

# The Gaps in the Line: A Study of Drawing Between Word and Thing

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In the following pages, I look in detail at a line I drew in biro across a bed sheet in 2009, which to date remains unresolved as an artwork despite several periods of attention. Below is a short reflection I wrote not long after the event, setting out what I saw as my motivation for drawing the line:

‘One night a few weeks ago I was in bed writing something about the day. I tried to describe the room just as it was. The harder I tried to describe it the more exact it became and consequently the more inadequate my description. I wanted to catch the room on the paper so I could have it again, later on, when it was gone and the book remained. I was aware of the power of writing to outlive its object, but also of the gaping distance between the things I wanted to keep and the words I was using to capture them. It was like making a net with holes too loose.

Then I noticed the words were jealous of the book they were in. The book was real, and it pressed down with real, present weight on the blanket, and the blanket touched the bed and the bed the floor and the floor the other furniture and the furniture everything else in the room I was trying to write down. Yes, the words took up space on the paper of the book, and yes, the paper pressed down on the rigid cover of the book that touched the blanket, and so on, but the words betrayed themselves. They betrayed themselves in their way of directness, which claimed to cut through the physical things in the room and intimately name them, and yet naming can never be intimate because a name is so different from a thing.

A line in biro is a thing just as a chair or a hat is a thing. But the extra quality I was giving my biro lines by shaping them into words caused them to depart from the world of things. Each time I tried to look at a biro line I just ended up reading what it spelled. The words weren't going to be able to keep the things in the room, and so the things in the room would fade.

Then I drew a biro line from my paragraph to the edge of the page and from the paper onto the bed sheet, and all the way across the sheet to A as he slept. One day he will die, but I have kept in my book a line that touched him'.<sup>1</sup>

As I remember, the line was initially drawn with no thought of how it might exist to other people outside of its originary moment, and the now evident connections to my art practice did not occur to me at the time. I recognized these connections fairly quickly the following morning, and took steps to show what I took to be an interesting development in my studio research. I removed the sheet from the bed, scanned it into my computer in A4 sections and pieced the sections together into a long, narrow PDF file. I washed the sheet. The same month I distributed bookmark-sized printouts of the PDF at FormContent, London during an artist talk. Because it introduces and connects various aspects of my studio work, the episode has frequently appeared in my artist talks since then, including at Spike Island, Bristol in 2011 and Modern Art Oxford in 2012, where I showed no images of the bed sheet, but read out the 2009 text, and described my difficulty resolving the episode as an artwork. For a 2013 solo exhibition entitled *Well You Have to Draw the Line Somewhere*, I visited the episode again. This time, I presented the bed sheet itself, folded tightly with just segments of the line visible, and supported by a tall, narrow plinth constructed to exactly fit the dimensions of the folded fabric. Though I read the 2009 text at the associated artist talk, information supplied in the gallery space was limited to the following:

*Line*, 2012

Bed sheet, biro line to A sleeping

H125 x W34 x D14cm

If the orientation of the sheet in relation to the bedroom was as I remember it, with A sleeping to my right as he always has, then I can look at the biro line and know that I drew it from left to right, and that it started at *this* end and ended at *this* end.

The faint blue outline to the upper edge of the tiny circle at this end of the line must be where the tip of the biro first met the surface of the sheet as it tripped down off the bottom edge of the notebook. It must have landed with more pressure than friction, so the only mark it made was with the little residue of ink collected on the sloping circumference of the nib. The centre of this tiny circle is empty, and the line really only begins just below it, softly as it curves a little to the right and then darkens in two uneven passages each a millimetre long or more. Or, rather than darkens, it thickens so that where, just above, only an occasional speck of the fibre was darkened with ink, here two or three specks in a row are thick with blue, as are six or seven in a row below them, and the next rows too, the ink making visible the invisibly fine weave of the fabric.

