main() {
    printf("hello, world\n");
}

*An Essay on Kenneth Goldsmith*

Ritgerð til B.A.-prófs í almennri bókmenntafræði

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Abstract
The foundation to literary studies, are the conflicts and discussions around it, for without the cultural developments, literature would be stuck in a rut. Seeing how we are in the middle of vast developing technological advancement, this essay will be an attempt to explore the effects it has on literature, as well as how literature reacts to these developments. This will be done through an analysis of the works of Kenneth Goldsmith, specifically his books Day and Fidget, which go against the traditional values of a literary work and are the preliminary works to the two chapters the essay is divided into. The essay begins with an overview on Goldsmith’s poetics, with a little bit of controversy and context, along with a short introduction to the main sidekick to Goldsmith’s works, Walter Benjamin. The first half of the second chapter of the thesis focuses mainly on Benjamin’s essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” and the course of art from the beginning of the 20th century along with Alexander Alberro’s essay “Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977”. The main speculations evolve around the invention of photography, in pursuit to connect the modifications it had on art to the alterations literature is forced through in the era of the internet. Whereas in the second half, the book Fidget will be shortly analysed based on the notion of materialized language. The third and final chapter is a coherent overview of the book Day along with the development of conceptual art, mainly derived from Alexander Alberro, and the ideas of originality it provides, courtesy of Rosalind Krauss, which connects to discussions around ownership and there on to recycling language based on linguistics and a little bit of semiotics.
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1: Introduction to Kenneth Goldsmith’s Poetics

Kenneth Goldsmith is a contemporary artist based in New York, a poet whose poetics exceedingly challenge conventional art, attracting criticism and mockery. Goldsmith believes the literary scene, compared to other art movements hasn’t quite kept up with the times of technological advancement. For in the world of visual arts the ideas of originality and replication have long been dealt with. As an example, Duchamp and his readymades dealt the notion of originality a hard blow. Along with Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1935) the changes about to happen became more understandable and accepted, for the practice of copying goes way back to the beginning of man. And so, with the arrival of photography the multiplication of images became such a common practice that paintings ceased to exist as one of a kind, the only copy or the original. Benjamin emphasizes the loss of aura with such reproduction of art and makes a point of unoriginality of the artwork. Goldsmith argues that these changes have gained a mainstream following, including music, whereas in literature there remains an idolized belief of authenticity. Goldsmith senses that literature “infinite in its potential of ranges and expression – is in a rut, tending to hit the same note again and again, confining itself to the narrowest of spectrums, resulting in a practice that has fallen out of step and unable to take part in arguably the most vital and exciting cultural discourse of our time” (Goldsmith, 2011, p.18). But he believes that with the rise of the Web, literature has finally met its challenger.

The issue Goldsmith is confronted with is of understanding literature, what it is and how it should be. Clearly the way Goldsmith views language and writing varies greatly from ideas commonly held about literature. “Lyric poets tend to be allergic to conceptual poetry” says Wilkinson in a New Yorker article “Something Borrowed” – continuing: “The poet C. K. Williams once stood up at a talk that Goldsmith gave at Princeton and said that hearing Goldsmith’s version of poetry made his heart sink. Williams [...] told me that he objected to the word ‘poetry’ ‘being used to characterize such silliness.’ He said, ‘It’s removing expression and feeling from writing, but it’s also removing beauty’” (Wilkinson, 2015). The word poetry in Williams’ dictionary varies from Goldsmith’s in a way where it becomes restricting. Williams, for example, believes poetry should follow a very narrow path of bourgeois rules and that the word poetry is descriptive of a specific way of writing. The importance of dictionary definitions undoubtedly helps understanding and communicating, but even a word
like poetry has changed in meaning throughout time, from referring to creative literature in general to expressing a feeling and ideas using distinctive style and rhythm (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). Goldsmith says: “People’s idea of art is infinite, whereas their idea of poetry is very limited. Poetry is such an easy place to go in and break up the house. The avant-garde loves to destroy things, and I’m an old-school avant-gardist” (Wilkinson, 2015).

Goldsmith practices a lot of what he deems “uncreative writing”, which in his ever so controversial words he explains in the following way:

[Uncreative writing] obstinately makes no claims on originality. On the contrary, it employs intentionally self and ego effacing tactics using uncreativity, unoriginality, illegibility, appropriation, plagiarism, fraud, theft, and falsification as its precepts; information management, word processing, databasing, and extreme process as its methodologies; and boredom [...] as its ethos. Language as junk, language as detritus [...] language more concerned with quantity than quality [...] conceptual writing is more interested in a thinkership rather than a readership. Readability is the last thing on this poetry’s mind. Conceptual writing is good only when the idea is good; often, the idea is much more interesting than the resultant texts. (Goldsmith, 2008)

Goldsmith deconstructs every possible idea one might have of literature. Through his concept of uncreative writing, he ties together concept and unoriginality.

Goldsmith states that uncreative writing is for everyone, no matter their income, social status, or origin - the writing is understandable and available. Goldsmith explains that:

A common accusation hurled at the avant-garde is that it is elitist and out of touch, toiling away in its ivory tower, appealing to the few who are in the know. And I’d agree that a lot of “difficult” work has been made under the mantle of populism only to be rejected by its intended audience as indecipherable, or worse, irrelevant. But uncreative writing is truly populist. [...] uncreative writing makes its intentions clear from the outset, telling you exactly what it is before you read it, there’s no way you can’t understand it. (Goldsmith, 2011, p.153)

While visual art was brought closer to the public, avant-garde literature has become increasingly unfamiliar to the common reader. What is up for grabs in terms of change is literature materialized, with a thought behind it, conceptual, for the common to consume and be challenged by.
The term avant-garde is well-known and often associated with an unconventional outlook on art. According to the Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory, avant-garde “denotes exploration, pathfinding, innovation, and invention; something new, something advanced (ahead of its time) and revolutionary” (Cuddon, 1999, p. 68). One can with confidence say that Kenneth Goldsmith is indeed investigating the unexplored – literature in technology.

Among the changes that civilization has been going through the past decades, we’ve been bestowed with era of the internet. Technology is everywhere around us and the internet has taken up a big part of our lives. We are always connected and exposed to new information, making our perception of reality a little ‘realer’, considering the many perspectives that have been brought closer to us through the internet. Of the many files, pictures, and websites we go through daily, we stumble upon enormous amounts of both relevant and irrelevant content. Some of that content which pops up in our devices has gained a greater value and a status of importance on the basis of copyright. These texts and pictures have often been claimed as property by those who’ve put their names on it, making the content unshareable for it is illegal to use without permission. But the copyright laws were created long before the age of internet and are now forced through changes to fit the new layout of content ownership. The more time passes and the more content that gets uploaded to the internet, the harder it will become to regulate the content’s rightful owner. Goldsmith touches on the subject in his book Uncreative Writing (2011) for he is a follower of the net neutrality philosophy, where all online material should remain available to us all. Goldsmith compares the situation to the fighters for net neutrality, which is against the enforcement of laws that would allow for network operators to use congestion-management and traffic-shaping techniques, which is believed to potentially be used to block certain data streams, creating an unfair advantage for other content. “These kinds of practices jeopardize the open and transparent principles of the internet” (Internet Society, 2015), says on the website of Internet Society. Goldsmith writes: “Uncreative writing mirrors the ethos of net neutral advocates, claiming that one way of treating language is materially, focusing on formal qualities as well as communicative ones, viewing it as a substance that moves and morphs through its various states and digital and textual ecosystems” (Goldsmith, 2011, p.56).

