

Beginning

Victor Burgin

*'Begin at the beginning', the King said, very gravely,
'and go on till you come to the end: then stop.'*
Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

1

Where to begin? Roland Barthes first poses the question in 1970 in the title of the opening essay of the inaugural issue of the literary review *Poétique*.¹ In 1970 his question concerns the structural analysis of a literary work. In 1980, in his course on *The Preparation of the Novel*, it concerns the work itself. Where structuralism sought to disaggregate a work into its smallest constitutive elements (*phoneme, mytheme* ...) the later Barthes begins with the problem of how to pass from the fragment to the whole, from short forms of writing to the long form of the novel.

2

My 2024 artwork *Adaptation* takes the form of a digital video loop in which visual images alternate with written intertitles. Its structure is inspired by the model of the fantasy, which the psychoanalysts Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclair describe as made up of 'short sequences, most often fragmentary, circular and repetitive'.² It is strictly inappropriate to ask: 'How long is *Adaptation*?' The relation to the work is one of repetition, or more accurately reprise; the ideal viewer is one who accumulates her or his knowledge of the work, as it were, in 'layers' – much as a painting may be created. Before going to see a film at the cinema we might reasonably ask: 'How long is the film?' Before going to see a painting in a museum we do not ask: 'How long is the painting?' However, for all

that the time of viewing may be indeterminate, the work is composed of a finite number of elements in a determinate sequence. Where do these originate?

3

I think of my works as beginning in an encounter with the real. By 'real' in this context I mean simply all that is there – it can never be described fully, there are never enough words, never enough images, no 'outside' from which it might be grasped as a totality. In a 2021 interview I explain what I mean by 'real' by way of a childhood memory:

I must have been about five-years-old, [and] looking out of a window at home across a valley given over to the steel industry. On the line of the horizon are a number of triangular forms. Showing off some recently acquired knowledge, I point to them and tell my mother they are pyramids, and the land over there is Egypt. She tells me that the peaks are slag heaps, and the 'land' over there is Tinsley – a neighbouring district in the city of Sheffield where I grew up. Egypt is not effaced in my enhanced grasp of geography. The pyramids still shimmer in the haze, along with drifting clouds of smoke and steam, my mother's presence, the quality of the light, bodily sensations, percussive sounds from factories, memories and anticipations, the words 'Egypt', 'Tinsley', and the images these words in turn evoke – all contributing to a kind of complex object that is just there, and of which I myself am part.³

4

Most of my works begin in an invitation to go somewhere. My point of departure has most often been a place: sometimes a city, for example Grenoble or Berlin; sometimes a building, for example Rudolph Schindler's Kings Road House, in Los Angeles, or Sedad Hakki Eldem's Taşlık coffee house in Istanbul. When in 2021 I received an invitation from the Jeu de Paume to make a new work on the occasion of my solo exhibition there I began by looking for a point of origin in the place from which the invitation issued, but had trouble finding something I felt both

motivated and qualified to address. Then an encounter with an image on the Internet suggested to me that, exceptionally, my point of departure was in the timing of the invitation itself, which came just as I had turned eighty years old – prompting retrospection. At my desk in Paris I found myself thinking of the North of England industrial city of Sheffield where I grew up. While browsing the web for images of Sheffield I came across a photograph from the 1950s in which I instantly recognised the district where I lived and first went to school. What I am unable to say is why I then thought of Stanisław Lem's 1961 science fiction novel *Solaris* and its 1972 film adaptation by Andrei Tarkovsky. My working process is largely one of accepting spontaneous associations, especially if they persist, seem to insist. However arbitrary they may appear I accept them as facts.



5

Adaptation begins with an encounter in the real, subsequently elaborated upon with the aid of research materials through mechanisms of association, memory and fantasy. The representation of the encounter can only be *partial*. First, it is necessarily incomplete. By way of analogy I think of a scene from a film version of *The Invisible Man*. As one cannot see the invisible man a variety of devices have to be used to show the audience where he is and what he's doing. There is a scene in which a strong gust of

wind blows litter about in the street, some of which sticks to him. Analogously, I can show the real of my encounter only through those fragments that 'stick'. The representation is 'partial' in the additional sense that the selection of the elements that enter the work is subjectively invested. Commenting on Freud's account of the relation between conscious and unconscious, Jean Laplanche remarks that what passes between the two is always 'an isolated equivocal element'. He finds an analogy in: 'those puzzle drawings, in which a certain perceptual attitude suddenly makes Napoleon's hat appear in the branches of the tree that shades a family picnic', observing, 'if this hat is able to appear, it is because it can be related to an entirely different "anecdote", which is not at all present in the rest of the drawing: the "Napoleonic legend"'.⁴ The conscious *abstraction* of select elements from the totality of a phenomenological field is in part determined by unconscious *projection* into that same field. I am reminded of Freud's remark on the persistence of early love attachments in later life: 'The finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it.'⁵

