lima 2014:21).



Fig. 2. *The Tree of Life, which bear twelve manner of fruits...* (1770-1800) Engraving. © The Trustees of the British Museum (Lima 2014:21).

Allegory from the Book of Revelations, XXII v.2, with Christ crucified on a tree of fruit, with fashionable people in the foreground taking the broad way to the bottomless pit, and ignoring preachers such as John Wesley and George Whitefield; the New Jerusalem is behind the tree.



Fig. 3. *Allegorical account of the life of man* (c.1639) Engraving. A tree, with its roots before birth, and its branches bearing fruit with texts from the Bible; at the top the beams of Christ as the sun. © The Trustees of the British Museum (British Museum Library 2014).



Fig. 4. *Garima Gospels* (330-650 AD) Illuminated Manuscript. The Ethiopian Heritage Fund. Abba Garima, Ethiopia, Non-collectable. (Ethiopian Heritage Fund 2014).

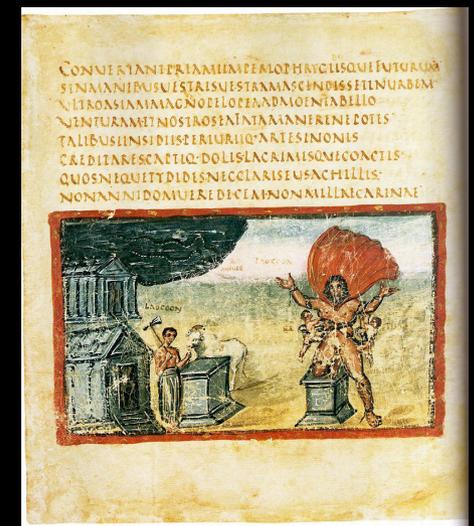


Fig. 5. *Vatican Vergil* (c.400AD) Illuminated Manuscript. Rome, Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica (Meggs & Purvis 2006:43).

Detail: *The Death of Laocoon*, two scenes from the life of the priest Laocoon, punished by death for profaning the temple of Apollo.

Fig. 6. *Book of Kells* (c.680) Illuminated Manuscript. 33 x 25,5 cm Collection: Dublin, Manuscripts and Archives Research Library, Trinity College, The University of Dublin. (Meggs & Purvis 2006:48).

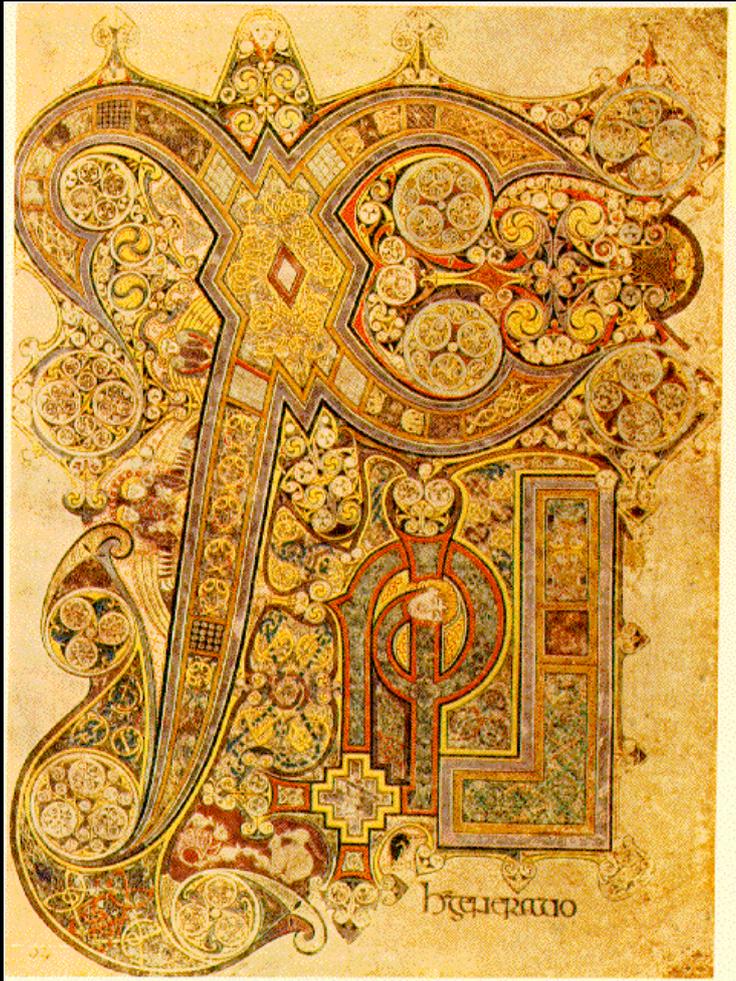


Fig. 7. Joachin of Fiore. *The Trinitarian Tree circles* (1202) Illustration from illuminated manuscript *Liber Figurarum* (1202). Collection: San Giovanni, Fiore, Non-collectable. ([http://phylonetworks.blogspot.com/2014\\_11\\_01\\_archive.html](http://phylonetworks.blogspot.com/2014_11_01_archive.html) 2014).

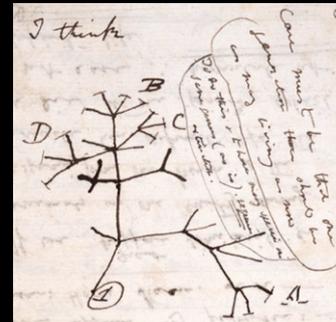
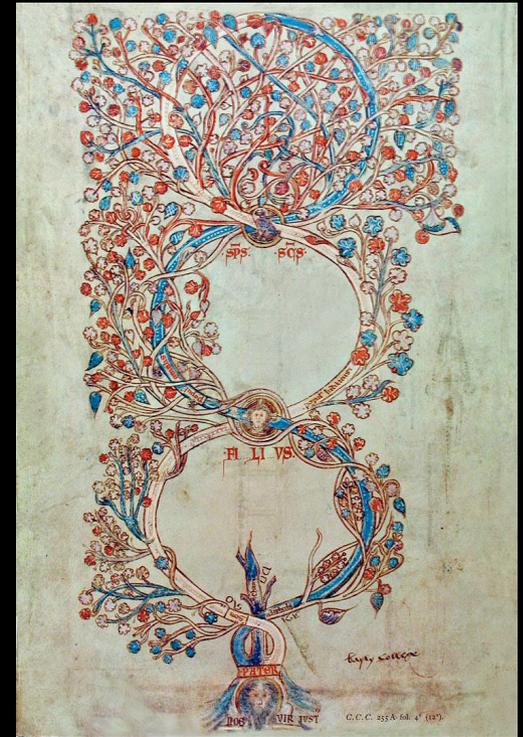


Fig. 8. Charles Darwin. *Tree of Life* (1837) Notebook sketch of evolutionary tree published in *Origin of Species* (1859). (Lima 2011:66).

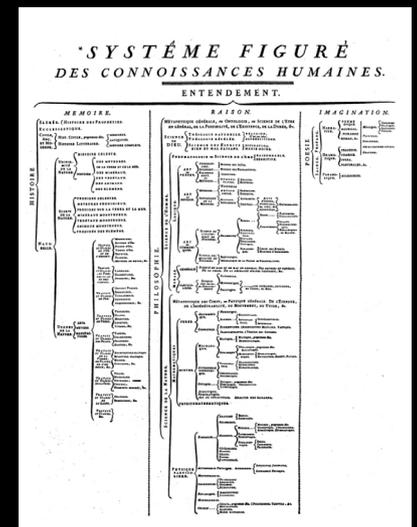


Fig. 9. Charles-Nicolas Cochin. *Système figure des connaissances humaines* (figurative system of human knowledge) (1751) Design in Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond's *Encyclopedie, ou dictionnaire raisonne des sciences, des arts et des metiers* (Encyclopedia, or a systematic dictionary of the sciences, arts and crafts) (1751). (Lima 2011:38).

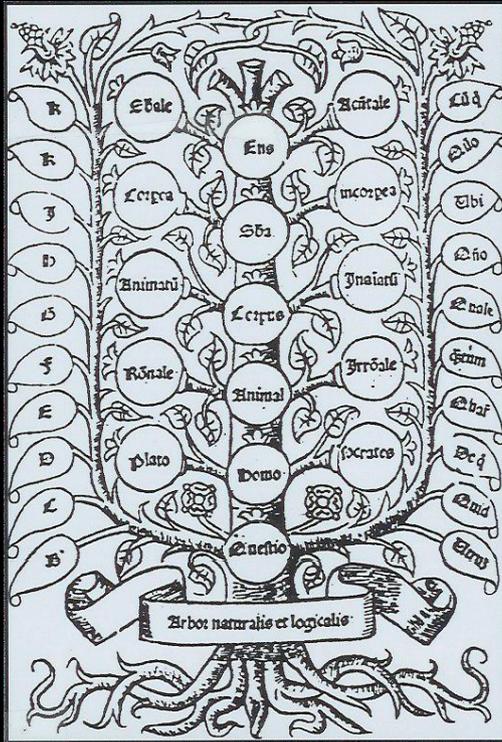


Fig. 10. Poryphy. *The Porphyrian Tree* (ca.270BCE) Earliest diagrammatic tree of knowledge conceived by Greek philosopher Poryphyry that is a reframing of Aristotle's original predictables and found in the introduction to *Categories*. (Sowa 1999:1).



Fig. 11. Johann Gutenberg. *The forty-two line Gutenberg Bible* (1450-55) The first Typographic Book. Detail: one of the front endpapers. 30,7 x 44,5 cm. Collection: The British Library (British Library 2014).

Fig. 12. Tuscani Cardoso. *Imbokodo* (2013)  
Archival gloss print on metal sheet.  
29.6 x 36.8 cm. Collection: Cape Town,  
Artist's own (Cardoso 2014).



Fig. 13. Tuscani Cardoso. *Yuen-Fen* (2013)  
Archival gloss print on metal sheet.  
29.6 x 36.8 cm. Collection: Cape Town,  
Artist's own (Cardoso 2014).

Fig. 14. Tuscani Cardoso. *Yuen-Fen* (2013)  
Detail. Archival gloss print on metal  
sheet. 29.6 x 36.8 cm. Collection: Cape  
Town, Artist's own (Cardoso 2014).





Fig. 15. Hartmann Schedel. *Genealogy of Henry II (973-1024)* Illustration of genealogical scheme depicting the woman's womb as the source of all off-shoots, from the Medieval printed book *The Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493) Collection: Beloit, WI, Beloit College, Morse Library (Lima 2011:26).



Fig. 16. Judy Chicago. *The Dinner Party* (1974-9) Installation, mixed media. Mixed media: ceramic, porcelain, textile. Dimensions variable. Collection: Brooklyn, Brooklyn Museum. (Brooklyn Museum 2014).

Detail: Place settings evoking female sexual organs. Mixed media: ceramic, porcelain, textile.

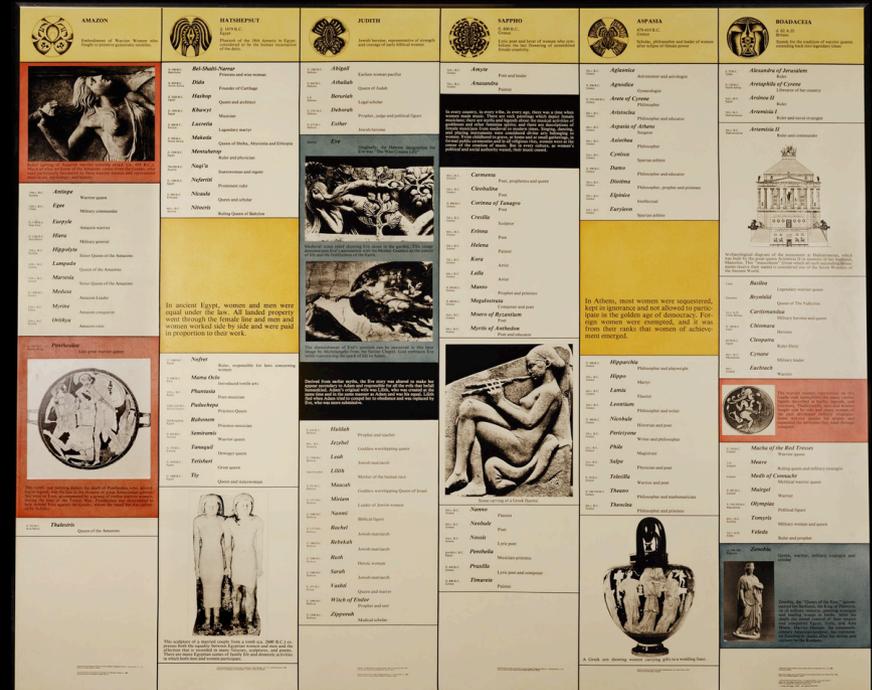


Fig. 17. Judy Chicago. *The Dinner Party* (1974-9) Installation, mixed media. Dimensions variable. Collection: Brooklyn, Brooklyn Museum. (Brooklyn Museum 2014).

Detail: Heritage Panels hand-colored photo-and-text collages that portray the lives of the mythical and historical women whose example impacted women's history and the improvement of women's conditions.

# 2

## The Fascicular Book

This time, the principal root has aborted, or its tip has been destroyed; an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development. This time, natural reality is what aborts the principal root, but the root's unity subsists... We must ask if reflexive, spiritual reality does not compensate for this state of things by demanding an even more comprehensive secret unity, or a more extensive totality (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:5-6).

Part of understanding the second book or system of thought lies in the term 'fascicular'. The word '*fascicle*' in botany means a bundle or cluster of flowers or leaves, for example, or in this case offshoots of roots. What is indicated by the fascicular root as a concept is something that is in its very nature divergent from the dominant mode of thought (from the principal trunk or tap-root) and is also multitudinous, or prolific. However, even if these roots/modes of thought are adventitious they are only supplementary to a new, greater unity and "totalization" (Deleuze & Guattari 1984:6). Thus the fascicular book sits

between the rhizome and the tree model, and shares characteristics with both. As such, I reveal parts of the inventive rhizomatic strategy in this chapter, but in relation to the arboreal issues already addressed. This chapter is short, but it serves as an important step in orientating my discussion of the rhizome, allowing me to address in advance some practical examples of the ways in which books, even when seemingly rhizomatic, may return to an arborescent state. I observe both the formal and conceptual aspects of this fascicular book type and conclude by pre-empting some questions that might arise out of learning of the complex and seemingly chaotic nature of the rhizome.