Goldsmith’s principles of language follow the same rules as the freedom of the internet and in a society where the interests of people like Ajit Pai, the most recent leader to cut net
neutrality laws, are the decision makers of such things as the internet and freedom to consume, then why think that the handling of language and art in the era of internet doesn’t follow the same unfair rules of consumption as the internet does where priority isn’t the art itself anymore, but money that is made off it. To understand the language Goldsmith uses it is important to realize that the influences in literature and dealing with art today are based on different values than before the time of internet: “Faced with an unprecedented amount of available digital text, writing needs to redefine itself to adapt to the new environment of textual abundance” (Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 17). “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” is a harbinger of understanding art in a context outside of religious or cult value, thriving towards a fresh approach for art in general, down the path of mass production with a hint of nostalgia. Benjamin’s writing manages to introduce an important speculation in the world of modern literature which with the evolvement of the machine has unwillingly denounced the idea of an original artwork, transferring over to the ideas held about ownership.

There is no rule consistent enough when it comes to art and literature which supports our valuation, since it is for the most part arbitrary. Both Jean-Paul Sartre and Roland Barthes, respected and widely read theorist in the literature academia, have written about literature, in terms of what it is and of its values. Barthes, at one point focused on language as a tool of mythologies and the unimportance of the writer, and Sartre explored literature from the perspective of language as a tool of absolute truth. Both make a case for the importance of connotative language in literature and Barthes’ Writing Degree Zero (1953) is a sort of reply to Sartre’s What is Literature? (1950). Sartre starts the book by differentiating between literature and other art forms, pointing out that literature contains one important aspect that is lacking in music and paintings: language. Compared to paintings and music, literature can signify through language, whereas in painting, according to Sartre, a colour or form can’t, they just are: “One does not paint significations” (Sartre, 1950, p.11). Just like painters and musicians, poets aren’t able to utilize language either, for the “poetic attitude considers words as things and not as signs” (Sartre, 1950, p.12). Goldsmith puts emphasis on materializing texts, which he says rose with situationism and concrete poetry (Goldsmith, 2011). Goldsmith writes briefly of the movements as the beginning of “envisioning the page as a screen” (Goldsmith, 2011, p.58), which has since then become the daily bread of a
computer programmer, for everything happening in front of us on the screen occurs through language. The poets in Sartre’s *What is Literature?* aren’t the only ones materializing language anymore, and neither are the concrete poets nor the situationists. According to Sartre, in the words of Susan Sontag, the prose writer “by its nature is bound, as is no other art, including poetry, to the task of communicating” saying that “[t]he writer is (potentially) a giver of consciousness, a liberator” and “[h]is medium, language, confers on him an ethical obligation: to aid in the project of bringing liberty to all men” concluding that “this ethical criterion must be the foundation of any sound literary judgement” (Sontag, 1968, p. 15). This said, the prose writers, have come to also play with language, to create a new platform for literature. From short poems to novels starting with George Herbert’s 1633 poem *Easter Wings* to Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (2000), which is commonly recognized for its cybertext, a new way of experiencing literature emerges, that the writings of neither Sartre nor Barthes account for. The criteria for ‘good’ literature have transformed, and the liberator is dead. In *Writing Degree Zero*, Barthes distinguishes between modern poetry and classical poetry by implying some sort of greater communicative and ethical value over modern poetry, which is “terrible and inhuman” for the poetic word in modern poetry is equivalent to encyclopaedic word, which “is reduced to a sort of zero degree, pregnant with all past and future specifications” thus making “[e]ach poetic word an unexpected object” (Barthes, 1967, p. 48). The theme here seems to be corresponding between the two French theorists, where poetry materializes language.

1.1 Introduction to Rest of the Essay

Goldsmith’s *Fidget*, published 2000, is a book only based on movements and our interpretation of them. The language used in *Fidget* is dry and the book doesn’t provide any storyline, character development, or valuable lessons. That’s why the matters of materializing language in the digital age will be looked at through *Fidget*, which exists also in other forms than just the book. Before *Fidget*, Goldsmith published *Soliloquy* which was an art installation of all the words spoken by him in a week, printed on paper for the guests of the gallery to drown in, or at least that was the idea. But Goldsmith says that “[n]obody in the art world wanted to read” (Wilkinson, 2015) so the piece became a book, obviously. In collaboration with an art-book publisher, Goldsmith divided the text into seven parts as the weekdays go and called it poetry. The text describes Goldsmith’s everyday acts and thoughts, with
whomever he crossed paths that week or what went on in his marriage at the time, but only his spoken words are printed, creating a poetic gap for the reader to fill in, creating a work that allows variety in the face of our own thoughts, never leaving the reader starved, for food – food for thought that is. Following this concept, Goldsmith published *Fidget*, which he ‘wrote’ on Bloomsday (a day in honour of James Joyce), 16th of June 1997, when over the course of the day, he documented each movement of his body into a dictaphone, beginning with him waking up. This led Goldsmith to a year of ‘uncreativity’, (Wilkinson, 2015) leading to *Day* (2003).

Therefore, *Fidget*, along with *Soliloquy* isn’t the only work Goldsmith recycled. With his most known book *Day*, Goldsmith retyped the *Time* from September 1, 2000 word by word, every number and sign included, starting from the top corner down. Goldsmith says “[w]hen you take a newspaper and reframe it as a book, you get pathos and tragedy and stories of love” (Wilkinson, 2015), making it a great book of which he wrote none. Similar projects then followed, for example *The Weather* which is a transcription of weather reports, a small part from each day over the course of a year creating an overview of all the four seasons in New York. This concept follows Marcel Duchamp’s readymades, which paved the way for conceptual art by adding an artist, stripping of usage, changing the environment, and putting it in another context, adding concept never-before seen, exposing art in the most unlikely places, everywhere. By taking an already finished product, such as a newspaper, and retyping it in a way that changes the context of it, thus actually creating something Goldsmith believes to be a great book. He creates a work of art that remains. A newspaper that is read by thousands every day has become an art work, barely read by anyone, for Goldsmith believes his books aren’t to be read but to be thought about. But the value of the book still seems to be greater than of the specific issue of the newspaper he copied since the book still sells copies. Would this have been done with any kind of fictional work, the copyright laws and issues of originality would become the prime topic in art world. By materializing language, by denouncing words, the issues of copyright would perhaps be non-existent in the world of literature, contrary to music for example. John Cage’s 4:33 is a piano piece of silence, which recreates itself every time it is ‘played’, and thus Cage is making a strong argument for laws of copyright and ownership. By attempting an ownership over silence and the surrounding sounds which might occur whilst playing the piece, Cage is pointing out the ridiculousness of
claiming elements used to create an art piece. Goldsmith touches on copyright in his book *Uncreative Writing*. In an academic context, he writes about his teaching methods in University of Pennsylvania, where he teaches a class on uncreative writing:

I teach students to appropriate, plagiarize, patch-write, and steal. If they show a trace of “creativity,” they are demoted. For a final project, I make them break the most sacred taboo in academia: they must buy a term paper from an online paper mill and present it to me as their own. What I do in the classroom is illegal and unlawful; some might even call it immoral. (Evans, 2011)

When considering originality in art the issues of copyright don’t seem to be far behind since it seems a delicate matter in the 21st century for artists to be recognized for their uniqueness and originality, not the thought behind or a value of their message. Goldsmith seems to make the subject of recycling a matter close to his he(art) and calls for a new appreciation of literature.