6

Barthes begins his course on *The Preparation of the Novel* by announcing he can no longer put up with the repression of the subject in critical writing. Whatever the risks the subjective entails, he says, 'better the lures of subjectivity than the impostures of objectivity'.⁶ The lure of subjectivity is in the siren call of the *ego*. In a 1980 interview Julia Kristeva is asked how her conception of the artist differs from the traditional idea of a 'subject who speaks in the work'. She replies that to say the artist 'speaks' in the work is to suppose a subject that exists *before* the work, however:

[T]he practice in which [the artist is] implicated extends beyond and reshapes subjectivity. There is, on the one hand, a kind of psychological ego, and on the other, there's the subject of a signifying practice. [...] The work of art is a kind of matrix that makes its subject.⁷

The painter Philip Guston says that John Cage once told him:

When you start working everybody is in your studio – the past, your friends, enemies, the art world, and above all, your own ideas – all

are there. But as you continue painting, they start leaving, one by one, and you are left completely alone. Then, if you are lucky, even you leave.⁸

7

Barthes finds ‘at the heart of all literature’ only ‘an absurdly restricted number of functions: *I desire, I suffer, I am angry* [...] out of [which] we must make an infinite literature’.⁹ It is commonly believed that ‘the task of art is to *express the inexpressible*’, but he finds to the contrary that, ‘the whole task of art is to *unexpress the expressible*, to kidnap from the world’s language [...] another speech, an exact speech’.¹⁰

8

While looking at a photograph of an industrial city I think of Stanisław Lem’s *Solaris*. The titular *Solaris* of Lem’s novel is a distant planet many times the size of Earth whose surface is an ‘ocean’ believed to be a single sentient intelligence. Scientists from Earth on a research station orbiting the planet have spent decades studying and attempting to communicate with it. They have amassed vast amounts of observational data without reaching any understanding of the complex phenomena on the surface. They then take the fateful step of bombarding Solaris with messages encoded in high-energy X-rays. The planet first responds by producing short-lived forms on its surface roughly resembling familiar objects or cities. As the experiment continues, however, faithfully exact simulacra of living beings materialise on the research station itself, and each of the scientists finds himself accompanied by a ‘guest’ from a past he would prefer to forget. In the case of the novel’s central protagonist, the psychologist ‘Kris Kelvin’, the revenant guest is ‘Harey’ – the dead wife for whose suicide he feels responsible. Lem’s novel might be read as an adaptation of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, in which a woman is lost, recovered, then lost again. Lem however gives equal weight to the parallel theme his book explores – that of confrontation with an absolute otherness. The impossible quest for understanding of an irreducibly radical alterity recurs throughout Lem’s stories. His protagonists are often

people who believe themselves to be seeking communication with others, but are shown as incapable of adaptation to any 'other' not made in their own image.



9

Prominent amongst memories evoked by the photograph of Sheffield was the sight of the River Don which runs through the city, and in particular the river as seen from Lady's Bridge close to the city centre.¹¹ When I looked on the Internet for photographs of this view I found myself reminded of other salient features of my childhood environment, which include the blast furnaces of the English Steel Corporation River Don Works, which lay about two miles downstream from Lady's Bridge. The representation of the River Don in my work combines the two images by the mechanism of 'condensation' Freud identifies at work in the formation of dreams. Psychoanalytic theory may make us cautious when we speak of 'images from childhood'. The relation of a physical or mental image to memory, and the relation of personal memory to historical fact, can never be certain. Freud said it is possible we may only have images *of* childhood, not images *from* childhood. My image of the view from Lady's Bridge is an attempt to represent a psychical reality in the present, it does not show a physical reality at a past moment in time. Moreover, my memory image of the view is impoverished. As Jean-Paul Sartre remarks, I cannot count

the columns on my mental image of the Parthenon.¹² What the imagination loses in information however it gains in freedom.

10

I draw upon eight memories of childhood in *Adaptation*: two take the form of images, six take the form of intertitles.¹³ My written memories are given in the form of haiku, which allows me to draw upon a personal memory without assigning it to an egocentric position. The French geographer and orientalist Augustin Berque observes that, in Japanese: ‘The first person, that’s to say the existential subject, does not exist in itself but as an element in a contingent relation to a given scene.’¹⁴ This is how I understand the linguist Alexis Rygaloff’s characterisation of the Japanese language as ‘lococentric’.¹⁵ For example, I might have written: ‘I have an early memory from my childhood in Sheffield of playing with friends after school up to the time darkness began to fall. We were so absorbed in building castles from industrial waste we were unaware night-time was upon us.’ My intertitle however reads: ‘Gathering evening / The children building castles / from industrial waste.’

11

When I say ‘the haiku form’ I mean seventeen syllables arranged in three lines in the pattern ‘5-7-5’. The Japanese haiku however is based not on the syllable but on the mora (*on*), a regular unstressed rhythmic unit – the word ‘haiku’, for example, has two syllables but three morae: *ha-i-ku*. Japanese haiku are written in a single line. Line breaks were introduced by Western translators to convey the tripartite structure which is *heard* in Japanese. There is otherwise no compelling reason for translators of haiku into European languages, or for those who write haiku in English, to conform to a 5-7-5 pattern. Richard Wright adheres to it, Jack Kerouac does not.¹⁶ I apply the 5-7-5 pattern in *Adaptation* to ‘frame’ memory images much as a single picture frame may accommodate a variety of photographs. In a 1943 essay Jean-Paul Sartre compares the writings of Albert Camus and Ernest Hemingway.¹⁷ He finds that both favour short sentences, with each sentence refusing to benefit from what has been

accumulated by prior sentences – as if each sentence were a new beginning. He has the impression that each sentence is the equivalent of a photographic or filmic “shot.”