The line on the bed sheet is widest where the curve is most sharp, where the barrel of the pen must have tilted to bend

As I mentioned in the artist talk, this was a restaged line, drawn on a fresh sheet for the purpose of the artwork. Just like the original line (long since washed away) it was drawn from the page of my notebook to A's mouth, and I even waited for him to go to sleep – a somewhat parodic situation, as he knew what I was planning – but the original motivation and feeling for the gesture was so well rehearsed, it was difficult to muster this second time round. To this list I must also add the present essay, which omits images of either the original or the duplicate biro line, includes the 2009 text both in its entirety and in extracts quoted throughout the argument, and examines slowly and at very close range the form of the line and the conditions of its execution.

Each of these problematic manifestations engages the problem of attempting to extract an event from its local context and make it *show* as part of my artistic practice. There is an acknowledged belligerence to this extraction, be it in my scanning and digitizing of the line, my handing it out like a bookmark, my restaging (parodying?) of the drawing, or indeed the invasively detailed enquiry in the present essay. The folded sheet on the narrow plinth had a shroud-like or memorial quality, adding to this suggestion of belligerence a suggestion that the original episode is mournfully lost through its inscription as gallery artwork. The fact that the event, text and artifact have been tested in several ways and still resist satisfactory resolution, is what makes them available to me as a highly wrought site of theoretical and material research. This essay, then, takes the original episode not as the basis of a finished artwork, but as a site of ongoing practice-led enquiry.<sup>2</sup>

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The central assertion of the 2009 text is that words and things are radically different from one another, and that a consequence of this difference is the inadequacy of language as a means of 'capturing' things through description. This problem appears to relate closely to the more urgent and elementary assertion also made in that text: that my attempt to capture things in writing was preceded by a desire to capture these things, a feeling itself provoked by a feeling of separation from them.

the line, or I must have held the heel of my hand against the sheet to keep it from crumpling, while I edged the pen along. Where the thickness stops, the line sweeps rightward then fades to nothing. There is a soft gap in the line, where the pen must have carried on along the surface with the ink temporarily blocked. Continuing to draw the pen across the sheet must have sufficed to pull the ink into flow again: the line fades in again after an inch or so, a fraction lower, and goes on. Then another gap, which turns out to be a passage of very feint drawing that meanders unsteadily and picks up again with a particular little indentation that makes me think it must have been drawn over a little hill in the sheet, which offered no resistance against the pressure of the nib, so it barely made a mark, until the sheet was flat against our skin again, and the pen could press down with real weight. At least two of the gaps in the line must have been caused by drawing across creases which have since fallen out of the fabric. These gaps are nearly identical. Each time, the nib must have mounted the fold and slipped onto the surface below to continue its path, leaving a tiny deposit of ink at what must have been the very brink of the pleat, where the line stops abruptly, only to resume just as abruptly a little further on.

This is the most basic strife described in the 2009 text: an awareness of an irreconcilable difference not between words and things, but between my own situated experience of the world around me, and some essence of that world which resisted my attempt to capture it. The comfort offered by the biro line was not a resolution of this strife, but rather an accomplishment of it: a tensioned material evidencing of the strife at stake. From this perspective, the biro line emerges as an exemplary ‘work’ in the Heideggerian sense: it ‘consists in fighting the fight between world and earth’.<sup>3</sup> This assessment of the episode draws upon Heidegger’s thought in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, a text that brings together what I have described as this ‘most basic strife’, and the related separation of word and thing.

Here, it is worth examining briefly how Heidegger intends the word ‘strife’. The historical and cultural layering of human practice and experience constitutes what he calls the ‘world’, a system that exists upon and in opposition to the ‘earth’, the unformed and self-secluding ground of matter upon which the world is built, and which the world continually seeks to uncover and illuminate. Because of their opposing tendencies – of the earth to remain concealed, and of the world to tolerate nothing concealed – the two ‘are essentially different and yet never separated from one another’.<sup>4</sup> It is this relationship of metaphysical opposition that Heidegger refers to as ‘strife’. He endows the work of art with the particular function of bringing this strife into appearance by means of setting up a world that illuminates the self-concealment of the earth: it shows us that the earth does not show itself. As this state of strife is irresolvable in his philosophy, he emphasizes that the artwork’s ‘fighting [of] the fight’ between earth and world is an ‘accomplishing’ of this strife rather than any kind of resolution.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps when I drew the biro line it began from my own experience of this strife, being myself a participant in the world and wanting to bring into the world the ungraspable and self-secluding matter – the earth – around me.