Marjorie Perloff is a poetry scholar and a critic who writes about Goldsmith’s work in her book *Unoriginal Genius* (2010). Perloff doesn’t take Goldsmith at face value, as many do, and she doesn’t really care for Goldsmith’s book *Day* that much, but what she does think is that not anyone could do what Goldsmith does, contrary to perhaps the most common view of conceptual artists. The importance of keeping an objective view of conceptual art translates well in Perloff’s writings. With works such as *Day* and *Fidget*, Goldsmith is changing how we not only look at writing and language, but he is also collapsing the idolisation that can often cloud one’s judgement when it comes to valuing and recognizing a piece of art based on its content rather than the person behind it.
2: Digital Age: Materializing Language: Fidget

“The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” reflects on the loss of aura in modern art, such as in photography and film, contrary to the form of painting. Benjamin explores the importance of aura in terms of authenticity and authority derived from an artwork that is mechanically reproduced. With the rise of mass production, Benjamin implies, the originality of a singular artwork ceases to exist and enforces the politicization of art. Benjamin says, “[e]ven the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (Benjamin, 1969, p.3). If literature would be perceived under the same mantle now a days, there wouldn’t be literature, for literature as we know it, is always reproduced in massive amounts. Although Benjamin believes that “the enormous changes which printing, the mechanical reproduction of writing, has brought about in literature [is] a familiar story” (Benjamin, 1969, p. 2), the history of literature varies from the history of other arts. This time not by means of the text, but for its course of development. Literature doesn’t come in an original work, it simply is. The notion of an original script has long passed; the value of a text is not retrieved from its husk of ‘originality’ but from the content the text provides, and more so “as we encounter and adopt other digital, network-enabled strategies that further alter our relationship with words [...] language has value not as much for what it says but for what it does. We deal in active language, passing information swiftly for the sake of moving it” (Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 19). With the migration of the text over to a screen, the notion of a book as an object is fading. Although these changes are taking place long after Benjamin’s essay, it nevertheless provides an important reflection on why and how we consume and make art, how it laid the ground for contemporary art, as well as how the beginning of reproduction through technology has transported the art world to the digital age we are so familiar with today.

Regarding Benjamin’s reflections on art, it is convenient to understand the immense changes, the web brought with itself and what it did to literature in the eyes of Goldsmith, for even during the 40+ years between Benjamin’s observations and Peter Bürger’s acknowledgement of the impractical comparability of advancements in visual art to literature, the poetics of literature have gone through little to no changes. In Peter Bürger’s book The Theory of the Avant-Garde (1974) the following remains:
The advent of photography makes possible the precise mechanical reproduction of reality, the mimetic function of the fine arts withers. But the limits of this explanatory model become clear when one calls to mind that it cannot be transferred to literature. For in literature, there is no technical innovation that could have produced an effect comparable to that of photography in the fine arts. (Bürger, 1984, p.32)

Bürger’s words confirm the unforeseeable course of technological advancement and its impact on literature. Goldsmith asserts that “[w]ith the rise of the Web, writing has met its photography [...] writing has encountered a situation similar to what happened to painting with the invention of photography” (Goldsmith, 2011, p.27). The way language is used in technology and digital media is an issue Goldsmith has great interest in with regards to literature. Goldsmith says in an interview Against Expression that conceptual writing “fifteen years into this [...] was just a thing that sort of emerged [...] just kind of feeling that there was a change in the air which was being precipitated by digital availability, back in the late nineties” (Goldsmith, 2011c). To tie together the force driving Goldsmith and his colleagues of conceptual poetry, he explains that “[f]aced with an unprecedented amount of available digital text, writing needs to redefine itself to adapt to the new environment of textual abundance” (Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 17) and “[i]t appears that writing’s response will be mimetic and replicative, involving notions of distribution while proposing new platforms of receivership. Words very well might be written not to be read but rather to be shared, moved, and manipulated” (Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 21).

Goldsmith takes an example of an article off a website in his book Uncreative Writing where he talks about this type of stripping away in digital media and calls it the nude media: “Once a digital file is downloaded from the context of a site, it’s free or naked, stripped bare of the normative external signifiers that tend to give as much meaning to an artwork as the contents of the artwork itself” (Goldsmith, 2011, p.112). It becomes clearer when put in context of the digital world, how texts lose their content/value through sharing. As an example, Goldsmith takes a look at a news article about Toni Curtis, an American film actor popular in the 1950s, and compares different publications of the article, on various news sites and in paper copy. Goldsmith then sends the article to himself as an email and therefore stripping it of its signifiers, revealing the nakedness of it (Goldsmith, 2011, pp.113-117). This underlines the materialisation of a text that is possible in digital media, but even in the material world of
literature, adaptations grant the artwork the same materialisation and a new context as digital media does through file sharing. Another type of materialisation that Goldsmith embraces is in his more ‘original’ works, where he is not only plagiarising but assembling sentences from words that are mostly verbs or ‘actions’ and bear with them the least amount of connotation. Goldsmith’s book *Fidget* follows this idea, for the book consist only of movements and is extremely hard to read cause of its dryness. How and why Goldsmith manages to create a novel out of materialised language will be the purpose of this chapter. Another aspect of digital media, that is so dear to the author, and on the subject of adaptations, *Fidget* also exists, as mentioned before, in other forms than the book, one of them being in the form of a Java Applet website, which emphasizes the undeniable materialization of language via machines, where

[w]ords seem to have become possessed by some spirit, an ever-changing cipher, sometimes manifesting itself as image, then changing into words, sounds or video. Writing must take into account the multiple, these fluid and ever-shifting states from the very conceptual to the very material. And writing that can mimic, reflect, and morph itself in similar ways seems to be pointed in the right direction. (Goldsmith, 2011, pp.111-112)

2.1 The Work of Literature in the Age of the Computer Screen

Benjamin begins his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” by saying: “Man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men” (Benjamin, 1969, p. 2), although distinguishing between replication and mechanical production, saying that “the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility” (Benjamin, 1969, p.6). Benjamin’s memo represents the shifts of value in an artwork with reproduction and the loss of the aura. Furthermore, Benjamin reflects on the authenticity of an art work on the basis of ritual acts:

It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the “authentic” work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. This ritualistic basis, however remote, is still recognizable as secularized ritual even in the most profane forms of the cult of beauty. (Benjamin, 1969, p.6)
Just as beauty diminished the ritualistic qualities during the Renaissance, the invention of photography would surely, with the rise of socialism, threaten the value of beauty in an artwork. This, Benjamin suggests, developed a negative theology of art because it lacked all social functions that art had provided, although at the same time freed from the form, art eventually came to be made for reproducing and hence the politicisation of art (Benjamin, 1969). The problem at hand became the increasing opportunities to distribute art for its materiality, and that the uniqueness is lost once it is copied; the value of art is derived from its rarity. But Benjamin recognizes that “the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed” (Benjamin, 1969, p. 6).