Let me return to the discussion of the redundant nature of certain critical approaches to art with which I ended the previous chapter. In theorising about my own artworks I wish to engage in a more productive model of thought than that of negative critique *alone*.<sup>63</sup> I must break from the habitual thought processes indicated by the root-tree model when I create my artworks. Here, the second part of *becoming*, as mentioned earlier, will prove important. One should not *highlight* difference (between us/them, man/woman or words/images), but rather one should go against creating binaries altogether and claim a new agency from this difference.<sup>64</sup> Part of how one goes about doing this might be offered in thinking rhizomatically.

Deleuze and Guattari's theory does *include* a strong criticism of representational thought, and is in many ways similar to Derrida's project of deconstruction. However, their criticism is accompanied by an affirmative, *inventive* strate-

63. Deconstructive and ideological criticisms are also, to be slightly reductionist, simply readings of other texts (O'Sullivan 2006:15). Again, I do not position myself *against* this approach, as this would likewise be creating a dichotomy. I have stated its importance and gone through this method myself, and now wish to allow myself to be informed by an alternative approach to thinking about art as well.

64. Damian Sutton writes, "Artists work to raise this twofold issue of experience. On the one hand, there are different experiences of the world from that of man [or from that of whatever central authority is being discussed]... On the other hand, those different experiences are experiences of difference itself... artworks that highlight difference, especially within the aesthetic or formal constraints of art practice, often recreate the systems of difference... the highlighting of 'man' as the majoritarian form that leads to social inequality represents only one dimension to the concept that Deleuze and Guattari wanted to create. They wanted to go further, and attack the very principle of difference itself" (Sutton & Martin-Jones 2008:72).

gy for thinking beyond signification *alone*. They propose specific characteristics of thought that might produce creative and more *inclusive* possibilities for reading and interpreting the world and for approaching art.<sup>65</sup>

Again, I have become aware of the problems associated with the tree-model of thought, or of representative thought, and now I need to move beyond it. This is how fascicular thought grows (and undergoes "flourishing development"), from first breaking with the principle root. It begins with the deconstructionist philosophers, feminists, interpreters, or artists tinkering with new and different ideas at the beginning of counter-movements. As I unpack the quote cited in the beginning of this chapter, it is suggested that (literary or artistic) works have a significant role to play in any attempt to break away from the dominant mode of thought.

65. O'Sullivan cites Nietzsche in acknowledging people's strong propensity for anthropomorphism, where we tend to see ourselves in things (2006:164). The representational way of thinking is, in a sense, the traditional way in which we tend to think about ourselves and our relation to the world (the various points that I discussed in the previous chapter demonstrate this, where representational thinking extend to ideas about psychology (subjectivity) and many of the fundamental ideas behind philosophy, for example). O'Sullivan reminds us that these are already our habits of thought; we separate ourselves as subjects from objects, we tend to think about ourselves inhabiting an internal world as well as an external one, and so forth. Art, as a part of this representational thinking (art as content/subject and form/object), therefore reflects back to us a sort of image of our own subjectivity (2006:16). Hence, the importance of not just reflecting on thought (going through our traditional modes of thinking), but also of exploring new possibilities of thought and finding strategies that might transform the way we think, not only about the world and art or 'art objects', but the way we tend to think about ourselves (O'Sullivan 2006:16).

## I

## NATURAL REALITY

Deleuze and Guattari use the term *natural reality* to refer to the form or structure that a book takes,<sup>66</sup> where the book resembles a tree when in its traditional codex form. In this second section they write that "[t]his time natural reality is what aborts the principal root...", which suggests that the *form* or *structure* of a work is what breaks it from the principal mode or thought system, and this break is achieved specifically by assuming principles such as divergence, fragmentation and multiplicity (1987:5-9). Deleuze and Guattari use William S. Burroughs' cut-up method<sup>67</sup> as an example of fragmentation in lit-

66. "Even the book as a natural reality is a tap-root, with its pivotal spine and surrounding leaves" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:5).

67. Influenced by artists such as Brion Gyson and Dadaist poet Tsitin Tara, Burroughs developed a method of collage, in which he would mechanically cut up passages of prose (his own and of others) and randomly juxtapose these to create a new work. He later developed a theory for this 'cut-up' method.

erature that breaks from the dominant or traditional way of thinking about writing.

The fragmentation of Burroughs' method was influenced by techniques and devices in art (such as collage and photomontage) closely associated with twentieth-century avant-garde movements such as Dadaism and Surrealism. Johanna Drucker affirms that it was during these times, the early twentieth-century avant-garde, that the form of the book became one of the main vehicles for experimental artistic vision (1995:45 cited in Dietrich 2011:7). In my own work I often draw from artworks and ideas from these movements and I will be discussing specific examples in the next chapter; however, before I can move forward with detailing principles such as fragmentation (which would essentially be describing the rhizome), it is important first to examine the full scope of what the fascicular-root indicates.

## II

### SPIRITUAL REALITY

The point of introducing this second book is to give a warning about what can happen when attempting to move away from the dominant mode of root-tree thought in one's work with a view to achieving a 'multiplicity' of connections (in some way or another, for example through collage). Deleuze and Guattari write: "...but the root's unity subsists" (1987:5), and it is a "*spiritual reality*" that is responsible for this, as it works to compensate for the newly fragmented form of the book. They use the term *spiritual reality* to refer to the logic of a book, or the conceptual idea

behind a book. Where *natural reality* deals with the book as object, *spiritual reality* deals with the book in relation to the subject, and in the case of the fascicular book the two do not correlate.<sup>68</sup>

68. Deleuze and Guattari write that "[u]nity is consistently thwarted and obstructed in the object, while a new type of unity triumphs in the subject" (1987:6).

Rather, the logic of dualism still presides, where *spiritual reality* is, in a sense, a force that works to restore the book back to an arborescent state, into a "comprehensive secret unity, or a more extensive totality" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:5).

This means that there is still potential for a greater unity to be created in some way or another, for the features associated with arbo-real thought to return in a work, despite a writer's attempt to break from habitual thought by means of syntactical play or the artist's attempt by means of experimentation with layout, typography or with the material form of an art object (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:23). Below, I point out practical examples of how this redundant, cyclic movement can occur in a book.

One of the ways in which this can happen is in the underlying intention of the author, or the control of those making decisions about the production of a book. As suggested earlier, much work has already been done regarding the criticism of the author, most notably by Roland Barthes in his book *Mythologies* (1972) and in his essay *The Death of the Author* (1978), in which he writes: "To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing." (1978:147). In the first chapter I addressed the notion of centralism and gave the example of how traditionally monasteries would control the decisions behind the production and design of illuminated manuscripts, where the '*natural reality*' of the book

69. The weight of the traditional paper codex, the elaborate and precious detailing, the repetitive controlled layout and choice of script aligned with the book's conceptual underpinnings of religious reverence, evangelical teaching in its reception, and importantly, meeting the *scrittori's* vision. This alignment is something that I explained, could be used for more insidious political gains.

70. Between the period of the Gutenberg Bible c.1450 and the arrival of the *Livre d'artiste*, book design developed through various experimentations and innovations in typography (e.g., the emergence of illustrated typographic books and the invention of type families such as: Garamond; Caslon, Fleischmann and Bodoni, Walbaum and Didot of Classicism) and fine printing (e.g., woodblock illustrated books, Rococo etching, copperplate engravings, etc.). As a natural progression of illuminated manuscripts, the genre of deluxe editions became an established part of the publication industry. Johanna Drucker writes that deluxe editions are characterized by "large sized formats, elaborate production values such as hand colouring, virtuoso printing, fine binding, and the use of rare materials, texts, or images which catered to a sophisticated or elite market" (1994:3). These elements likewise all constitute the *Livre d'artiste*, which saw the commoditisation of deluxe editions created by rising or established artists and poets.

71. Publishers would sell the books on the strength of the popularity and fame of the artists or on the quality of the literary text. Early artists whose work was featured include Max Ernst, Pablo Picasso, Jean Miro and Henri Matisse and very often texts came from classical literature such as that of Shakespeare, Dante and Aesop (Drucker 1995:4).

conspicuously aligned with its 'spiritual reality' in being arboreal.<sup>69</sup> But the Fascicular book is closer to the genre of the *Livre d'artiste* in which the design and form of books became more experimental, but the production of which remained very much under the control of an organizing authority.

In his own project of differentiating artist books from other books which might give the impression of being artist books, in his inaugural lecture *Intersections, Boundaries and Passages: Transgressing the Codex* (2011), Keith Dietrich begins by mentioning the genre of the *Livre d'artiste*, which first came into existence in the mid-1890s.<sup>70</sup> Art dealers, collectors and publishers, such as Ambroise Vollard and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, would commission artists to *illustrate* the texts of writers and poets in a way reminiscent of the manuscript illuminators, and then have these books finely printed and bound for an exclusive readership that had grown to develop a taste for fine consumer goods, including fine artworks (Dietrich 2011:6, Drucker 1994:3). Drucker comments that the *Livre d'artiste*, in contrast to artist books, are 'products' rather than creations, where the editor's vision, which tends to be market- and sales-oriented, directs many of the decisions behind its production (1994:4-5).<sup>71</sup>

The narrative of a book is also a potential indicator of the compensatory force that can make a fragmented work arborescent. Specifically, it is linear narrative that is the issue. Deleuze and Guattari write that linear logic, or movement in a linear direction, is problematic in modern methods of making a series 'prolifer-

ate' or a 'multiplicity' grow (1987:6)<sup>72</sup> in that this is the same linear logic that develops the dualistic, genealogical nature of the tree. Of course a trained graphic designer would be well aware that movement or 'flow' can be physically and visually created within a book by means of typographical choice and alignment, colour palettes, decisions concerning the layout between text and image, and even the way in which it is bound, affecting the movement of the pages (e.g., perfect binding, saddle stitch or accordion fold).

Still a further instance of where one can observe the compensatory force under consideration is in the way that a book or artwork is exhibited. I enjoy experimenting with different ways in which all of my artworks are displayed, but my use vinyl works are particularly self-referential in this sense (*see fig. 18*). I am interested in curatorial decisions that are made in the traditional gallery setting. A very common custom of most contemporary exhibitions is the vinyl text which either modestly or blatantly acquaints the viewer with the title of an exhibition or the rationale statement, and which is aimed at orientating the viewer's understanding of the works to come. By means of using the vinyl material, I allude to this custom. In doing so, however, I wish to experiment with this overlooked convention. After all, it is surely a representational reasoning that confirms that artworks, before they are even seen, must first be explained, their meaning put at the forefront, so as to *organize* the intended experience of the viewer around the vision of the artist, the gallery, or curator.

72. Appropriately, the term 'fascicle' in literature refers to separate instalments, parts, or issues that together form a single literary work. This is common in narrative fiction where the separate instalments are generally published chronologically, or in sequential order.

Within my own works I undermine the above reasoning by means of asemic- or pseudo-writing. I have made use of this form of 'writing' throughout my practice and so it can be found in many of my works, which again are not all discussed in this thesis, but my untitled pastel drawings *Untitled Blue, Green, Pink and Yellow* (2014) are an example, as well as my print and book-work series "*Thank you everybody. I like American*" (2013) that I discuss in the next chapter. Asemic scripts have no fixed meaning, but rather allow the viewer to have an open-ended experience between meaning and non-meaning, or sense and nonsense. In *Untitled Blue, Green, Pink and Yellow* (2014) (fig. 19) I attempted to keep the drawing very clean and minimal, alluding to the same experimentation with form that one sees when a typeface is being developed. I used the same simplicity of form in my vinyl works. By invoking the familiar forms of recognizable writing or typography, they incite the viewer to want to read and to search for meaning, but no meaning is to be found by this mode of 'reading'. Perhaps the viewer would now search for an alternative way in which to experience the artwork and think about meaning.

The contrast between fragmented formal aspects of a book or artwork and the compensatory force that organizes and controls it (e.g., the author, linear narrative, etc.) is the reason why the fascicular book still does not break from the arborescent model. Deleuze and Guattari write that the "fascicular system does not really break with dualism, with the complementarity between a subject and an object, a natural reality and a spiritual reality..." (1984:6). Because of

this, fascicular thought is furthermore thought that does not break from the centralized, linear, hierarchal and dualistic logic present in representative thinking. As Deleuze and Guattari continue: "[t]he world has become chaos but the book remains the image of the world... A strange mystification, a book all the more total for being fragmented" (1987:6). The rhizome, on the other hand, functions and flows through a *Milieau*.

### III

## THE MILIEAU

As discussed earlier, it is a cyclic, fascicular logic that operates within the various criticisms of representative systems or power structures that, in turn, have the potential to become all-consuming in the thoughts and work of those that criticize them.<sup>73</sup> So as not to be *consumed* by criticism, I turn to investigate some of the principles that constitute rhizomatic thinking in relation to my own practice.

Particularly while experimenting with asemic writing in my artworks, I began thinking about how one makes sense of writing and art. After reading the various criticisms of representative thought (artworks are not just signs that mean/stand for something else), I was left with some questions: if it is important that I break away from representative thought, how can I do so in the creation of my artworks? Furthermore, if part of the solution is that I am to develop principles of *fragmentation* and *multiplicity* in my artworks, does this eventually mean a return to a completely abstract kind of art? Complete

73. Eugene Holland also explains how this model of thought connects to thinking about representation. He writes, "The Root-book or arborescent model of thought relates to the eternal world by reflecting and representing it, but as confidence in the tap-root book's ability to completely comprehend and faithfully represent the eternal world wanes, that very inability becomes the principle of the fascicular-book's coherence, even as the ultimate meaning of such a book gets infinitely deferred and/or requires endless interpretation" (2013:38).

chaos? Nonsense? Or to put it another way, if I am to try to move away from the conceptual mode of *signification*, with its dualistic, hierarchal potential, does this mean I should completely reject the use or study of verbal systems/ words/ semiotics, the original purpose of which was to essentially ‘signify’ or communicate sense and meaning? Surely, this too constitutes the cyclic force that is described by the fascicular-root book; a moving away from or a rejection of a controlling centre, but then a return to a new dichotomous position in privileging the ‘image’ over the ‘word’.