In any case, the biro line began not as a line but as language, and specifically as writing. These two beginnings have something in common. Anthropologist Michael Taussig describes how his ‘hurried, abbreviated,

By now there are too many creases on the bed sheet to identify which must have caused these gaps in the line. The original creases have likely fallen out as new ones have accumulated over the past months and years. While I have been writing about the sheet most recently, I have often bundled it on my lap with portions of the line pulled up onto the desk to inspect. When I stop writing I tend to fold it, and store it in a pile with my notebook, my laptop and some other sheets of paper and fabric. This folding leaves its own creases, and marks, too. Before I began the present writing, the sheet lay in a box upstairs for a few years, still tightly folded from the last time it was used, and many of these folds have yet to fall away.

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There are so many gaps in this line. The little gaps on the sheet are the smallest of them. There are much greater ones. For a start, the line did not begin on the bed sheet but on the page of a notebook I was writing nine years ago, which I have kept but no longer have to hand. It ended on A’s open mouth, and he washed the mark away when he woke the following morning. But even before he woke, the line began to separate into its member parts. As soon as I had finished drawing it, I remember the line seemed to release the book from where it lay pinned against the sheet, and I closed

and urgent' notebook entries were motivated, something like mine, 'by the desire to have contact because the thing witnessed dies away as soon as it is seen'.<sup>6</sup> But the desire was countered by 'a foreboding sense that the writing is always inadequate to the experience it records', and moreover that 'the very words you write seem to erase the reality you are writing about'.<sup>7</sup> It is striking that he singles out writing as opposed to drawing as the agent of erasure. He goes on:

Why draw in notebooks?...one reason, I suspect, is the despair if not terror of writing, because the more you write in your notebook, the more you get the sinking feeling that the reality depicted recedes, that the writing is actually pushing reality off the page.<sup>8</sup>

This anecdotal account of the 'erasure' of things by words is what Peter Schwenger draws upon Hegel, Kant, Heidegger and Blanchot to describe provocatively as 'the murder of the thing'.<sup>9</sup> He describes a 'recurrent metaphor', appearing across the literature by which the act of naming results in the nullifying or annihilation of the thing-in-itself, and moreover, its return as the object of the human subject that names it.<sup>10</sup> In Heideggerian terms, the act of naming causes the thing-in-itself to recede into the concealment of earth meanwhile bringing that being into appearance as a projection into the world of that very seclusion.<sup>11</sup> This is to say: it is the name of a thing that shows us that the thing does not show itself.<sup>12</sup>

While Taussig's response to the problem of erasing experience through language is a preference for drawing over writing, Schwenger searches literature for a solution. Turning to the writing of Maurice Blanchot, he traces a final turn in the word's 'murder of the thing'. He asserts that as 'words throw the things of this world into nonexistence...they then move into the vacancy with an existence of their own'.<sup>13</sup> The crucial passage is in Blanchot's words:

What hope do I have of attaining the thing that I push away? My hope lies in the materiality of language, in the fact that words are things, too...A name ceases to be the ephemeral passing of nonexistence

it, put it away and settled down into bed, and he must have moved his mouth from the edge of the sheet before morning, and we must both have moved and crumpled the sheet as we slept. I wrote *one day he will die, but I have kept in my book a line that touched him*. Yet the line that touched him was only briefly intact, for the duration of the drawing, and no longer.

And here is the greatest gap of all: this sheet is not the real one. I washed the real bed sheet the very morning after the line was drawn, and the line came out. A few years later I bought a new sheet, laid it over the bed, and when night came, I waited for A to fall asleep and drew the line again, from my notebook to his open mouth as he slept. I did this because I wanted to show the work in an exhibition. And when I did show the work, folded tightly and poised on a tall, narrow plinth in a way that seemed to me memorial, or funereal, I gave a talk describing how I drew the line and washed it away, wrote about it, bought a new sheet and drew it all over again, and how this time A knew I was waiting for him to fall asleep for the purpose of finishing *some work* for my show, and it raised a laugh. Perhaps these are all creases, and have all caused gaps in the line.