This course of action made it later possible for the conceptual artist to recreate the epistemology around art and spread art to myriad of people by “[sharing] with others of their generation an unequalled sense of opportunity and obligation to question the authority of the institutions that superintended their social roles, and ambition to develop alternative means of their interests within the larger social order” (Stimson, 1999, p.38). Peter Bürger in his book *The Theory of The Avant-Garde* points out post-Benjamin that “[a]partness from the praxis of life, which had always been the condition that characterized the way art functioned in bourgeois society, now becomes its content” (Bürger, 1984, p.48). By rejecting the art institution and reclaiming art from the politicisation Benjamin predicted, putting emphasis on the idea behind the work not its quantity, the artwork derives its importance from its concept not its authenticity anymore. So, the aftermath of reproduction has made it possible for greater outspread of art and steered its way toward reassembling art. By taking an already, mass-produced object and placing it in another context, the work of art transforms, one can recreate it. The chronicle of conceptual art has come a long way since Benjamin’s essay, but Benjamin laid the groundwork for how art came to be looked at through mechanical advancements. By asking questions regarding art itself, Benjamin pointed out the alterations in need to be made to adapt art to the new environment that photography brought. These questions are re-surfacing, since art is now ‘under attack’ again with the rapidly increasing technological advancements.

The conceptual writing that Goldsmith describes functions on another level than it does in the world of visual art, for there the essence of language has remained the same throughout history. Although the up-and-coming conceptual art movements Alexander Alberro describes
in his essay “Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977”, included language, conceptual writing – which Goldsmith’s works are categorized as – is only now properly surfacing. The reproduction of literature as art did not evolve around the replication of it as Benjamin concluded but by new means of producing it. While the first manuscripts were held in high esteem, and still are, the controversy around printing technology is history. Texts have been mass-produced since around the 15th century and an ‘original’ of today’s literary work is subsequently non-existent by way of the digital age. Goldsmith reflects: “While traditional notions of writing are primarily focused on “originality” and “creativity”, the digital environment fosters new skill sets that include “manipulation” and “management” of the heaps of already existent and ever-increasing language” (Goldsmith, 2011, p.28).

2.2 Materializing

For centuries a small number of writers were confronted by many thousands of readers. This changed toward the end of the last century. With the increasing extension of the press, which kept placing new political, religious, scientific, professional, and local organs before the readers, an increasing number of readers became writers [...] the distinction between author and public is about to lose its basic character. The difference becomes merely functional [and] [l]iterary license is now founded on polytechnic rather than specialized training and thus becomes common property. (Benjamin, 1969, p.12)

Seeing how Goldsmith himself uses language that he gathers to create literature, the idea of a writer as a profession may very well become outdated, due to the increasingly blurred lines of authorship. As soon as the concept of a writer blurs, the texts stabilize in their value and so the materializing language, along with the enforced materializing by technology, begins. One can take a text and materialize it by stripping it of its presence in time, taking it out of context and creating a new one, adapting it. For one to adapt a text into a foreign language and culture or another medium, the adaptor must materialize the text before building it up on the values of that culture and language, or the epistemology of that medium, meaning the ‘original’ to be created again only in different context. It is extremely arguable in that case whether the text, for it has been materialized and re-created, reproduced, can be considered the same text it was materialized from. The text has lost its surroundings in its original form,
the paratext which is simply put, all that surrounds the text, has been changed or erased. A simple means to materialize text is through the computer screen.

Benjamin notes that the process of reproduction, which differs from manual reproduction, is more independent of the ‘original’ (Benjamin, 1969, p.3). Benjamin derives authenticity from an original copy of art, and “[s]ince the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized” (p. 4) and therefore also “the authority of the object” (p.4) which Benjamin subsumes under the term “aura”. Benjamin explains that the decay of the aura, which is satisfied through the “unique phenomenon of a distance” (p.5), is due because of the urge to “bring things ‘closer’ [...] which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction” (p.5), concluding that the reproducibility is the key to ‘transitoriness’. Benjamin talks of the value of exhibition over aura and the struggle of the transformation, explaining the issues of the conflict by pointing out the questions which weren’t ask, such as “the entire nature of art” (p. 8). It is clear that with the vast progress of technology, which brings us closer to comfort and obscurity, that allows us to partake in inexhaustible amounts of information renewing itself all the time, from texts to pictures, will become the same force of transformation of literature as photography was back then.

What Goldsmith, in collaboration with a computer programmer Clem Paulsen, did with Fidget when turning it into a Java Applet website goes to show just how denoted the text can be. When learning about the first program, usually used when learning a new programming language, which simply reads “Hello World”, it gives a great insight into how language can be stripped of its meanings. The capitalisation of the first letters in each word is not done in the purpose of established practice, but because it translates that way when purposely using certain signs when programming the sanity test, as it is often used; every slash, dot, and bracket has its purpose, but in themselves, they mean nothing. This clears well in, yet another example Goldsmith included in Uncreative Writing where he, over-simplifying, breaks down the mechanics of materialised language, through a screen in front of him on an airplane saying:

What we take to be graphics, and motion in our screen world is merely a thin skin under which resides miles and miles of language. Occasionally, as on my flight, the skin is punctured and, like getting a glimpse under the hood, we see that our digital
world – our images, our film and video, our sound, our words, our information – is powered by language. And all this binary information – music, video, photographs – is comprised of language, miles and miles of alphanumeric code. (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 31)

On the website helloworldcollection.github.io, where all the “Hello World” programs are collected together in different languages, even human ones, one can see the depth programming languages go to, how concrete the language must be, and how particularly the text is written in order to translate it for our understanding. For the program to be able to do this, for humans to be able to write it, the language must be completely binary and materialised. Knowingly eliminating all emotion and psychology, it becomes clear that not much is to be said when writing such a text, at least not in the traditional form as we’re used to. The connotative meaning of the word is non-existent. What remains is denoted text that possesses its meaning in its concept rather than the text itself, much like a computer program which is an endless row of texts, meaning nothing, but creating a new/another body of art work ready to be consumed. Goldsmith says: “The Java applet contains the text reduced further into its constituent elements, a word or a phrase. The relationships between these elements is structured by a dynamic mapping system that is organized visually and spatially instead of grammatically” (Cited in Perloff, 2007, p. 99). Here Goldsmith describes the role of the elements, ‘a word or a phrase’ in the Java script, in which they create the dynamic mapping system, by transforming from grammatical to visual. To give a better image of what is happening on the screen of the program, Perloff describes:

in the electronic version ‘swallow’ appears cent[re] stage and rests on top of ‘Tongue runs across upper lip’; it is then replaced by ‘grind’ and ‘stretch’, the words grinding against one another and causing a kind of traffic jam as the screen fills up with what looks like a spiderweb of action verbs connected by lines that appear straight, then bend and stretch. But in the visual mapping system, verbs like ‘bend’, ‘clench’ and ‘swallow’, detached from their subject and object nouns, and given relatively equal weight, become less referential, less narrative. (Perloff, 2007, p. 100)

2.3 Introduction to Fidget

“Fidget is an experiment in writing the body, in translating ordinary movements into words. The project sounds simple but it is actually an extremely complex investigation of the
relationship between bodily functions and literary devices” (Gallo, n.d.). The focus of this essay is not on the body and its interaction with a text, but rather on the literary devices Goldsmith uses.