In his book *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (2005), Deleuze argues that there are two positions that must both be avoided: *Figuration* (or, representation) that consists of illustration and narration; and *Abstraction*, ‘chaos’ to a degree, or the complete abolition of the figure<sup>74</sup> (cited in O’Sullivan 2006:63). In order to avoid sitting on one side or the other, I must approach and create artworks through the middle or the *milieu*. This is one of the key features of the rhizome: that it has no beginning or end but always a middle or *milieu* (the French term meaning ‘surroundings’, ‘medium’ or ‘middle’) through which it works and from which it grows (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:vii,21).

•

Deleuze and Guattari’s brief but highly suggestive discussion of the fascicular root highlights some important points for moving towards rhizomatic thought. Firstly, the actual form of a book or artwork is what will encourage think-

ing that breaks from the arborescent habits of thought. Therefore the artist or viewer/reader should pay careful attention to the actual art object as it is, rather than look for something else to understand in it or beyond it. Secondly, despite a work having formal features that seem rhizomatic (e.g., being fragmented or complex) one must still be wary of certain aspects that might return a work to serving a hierarchical, dualistic mode of thought (e.g. how has the work been presented as a whole? What sort of movement does the narrative create within the bookwork?). Lastly, the fascicular book highlights the importance of how these two ‘realities’ of a work relate to each other. In fact, it highlights the importance of relations, connectivity as a whole, where works should be considered in a more comprehensive manner; in how they relate to subject, object and the world. In the next chapter I contextualize and substantiate my own work by demonstrating how artist books, through a *combined natural reality* (i.e., by formal means) and *spiritual reality* (i.e., conceptually or, in how they relate to the subject), break from the issues associated with the tree image of thought and representation, as they operate through the *milieu*.

74. Figure here refers to the figurative nature of a work: the extent to which a work, or elements in a work can be identified or recognized, for example, one identifies or ‘reads’ masks and fruit and women in Picasso’s painting *Les Femmes d’Alger* (1907).

Fig. 18. Tuscani Cardoso. *Vinyl Works - work in progress* (2014) Digital vector sketches. Dimensions variable. Collection: Cape Town, Artist's own (Cardoso 2014).

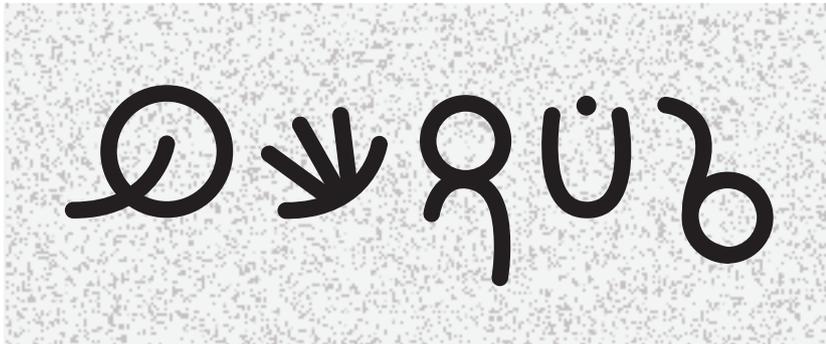


Fig. 19. Tuscani Cardoso. *Untitled Blue, Green, Pink, Yellow - work in progress* (2014) Pastel Drawings on various stocks. Each 21 x 29.7 cm. Collection: Cape Town, Artist's own (Cardoso 2014).



# 3

## The Rhizome

75. One of the biggest, if not the biggest organisms in the world is the ancient *Armillaria Ostoyae*, a sprawling mat of fungus that lives beneath the forest floor and which extends thousands of acres of soil. In her article *Strange but True: The Largest Organism...* (2007), Science writer Anne Casselman describes this structure and it provides one with a clear picture of what a rhizome looks like. At various points, spores surface into what we see as mushrooms but below the ground is a massive interconnected web structure which primarily grows along the roots of trees and secrete digestive enzymes, killing these trees (Casselman 2007:1). It even has the ability to extend rhizomorphs, which are string-like structures that bridge gaps between food sources and expand the perimeter of the fungus. Collectively this network is called the *mycelium* and is of "indefinite shape and size" (Smith, Myron cited in Casselman 2007:1)

The intricate concept of the Rhizome is Deleuze and Guattari's favoured image of thought. It is a botanical term that describes a continuously growing horizontal subterranean stem that puts out lateral shoots and adventitious roots at intervals. Examples of a rhizome include ginger, certain mushrooms<sup>75</sup> and irises. To think in this way is to attempt to think differently from a top-down tree-like system of thought, to think about things in a more complex, decentred and connected manner. Throughout this thesis, I have been developing the case for rhizomatic thinking within art practice. In this chapter, I show how the artist book *situates* the rhizome theory or, in other words, how artist books, more so than other forms of art practice, provide a space in which the rhizome theory can function. In this way I argue for the relevance of my own practice.

The rhizome is very different from the tree structure, but it is not totally opposed to it, as a binary logic would have it. Rather, the rhizome seems to offer a more *comprehensive* and

76. Deleuze and Guattari write that “[a] book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously for matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations” (1987:3).

77. What does this mean? In order to get to an idea about what this means and indeed what the rhizome as a theory actually implies, it is very important to have an openness and sensitivity to thinking about terms conceptually before attempting to link them to concrete examples. Think of the term *multiple*, and allow various connotations of the term to inform the idea of what it is. Later in this chapter, I will be applying these terms to very practical examples in the creation of bookworks, but essentially these are philosophical ideas that describe a way of thinking. Deleuze and Guattari were very careful to write in a complex way in order to allow for multiple understandings and applications of their concepts. The terms root-tree or tap-root that I have been discussing, for example, was used not because Deleuze and Guattari could not make up their mind about which part of the plant that thinking relates to, but because they wanted to demonstrate a specific root system and demonstrate the dualistic and causal nature of the relation between the root and the tree.

useful way of thinking.<sup>76</sup> The way that Sutton and Martin-Jones explain the relation is helpful: quite simply, if a solitary tree expresses the tendency of Western society to be attracted to a single, centred principle or motif, the *forest* of numerous trees and elements expresses a multiplicity of ideas, variously connected causes and effects (i.e., instead of the linear flow of a genealogical tree) and of which an originating centre is nearly impossible to trace (Sutton & Martin-Jones 2008:4). “[The rhizome] has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:21). Likewise, even to consider a tree without considering the complexity of the various environmental elements that create and propagate it would not provide the whole picture and is thus erroneous (Sutton & Martin-Jones 2008:4). Deleuze and Guattari argue that, despite the fact that many people have trees growing in their heads (those habitual modes of thought), the way that the brain itself works is like a grass rhizome, where neurons are immersed and connected in a continuous fabric as messages are transmitted across synapses and microfissures. Instead of the *one* (and inevitably, the *one* that becomes two), I must rather consider the complexity of matters and the idea of multiples, in relation with other multiples.<sup>77</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari identify approximate characteristics of the rhizome that I find extremely difficult to consider independent of each other. I find that they overlap and intersect, as was Deleuze and Guattari’s intention by writing in such a complex manner. Thus rather than unpack each principle, I have chosen to discuss key ideas that these bring up and *map*

out the ways in which they connect to artist books. I use the term *map* rather than *trace* so that it is understood that the headings in the following section are only organized one after the other because this is the nature of writing, and especially writing an academic text. Writing in the complex manner that Deleuze and Guattari do, would require skill that I do not have. Nevertheless, I have allowed myself to write in a flow (like a river or a train track through the map), a style close to a stream of consciousness, where the ideas I discuss should not be understood in a hierarchal manner, with one more important than any other. Rather, these headings are key words; they could also be said to be points on the map that could connect to any other point, where these connections (between the rhizome and artist books) are seen as equally pertinent throughout and overlapping one another. Deleuze and Guattari write that “[t]he tree imposes the verb ‘to be’ but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, ‘and ... and ... and...’, this conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb ‘to be’” (1987:25). By mapping these connections I observe how the application of the rhizomatic ideas allow the artist to move beyond her/his habitual mode of interpreting knowledge, viewing the world, themselves and their approach to art. As such, the various issues associated with these modes (i.e., centralism, dualism, representation) that I have pointed to throughout this thesis, will now be confronted. As Simon O’Sullivan maintains, these concepts aid a project of thinking, “an expanded art practice understood as a form of thought and as a technology of subjectivity” (2006:17).

## I

## ARTIST BOOKS

There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made... We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:4).

Not every book that is made by an artist can necessarily be called an artist book.<sup>78</sup> The artist book is a field of art production and study in and of itself. One of the crucial differences between a book that an artist produces and a 'book object', 'bookwork', or an object that can be called an *artist book* is that the latter interrogates the conceptual framework as well as the material form of the book as part of its purpose, thematic interests, structure or production activities (Drucker 1994:3-4, Dietrich 2011:5-6). Drucker writes that this is one of the most important aspects of the artist book, that it is almost always self-conscious about the structure and meaning of the book as a form (1994:4). Now, the artist no longer looks to create meaning in the book, instead she/he uses the book to question meaning/s. The very nature of the artist book is interrogative, as Keith Dietrich writes: artist books are created to subvert and play with every facet of the *function* of orthodox books (2011:5).

78. A considerable amount of work has been done to define and delineate the boundaries for the identification of an object as an artist book. This is not one of my concerns within this thesis and so moving forward I choose, as an artist, to draw from the definitions that align with my own ideas about what constitutes artist books.

## II

CONNECTIVITY  
- FUNCTION

The traditional and still dominant *function* of books is in essence to be a 'vehicle for reproduction', to *represent* or *illustrate* some form of knowledge, a meaning, a theory, a story, an artist's work, and so on. Artist books, on the other hand, are 'creations' in and of themselves. They are, very importantly, created and conceived of as *art objects* and therefore, to draw from the Lyotard quotation I earlier discussed,<sup>79</sup> the same care should be taken not to treat the material and organization of these works as a surface to be penetrated, not simply as 'signs' that have a substitutive function. I agree with the idea that as artworks they do not always have to stand for something else, and one should not always look for something outside of the work to understand it. Rather, works can also be approached and understood as they are, for what they can do and for what they connect with. As Deleuze and Guattari write when they continue with the rhizome approach to a book: "...we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed" (1987:4).

The principles of *connection* and *heterogeneity* epitomize the rhizome and are key to challenging the issues associated with centralism. Deleuze and Guattari declare that "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the

79. "This methodological nihilism, which transforms entities of language, painting [or artworks in general]... into signs or groups that *stand for* something else, and therefore treats the material and its organization as a surface to be penetrated, one finds the same prejudice: the notion that works have a substitutive or vicarious function. They are only there in place of a missing object, as the accepted formula has it; and they are there only *because* the object is missing" (Lyotard 1989:158 cited in O'Sullivan 2006:164).

tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:7). The theory specifically describes a conceptual state of being connected in such a way that might be likened (as Eugene Holland does) to felt material. In felt, various strands of fibre intersect and connect depending on their length, and it is these intersections, and the number of these intersections, that give the material its strength (Holland 2013:38-39). However, where the fibres of felt are homologous (in the sense of having the same structural features and patterns), all the elements within and of the rhizome are heterogeneous (meaning diverse in character or content). The rhizome itself takes on very diverse forms where it extends in all directions while having certain clumps of concentration (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:7). Indeed, artist books, too, take on diverse forms, directly calling into question the traditional codex form (or, the *natural reality* of the root-tree book).

### III

## HETEROGENEITY - FORM

Drucker writes that whether the book appears as a set of uniformly sized pages bound in a fixed and intentional sequence or as an accumulation of non-uniform pages in an unintentional and unfixed sequence which is barely recognizable as a book, both forms can conceptually be said to be books in that they work equally with the idea of the codex as their point of reference. In this sense artist books move between order and chaos, between the figurative and the abstract, in other words, in the *milieu*. I consider all of

my works as existing within the field of artist books, whether they take on the traditional paper codex form or completely reject it (and by this, I mean that some of my works literally are not books at all but are posters, or installations), because of the fact that they all refer to and allow me to explore the notion of the book, what it can do, theoretical ideas surrounding books (e.g., about language or knowledge presentation), connections that books as art can make or material questions about what a book is and can be.

Because definitions concerning artist books are so elusive and widely disputed and because specific formal characteristics cannot be definitively attached to artist books, any attempt at trying to point out a key moment in which they historically appear proves to be a difficult task. My own attempt to locate artist books within the evolution of the book (a chronology that I have inserted throughout this thesis) is aligned with Drucker’s account. She considers the complications of this history and the complexity of the practice, which itself appears as a rhizome, writing (1994:11):

[T]he artist book [is] a field that emerges with many spontaneous points of origin and originality. This is a field in which there are underground, informal, or personal networks which allow growth to surface in a new environment, or moment, or through a chance encounter with a work, or an artist. This is also a field in which there are always inventors and numerous mini-genealogies and clusters, but a field which belies the linear notion of a history with a single origin.

In light of this, I view works that are generally considered to be precursors to the modern-day idea of artist books, such as those of the Arts and Crafts movement or of the twentieth-century avant-garde, as equally relevant to this discussion as those created from the 1960s until today.<sup>80</sup> From this point onwards I will not continue with a linear history of artist books but point to moments and examples that inform their identity. Each moment in the history of the book and of its surrounding fields (e.g., literature, graphic design, etc.) informs the identity of artist books, either as idea or form, as they appear today. Let me now return to my discussion on the heterogeneous nature of artist books as form, and share some of my views concerning this matter, as they are pertinent to my own practice.