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When did it become *some work*? When did it cease to be

and becomes a concrete ball, a solid mass of existence; language, abandoning the sense, the meaning which was all it wanted to be, tries to become senseless.<sup>14</sup>

Schwenger finds an example of this kind of language in the writing of Gertrude Stein. Her semantically rich and ungrammatical text *Tender Buttons* (1914) makes words unfamiliar not in an attempt to capture things, but rather to show them uncapturable. Her writing evidences what Heidegger would call the strife between world and earth by manifesting ‘a vital disorder...within the words one senses, always, the movement of the mind seeking an unknown *x*’.<sup>15</sup> By putting this into evidence – demonstrating through the disorder of representation that representation is going on – Stein’s language refuses the recession of thing to object and acquires its own status as a thing in itself. I would suggest Henri Chopin’s 1956 audiopoem *Rouge* covers similar ground through the incremental layering of spoken words, which come to abandon their sense and develop an aural effect arrestingly suggestive of a ‘solid mass of existence’. The work brings to mind Roland Barthes’ utopian rustle of language: ‘a vast auditory fabric in which the semantic apparatus would be made unreal; the phonic, metric, vocal signifier would be deployed in all its sumptuousity’.<sup>16</sup>

As it tries to become senseless in an attempt to capture the thing pushed away by language, the biro line on the bed sheet has something in common with these literary experiments. It is a feature extracted from the material shape of written language: an attempt to metaphorically extend the reach of a given description by literally extending its form toward its object. The line shares its (biro) medium, its basic (linear) form, and initially its support (the page of a notebook) with the handwriting in which it originates. But it does not relate to the page as handwriting does.

Just like the bed sheet, the page of the notebook is a material thing that takes its place alongside everything else in the room ‘just as a chair or a hat is a thing’.\* But the page is also a site set apart from the room: a level ground upon which units of representation can be laid out, not in relation to the other things in the room, but in relation to one another. (The same is true of the deposits of ink on the paper, which exist as ma-

something I did on my own once in a room? When did I introduce the gap, if this is what happened? Perhaps these are the wrong questions after all, because they presume it was once otherwise, and perhaps it was always work.

I know it was already work by the time I washed the line away in the morning. Before I washed it, I stripped the sheet from the bed and pressed it, section by section, against the glass of our A4 flatbed scanner, made a series of scans, and spent some time on Photoshop matching up the sections into a long continuous composite. The line became something I always mentioned when I gave talks about my artwork. I would explain that the line, or the drawing of the line, was *work*, or that it was *doing work*, but that it was not necessarily *a work* or *a work of art*.

For a long time, during these lectures I would describe the biro line in terms of an article I had read about words murdering things. I would say that when I was trying to write my description of the things in the room, it was partly *because* I was trying to describe them that the things had become so hard to capture. This I would use as an example of what was meant by words murdering things. It was easy enough to insert my line into a repertoire of literary experiments that were supposed to mitigate against the murder of the thing by balancing somewhere

terial things in the room, even if this is easy to forget when they are read as units of representation on the level ground of the page.) The ordering and positioning of strokes in a grapheme and words in a paragraph are significant just as, in different ways, the ordering and positioning of strokes in a drawing are significant: in either case, a change in location contributes to a change or disruption in meaning. The space of the page has its own topological rules, which are distinct from the topological rules of the room, even if some mimetic connections exist.<sup>17</sup> Crucially, the notebook can be moved around the room without disrupting the internal relationships set up between the elements of drawing or writing upon its pages.