In *Fidget*, every ‘the’, every literary and art reference, and every unnecessary word was removed, aiming for a ‘very dry and very descriptive’ text (Perloff, 2007, p. 93), creating a sort of programming language of its own. For unimportant reasons, the last chapter of *Fidget* is the first chapter run backwards and mirrored, turning the sentence ‘Tongue runs across lower lip, moving from right side of mouth to the left following arc of lip’ into ‘.pil fo cra gniwollof tfel ot htuom fo edis thgir morf gnivom pil rewol ssorca snur eugnoT’ (Goldsmith, 2007). At first look the sentence seems unreadable, reminiscent of a programming language, for it presents itself as an unfamiliar language, but it is a matter of how it is read rather than in which foreign language it is written, that is alien to us; both programming language and this sentence are based on English, therefore familiar enough to a language already known and thus only ‘unreadable’ for the form has changed. The presentation of the language Goldsmith uses, as Perloff points out, follows Beckett’s words that “form is content, content is form. [The] writing is not *about* something; it is that something itself” (Perloff, 2007, p.98), said about *Finnegans Wake*, by James Joyce, which is known for its idiosyncratic language, a sort of ‘secret language’.

Types of narrative Goldsmith uses in *Fidget* vary from one another, in no specific or thought out way, but by the mental state of the narrator. The first sentence is highly descriptive of the movements, not leaving much for the imagination, sometimes including objects around the narrator, which helps in understanding the place and situation of the body. Goldsmith’s narrative also includes his ejection of mucus, semen, and saliva, which adds to the story, as little as it might seem. In the moment of all these movements, it becomes clear how difficult it is for Goldsmith to grasp all of what is going on, and he switches the form of his narrative throughout the book, not only how the focus shifts from one action to another but the amount of words and periods he chooses to use in the editing process.

2.3.1 Concept

*Fidget* is an observation of a body over the course of one day, Goldsmith writes about the work:
I just observed my body and spoke. From the outset the piece was a total work of fiction. As I sit here writing this letter, my body is making thousands of movements; I am only able to observe one at a time. It’s impossible to describe every move my body made on a given day. Among the rules for *Fidget* was that I would never use the first-person ‘I’ to describe movements. Thus every move was an observation of a body in space, not my body in space. There was to be no editorializing, no psychology, no emotion – just a body detached from a mind. (Cited in Perloff, 2007, P.91)

With *Fidget* it becomes apparent how limiting the language we use, the primary tool of communicating our surroundings, truly is, challenging the traditional perception of literature as language-driven. Perloff points out in the afterword how the “ostensibly ‘dry’ and ‘descriptive’ report of successive body motions quickly takes on an air of surreality as the artist poses the question of what it would mean to be aware of every physical motion one makes” (Perloff, 2007, p.93), drawing attention to the concept of the work, which in Perloff’s description is the absurdity in translating every body motion and the inconceivableness of it, therefore idiosyncratic. Perloff concludes that “what *Fidget* celebrates with perverse charm is the victory of mind over matter, and the inability to convey what we call body language except through language” (Perloff, 2007, p.93).

Goldsmith connects uncreative writing with conceptual poetry where the main goal is to create new meaning by repurposing pre-existing texts (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 58). He explains that “[i]n order to work with text this way, words must first be rendered opaque and material” (Goldsmith, 2011, p.58). Goldsmith’s intention to minimalize the value of the text seems to emanate quite directly from the conceptual artist. Alberro goes over the rise of practicing conceptual art in around 1960s. Although long after Benjamin’s essay, Alberro acknowledges the abandonment of technical manual skill that influenced the “traditional structure of the artwork” (Alberro, 1999, p.16) and “the notion of an original, cohesive work” (Alberro, 1999, p.16). Alberro elucidates that “[t]he second trajectory, what can be termed “reductivism”, will push the conventional objectness of the artwork toward the threshold of complete dematerialization […] the prominence of text expands” (Alberro, 1999, p. 17). The third and fourth genealogy of conceptualism, Alberro says are the placement of “art at the threshold of information”, influenced by Duchamp’s work, and “the problematize[d] placement” (Alberro, 1999, p.17).
It is important also to point out the difference between perceptual art and conceptual, of which LeWitt says the following: “Expressionist art [...] requires rational decisions to be made throughout the process of an artwork’s execution, and conceptual art in which all decisions about execution are made in advance” (Cited in Alberro, 1999, p. 20). Mechanical reproduction, as mentioned, eliminating the ritualistic values from art, came to be valued primarily on its visual qualities, which eases the way into conceptual art driven mainly by ideas, as Goldsmith often has said he depends on his ‘thinkership’ not readership.

Fidget as conceptual art plays on the inconceivable ways to interpret body/motion/reality, the momentary occurrences in our daily lives with the traditional perception of language at hand. Goldsmith sees the possibilities language has in the digital environment in order to break out of these chains language has been put in and its oppressing impact to interpret reality. Goldsmith writes:

never before has language had so much materiality—fluidity, plasticity, malleability—begging to be actively managed by the writer. Before digital language, words were almost always found imprisoned on a page. How different it is today, when digitized language can be poured into any conceivable container: text typed into a Microsoft Word document can be parsed into a database, visually morphed in Photoshop, animated in Flash, pumped into online text-mangling engines, spammed to thousands of e-mail addresses, and imported into a sound-editing program and spit out as music—the possibilities are endless. (Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 19)

Fidget, for one, was animated, through language, and to see the new use of language in conceptual poetry is what Goldsmith is actively reminding us of.

2.3.2 Sign

The infusion of language into conceptual art, as mentioned according to Goldsmith, came from concrete poets and the situationists, who materialized the text and transferred it from its traditional environment over to the visual art. Including the Dadaists, who in the early 20th century made their aim to visualize language, and the futurists who through hyper-concision attributed to the new means of looking at language. Alberro concludes the following based on a small group of conceptual artists active during 1970-80s:
What is addressed now more programatically and forcefully [...] is the construction of the subject through various overdetermining forms. Particular focus is placed on the complex link between text and image, and between language and subjectivity. And this points to one of the distinct differences between this model of post-conceptual art and the linguistic conceptualism of the late 1960s. The latter, with its emphasis on a purely formal language, as much as on the belief that linguistically stated analytic propositions are capable of displacing traditional models of visuality, is clearly based on a modernist model of language, one that correlates historically with the legacies of reductivism and self-reflexivity. By contrast [...] language is perceived as in and of itself the very medium by which ideological subjectivity is always already constructed. In other words, in direct response to the formal neutrality of conceptual art of the late 1960s, the post-conceptual work of artists [...] in the 1970s argues that language is inextricably bound to ideology. (Alberro, 1999, p. 28-29)

Although language played a role in conceptual art, up until now, it had not been so extremely ‘modernized’, for it remains a debate over the quantity of connotation.

Perloff points out the usage of words in an attempt to describe movements, which become increasingly simplified for the drainage of mind Goldsmith had inflicted on himself, changing into one-word descriptions of reach, grasp, hold, pull etc. to another, peculiar for it includes an object: “Coffee spills into mouth. Swallow. Right hand brings coffee cup to table” (Goldsmith, 2007, p. 22). It becomes clear that the plain and simple act of describing body movements is not effortless, for objects, seemingly innocent come in the way of pure description of movements. The word ‘coffee’ for example appears dozens of times on the next page following this and with these reappearances of one specific word, it is clear that the focus, once gotten, is fixated to that specific thing, making it even harder to grasp the whole of the situation.