Admittedly, I often find artist books that explore variations on the codex form to be, for a lack of better terms, ‘gimmicky’ and ‘crafty’. This is definitely a concern that comes with moving too far away from a widely accepted and celebrated form (the codex), while at the same time referencing it. It is why, for the most part, I either completely reject the codex form, instead choosing to explore other concepts surrounding the book through forms such as print or installation, or I completely adhere to this form. Again, there will always be moments of habitual thought and representation within a rhizomatic practice, as with all practices in life, but what is argued for here is to recognize how limiting they have the potential to be, and also to not to make these more important, or more prevalent, than those experimental modes of production.<sup>81</sup> The artist must always work along *lines of flight*,

80. Very often theorists allocate this time as the defining moment in which artist books appeared, specifically by referencing Pop artist Ed Ruscha's work *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations* (1962) (fig.20) as key to conceiving the form of a book as art. Drucker argues that this too definitively limits one's idea about what can be said to be artist books, both conceptually and formally (1994:11).

81. Deleuze and Guattari write that we should always attempt to break from our old habits. "Never send down roots, or plant them, however difficult it may be to avoid reverting to the old procedures" (1987:23). As I wrote in the second chapter, it is the natural reality of the book, the actual object and form of a book that will be a strong tool in this strategy.

a notion that envisions the rhizome in a flock of birds, and calls for thought that always tries to make new connections and search for new possibilities.<sup>82</sup> There are examples of artist books that have managed to maintain, in my view, eloquence in their play with form.

Keith Smith's bookwork *Out of Sight* (1985) (fig.21-22) cuts consecutive pages at different lengths that have the effect, on each turn, of extending words by one letter. The simple use of a black sans serif font spaciouly laid out on the page, allows for the use of cut pages to have a minimal and clean effect. Some books disregard words altogether or almost altogether, becoming more expressive or gestural, as is the case in Lucas Samaras' *Book* (1968) (fig.23-25), which comprises boards as pages, cut into in a repetitive way and psychedelically layered with changing patterns and dispersed images.

Artist books in form can go so far as to become sculptures. Rather than a fixed identity or a fixed state of being, the book itself is constantly going through a fluid, dynamic process of *becoming*.

Sequence is one of the fundamental structural elements of a book (Drucker 1994:257). There are many ways in which artist books can reject a linear narrative and experiment with movement. One way in which this can be achieved could be through an employment or disruption of an established convention (e.g., relying on a comic book's breaking and continuation of cer-

82. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that "[i]n a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movement..." (1987:3). The rhizome functions on the outside, like when a new line of flight begins from the outside of a formation of birds, it is the outside where the formation changes from its predictable nature and from where it moves into other spaces and connects to other formations (1984:9). The emphasis on the outside is a call for connection, philosophically, for an outward view that looks to connect to things in the world rather than an inward, internal view that repeats habits of the past and accepts predetermined positions.

#### IV

### MOVEMENT

tain scenes using bordered blocks or strips or quick annotations). Other ways might include the use of a random selection of themes to hold together a series (rather than using connected ideas), the choice of typography that would affect a text's ease of legibility or the pace at which a reader moves through the bookwork, a careful selection of images (e.g., images that contain lines or planes of colour that connect through layout or images that break a story). Yet further intervention could be achieved by simply utilising the formal style of the book (a fast page-moving flip book versus one that is detailed and coded, requiring a longer attention span to decipher, or a loose-leaf book or accordion fold which can present pages all at once, alter the direction of reading in both directions, or allow the reader to manipulate the movement and sequence of the pages themselves).

South African artist Peter Clarke's work *Arrangement with panels* (2010) (fig.26) appears to be particularly self-referential about its structure as an accordion fold, rather than representative. Drucker describes another example in conceptual artists Lawrence Weiner and Matt Mullican's collaboration *In the Crack of the Dawn* (1991) (fig.27), in which they use the convention of the comic book to play with the idea of how meaning is determined and how a book can explore the relation of spaces (both within the frame of the page and in relation to the outside). Likewise, in his *Collected works, Volume 7: BOK 3b and BOK 3d* (1974) (fig.28), Swiss-German artist Dieter Roth punched round holes into the pages of original comic books and children's books, a simple intervention that creates an immersive

and new reading of the books narrative. I relied on the comic convention in my bookwork *S.py (Re-arrangement of parts of Mad Magazine's Spy vs Spy, 1961-)* (2013) (fig.29-31), in which I took image blocks from the darkly satirical and wordless *Mad Magazine* comic strip *Spy vs Spy* (1961-) and laid them out in the same way a children's alphabet book is laid out. On each page is a block from the comic that contains a scene in which the main object or action corresponds to a letter of the alphabet (i.e., C is for Cry, D is for Dog, M is for Map, N is for Naked etc.). The sequence may be linear because of the alphabet but the usual story-telling narrative of comics is directly interfered with. Furthermore, knowledge of this particular comic's black humour provides an extra dimension to the reading. In *Spy vs Spy*, the two spies are forever attempting to kill each other, plotting ways in which they can trap and trick the other. The ABC's are an English speaker's first encounter with written language. By placing the two conventions together I question language's role, from the earliest stages of education (genealogical role in this sense) to trick, or to embed dominant streams of thought.

A play with narrative and sequence is one of the most effective ways in which artist books can break from the cyclic fascicular force that returns a work to an ordered, organized and arborescent book. My particular integration of various editorial forms and various art forms highlights another important and rhizomatic feature of artist books that is, the *liminal* quality of the practice.

## v

CONNECTIVITY  
– LIMINAL SPACE

83. The word *liminal* comes from the Latin *limen*, which means 'threshold', and describes a transitional space or a position at a boundary.

Rather than a fixed identity or definition, Drucker and Dietrich conceive of artist books as a “zone of activity”, where bookworks occupy a *liminal*<sup>83</sup> space between various fields and ideas, both literary and artistic (Dietrich 2011:5, Drucker 1994:1). In this space, the artist has the freedom to experiment with and make connections between poetry, typography, bookbinding, painting, drawing and even performance, sculpture or installation, and so forth. Here categories are blurred and definitions are challenged. O’Sullivan writes that such a smearing and making of connections between seemingly discrete areas is the key modality of creativity in general, as it produces surprising and novel compatibilities, where new kinds of writing and art-making and thought become possible (2006:17–18). Again, one need not approach artworks to try and understand something in them anymore, or look for what they mean, but one can confront them rather in terms of their possibilities, for what they can do and for the ideas with which they can make connections.

I must make a brief interjection here to afford the concept of *liminality* a bit more attention, as this will prove useful in understanding the trans-disciplinary, hybrid nature of my works. In his article *Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rite de Passage* (1964), anthropologist Victor Turner examines the concept of liminality as it applies to the transitional space between different states that people go through

in various rites of passage. *Liminality* is “inter-structural” and occurs in the margin between fixed positions and states (Turner 1967:93). Keith Dietrich also applies this concept to thinking about artist books, viewing the space of *liminality* as a creative space where all kinds of ideas, whether they be cultural, political, social and artistic, constantly interact. Artist books occur in this space and also enable this space. The artist book as a creative space ties in with conceptual practices of art, allowing the artist to deal with the ‘un-representational’ and with the book as idea and performance. I will return to this idea later on in the chapter when I discuss the mutual *becoming* processes of the artist and the book.

Dietrich additionally references Homi Bhabha’s ‘Third Space of enunciation’ from *Location of Culture* (1994:86). Originally a concept for post-colonial study, the third space is an elusive concept that imagines a hybrid space, or a parallel formation of thought exceeding the dualism of us/them, for example, and a space in which productive and potentially reconciling concepts might be imagined. Artist books not only connect to various disciplines but they also operate in a space supplementary and parallel to these, a hybrid, third space “betwixt and between” that enables new ways of thinking about knowledge, art, language, and our own subjectivity (as beholder, artist, man, woman, citizen, African, Western etc.).<sup>84</sup>

Of further interest here is Ellen Lupton’s argument in her article *A Post-Mortem on Deconstruction?* (1994) where she responds to the unpopularity of the theoretical model that com-

84. Chinese activist artist Ai Wei Wei conceived of the book as such a space his works *The Black Book* (1994) (fig.32-33), *The White Book* (1995) and *The Grey Book* (1997). He wanted to document the thoughts of young artists in China, as well as create a space in which to exhibit foreign artworks and art historical texts (which at the time were inaccessible due to government censorship). Ai Wei Wei asked the artists if they would collaborate but when artists sent him images of their sculptures and paintings, Wei Wei sent them back asking only for short sentences or poems. In an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist in the book *Ai Wei Wei Speaks...* (2011) the Ai Wei Wei recalls his response when the artists did not like the idea, “I said, ‘No no, no, to me they’re all equally good or equally bad works there is no single work that’s better than the others, except your mind’” (2011:58). *The Black Book* was circulated “underground”, as Wei Wei would not censor the thoughts of the artists, leading some of them to withdraw from participating in the latter works for fear of the Public Security Bureau (2011:58-59). I discuss the artist book as a political space in my section “Heterogeneity-Subtraction”, later in this chapter.

pares language and design or art – that we no longer want to think of objects as texts, as ‘communicating’ messages (Lupton 1994 cited in Heller & Meggs 2001:47). She contends that the link between language and typography is different from the link between language and objects because typography is so close to language; it is “the frontier between language and objects, language and images [and it] turns language into a visible, tangible artefact, and in the process it transforms it irrevocably” (Lupton 1994 cited in Heller & Meggs 2001:47). In this way typography, as a core component of artist books, might too be understood as a space in which to experiment and language, now understood as something tangible, is put into the same framework as the materials used in an artwork, where one need no longer *only* search for what the words in a bookwork mean, but to what they look like, where they exist in space, what they can do or what performances they can elicit and what they make connections with.

## VI

## TIME

## - MULTIPLICITY

The rhizome not only makes connections through/within space, but also through time. A lot of my artworks, if not all of my works, reference and are informed by past forms in art history. Likewise, I take advantage of the mass of images and words that are available to me online and in existing books, often working over the archive. When I talk about this aspect of my work I like to quote conceptual artist John Baldessari (see *fig.34*) when he famously said “I

tend to think of words as substitutes for images. I can never seem to figure out what one does that the other doesn’t do” (cited in Schuman 2009:1). Like Baldessari, I see words and images as equally important “stuff” to use. Again, this means that there are undoubtedly moments of figuration within my work, texts that convey meaning, and plainly recognizable images. What might surface as a result of this is the issue of over-coding that I discussed earlier, where my re-iteration of certain codes might reinforce problematic productions of subjectivity. In order to address this, the rhizome’s principle of *multiplicity* will be useful.

Deleuze and Guattari explain that a *multiplicity* is created not by adding more elements, but rather by following a method of *subtraction* and using the elements already available (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:6-7, O’Sullivan 2006:29). The artist can avoid the traps of over-coding in their use of existing codes and past forms (i.e., clichés, or habitual ways in which we present knowledge (O’Sullivan 2006:66)) by *transforming* and *mixing* these, connecting them with a variety of other codes and forms and looking to the potential of what can be.<sup>85</sup> Attempt to work between figuration, recognition and abstraction. The idea of *Bricoleur* is understood here then not as a mere arrangement of signs but as accessing what is already beneath them, accessing their creative potential, where artworks make use of components of cliché in order to resist cliché, as O’Sullivan writes (2006:66-67). Claire Colebrook, in her chapter called “*Art and Time*” (2006), writes that the archivist looks to return a work to its context, placing it within a broader

85. Deleuze and Guattari write that “[a] rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts...” (1987:7).

historical movement; but, for Deleuze, the artist has the ability to do something else altogether. Colebrook (2006:83) writes:

Certain events of art are monumental precisely because they do not repeat or consolidate their time but allow for a rethinking of time, a rethinking of the very nature of life. To repeat these works is to repeat the creative potentials from which they emerged.

Artworks, then, do not simply organize things of the world but might envision a new world. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari always maintain that binaries must be avoided, but they openly acknowledge that there are indeed moments of tree-like growths and structure within the rhizome, and that there can be moments of rhizomatic sprouting on or in the tree (1987:15). O'Sullivan explains that this principle describes an attitude that sees the world then as a plane of immanent connectivity and complexity (2006:28). This means thinking in a way that is not separated from the world, but instead, "[t]he book... forms a rhizome with the world" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:11). So, too, must the artist think *with* the world in all its complexity. In this way, art can also be appreciated for its different functions, as O'Sullivan writes: it has a story-telling or allegorical aspect that is its signifying aspect, and it can also have a more creative aspect, its a-signifying aspect; and the attitude of the artist acknowledging these complex relations is what is important (2006:47).

As a complex set of relations, the principle of multiplicity emphasizes an indefinite structure; or perhaps a better description, an anti-

structure and anti-system. Anti-structure does not imply chaos; I do not see the rhizome as a 'free-for-all' kind of thinking that is too expansive, too random and nonsensical. It is rather a responsible and careful articulation that acknowledges the complexity of the world, rather than presumptuously making knowledge claims about such a complex world. This is the argument that philosopher and complexity researcher, Paul Cilliers, puts forth in his article *Complexity, Deconstruction and Relativism* (2005).

## VII

## COMPLEXITY

Paul Cilliers' description of complex systems in many ways matches up with the idea of a rhizome and some of the features associated with artist books and their study. Complex systems are open systems; they have asymmetrical structures; they display behaviour over a divergent range of timescales; they consist of many components that, on average, interact with many others; and the state of the system is determined by the value of the inputs and the outputs, and also, more than one description of a complex system is possible (Cilliers 2005:257).