Some ambiguity creeps in, however, where the biro marks begin their transition from handwriting to line. As a line, the biro mark is difficult to site on the page according to topological rules appropriate to language because the words and graphemes of language are no longer available to order or disrupt. At the same time, a vestigial feature of these rules seems to be still at work: the line moves downwards and veers slightly to the right on the way, as if to continue the general trajectory of the paragraph it leaves behind. Yet, the rightward veering of the line is also beginning to anticipate the topology of the room, because A is lying asleep to the right of the page. At this point the biro line is not clearly governed by the rules of the page or of the room but seems to be sliding between the two. Meanwhile, as it slides from something like handwriting to something unlike handwriting, so it begins to transform the status of the page from a level ground that is non-situated in the space of the room to a thing that is governed, like the bed sheet, the chair or the hat, by the topology of the room.<sup>18</sup> At this point, moving the notebook around the room would disrupt the meaning of a mark on its page. Perhaps this is an example of Blanchot's hope fulfilled: a name that 'becomes a concrete ball, a solid mass of existence' in which, to borrow Barthes' terms, 'the semantic apparatus would be made unreal'.<sup>19</sup>

But Barthes' description continues with a caveat: in its utopic state, semantics would be backgrounded 'but also – and this is what is difficult – without meaning being brutally dismissed'.<sup>20</sup> There is good reason for the caveat. In the works of Stein and Chopin, for in-

between words and things, and then it was easy enough to argue that my drawing of the line was one of many efforts to reconcile the kind of loss I had felt: the gap between the room around me, and the words I was trying to use to capture it. Although I believed what I was saying, I believed it especially well when I made the argument well, and that was partly a matter of shaping my sentences to arrange analogies where I wanted them. I wanted the gap between words and things to be analogous to the gap between me and the room. I wanted the things and the room to tend to remain concealed, and I wanted the words and me to tend not to tolerate anything being concealed. I would explain that the biro line on the bed sheet was *work*, or it was *doing work*, or it was – I would pronounce it in inverted commas – *an exemplary work* because it revealed that there was something concealed.

But, did I know about these things when I drew the line on the bed sheet? I already knew, at that time, about many of the experiments that balanced between word and thing, and so perhaps while I drew the line I was thinking about them. Or, was the line already *work* before the pen had even met the bed sheet? Perhaps, when I found my description inadequate, the inadequacy was as comfortable as a trope, and when I extended my handwriting into a line, the line stretched from far beyond

stance, language certainly ‘tries to become senseless’, but never wholly succeeds, because to succeed would be to abandon language altogether and, with it, the enterprise of ‘attaining the thing I push away’.<sup>21</sup> Instead, these works establish an intimate rapport between the semantic apparatus of language and the visual or aural experience of its material form, continually returning one experience to the other.

Perhaps the biro line on the bed sheet equivocates between word and thing in another way. As I look at the work that the line appears to do, and the work I ascribed to it in the 2009 text, it seems to me that it is not a form of linguistic representation, but rather a representation of linguistic form. That is, the line replaced the written description not to *inherit* the semantic function of the description, but to *describe* that semantic function. In this sense, the line is representational after all, though its object is not my experience of the room but rather my inability to capture any such experience. This new conceptualization of the line’s object forces a shift in perspective. The operation of representation does not trace the nib’s movement, travelling along the length of the line to finally touch its object; instead the object is the operation of representation which, like a static thread, is the line in its entirety, all the way along its length.

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If it is a representation of linguistic form, then the line is its own object. This lends to the line a character of superfluity: a sense that if the representation and its object are in total identity with one another, then representation is unnecessary in the first place. Rather than bridging the gap between two separate entities, perhaps the gesture of the biro line is to refuse their separation in the first place: a prospect that is at odds with Heidegger’s account. Roberto Pinheiro Machado offers a critique of his account, and in doing so he suggests a theoretical framework more appropriate to the emerging characteristics of the biro line.<sup>22</sup> He locates Heidegger’s writing on the strife between earth and world within Western philosophy’s ‘attempt to overcome the dualistic conception of the world in which an ideal or metaphysical realm exists separately from everyday reality’, and it is in this context that I have so far considered the biro line. But ‘once philosophical

the handwriting, tracing a line through the arguments already forming in my imagination, and all the way back to wherever those arguments began. Or perhaps, there was none of this, and I was all alone with the line, and the gap came later. Or perhaps, I came with it all the way along its length, and am still with it now as I write, in which case if it is indeed work then it, and I, have always been work. In any case, I know I meant it. I know, also, that there was a feeling of communion when the line touched his mouth, though whether I meant *communion* in the way I would mean it in lectures later, I do not know. In any case, by the time it was morning I was not alone, and I scanned the sheet, and prepared its image for distribution.