By one o’clock Goldsmith has his hand down his pants and the descriptions of masturbation begin. The first lines begin seemingly innocent, but for some reason, now including the degrees of angle his hand is moving at, a new way of observation/narrative arises. In this chapter the uncontrolled bodily movements magnify, for things that the author does not have control over are included in the text, simplifying the text for the reader in a way, or perhaps revealing too much, considering how little the text had previously revealed: “Both hands lift. Raise. Shake. Twist. Turn. Pull counter clockwise. Upend. Drop. Turn. Spin. Right arm spins
clockwise” (Goldsmith, 2007, p.47), which were only the ‘pure’ movements Goldsmith made three o’clock that day. Not to mention the chapter three hours later where only single words following a period are used to describe actions ending with the subject falling asleep.

The intense observation throughout half of the day became insanely irritating for Goldsmith, for he had to change the scenery with a bottle of whiskey, along with changing up the language used to describe his body once again into a more surreal experience of his presence in time as an object, in desperate need to give his body feelings and description of characteristics. Perloff points out the various cultural references found in the text, referring among other things to the poet Alfred North Whitehead who is known for his ‘Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness’ (Perloff, 2007). And therefore, Goldsmith’s attempts to remain completely neutral toward his body and culture in *Fidget* failed.

The coherence of form at a closer look is not perhaps as apparent after all when reading *Fidget*, and not as materialized as one would assume. The more aware Goldsmith grew of his movements, the harder it became to give a damn about his observations, for in the following chapter the text changes dramatically (by *Fidget* standards) and reads: “Hey doe! Betsit. From chest: good girl! Good Girl! Happy to find highest. Slight pleasure gained from dig into finger and then pleasure by sharpness. Hoping to garner more pleasure through pain. But it ends. Foul smell knows. Non-neutral all day” (Goldsmith, 2007, p.67). The text is full of resentment blended with amusement over the situation but mostly of the author’s defeat. And so, at the end of the day, the final chapter, for which Goldsmith himself had become drunk enough not to understand his recordings the day after, mirrored the first chapter and ran it backwards, as a cherry on top of this mess of a seemingly coherent form.

What remains from the text is perhaps the inevitable need to make sense of the surroundings through language, therefore impossible for humans to articulate a language material enough, for every slash, dot, word, and bracket, remains connotative. And if that does not signify something then the paratext definitely will, for a text cannot exist without it. Perhaps not until torn from its context and transferred to another platform, *Fidget* becomes materialized, by the screen. It seems inevitable not to read into the dry and materialized text Goldsmith has provided, although the attempt was made. But considering the Java Applet programming language, which for now, only bears a connotative meaning to the computer, Goldsmith did in a way manage to materialize *Fidget* by translating it to the computer program. This is
perhaps the main goal in Goldsmiths poetics: to realize the importance of technology in literature specifically and to interact with these changes that will inevitably come to recreate the epistemology around poetry.
3: Copyright – Originality – Recycling: *Day*

“The notion of the avant-garde enshrines the idea that art should be judged primarily on the quality and originality of the artist’s vision and ideas.”

(Tate, n.d.)

Walter Benjamin says, “changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the situation of the original” (Benjamin, 1969, p. 3). Originality of an artwork had shifted from the ‘original work’ to the ‘original idea’ since Benjamin; the material quality of an artwork passed and instead, the responsibility of originality was laid on the shoulders of the artist. And there on, with the rise of unmaterialized conceptual art around 1960, the unmaterialized “came to be the dominant theoretical model of conceptualism [and] did not stop its interrogation of the underlying essence of an artwork at linguistic or economic conditions” (Alberro, 1999, pp.23-24). Alberro says: “This development was part of a larger shift from the primacy of works that critiqued the idea of autonomous art and authoritative artists toward works that addressed the invisible institutional mechanisms that structure and define art in advanced capitalist society” (Alberro, 1999, p. 24). Thus, “[t]he individuality and creativity of artists capable of producing and exhibiting works, indeed everything that had been attributed to artistic subjectivity, [then] came to be considered residual, alienated phenomena” (Alberro, 1999, p. 24). By protesting against the favouritism and politicization by the art institution, the ideology of art was reclaimed to exclusively focus on the artwork itself, much like the elimination of the author in “The Death of the Author” (1967) by Roland Barthes, which suggested the primarily structuralist view of a text. The intention behind this suggestion of new criticism was to eliminate the unnecessary aspects of the authors personal life, which might have influenced the text in an unfair and sloppy way, for the image of the author limits the possibilities of the text. This new speculation came to in a way challenge the belief of authority of the artist, for the text ceased to belong to the author once it obtained a reader who re-created the book by attaching meaning to it, highlighting the notion of universal property via interpretation. But the subject of ownership, which will be returned to, is a crucial concept in Kenneth Goldsmith’s poetics. In 2003 Goldsmith published his book *Day*, where he had retyped the whole of a *Time* newspaper over the course of a year, and so it seems appropriate to discuss this type of art work in the context of originality, copyright, and recycling.
3.1 Originality

The avant-garde artists hold up a repetition of originality, but as Rosalind Krauss discusses in the 1985 essay “The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition” the originality is “[m]ore than a rejection or dissolution of the past, avant-garde originality is conceived as a literal origin, a beginning from ground zero, a birth. [...] originality becomes an organicist metaphor referring not so much to formal invention as to sources of life. The self as origin is safe from contamination by tradition because it possesses a kind of originary naïveté” (Krauss, 1981, p. 53). She further writes that the artist “[w]ith his own self as the origin of his own singularity will guarantee the originality of what he makes” (Krauss, 1981, p. 56). The idea of singular originality of the artist would indeed, make anything an original work, for the slightest changes in form and style, especially the context of the work would in a way recreate the work of art, thus a new original work of a recycled piece emerges. The book Day follows this idea, since the Time newspaper itself is an already finished work which Goldsmith then takes and creates his own, without changing anything but the form and occasional appropriation for delicate subjects. Goldsmith refers to this as uncreative writing, which as mentioned earlier, rids itself of all originality, by repurposing already ‘out there’ material, making this kind of mentality his ethos when it comes to assembling text. On the back of the 750 first edition copies of Day reads the following: “Goldsmith now turns his attention to quotidian documents. [...] [levelling] the daily newspaper, reducing it to mere text. [...] everything is assigned equal weight”, and “[w]hat emerges is a monument to the ephemeral, comprised of yesterday’s news: a fleeting moment concretized, captures, the reframed into the discourse of literature” (Goldsmith, 2003, back cover). As seen in the case of Fidget in the chapter before, Goldsmith’s basis for his poetry lies in materializing language and now through Day, he is redistributing it, for every text in a new context becomes a new text.