Cilliers argues that a 'modest' approach is key to our ability to access these complex systems. He addresses criticism of post-structuralist positions (and a criticism that undoubtedly may come up in response to a rhizomatic position) that argues that these are too open and too vague to contribute to our knowledge of the world. He suggests that, if we acknowledge the complexity of the world in which we live, then

we also have to acknowledge the limitations of our understanding of it (2005:256). To understand the limits that knowledge can have, *enables* knowledge, where there is an understanding that we cannot know all things completely (Cilliers 2005:260). A modest approach is one that is reflective and careful about assertive claims that can be made about any aspect of knowledge.

This is the approach that I have adopted in my exploration of the fascicular and arborescent images of thought, which take assertive, singular and centralized positions as evident in the way people have represented knowledge. Rhizomatic thought, by contrast, takes on a modest position that acknowledges the complexity of matters in the world but also helps us to navigate through this complexity, offering strategies for thinking in a manner that is closer to this complexity, and that is therefore able to flow *with* it.

### VIII

## HETEROGENEITY – SUBTRACTION

The principle of multiplicity, in my understanding of it, clearly emphasizes the political effectiveness of the rhizome. A multiplicity, or as we should view it, the multiple elements together as a rhizome, “ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world...” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:8). In other words, a multiplicity, through complexity and connectivity, breaks from the pivot of controlling centres that dominate many spheres and systems of knowledge through its complexity and connectivity. As mentioned previously, a method of subtraction is key to this

break. I must attempt to subtract the one, “the leader, the general” (O’Sullivan 2006:29), and attempt to think of things in the world without reference to an organizing, classifying or genealogical referent (O’Sullivan 2006:28).

This concept is easier to understand when one considers the rhizome in animal form. Deleuze and Guattari praise the rat as a rhizome in its pack form, as also the function of their burrows, which provide shelter and prompt movement, evasion and breakout, the extension of the burrows allowing for multiple exits and entrances in all directions (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:6–7). Sutton and Martin-Jones draw a parallel between the rhizome as a network of burrows and underground protest movements. Here, one might understand rhizome thinking as a guerrilla tactic of sorts. Again, I no longer approach artworks to try and understand something in them, as ‘objects of knowledge’ (or, as only these), but rather in terms of what artworks can *do*. Perhaps the most effective employment of this complex making of connections within art practice for the purpose of “subtracting” those dominating authoritarian powers—that-be can be observed in the Dada practice.<sup>86</sup>

Nicolaus Ott, Bernard Stein and Friedrich Friedl provide a comprehensive study of the history of typography in their book *When, Who, How Typography* (1998). They write that at the beginning of the twentieth century the futurists had already achieved radical breaks from the standard forms of representation that had previously dominated books, where the layout of poetry and texts completely disrupted linear reading, and themes such as speed and the

86. As a side note: the works of William Blake and William Morris, created during the late nineteenth century, are considered to be among the first precursors to artist books as they are conceived of today. Drucker writes that Blake’s works exemplify the capacity of the book form to realize individual and independent thought (1994:26). This is especially apparent to me in one of his earliest creations *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794) (fig.35) in which Blake published and illuminated his own poems and thematically confronted the rigid constraints put on thought and spirit by those oppressive forces at work in education and the law (Drucker 1994:24). While the Arts and Crafts movement that Morris headed flourished as a “reaction against the social, moral and artistic confusion of the industrial revolution” and philosophers like John Ruskin worked to question the ordering of social structures and the severance of art from society (Maggs & Purvis 2006:167).

machine dominated thought underlying these designs (Ott, Stein & Friedl 1998:52). Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari liken the rhizome book to a “mechanical assemblage” that makes connections to other assemblages and, as a machine, the rhizome has different functions and effects, dismantling signifying particles and allowing ‘intensities’ to circulate (1987:4).

Italian poet Filippo Marinetti published his *Manifesto of Futurism* in which he declares that “Except in Struggle, there is no more beauty” (1909). A new approach to typographic design was born called *parole in liberta*, which means ‘words in freedom’ (Meggs & Purvis 2006:253). In his book *Un Coup de Des lamais N’Abolira le Hasard* (A roll of the dice will never abolish chance) (1897), French poet Stephane Mallarmé disperses hundreds of words of his poem on twenty pages, using a range of typographic styles and positions of text (fig.36-37). He creates space between words as a means to create moments of silence in the poem and wished to conceive of a book that would be the equivalent of the world (Meggs & Purvis 2006:253, Drucker 1994:118). This was one of the first times that the book’s form was conceived of as a space. French Poet Guillaume Apollinaire published another outstanding bookwork, *Calligrammes* (1913-16) (fig.38), which contained poems that, in the words of historians Meggs and Purvis, “explored the potential fusion of poetry and painting, introducing the concept of simultaneity to the time- and sequence-bound typography of the printed page” (2006:255). These notions would pave the way for the Dadaists’ own subversion of conventions in language and typography.

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages. (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:7)

Dada artists were anti-art. Horrified by the damage of the First World War, they were concerned with protest and believed in the power of nonsense and chance when applied to both visual forms and language to free thought from the traditional, bourgeois and monotonous traditions of society at the time (Meggs & Purvis 2006:256-256). Keith Dietrich names key characteristics of the Dada practice that to me clearly illustrate that it was a rhizomatic practice: “compositional disruption, typographical disorder, illogical language, the absence of narrative and descriptive elements, outrageous associations between textural elements, and chance and chaos as a means to social revolution” (2011:8). Dietrich points toward Dada periodicals in which these innovations were made manifest, such as *Cabaret Voltaire* (1916) (fig.39), *Dada* (1916) (fig.40), the *Dada Manifesto* (1918) and French poet and typographer Francis Picabia’s periodical *391* (1917) (fig.41-42). Many artists at the time used the book, along with posters and pamphlets, to express their political sentiments, and art forms such as collage and photomontage were invented during this time. Drawing from the works of cubist artists such as Picasso, Dada

artists (including French artist Marcel Duchamp, German Kurt Schwitters and Austrian Raoul Hausman) experimented with assemblage as an art form, a word that literally means ‘collection’ or ‘gathering’.

Simon O’Sullivan, in his study of Deleuze and Guattari’s machinic understanding of art, demonstrates that Marcel Duchamp’s Ready-mades (fig. 43) encapsulate the idea of art as a machine (2006:24). He suggests that in creating art, one can look to the ‘machines’ we already have (those systems that produce habitual codes) and those ones that may no longer be working but can be “reactivated... producing certain effects that could be tinkered with, unplugged and re-plugged, redirected” (O’Sullivan 2006:23–24). Duchamp’s use of found images and objects, and his creation of encounters and confrontation, is precisely using the machine in a way contrary to that for which it was intended (2006:24).

Kurt Schwitters (who was not officially part of the Dada group at the time) was famous for his reliefs, sticking or nailing together various materials such as painted card and cloth or wire meshes along with found objects, integrating art more and more with life (Meggs & Purvis 2006:259) (fig. 44). He also published twenty-four issues of the periodical *Merz* (1923–1932) (fig. 45), which included interesting typographic spreads integrated with images and blocks of colour. Later, he collaborated with Dadaist Kate Steinitz and Dutch DeStijl artist Theo van Doesburg in the book *Die Scheuche: Märchen (The Scarecrow: A Fairytale)* (1925) in which letters were depicted as characters (fig. 46-

48). Although this book is often considered more constructivist than Dada, it is nevertheless one worth mentioning for its wit. Here, as O’Sullivan writes when reflecting on the Dada practice, we might see humour as a form of “affirmative violence against typical signifying formations” (2006:73).

The use of wit and humour played a big role in freeing artists from the boredom of the bourgeois. In his book *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (1965) artist Hans Richter, who was a part of the start of the Dada movement, writes about Hans Arp, an artist who revelled in the freedom and spontaneity that the Dada movement encouraged. Arp made bold cut-outs of paper that eventually became flat pieces of wood superimposed on one another and painted in bright colours. His reliefs hardly depicted recognizable shapes, but he would label them as if they displayed obvious scenes and objects (a play with words most famously associated with surrealist Miro’s works) (see fig. 49–50) (Richter 1965:44, 25). A play with words, and an interplay between that which is representative and that which is not, became major themes of Dada practice. Poets and artists like the Swiss Hugo Ball and French Tristan Tzara transformed poems to become more and more abstract, eventually to the point of disregarding language completely.<sup>87</sup> Whole evenings would be dedicated to performing these phonetic poems.

Overall, Dada works exemplify the political potency of utilising elements such as *connectivity*, *heterogeneity* and *multiplicity* within typographic and linguistic play, but also within art practice and thought. In this regard, these works

87. “There is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity. Language stabilizes around a parish, a bishopric, a capital. It forms a bulb. It evolves by subterranean stems and flows, along river valleys or train tracks; it spreads like a patch of oil. It is always possible to break a language down into internal structural elements, an undertaking not fundamentally different from a search for roots. There is always something genealogical about a tree. It is not a method for the people. A method of the rhizome type, on the contrary, can analyze language only by decentering it onto other dimensions and other registers. A language is never closed upon itself, except as a function of impotence” (Deleuze & Guattari 1984:7–8).

epitomise the idea of a *minor art practice*,<sup>88</sup> about which O’Sullivan writes as follows in his discussion on “*Art and the Political*” (2006:70–80):

[a] minor art pushes up against the edges of representation; it bends it, forces it to the limits and often to a certain absurdity. This is not to say that a minor art cannot itself work through representation (or at least through fragments of representation)... A minor practice must be understood as always in process, as always becoming – as generating new forms through a break with, but also a utilization of, the old (2006:73).

88. O’Sullivan borrows this concept from Deleuze and Guattari’s writings about ‘minor literature’ in their study of author Franz Kafka in *Kafka: Towards a minor literature* (1986). See also O’Sullivan’s separate study of this in his article *From Stuttering and Stammering to the Diagram: Deleuze, Bacon and Contemporary Art Practice* (2009).

## IX

### SUBJECTIVITY

Such strategies as those used by the Dada artists become important tools in the artist’s production of subjectivity, where they are important not only for their destructive power but also for their parallel and connected creative potential. This is something I introduced in my first chapter where identity can be seen as always changing and being formed; one is always going through processes of *becoming* rather than having a fixed identity dictated by some genealogical or social arrangement (i.e., *becoming-woman*, *becoming-minor*). In ‘*becoming-woman*’, the woman not only confronts dualism and sees her difference as symbolic and arbitrary, but she “*becomes*”; she claims agency from her difference. Judith Butler’s idea of gender performativity is of interest here, especially where she suggests that it is we who have the potential to mimic certain performances and dominant conventions of gender, saying in an interview with Liz Kotz called *The*

*Body You Want* (1992:4):

I accept the idea that gender is an impersonation, that becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits... [but] it’s not enough to expose an ideal as uninhabitable. Ideals have to be altered and dissolved and rearticulated; there has to be a thorough rethinking of the violence of the gender ideal.

In *Gender Trouble...* (1990) Butler also suggests that it is not just through singular, united groups that such feminist politics can exist, but that “variously positioned women articulate separate identities within the framework of an emergent coalition... an emerging and unpredictable assemblage of positions” (1990:14).

Perhaps an example of an artist book that confronts and criticizes an issue emerging from gender difference while at the same time being constructive in its creation rather than purely critical, is Suzanne Lacy’s *Rape Is* (1973) (fig. 51). It is similar to (or perhaps was the inspiration for) the currently circulating internet campaign “*I need feminism because...*”. Drucker states that the book *Rape Is* emerges from first wave feminist ideas and is designed to raise women’s (but not just women’s) consciousness, in so far as it details the range of behaviours that may constitute violence against women that are usually passed off as okay in many social interactions (Drucker 1994:302). The words “Rape is” appears on every left page while the changing texts on the right include examples such as “when you attempt to prosecute the rapist, and find yourself on trial instead”. It not only criticises but it also

opens up a questioning and awareness about day-to-day behaviour and gender relations.

One of my first attempts at trying to create work that was more rhizomatic was in my bookwork *An Ode to Bukowski* (2013) (fig.52-55) and in the print series that accompanies it “*Thank you everybody, I like American*” (2013) (fig.56-58). I began the bookwork by reading a Charles Bukowski poem *16-bit Intel 8088 chip* (c. 1990-1994) which is full of computer jargon and to me, expresses a sense of frustration with trying to keep up with the fast passed, changing systems of technology one engages with in today’s world. I am drawn to the idea of different jargons and dialects being connected in an artwork, again referencing a Deleuze and Guattari quote that I cited earlier in my discussion of the experimentations with language that occurred in Dada practice, “There is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity... A method of the rhizome type, on the contrary, can analyze language only by decentering it onto other dimensions and other registers” (1984:7-8). This play with language and method of “decentering language” is one that I have become increasingly interested in while making my artworks.

Inspired by the poem, I decided to use the complicated text from a software installation instruction manual and then put this next to the unrelated ‘register’ of images of *Miss Universe* contestants. I also integrated my own drawings of strange symbols and asemic letters, that I created while studying the history of writing for this thesis. The connections made between the different ‘dialects’ and registers are made by both

myself and the viewer.

For the bookwork, I further trawled through the Internet to find recordings of the Miss Universe Pageant dating back to the 1950s, and in an almost obsessive collection of texts, I recorded the commentary made by the hosts and the speeches of the contestants. Because there seems to be no typed-out record of these (or no available records), I watched each pageant and recorded them myself, drawing out particular phrases that stood out to me (see fig.55).