enquiry starts from a separation', Pinheiro Machado continues, 'it can hardly move back to a unity'.<sup>23</sup> He argues that the discipline of aesthetics tasks the senses with mediating between the human being and the world, but in so doing it presupposes and instates their separation in the first place; a separation that 'must be bridged by a third, sensory element'.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, metaphysics 'instates a fissure in being through its claim of the existence of a realm located beyond being'.<sup>25</sup> While Heidegger accepted this negative ground, he 'failed to take the evidence of the negative ground of reality to its ultimate consequence', because he did not allow for a state of unity that exists prior to this separation.<sup>26</sup> Instead, his solution depends upon endowing language and the work of art with the function of bridging the separated world and earth.

Indeed, an emphasis on the priority of language makes Western philosophical thought specifically ill-equipped to admit that these two entities were never separated in the first place, because language itself 'is nothing other than the very expression of that separation'.<sup>27</sup> Pinheiro Machado's description of language might equally have been describing aesthetics or metaphysics:

Language...can be conceived only as mediation. It can be conceived as nothing but a bridge that in trying to connect two entities that were never really separated ends up working as a hindrance to their communion.<sup>28</sup>

At this point, an alternative theoretical framework is put forward from the tradition of Eastern philosophy, of which 'Zen Buddhism and Taoism, for instance, consistently perceive a uniform ground existing prior to the separation of subject and object'.<sup>29</sup> The writing of Nishida Kitarō is instructive in this respect, being part of a tradition that considers the origin of being to be not the *separation* of self and world, but their *identity*. Where Heidegger takes the point of view of the self 'and then tries to work back to the world by avowing a "forgetting of the self" that will disclose truth as pure presence of being, Nishida considers a unified field of identity as the ground in which the self is built'.<sup>30</sup>

Although I have been careful to treat the biro line episode as a 'site of ongoing practice-led enquiry' as I described it at the start of my discussion, it is as a practice of art-making that I here evaluate the episode against both Heidegger's and Nishida's concepts of art. Where for Heidegger the exemplary work of art reveals truth by accomplishing the strife between world and earth, for Nishida the art object is 'nothing other than an invitation to pure experience': it too functions to reveal truth, but the truth it reveals is 'the union of total being as undifferentiated from nonbeing'.<sup>31</sup> There is no separation to bridge. Instead, experience of the unified ground is revealed through direct or 'pure' experience of one's own state of consciousness, when 'there is not yet a subject or an object, and knowing and its object are completely unified'.<sup>32</sup> It is this conception of a unified ground prior to separation that accommodates the character of superfluity that emerged in the continuousness of the biro line. If subject and object, or world and earth, originate in a state of identity rather than separation, a line drawn from one to the other does not reconnect them but simply participates in their continuous material being.

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In this new light, I will conclude by reflecting on the difficulty I have had in resolving the biro line on the bed sheet, or the act of drawing it, as an artwork of some kind. There is a striking homology between the line's refusal of separation, and the resistance of the drawing act and the episode as a whole to any kind of stable resolution. Here, I would contend that in the latter case too, the difficulty arises from the Western philosophical resistance to a pre-dualistic conception of unity.

By this account, the original act of drawing the line was a private experience undifferentiated from the continuity of everyday life. My attempts to *preserve* the episode as artwork have so far involved differentiating it from this continuity only to present it back to the same continuity by means of an artwork tasked with bridging a separation that was never there in the first place. What I described earlier as acts of belligerence, and what emerged in the same discussion as expressions of memorial or loss, might also be seen as attempts to preserve the episode as artwork. In these

endeavours, then, differentiation and preservation emerge as much the same thing, each premised upon metaphysical separation. 'It is not only the creation of the work that is poetic', argues Heidegger: 'equally poetic, though in its own way, is the preservation of the work. For a work only actually is as a work when we transport ourselves out of the habitual and into what is opened up by the work'.<sup>33</sup> A glance in this direction appears at the very close of Pinheiro Machado's essay, when he notes a need to further investigate those of Nishida's concepts 'developed from pure experience, such as "action-intuition" and "place"'.<sup>34</sup> 'Only after such concepts are observed in relation to artistic events rooted in immediate experience', he goes on,

will we be able to bring our results to a consideration of Western art forms and works of art, regarding them from a broader perspective that encompasses everything everything from architecture and literature to jazz and conceptual art.<sup>35</sup>