Krauss infuses semiology of post-structuralists like Foucault and Barthes into her interpretation of modern art “incorporating their ideas on meaning and value as a subjective, historically contingent, and mutable phenomenon” (Kerr, 2016). Krauss talks about the grid in her essay as a platform of purity the avant-garde artist often used to reflect their originality on, the grid supposedly provides complete lack of interference, neutrality from history, culture, and society.
Within the discursive space of modernist art, the putative opacity of the pictorial field must be maintained as a fundamental concept. For it is the bedrock on which a whole structure of related terms can be built. All those terms—singularity, authenticity, uniqueness, originality, original—depend on the originary moment of which this surface is both the empirical and the semiological instance. If modernism’s domain of pleasure is the space of auto-referentiality, this pleasure dome is erected on the semiological possibility of the pictorial sign as nonrepresentational and nontransparent, so that the signified becomes the redundant condition of a reified signifier. But from our perspective, the one from which we see that the signifier cannot be reified; that its objecthood, its quiddity, is only a fiction; that every signifier is itself the transparent signified of an already-given decision to carve it out as the vehicle of a sign—from this perspective there is no opacity, but only a transparency that opens onto a dizzying fall into a bottomless system of reduplication. (Krauss, 1981, p. 57)

Arguing that the modernist grid is “logically multiple” (Krauss, 1981, p. 58) clearly influenced by the post-structuralist theories of signified and signifier, Krauss concludes: “The priorness and repetition […] is necessary to the singularity […] because for the beholder singularity depends on being recognized as such, a re-cognition made possible only by a prior example” (Krauss, 1981, p. 62). Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies* (1957) captures this idea of re-cognition, connections and significations sufficiently with examples of French ideas through signifiers and signified. Barthes’ view of signification of everything surrounding him significantly improves the world of art for the words and objects, signs that appear natural, but in reality completely arbitrary and constructed, allow for the endless associations, and constantly reassemble meaning. This is what Goldsmith adapts to his poetry when he is re-purposing texts, for the many qualities one text provides one can recycle it to form a new body of literature. Vanessa Place is an example of such conceptual writing, for she is known to transform her legal briefs written during her day job as a lawyer, into poetry. And by reusing these texts, she often creates provoking and sympathetic body of literature, sometimes as a single sentence in a 130-page book (Goldsmith, 2011, pp. 155-158). This type of writing advocates for literature to break out of its norms and seek poetry outside of its context. Much like Christian Bök, who works in genetic engineering and is currently finishing a project called *The Xenotext* in which, as read on the MIT Centre for Arts, Science & Technology webpage:
Bök uses “chemical alphabet” to translate his poem into a DNA sequence, which he implants into the genome of an unkillable bacterium, *Deinococcus radiodurans*. Once integrated into the organism, the poem acts as a set of instructions which cause the bacterium to manufacture a protein. This response, according to the original “chemical alphabet”, is itself another text. The Xenotext therefore becomes both a durable archive for storing a poem and an operant machine for writing a poem. (MIT Centre for Arts & Science & Technology, n.d.)

Bök of course has taken a step further, but the idea remains the same, literature and poetry cease to exist strictly in the boundaries of connotative language and lives instead in its concept.

Alexander Alberro says that “conceptual art has been entangled in controversy by those who stake claims to its foundational moment [...] the emergence of conceptual art was the result of complicated processes of selection, fusion, and rejection of antecedent forms and strategies” (Alberro, 1999, P. 16). He furthermore points out the very characteristics of conceptual art and the avant-garde movements ascending from the same actions and the paradox in the controversy around conceptual art, even more so now in the poetry community, where things are taking place outside of it, infusing and pushing boundaries to the limit. Going against the heated matter of authorship and plagiarizing, Goldsmith questions and answers the reasons behind the changes taking place in poetry, saying: “the computer encourages us to mimic its workings. If cutting and pasting were integral to the writing process, we would be mad to imagine that writers wouldn’t explore and exploit those functions in ways that their creators didn’t intend” (Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 28). He further explains: “there was a tremendous amount of manipulation that happened [...] William Burroughs’s cut-ups or Bob Cobbing’s mimeographed visual poems are prime examples” (Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 19). Today, Goldsmith puts this in context: “The “re-” gestures- such as reblogging and retweeting- have become cultural rites of cachet in and of themselves” saying “[f]iltering is taste. And good taste rules the day” (Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 19).

### 3.2 From Ownership to Authorship

With conceptual art, the claim of ownership blurs. Not only because of recycling and context, but for works such as Weiner’s, who “most often presents the information of the work only in the form of a statement” (Alberro, 1999, p.22), leaving the artwork open for execution. By
presenting an idea of an artwork without execution, the work remains strictly conceptual, and
the question is then, if executed, does it only then become ‘real’ for the concept has been
realized, therefore an actual object as a consequence of the ‘original’ conceptual art. Who is
the true ‘owner’ of Weiner’s Two Minutes of Spray Paint Directly Upon the Floor from a
Standard Aerosol Spray Can? An artwork part of Weiner’s ‘declaration of intent’, which since
the late 1968, has been the criteria for the execution of his works. The ‘declaration of intent’
allows for the executioner to construct, fabricate, and not build the artwork, leaving it open
for incomprehensible amount of interpretations that are possible. (Alberro, 1999, p. 22)
Logically, the work in words is its own piece, ‘owned’ by Weiner, at least associated with him,
but say the work is executed by an artist, demanding ownership, how is the problem to be
solved. Alberro writes of Weiner’s work to be “abolishing the traditional notion of artist-
centered production” (Alberro, 1999, p. 23). He continues:

the proclamation indicates that the artwork requires that one try to diminish the
distance between beholding and producing, joining the beholder and the work in a
single signifying practice. Further, Weiner’s instructions are for any interested body,
collector or otherwise, and hence destabilize the myth of authority and
authorship…the operation of the work emphasizes the exclusivity of a certain
experience- the experience of ownership. (Alberro, 1999, p.23)

This type of conceptual thinking without execution, as Alberro says, eliminates the authority
from the ever so broad term that is art: “And it requires only a slightly greater step to conclude
that its’s essentially a mechanism of economic exchange that allows a gesture to circulate as
an artwork in the culture” (Alberro, 1999, p. 23). In contemporary culture the notion of an
artwork which essentially does not exist is extensively influenced by the digital media, which
plays a great role in it, for the material available is immense and to attempt to supervise it all
is practically impossible, especially that the work, for example, only exists in the form of the
computer language on the web, one might say it is not at all physical content, but an idea on
screen and furthermore with the anonymity some of these works are presented, the owner
could be whoever, leaving the content to stand on its own. The rise of extensive file sharing
emphasizes that of Weiner’s intentions, and others who have attempted to eliminate the
notion of ownership, realizing how feeble the concept is. A prime example of such elimination
is Walter Benjamin with his unfinished Arcades Project, in which Benjamin used the collage
technique to create a literary work describing Paris arcades. By assembling texts derived from various sources, Benjamin managed to create a book with a fresh concept. Goldsmith is a big fan of Benjamin, saying “[he] wanted to take Walter Benjamin off the pedestal and on to the coffee table” (Sandhu, 2015), emphasizing the anticipated forthcoming of unoriginal writing as an accepted literary movement. Benjamin’s work was the main force to Goldsmith’s *Capital: New York, Capital of the 20th century* (2015), which uses the same techniques as Benjamin to create a sort of archive for New York by uniting various sources and authors, and the preliminary work for *Day*. The 836-page long *Day* is nothing else than work of others; people who have collaborated on that specific newspaper don’t own anything in Goldsmith’s book after he retyped and printed it, although after each individual article, all the journalist’s names appear, making it clear who wrote it, thus owned it(?). What remains unclear, are the fundamentals of ownership, the endless bending of the rules is what devalues the notion of authorship which is rarely ever consistent. If Goldsmith did this with any other text that was considered world classic, then he would not have gotten away with it. The rules of copyright are allegedly set to protect the artist, for the work they’ve done, and plagiarizing has been frowned upon since forever. John Lethem, an American author wrote “The Ecstasy on Influence: A Plagiarism” (2007) where he goes over the endless plagiarizing of famous, respected artists from one another, unnecessary to go over, for the abundance of examples Lethem concludes that:

> Finding one’s voice isn't just an emptying and purifying oneself of the words of others but an adopting and embracing of filiations, communities, and discourses. Inspiration could be called inhaling the memory of an act never experienced. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void but out of chaos. Any artist knows these truths, no matter how deeply he or she submerges that knowing. (Lethem, 2007, p. 61)

This ties together the notion of authorship, borrowing and reassembling ‘the work of others’. Returning to the *Arcades Project*, one might say is the original ethos of Barthes perception of the author, for how Barthes perceives a literary work is the final push towards the loss of authorship, saying: “that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God), but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (Barthes, 1977, p. 146). Barthes, “The Death
of the Author”, describes the lack of the authors ownership of his work by pointing out that “[l]inguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as I is nothing other than the instance saying I” (Barthes, 1977, p. 145), or as Alberro writes: “The activation of the receiver is the direct result of the eclipse of the authorial figure of the artist” (Alberro, 1999, p.23).