These speeches are interesting to me on two levels. On one level, the pageants bring together women from different countries who speak different languages and so the moments of translation or lack thereof, become very intriguing studies into social perceptions that can occur purely based on language or dialect. This relates to Butler’s argument that ‘received grammar’ can be limiting, but takes it further, where one might see how much more limiting one’s mother tongue can be.<sup>89</sup> On another level, the pageants that were set in the 1950s remind one of a time when women were still required to perform roles such as the stay-at-home mother, the good wife, or the meek and charming young girl. Almost all of the commentary from that time focuses solely on the beauty of the girls and the questions did not require much intellectual work to answer. Although these are *beauty* pageants, this treatment is no longer popular in pageants today. In the 2013 beauty pageant, for example, the contestants were asked questions such as “If you could make a new law, what would it be?”, “As an international ambassador, do you believe that speaking English should be

89. Admittedly, it was only in further study that I learnt that one must be careful of criticism that *highlights* difference and highlights the problem being criticised. I am aware that perhaps in this work I have inadvertently *highlighted* the problem of past societal expectations on women rather than purely attempt to promote my own ideas about womanhood. Nevertheless this process of self-reflection is what is important, and the artist can always choose which function they want to attempt to fulfill in a work, whether that is criticism or moving past criticism. In this work I still tried to create new connections in this work between various ideas, styles of print and hand drawn lines, images and dialects and hope that these connections will inspire critical dialogues and spark new ideas, in my attempt at getting closer to a Rhizomatic practice.

a prerequisite to being miss universe?” and “As someone who might be winning a modeling contract, how would you feel if you were told to loose weight or risk loosing an assignment?”. These questions demonstrate a critical shift and show the valuable progress that has been made, in productions of subjectivity, where more and more women are being given a platform to voice their own political and social concerns.

Johanna Drucker, too, has valuable feminist bookworks that work along the same themes. In her book *Figuring the Word* (1998), Drucker explains her bookwork *Through Light and the Alphabet* (1986) (fig.59) in which she uses variations of typographic styles to break the linearity of text and question the limits of language. She writes that it “pose[s] visuality and flesh as the material that escapes language, not according to an opposition of intellect and sensuality nor the masculine linguistic and the feminine body, rather, in... a dialogue between the symbolic orders of experience” (1998:275). Drucker moves beyond the dualistic tropes of gender and instead draws on the concept of experience.

x

BECOMING

- PERFORMANCE

Deleuze and Guattari have their own take on aesthetics, an affect-oriented account,<sup>90</sup> which to detail is beyond the scope of my interest in this thesis. Nevertheless it is worth mentioning some brief points. Affect here has to do with the effect that the artwork has on its beholder and on its beholder’s ‘becomings’ (O’Sullivan 2006:38). Deleuze and Guattari call for an aesthetic experience

90. Theoretically, aesthetic accounts of art are concerned with how art addresses the spectator, they have to do with experience, perception or attitudes. In *Philosophy of Art: A contemporary introduction* (1999) art philosopher Noel Carroll explains the different theories on aesthetic experience. He writes that an affect-oriented account of aesthetic experience is the “sympathetic and disinterested attention to and contemplation of any object whatsoever for its own sake” (1999:172). Sympathetic here refers to allowing oneself willingly to be guided by the actual object itself, for example singing along when viewing a play or suspending one’s disbelief when watching a film (Carroll 1999:171). Disinterested attention does not mean having no interest, but rather not allowing any ulterior motives to influence our view of an object, having no personal interest come into play; for example, thinking a work is bad because it doesn’t align with our personal opinions or religious beliefs (Carroll 1999:171). This account is directly in opposition to asking what an artwork means, and is an important aspect of rhizome thinking.

of an art object for its own sake, one that goes beyond a search for what the piece *means* and *represents* (as discussed in the second chapter), but also one that does not necessarily have to involve some transcendental interpretation of art (where art somehow transports us *somewhere else*, spiritually, emotionally, etc.). The object is expressive for its own sake. O’Sullivan writes that in terms of a rhizomatic art, the experience of art has more to do with “pragmatic processes of connectivity”, where practices foster connections between “different semiotic regimes with different organisations of power as well as connecting practitioners and producers of art with spectators and beholders” (2006:17).

Unlike Mallarmé’s aspirations to conceive of a book as presenting an entire world, German artist Barbara Fahrner investigates the limits of the book form in achieving this but nevertheless as one in which to create connections related to one’s own experiences. Johanna Drucker writes about Fahrner’s project *Das KunstammerProjekt* (1987–1988) in which she processed her own experiences in books through an obsessive and eclectic collection of texts and images (some her own, others from outside sources), drawings, notes and charts (1994:116). Fahrner describes herself as a “nomadic collector” and she describes the form of her project as being “a structure without recognizable order, but nevertheless a system that branches out in all directions (see fig.60). These ramifications are accompanied by countless holes, and these holes represent the holes in our own understanding and knowledge” (cited in Drucker 1994:118). The artist book can operate in a space of con-

nectivity and through it, both the artist as well as the beholder is able to create and inform new ideas about their own identity. *Becoming* always involves this fostering of connections.

Deleuze and Guattari use the example of the orchid and the wasp, where the orchid forms an image of a wasp and is no longer entirely orchid, as it shares its pollen with the wasp (a *becoming-wasp*), while the wasp makes use of the image that the orchid has created while mutually becoming part of the orchid's reproductive apparatus (a *becoming-orchid*) (1984:7). It is a parallel evolution of 'becomings' or a *double-becoming*, and it happens through moments of connection, both 'becomings' proving to be valuable for both parties.

Artist and critic Richard Kostelanetz differentiates artist books from honorific book forms by stating that one of the main features that defines artist books is that the artist determines the content, form, design, production, publication and distribution of the book (cited in Dietrich 2011:6). But, the nature of the artist's role in creating a bookwork is quite different to that of the 'author' that I have been referring to in this thesis. Rather than the artist taking the place of the author, purely controlling the work, I suggest that the artist has the potential to go through a process of *becoming* in the realisation of an artist book by creating and fostering new connections and independent ideas about knowledge, rather than repeating those of the habitual, majoritarian centres of control. Likewise, the artist book itself goes through its own process of *becoming* in form, function and in connection with the artist and reader/viewer,

91. "...contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is an aparallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world (if it is capable, if it can)." (Deleuze & Guattari 1984:11)

92. I would remind the reader of my discussion in the second chapter, of how the way in which a work is exhibited is another form of control that can return a work to into an arborescent state. Even the presentation and curation of works is an important aspect to consider in the practice of strategically countering habitual thought systems.

constantly changing in each instance of its creation and interaction.<sup>91</sup> As with the wasp and the orchid, the artist's process of *becoming* is parallel with the *becoming* process of the book, and both of these 'becomings' expand the other's potential for change (i.e., a *double-becoming*). Thus the book becomes an assemblage where, as Deleuze and Guattari write (1987:23):

[t]here is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject.

Although I do not wish to designate a specific period in which artist books began, it is important that I recognize the great developments of the field that occurred in the period from about 1945 to the 1960s. Dietrich writes that it was really in this time that artists began systematically exploring the functions and forms of the bookwork as an alternative space for publishing their ideas and exhibiting their work (2011:5).<sup>92</sup> Perhaps the one movement that can be said to be a rhizomatic one more than any other, was the Fluxist movement. Fluxus practice encapsulated nearly all of the notions that I have discussed: the artist/book thinking *with* the world, the practice of creating connections over time and space (the artist book being a space), the employment of wit and humour, conceiving of the book as an assemblage and an immediate form of expression rather than a representation or il-

lustration, and the passing through a process of performative *becoming*. Fluxists also worked with chance, attempting to minimize the control they had over a work as much as possible. I would therefore like to mention briefly a few examples of works from this movement, along with others that connect to this mode of thought.

One of the most popular examples of the book used as a space in which the artist or its readers can realize a performance is American artist George Brecht's *Water Yam* (Fluxus edition 1974) (fig. 61-62). It is a set of score cards, each of which contains instructions for some sort of performance, directing the reader to perform certain ordinary actions in a specific way. These actions often include interacting with the book itself. In Richard Tuttle's *Story with Seven characters* (1965) (fig. 63), seven asemic or glyphic woodblock characters are repeated in various arrangements as the book progresses. Drucker writes that the book itself entails a performance, with each page a set of interactions that are continually in transition; I would add here that the book is continuously *becoming* (1994:312). Paul Zelevansky's book *Shadow Architecture at the Crossroads* (1988) (fig. 64-65) combines a multitude of various references, languages, narratives and information, which Drucker likens to an entire universe of interlocking signs (1994:319). She quotes Zelevansky talking about his mutual relationship with the book: "the edges of the page" are "the proscenium which contains the play" but "the screen is porous between us" (cited in Drucker 1994:320).

There is a recurring sense of humour in Zelevansky's books, expressed either in childlike

drawings and writings, or simply in the choice of theme. Likewise, a whimsical disposition can be felt in most of Fluxus artist Yoko Ono's work. In one of her latest bookworks, *The Other Rooms* (2009) (fig. 66), Ono walks the reader (or herself) through imaginary rooms, minimally expressed as pages. In each room she makes a comment about something or gives directions. It is a personal and reflective work that references a mother-and-son relationship, but at the same time contains some powerful political undertones. On one page (or, in one room) she writes: "A butterfly was here" while in another she gives these directions: "Politicians should wear pink transparent loose robes or pyjama-like outfits without the bottoms at all times... The army should wear drag (cocktail party-type flair skirts) and high-heel shoes with jewellery (earrings, etc.)" (2009).

Artist books from the Fluxus movement challenged the traditional exhibition space, they allowed the artist and reader to interact and perform and, in doing so, they demonstrate how artist books can facilitate the production of subjectivity (the artist can explore and say who she/he is, in the space and time that she/he wants) and how the relationship between artist and book can become more complex and interwoven. In this way, art practice is a pragmatic process more closely fused with life and its spontaneity, as it becomes part of the complex interactions and connections one actually experiences in life.

## XI

## MAPPING

All the above-mentioned processes constitute mapping, a last feature of the rhizome I wish to indicate. Deleuze and Guattari write that the map has to do with performance and experimentation whereas “tracing always involves an alleged ‘competence’” (1987:13). It seems that such experimentation is key to Cillier’s assertion of taking a modest position when approaching knowledge rather than a competent one, which claims to know the right way to do things. The logic of the tree is one of tracing (the genealogical logic of cause and effect, tracing back to the past, tracing back to the pivotal centre of reason) but the rhizome is a map. In the continual processes of *becoming*, and in a *double-becoming* with the book, the artist is no longer a part of the tracings and dualisms that are attached to the genealogical tree. The artist’s or the woman’s identity is not a tracing of the past, attached to any controlling structure or pivotal image; they no longer need to see themselves as a result of past coding and behaviours. Instead, the artist can continuously map, continuously experiment and think *with* the world, instead of thinking separately from it. The artist can think their world anew, they can think art anew and think themselves anew. Deleuze and Guattari describe the map:

[It is] open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or meditation (1998:12).

Artist books can therefore be conceived of as maps, and the practice of artist books can become a practice of mapping, a mapping of ‘*becomings*’.

In a world that has arguably become more and more difficult to navigate as connections are continuously fostered on a global scale, and as millions of online information-embedded web-pages have been created since the advent of the Internet in the early 1990s, the artist finds her/himself in a position where her/his work must keep up. The dominant traditions of ways in which people interpret and present knowledge need to be continuously re-evaluated, and critical investigations into the new challenges and potential of an increasingly complex and connected social community need to be undertaken. I have not even given a glimpse into the complicated and expansive world of data visualisation (this is possibly something to look into for future study), but these new technologies and habits of thought have perhaps the most obvious parallels with the rhizome (O’Sullivan 2006:13).

Many times in my body of work, and especially now as I come closer to the end of my thesis and understanding the rhizome, I have made reference to the internet as the most relevant example of an integrated, connected and creative space in which individual expression can take place and identities can be produced, even fabricated if desired. The Internet provides entirely new visual, linguistic and experiential ‘registers’ with which the artist can play and between which the artist can make connections. Deleuze and Guattari directly suggest

what a bookwork that is a rhizome would look like, writing, “The ideal for a book would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations” (1987:9).

Of course, this seems to be more conceptual than practical but perhaps the closest an artist can get to making a bookwork of this kind is with a loose-leaf book. My bookwork *Fissures* (2014) is a loose-leaf document in which I explore the internet as a rhizome (*fig.67*). Similar to Fahrner’s practice, I collect various images and texts as I search through the Internet and let them influence what I collect next. These are printed on different size papers, and I often pile them on top of one another, emphasizing the expansive nature of the Web in a tangible book form. The rhizome is increasingly relevant now, perhaps more than it has ever been, and a design or art practice that encompasses rhizomatic principles is one that will be continuously pertinent.

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In this chapter I have shown how, through the practice of artist books, the artist can undermine and break away from the traditional and dominant thought processes of Western society that are associated with problematic socio-political notions such as centralism and the creation of dualisms. By having the potential to encapsulate such rhizomatic principles as *connectability*, *multiplicity and heterogeneity*, artist books (both conceptually and formally, or in other words, in both their natural and spiritual realities) pro-

vide a way of thinking that is more *comprehensive* and more *connected* with the complexities of the changing world in which we live. They operate in a *liminal* space (the *milieu*) and create multiple, heterogeneous connections between the artist and the world, between various fields of knowledge, past and current forms, and signifying and a-signifying registers. In all of this, the artist is able to map and produce his or her own subjectivity, in a parallel evolution with the book. While one face looks to the past so as to be sensitive to the creations I make today, another looks to the future for possibilities of what artist books can become. What is clear is that artist books have increased relevancy, as they allow for a more comprehensive and connected art practice in which to think *with* the world, and as I practice within this field I enjoy the freedom that it affords me.

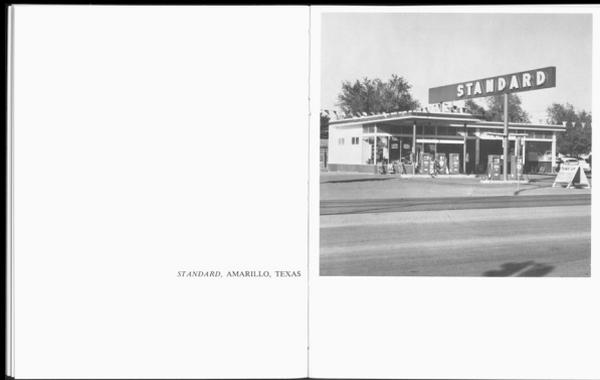


Fig. 20. Ed Ruscha. *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations* (1962) Artist's Book. 18 x 14 cm. Collection: New York, NY, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) Library (Gagosian gallery 2014).



