

Thesis (Working Title): A performance of student-hood within a performative research based practice.

Dear Reader,

You're about to start reading a 1000 word statement. Concentrate. Please, if possible, dispel every other thought. A lot is at stake for the reader and the writer. Let the world around you fade.<sup>1</sup> Best to close other tabs. Find the most comfortable position to read. Of course, the ideal position for reading is something you can never find. In the old days they used to read standing up, at a lectern. People were accustomed to standing on their feet, without moving.

Without moving, what voice is it that you think you can hear in your head right now? Is it the voice of a student? This student? Perhaps it is your own voice? Perhaps, the voice is that of the multitude of various institutions and conventions you must knowingly or unknowingly navigate and weave under, over, around and through in order to even comprehend that which you are reading, this text.

This research complicates the parameters of art writing relocating it within a performative research<sup>2</sup>. Performative research represents a move which holds that practice is the principal research activity and sees the material outcomes of practice as all-important representations of research findings in their own right. Autobiographies, histories and digital interfaces are analysed, manipulated and appropriated as materials as a means to reevaluate the conventions of a research based practice.

Currently, this performative research cumulates within a performance of student-hood through an art writing practice on and off page specifically within the context of the art-school, the wider university and the stressed neoliberal structures of contemporary art education. The performance unfolds through a variety of materials, fictions, forms and encounters both discrete and explicit, including all interactions the student has with staff and other students within the university.

The submitted material(s) for 'transfer of status' fore fronts a fractured but subjective critical voice<sup>3</sup>. Recorded sound-pieces and tangled text pieces form the basis of an ongoing investigative preoccupation with class and the contemporary and the historical formal structures that govern and determine what currently constitutes an art education. All of this is registered through the continual research of the student. Current research materials are partially accessible through a table of contents referred to as 'atransferofstatus.com' a website constructed by the student. Content is added to the table of contents regularly from November 10<sup>th</sup> 2020. (The initial date of publication) The website also contains all other materials submitted for the examination 'Transfer of Status'.

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<sup>1</sup> These lines are appropriated from the opening lines of 'If on a winters night a traveller' by Italo Calvino (1980)

<sup>2</sup> Brad C. Haseman 'A Manifesto for Performative Research', Media International

<sup>3</sup> There is a parallel here to ideas of what constitutes as the subjective voice outlined by the critical theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak has gone to some length to point out that her aim was to trace an itinerary of silencing so that the subaltern can have access to a site of enunciation where her voice can be heard. Hence too, her interest in teaching, as practice and as policy. In postcolonial studies and in critical theory, the term subaltern designates the colonial populations who are socially, politically, and geographically outside the hierarchy of power of a colony, and of the empire's metropolitan homeland.

The student's voice and consequently accent<sup>4</sup> is deconstructed and reconstructed through a study of archival material (works, interviews and images) of 20<sup>th</sup> century Irish writers Brendan Behan and Flann O'Brien<sup>5</sup> as a means to piece back together a voice and an accent (the accent of the student) which has arguably been erased and colonised in the student's body by years of being advised to speak through structures systemically built into institutions (such as the University).

While O'Brien and Behan are notable Irish writers the student's interest goes beyond an appreciation of the writing they produced (often experimental in form). The autobiographies of these writers are/will be treated as materials abstracted by the form the research takes.

The student will attempt to select a font to represent his voice in order to transcribe the script of a lecture-performance performed for the student's seminar in February 2020. The student is unable to find a satisfactory font that adequately represents the voice that spoke during the performance. This is outlined and further explicated in the 'related essay' which also should be considered as a component of the 'portfolio of work'. In an attempt to analyse the mechanics of a font the student begins to create his own font, the details of the work in progress are part of the contents of the 'portfolio of work'.

The first two terms of this DPhil have been spent recording and writing, mostly editing and using Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint. Alongside all of the above, the student has also engaged himself with a study of the historical conditions that led to the creation of software frequently used in art-making and art education today, specifically Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint.

To what extent does the design of this software influence the content that is partially formed within it? Some of the resulting material consists of exchanges between the student and subjects who worked and invented at Microsoft in the early nineteen nineties (most notably the inventor of Microsoft PowerPoint). This material takes the form of writing in word documents and email exchanges included in the 'related essay'/'portfolio of work'.

Necessarily, the student has also engaged in an analysis of the emergence of the 'crit' and lecture-performance format that emerged from the art school pedagogies of the 1960s. This is formulated through an analysis of the Coldstream Report and conservative party politics impact on art education in the 1960s and 1970s. The implementation of the Coldstream Report (1960) resulted in art history and

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<sup>4</sup> A distinctive way of pronouncing a language, especially one associated with a particular country, area, or social class, in this case the English language spoken in an Irish Accent, more specifically a south Dublin inner city accent, a liberties accent, a Tenter's [not sure what this word means] accent.

<sup>5</sup> In particular O'Brien's novel 'At Swim two birds' (1939) which presents itself as a first-person story by an unnamed Irish student of literature. The student believes that "one beginning and one ending for a book was a thing I did not agree with", and he accordingly sets three apparently quite separate stories in motion. The student lives with his curmudgeonly uncle in Dublin and spends far too much time drinking with his friends and thinking about writing rather than writing, much like that of the lifestyle of O'Brien.

complementary studies being introduced to art school curriculums in the 1960's<sup>6</sup> and paved the way for many of the structures that are still in place in the art school today. The forms in which this research takes place are consistently scrutinised as a means to determine the form of the work and establish some sort of voice of the student within the institution.

Finally, Reader, this voice is not the voice you're hearing right now.

### Contents of 'Portfolio of Work'

A table of contents (A website designed and constructed by the student)

An extended related essay/portfolio of work

A lecture/sound piece 'In Britain'

Notes on a font in development.

An annotated copy of the last Coldstream Report (1970)

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<sup>6</sup> The Coldstream Report (1960) had advised that courses should be conceived 'as a liberal education in art'. Experimenting in different media and materials was to be encouraged. The report stated that 'The history of art should be studied and should be examined for the diploma' and 'about 15% of the total course should be devoted to the history of art and complementary studies'