3.3 Recycling Intertextuality

This brings us to the topic of recycling that fits best with regard to Day, since it is, completely, 100% recycled. Goldsmith believes in unoriginality in art and often quotes Douglas Huebler when asked about his work who states that “the world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more” (Cited in Goldsmith, 2011, p.9). Goldsmith’s plagiarizing is directly based on copy pasting, but the notion of context is what justifies this type of writing alongside of the notion of intertextuality. The speculations of originality and replication in conceptual art have already become mainstream in the art world and “the culture appears to be embracing the digital and all the complexity it entails – with the exception of writing” (Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 20). With the coming of photography and film, the course of art was forced through changes, as discussed previously. Lethem questions whether “the photographer, amateur or professional, required permission before he could capture and print an image. Was the photographer stealing from the person or building whose photograph he shot, pirating something of private and certifiable value?” (Lethem, 2007, p. 62) This was ruled in the “favour of the pirates” since “[t]he world that meets our eye through the lens of a camera was judged to be, with minor exceptions, a sort of public commons, where a cat may look at a king” (Lethem, 2007, p. 62). And so with the arrival of the web, it seems only logical that these types of changes are about to happen in the field of literature. Since the laws of net neutrality and the belief that the content the web distributes is to be kept neutral and open to the public, equally, the “[n]ovelist may glance at the stuff of the world too” (Lethem, 2007, p.62). What Lethem is trying to point out perhaps, is the vast stream of information that makes us want to “make the familiar strange” (Lethem, 2007, p.63) for what is one’s enjoyment of art other than familiarity in obscurity? Day is the direct consequence of glancing without consequences and serves quite literally familiarity in obscurity, even though it has Truman Capote’s famous “That’s not writing. That’s typing” (Goldsmith, 2003) as its epigraph.
What Goldsmith managed to do, though, was to give the newspaper another life by just removing it from its original setup, so to say. The notion of intertextuality thus plays well into perceiving Day as its own individual piece of literature.

The term *intertextuality* is agreed to have been coined by Julia Kristeva in her essay “Word, Dialogue and Novel” in which she theorises the term based on her main influencer Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher, literary theorist and semiotician, and “one of the first to replace the static hewing out of texts with a model where literary structure does not simply *exist* but is generated in relation to *another* structure” (Kristeva, 1986, pp. 36-37). Kristeva sets forward the notion of the text as double, where the smallest unit of language, contradictory to Saussure’s signifier/signified dyad, becomes “one and other” (Kristeva, 1986, p. 40), saying that “each word (text) is an inter section of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read” (Kristeva, 1986, p. 37). Or in the words of Barthes: “denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the last of the connotations” (Barthes, 1974, p.9), forming a sort of endless interactions of meaning to object. Although Kristeva writes her essay in a context of literary texts, one can safely assume that the notion of differentiating between texts is long out of the picture for Goldsmith, and therefore the ‘text’ applies to all of it, and although Kristeva is incredibly specific in her essay, the concept of *intertextuality* has long been appropriated by other theorists and even outside of literature. Gérard Genette was one of them, a French literary theorist who adapted the term intertextuality to “much narrower sense of citational and related uses” (Mackey, 1997, p. 16) than earlier theorists had, but in return coined a five-element schema to further support his poetics of transtextuality, which he set forward in his 1982 book *Palimpsestes*. According to this schema, the term *intertextuality* simply refers to “the literal presence of one text within another” (Mackey, 1997, p. 18), using the term quite eidetically. What seems appropriate with regard to Goldsmith’s *Day* is to look at the work from the aspect of *paratextuality*, which divides into peritext (within the book) and epitext which refers to everything surrounding the book, such as “titles and subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, intertitles, notes. Epilogues, and afterwords” (Mackey, 1997, p. 18), divided yet again into public and private ones. Genette says: “[t]he paratext, then, is empirically made up of heterogeneous group of practices and discourses of all kinds and dating from all periods” (Genette, 1997, p.28). Although the peritext of *Day* did
not change a bit, Goldsmith did manage to turn the epitext surrounding Day’s content upside down, thus arguably provides a conceptual piece of literature, which will be perceived from a completely different set of paratexts. Just like Duchamp’s fountain, the newspaper claimed a new existence.

Returning to Kristeva and to the origin of *intertextuality*, Kristeva mentions Bakhtin’s theory of history as a linear phenomenon, which “appears as abstraction” (Kristeva, 1986, p.36). She marks that “[t]he only way a writer can participate in history is by transgressing this abstraction through a process of reading-writing; that is, through the practice of a signifying structure in relation or opposition to another structure” (Kristeva, 1986, p. 36). “Bakhtin assumes that the individual is constituted by the social, that consciousness is a matter of dialogue and juxtaposition with a social ‘other’” (Martínez, 1996, p. 273), therefore assuming language is dialogue in juxtaposition with itself constantly reinventing itself based on the ‘other’, thus allowing multiple readings of a text. And by simply assuming a new reader, the whole structure of a text changes and therefore ties together the notion of authorship, borrowing and reassembling ‘the work of others’ only here on a miniature scale of words/signs. This way of looking at texts as in an endless interaction with one another, allows for an endless interpretation and therefore re-typings of a text.

Therefore, one might say that Day, is after all, not plagiarizing, since by changing context, materializing its text, and retyping it, Goldsmith has managed to create a new body of literature, where in the new found context, the text interacts in juxtaposition of a different set of ideologies each reader, who glances at the book, brings.
Final Words

There is not much left unsaid about whether, according to Goldsmith, the changes happening in literature are of value, at least not for now. Not until perhaps a more objective view of the integration of technology in literature is obtained, as for now, the impact of it is still relatively alien. Nonetheless, from a subjective point of view of Goldsmith’s poetics, it is pivotal to acknowledge the obscure changes taking place in literature and perhaps more importantly to ponder over what literature is. Benjamin said it first, “the entire nature of art” (p. 8) was never questioned, and what is the nature of literature? Will the analytical literary devices at hand prove to be enough to fathom and oppose to these changes? To find out and see, it is convenient to keep an open mind when ‘reading’ Goldsmith. And to finish this on a completely singular perspective, in an attempt to tie it all together, the reader is left with a quote brought to you by Lethem, admonishing that “[w]hatever charge of tastelessness or trademark violation may be attached to the artistic appropriation of the media environment in which we swim, the alternative – to flinch or tiptoe away into some ivory tower of irrelevance – is far worse. We’re surrounded by signs; our imperative is to ignore none of them” (p. 63).
Bibliography