Fig. 21-22. Kieth Smith. *Out of Sight* (1985) Artist's Book. 20,3 x 14,6 cm. Collection: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) Library (The University of Arizona Poetry Center 2014).



Fig 23-25. Lucas Samaras' *Book* (1968) Artist's book. Dimensions variable. Pace Editions, New York. Collection: MoMA Library (<http://www.kettererkunst.com/details-e.php?obnr=411001462&anummer=366&imgnr=1>)

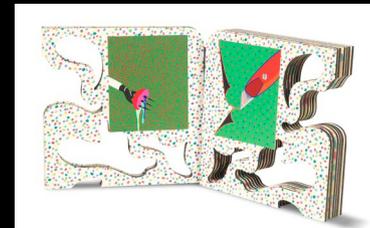




Fig 26. Peter Clarke. *Arrangement with Panels* (2010) Artist's Book. In box: 9.5 x 8.5 x 4 cm. Collection unknown. (Artists' Books in South Africa).

Fig 27. Lawrence Weiner and Matt Mullican. *In the Crack of the Dawn* (1991) Artist's book. 10.5 X 14.7 cm. Brussels, Mai 36 Galerie, Lucerne and Yves Gevaert. ([http://gramatologia.blogspot.com/2009\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://gramatologia.blogspot.com/2009_05_01_archive.html) 2014).

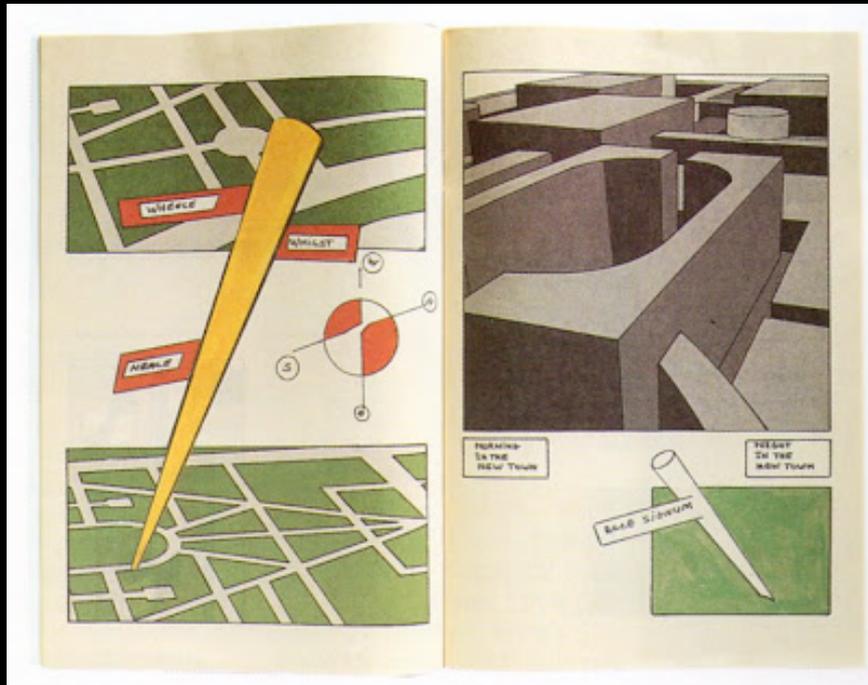


Fig. 29. Tuscani Cardoso. *S.py (Re-arrangement of parts of Mad Magazine's Spy vs Spy 1961-)* (2013) Cover. Artist's Book. 12 x19 cm. Collection: Cape Town, Artist's own (Cardoso 2014).

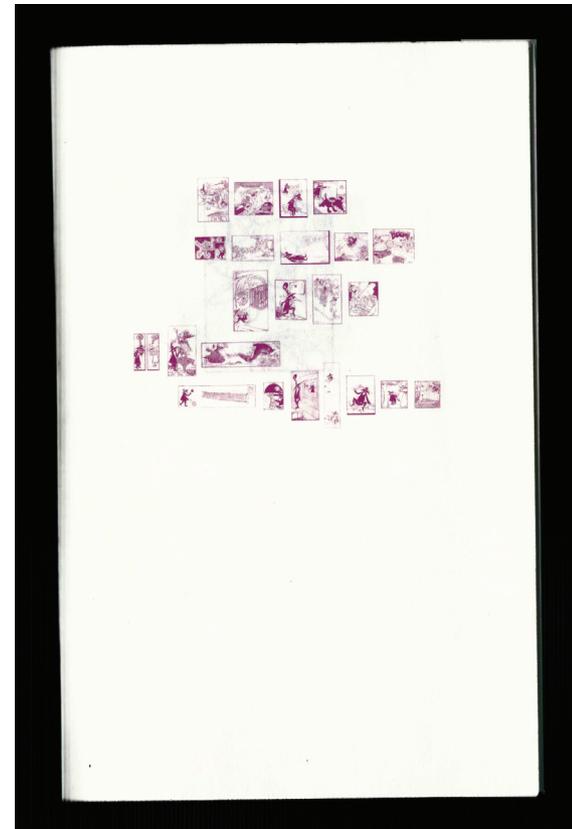


Fig 28. Dieter Roth. *BOK 3b and BOK 3d (Reconstruction of the books published by forlag ed Reykjavik 1961)* (1974) Artist's book. 22.8 x 16.8 cm. Collection: New York, NY, MoMA Library (MoMA Library 2014).



Fig. 30. Tuscani Cardoso. *S.py* (Re-arrangement of parts of *Mad Magazine's Spy vs Spy 1961-*) (2013) Spread (left). Artist's Book. 12 x19 cm. Collection: Cape Town, Artist's own (Cardoso 2014).

Fig. 31. Tuscani Cardoso. *S.py* (Re-arrangement of parts of *Mad Magazine's Spy vs Spy 1961-*) (2013) Detail (right). Artist's Book. 12 x19 cm. Collection: Cape Town, Artist's own (Cardoso 2014).

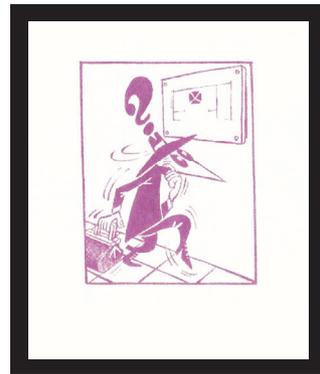
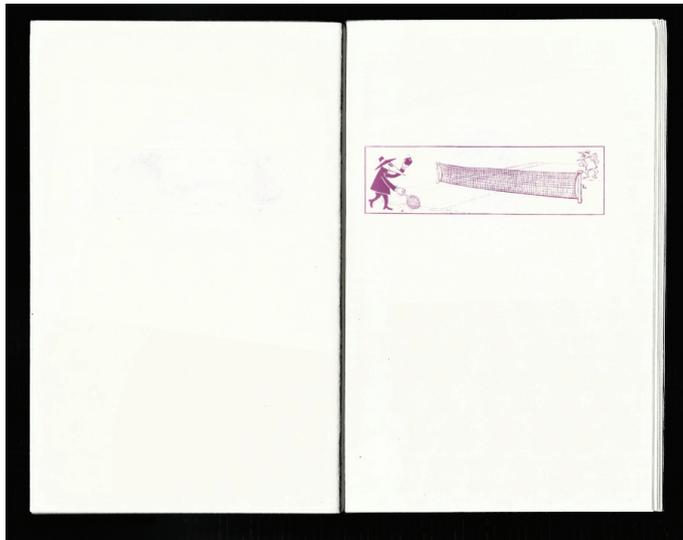


Fig. 32-33. Ai Wei Wei. *The Black Cover Book* (1994) Artist's Book. 22.9x17.8 cm. Collection: New York, NY, MoMa Library (MoMa Library 2014).

Detail: censorship lines.



Fig. 34. John Baldessari. *Storyboard (In 4 parts): Dolphin Performing before Many Seated Spectators* (2013) Varnished inkjet print on canvas with acrylic and oil paint. Collection: Berlin, London, Spruth Magers (Spruth Magers 2014).



Fig. 35. William Blake. *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1935) Published book. 21 x 18 cm. New York, The Peter Pauper Press. Collection: New York, Rare book collection, NYPL (British Library 2014).

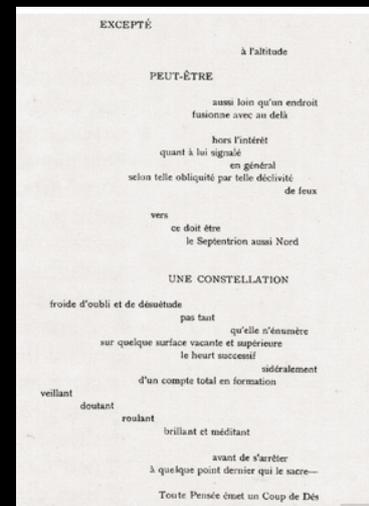
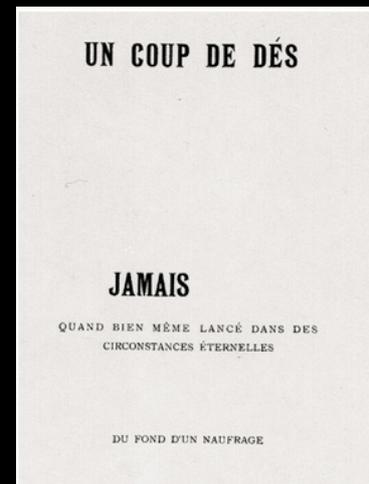
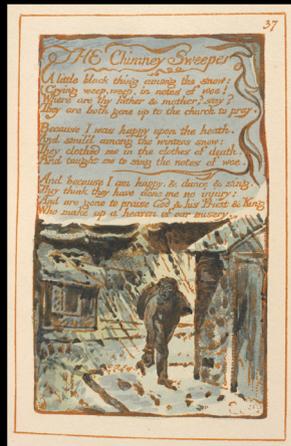
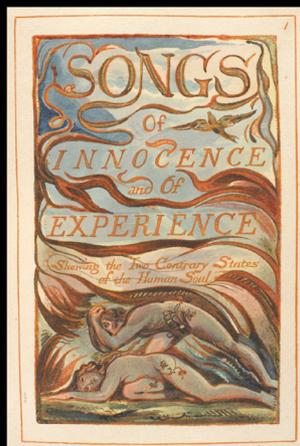


Fig. 36-37. Stéphane Mallarmé. *Un Coup de Des* (1914) Typographic book. 33 x 42.5. Collection: New York, NY, Rare book collection, New York Public Library (NYPL) (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mikaelplunian/3308133219/in/faves-dariover-rengial/lightbox/> 2014).

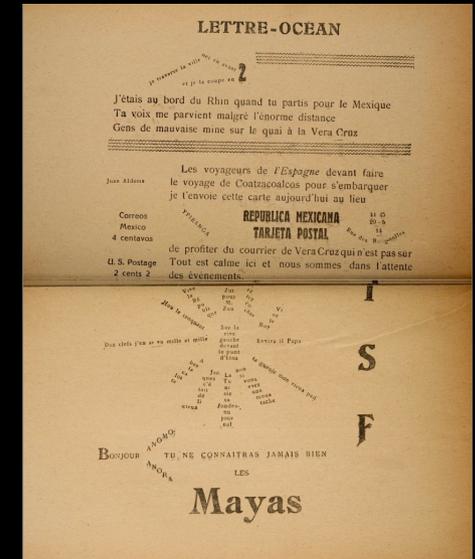


Fig. 38. Guillaume Apollinaire. *Calligrammes: poèmes de la paix et de la guerre* (1913-16) Published typographic Book. Paris, Mercvre de France. Collection: Durham, NC, Duke University Libraries (Internet Archive 2014).

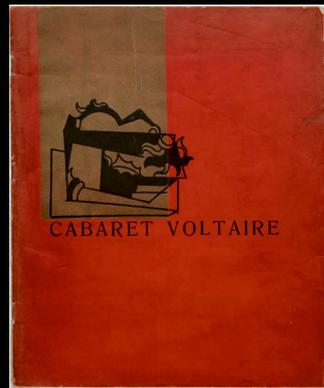


Fig. 39. (above) Hugo Ball and Guillaume Apollinaire (ed). *Cabaret Voltaire*. (No.1 1916) Published Periodical. Dimensions unknown. Zurich, Meierei. Collection: Iowa, University of Iowa Library (UIL) (UIL International Dada Archive 2014).

Fig. 40. (left) Tristan Tzara (ed). *Dada - No. 7 "Dadaphone"* (1920) Periodical. Dimensions unknown. Collection: Iowa, International Dada Archive, UIL (UIL, International Dada Archive 2014).

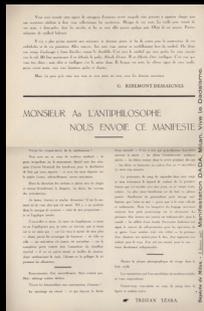
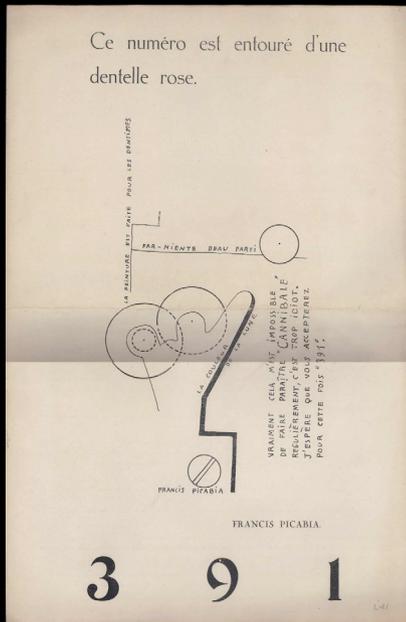


Fig. 41-42. Francis Picabia (ed). *391 - Issue No. 13* (1920) Periodical. Dimensions unknown. Collection: Iowa, International Dada Archive, UIL (UIL, International Dada Archive).