One might extend this list beyond artistic events rooted in immediate experience to include also originally 'non-artistic' events like the drawing of the biro line, which was rooted in and seems to remain continuous with immediate experience, yet which might finally be evaluated against concepts of art even as it remains – and perhaps, must remain – unresolved as an artwork.

- 1 In the present document, quotations from this text will be indicated with an asterisk.
- 2 These remarks take into account my assessment of the biro line as an 'exemplary work of art' in the Heideggarian sense. According to this account, the biro line emerges as an exemplary work of art when encountered in its originary context and by its originary audience (myself alone) but – to put its resistance to resolution in Heideggarian terms – as a work it lacks any satisfactory means of 'preservation'. See Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41–2, 47. Hence, I assess the episode (event, line, and text) in its unresolved state, and outside its originary conditions, as a site of enquiry rather than a work.
- 3 Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' 26.
- 4 Ibidem.
- 5 Ibidem.
- 6 Michael Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 19, 124.
- 7 Idem, 100, 15.
- 8 Idem, 16.
- 9 Peter Schwenger, 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' *Critical Inquiry* 28:1 (2001): 99.

- 10 Idem, 100.
- 11 Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' 46.
- 12 Indeed, it is in this sense that Heidegger describes the work of art as a species of poesy: 'Truth', he writes, 'as the clearing and concealing of that which is, happens through being poeticized' (idem, 45); and, later on: 'Poetry is the saying of the unconcealment of beings...the saying of the arena of their strife' (idem, 46).
- 13 Schwenger, 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' 103.
- 14 Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death,' in *The Gaze of Orpheus' and Other Literary Essays*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Barrytown, 1981), 46, cited in Schwenger, 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' 103.
- 15 Schwenger, 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' 106.
- 16 Roland Barthes, 'The Rustle of Language,' in *The Rustle of Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 77.
- 17 For example, Taussig points out a mimetic relationship between object, image, and body of the artist during the act of drawing: 'You draw an image that has a mimetic relationship with what it is an image of (bear in mind this does not mean that there is necessarily a one-to-one resemblance, as if such a thing were possible)... But coincidentally there is set up a mimetic relation between you, especially that part of you called your body, with you, especially that part of you called your body, with whatever it is that is being rendered into an image, and also with the resulting image itself,' and see Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*, 23.
- 18 It is not difficult to discern in this a minimalist/literalist attitude, following Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood,' in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
- 19 Blanchot 'Literature and the Right to Death,' 46, cited in Schwenger, 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' 103;
- 20 Barthes, 'The Rustle of Language,' 77.
- 21 Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death,' 46, cited in Schwenger 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' 103, emphasis mine.
- 22 Roberto Pinheiro Machado, 'Nothingness and the Work of Art: A Comparative Approach to Existential Phenomenology and the Ontological Foundation of Aesthetics,' *Philosophy East and West*, 58:2 (2008): 244-66.
- 23 Idem, 244, 259.
- 24 Idem, 245.
- 25 Ibidem.
- 26 Idem, 244. In fact, Heidegger comes very close to allowing for this negative ground at numerous points in his writing, yet at each point, Pinheiro Machado argues, he 'insists on overlooking' the 'deeper truth' (idem, 247). Pinheiro Machado addresses these points throughout his argument.
- 27 Idem, 256.
- 28 Ibidem.
- 29 Idem, 258.
- 30 Idem, 259.
- 31 Idem, 261-2, 262.
- 32 Idem, 260.
- 33 Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' 47.
- 34 Pinheiro Machado, 'Nothingness and the Work of Art,' 263.
- 35 Ibidem.

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