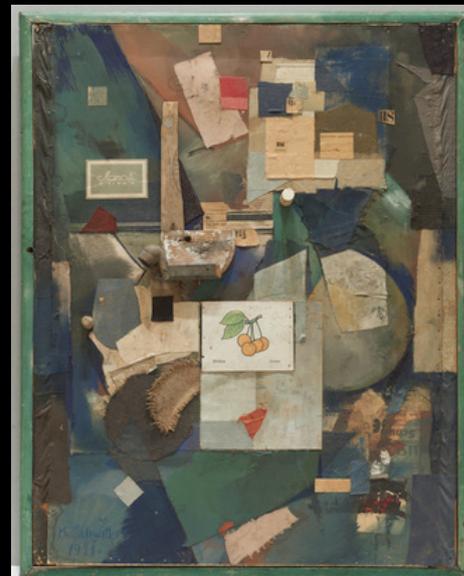


Fig. 44. Kurt Schwitters. *Merz Picture 32 A. The Cherry Picture* (1921) Cut-and-pasted colored and printed paper, cloth, wood, metal, cork, oil, pencil, and ink on paperboard. 91.8 x 70.5 cm. Collection: New York, NY, MoMA Library (MoMA Library 2014).

Fig. 43. Marcel Duchamp. *Unhappy Readymade* (1919) Dimensions variable. Non-collectable. (Agnelli 1993:69).

As a chance creation, Duchamp left the book outside to be exposed to the elements, allowing for the rain, wind and sun to transform the book.

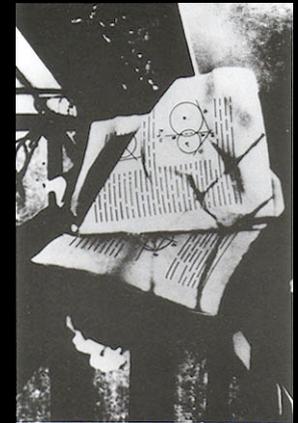


Fig. 45. Kurt Schwitters. *Plate 1 from Merz 3*. (1923) Lithograph with collage additions. Dimensions variable. Collection: New York, NY, MoMA Library (MoMA Library 2014).

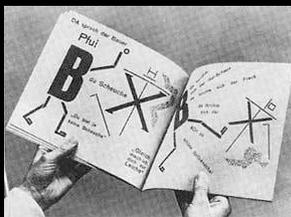
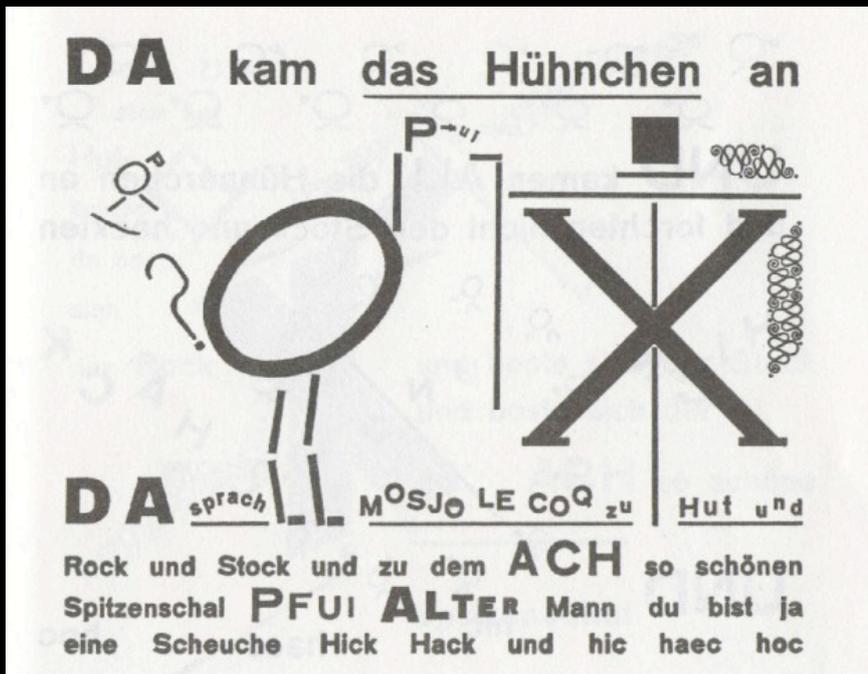


Fig. 46-48. Kurt Schwitters, Kate Steinitz and Theo van Doesburg. *Die Scheuche: Märchen (The Scarecrow: A Fairytale)* (1925) Children's book. 21 x 25. Collection: New Haven, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University Library (Yale University Library 2014).



Fig. 49. Hans Arp. *Forest* (1916)  
Painted Wood. 32.7 x 19.7 x 7.6 cm.  
Collection: National Gallery of Art,  
Washington. (Richter 1965:24).



Fig. 50. Hans Arp. *Birds in Aquarium*  
(c. 1920) Painted Wood. 25.1 x 20.3 x  
11.4 cm. Artists Rights Society (ARS).  
Collection: New York, NY, MoMa  
(MoMA Library 2014).

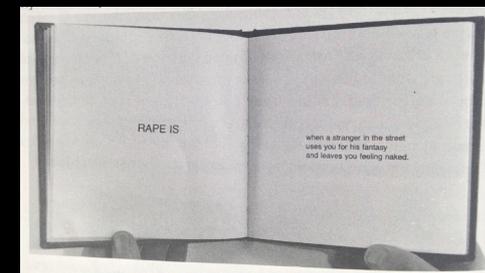


Fig. 51. Suzanne Lacy. *Rape Is* (1973)  
Artist's Book. 46p 15 cm. Woman's  
Graphic Center. Collection: New York,  
NYPL (Drucker: 1994:302).

Fig. 52-55. (clockwise)  
Tuscani Cardoso. *An Ode to Bukowski* (2013)  
Artist's Book. 20.5 x 26 cm. Collection:  
Cape Town, Artist's own (Tuscani Cardoso 2014).



Fig. 56-58. Tuscani Cardoso. *"Thank you everybody, I like American"* (2013) Pastels on museum quality print, Hahnemuhle Museum Etching. 84.1 x 59.4 cm. Collection: Cape Town, Artist's own (Tuscani Cardoso 2014).



Fig. 59. (right) Johanna Drucker. *Through Light and the Alphabet* (1986) Artist's Book. 33.2 x 33.2 cm. Collection unknown. (Drucker 1998:275).

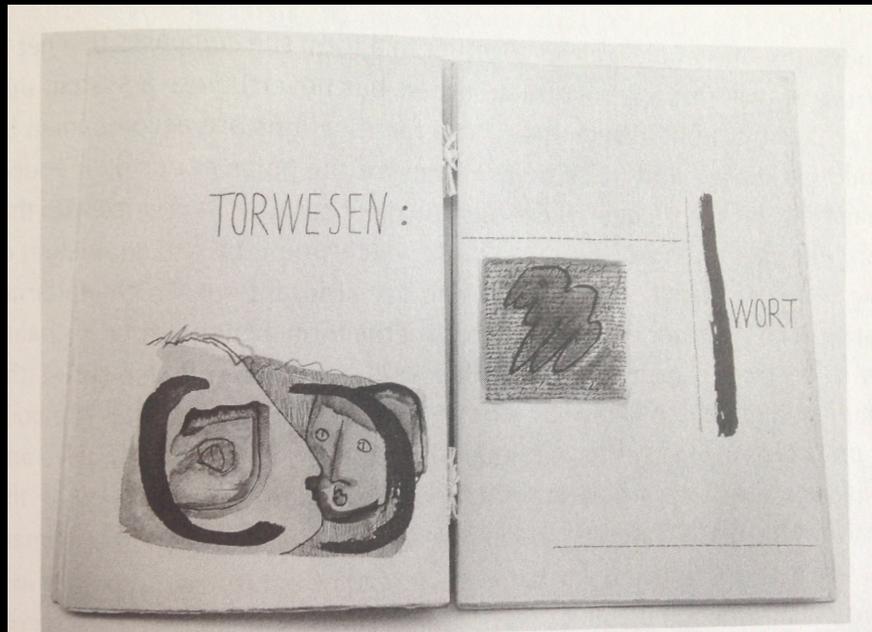
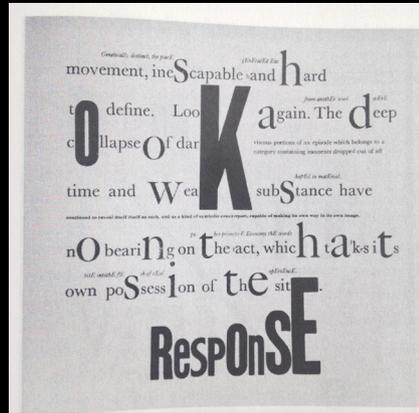


Fig. 60. Barbara Fahrner. *Japetus Steenstrup* (1987) Artist's Book. Collection: Toronto, LA, Granary Books, Artist's Books Collection, York University Library (Drucker 1994:117).

EXERCISE

Determine the center of an object or event.  
 Determine the center more accurately.  
 Repeat, until further accuracy is impossible.



Fig. 61-62. George Brecht's *Water Yam* (Fluxus edition 1974) Artist's book. Dimensions variable. Collection: Minneapolis, Walker Art Center. (Walker Art Center 2014).



Fig. 63. Richard Tuttle's *Story with Seven characters* (1965) Artist's book. Collection: New York, Spencer Collection, NYPL. (Trinity College 2014).



## Conclusion

In this thesis I have shown how prevalent tree-like structures of thought have been in the way that people have interpreted and presented knowledge, as observed in glimpses of the history of the book. Books have always played a significant role in the continued proliferation of these structures and the habits of thought they create. I have also explored how these structures might specifically operate in language (one of the many methods of expression that artist books connect with), and I have explored this through a feminist lens. I have argued that in a male-defined, phallogentric culture, which works to determine and fix gender roles, the production of a woman's own subjectivity is important; and here too the use or re-use of given codes becomes more than just a creative activity, but a political and social one. Experimentation and connection constitute a mapping of one's own ideas in connection with others, and so in this process of mapping, a process of *becoming* takes place.

I moved from thinking about how one could creatively produce ideas about one's own identity, to attempting to think in this way about art. I reflected on traditional approaches to art and on methods (even my own) of post-structural criticism in talking about art. This process of self-reflection is one that Deleuze and Guattari continuously take up in their own writing, and this is an important practice in rhizomatic thinking.<sup>93</sup> Even in criticism, it is important to

93. Deleuze and Guattari write "Have we not, however, reverted to a simple dualism by contrasting maps to tracings, as good and bad sides? Is it not of the essence of the map to be traceable? Is it not of the essence of the rhizome to intersect roots and sometimes merge with them? Does not a map contain phenomena of redundancy that are already like tracings of its own? Does not a multiplicity have strata upon which unifications and totalizations, massifications, mimetic mechanisms, signifying power takeovers, and subjective attributions take root?" (1987:13)

be cautious of creating new orders, dualisms and hierarchies (eg. to say “an artist should not be dealing with words or linguistic matters, because art is visual”). Instead, one should attempt to always move away from habitual organizations of thought, to ‘find new lines of flight’, to creatively attempt to think through new modes of thought. A strong case is made that foregrounds the asignifying aspect of art, the non-representational approach to thinking about art. But I argue that it is even better to attempt to think through the full complexity of art practice, what is called the *milieu*, always in the middle, that is, continuously to experiment and attempt to create connections between both asignifying and signifying registers, between total abstraction and total figuration, in one’s art. I have also argued that, in addition to this comprehensive way of thinking, using past forms and working through the archive is an important strategy for ‘uprooting’ centralised structures of thought.<sup>94</sup> I have substantiated my argument by discussing examples of artist book practice that demonstrate this complex and connected thinking, and I have indicated the social and political strength and effectiveness of thinking in this way.

Thinking in a rhizomatic way about art is to attempt to think in a transformative way, to experiment continuously, and to attempt to transform the way in which one thinks about art works and art practice. The artist must also consciously attempt to rethink and rework the mechanisms behind her/his own subjectivity in producing new ideas. The artist book is a machine in which to do so.

Further, Deleuze and Guattari write that

94. Deleuze and Guattari make this abundantly clear and reiterate their point: “Thus, there are very diverse map-tracing, rhizome-root assemblages... There exist tree or root structures in rhizomes; conversely, a tree branch or root division may begin to burgeon into a rhizome. The coordinates are determined not by theoretical analyses implying universals but by a pragmatics composing multiplicities or aggregates of intensities” (1987:15) and, “[m]oreover, there are despotic formations of immanence and channelization specific to rhizomes, just as there are anarchic deformations in the transcendent system of trees, aerial roots, and subterranean stems. The important point is that the root-tree and canal-rhizome are not two opposed models: the first operates as a transcendent model and tracing, even if it engenders its own escapes; the second operates as an immanent process that overturns the model and outlines a map, even if it constitutes its own hierarchies, even if it gives rise to a despotic channel... We invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another. We employ a dualism of models only in order to arrive at a process that challenges all models. Each time, mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass” (1987:20).

“what differentiates a tracing from a map is that it is entirely orientated towards experimentation towards the real” (1987:12). I have come to understand the value of making art that is closer to life, art that engages with various themes and modes of presentation and connects with art from various times and in various ways (story-telling and experiential modes). As an important part of my argument, I have addressed criticism that argues that this comprehensive way of thinking is too random and nonsensical by showing that a pragmatic art practice that acknowledges and celebrates the complexity of the world in which it is situated, is one that is socially and politically poignant because it is modest. The bourgeois is rejected because the artist understands the danger of attempting to make any claims about what can be known and what mode of thought is more important than any other.

In artist book practice, the rhizome thrives. It is a practice that sits between literature and visual arts, but also between a multiplicity of tributaries of study and practice. Further, it is one which operates within its own third space, a creative and connected space. This thesis has contributed towards developing a critical and theoretical framework for artist books, a contribution that is still much needed for this particular field of visual art practice and study. I believe that the importance and relevance of artist books as well as my own practice and study within the field has thus been substantiated.

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