12

The literary theorist and novelist Philippe Forest identifies three common ‘false ideas’ about the haïku: the belief it is one of the most ancient forms of Japanese poetry; that it forges a link only with the ineffable; and that it necessarily stands in isolation. However, the haïku first emerges from longer forms in the sixteenth century, and the term itself was coined only towards the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover the haïku may refer to the mundane, and be integrated into lengthy texts. Forest writes:

The haïku is not the expression of any wisdom, just a very slight incision made in the weave of time, ... precipitating the passage of the present then suspending it on the insignificant point of a single instant.¹⁸

He writes elsewhere: ‘Prose integrates within itself the poem which suspends it. The poem calls to itself the prose which envelops it.’¹⁹

13

Barthes devotes much of the first part of *The Preparation of the Novel* to the haïku.²⁰ The relation to the real, the recovery of the ‘inexpressible’ from the preformatted, which Barthes sees as the essence of the haïku he further identifies at the origin of all literature. In his 1977 inaugural lecture at the Collège de France he says:

From ancient times to the efforts of our avant-garde, literature has been concerned to represent something. What? I will put it crudely: the real. The real is not representable, and it is because men ceaselessly try to represent it by words that there is a history of literature.²¹

Some now find that the public release in 2022 of ChatGPT, and the Artificial Intelligence image generation models DALL-E and MidJourney, has announced the end of this history. Citing the example of a music video the author of a 2023 book about virtual reality and AI²² remarks: ‘Here, everything refers back to the real – while nothing seems to originate there.’²³ Image generation models however do not create *ex nihilo* but are ‘trained’ on images ‘scraped’ from the Internet together with their accompanying texts.²⁴ Even the most fanciful of such images eventually devolves upon the real (a unicorn may not be encountered in the real, but horses and horns are). The writer more sustainably argues: ‘the major rupture engendered by the generative system is that it works through an exclusive domination of the image by the word’.²⁵ In the course of his 1977 lecture Barthes famously declares language to be ‘fascist’. He says:

It inevitably has two main features: the authority of the assertion and the gregariousness of the repetition. [...] The signs of which language is made [...] only exist in so far as they are recognised, that is to say in so far as they are repeated; the sign is a follower, gregarious; in every sign sleeps this monster: a stereotype.²⁶

Barthes concludes that one cannot escape the dictatorship of language, one can seek only to ‘cheat’ it: ‘This salutary cheating [...] which allows language to be heard outside of power, in the splendour of a permanent revolution of language, is what I call: *literature*’.²⁷

14

To have introduced the question of technology here is not to digress. In his book of 1958 *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* Gilbert Simondon argues that technology is not something added to an already existing human being, it was only through technology that ‘humans’ *came into being*.²⁸ The palaeontologist André Leroi-Gourhan observes: ‘Tools and skeletons evolved synchronously.’²⁹ The preparation and production of an artwork necessarily passes by a material practice, a *technic*. At the beginning of a 1973 essay Barthes says that although ‘writing’ (*écriture*) was the first object he encountered in his work he originally thought of it only as a variety of style, a choice and disposition of words announcing the text as a work of *literature*.³⁰ Now, however, ‘twenty years later’, it is the manual

sense of the word that interests him: 'the muscular act of writing, of tracing letters [...] the gesture by which a hand grasps a tool'.³¹ In *The Preparation of the Novel* Barthes speaks of 'the maniacal care [...] brought to the choice of pens, paper, etc.',³² a characterisation anticipated in a 1973 interview in the French daily *Le Monde* with the title 'An almost maniacal relationship with graphic instruments'.³³ Preparation for the act of calligraphy demands control of respiration and musculature,³⁴ Barthes says: 'in writing, my body takes pleasure in tracing, in rhythmically incising a virgin surface'.³⁵ Preparation may be not only physical but spiritual: 'In ancient Chinese society, people prepared to write, i.e. to wield a paintbrush, after a quasi-religious asceticism. In certain Christian abbeys in the Middle Ages, copyists would only begin their work after a day of meditation.'³⁶

15

Apart from clearing my desk and my mind, the preparation of *Adaptation* involved neither physical nor spiritual exercise. I turned to photography from a background in 'art' at a time when the artworld considered the expression 'art photography' to be an oxymoron. To use photography in my works for art galleries and museums allowed me to bring my visual art practice into dialogue with a significant aspect of the sociopolitical process. It moreover required that my critical thinking about my practice take account of a world beyond the 'artworld'. The images in *Adaptation* were made by means of a 'game engine' – software originally designed for the production of videogames, but since used in such fields as architectural rendering and film-making. The intertitle texts were written using word processing software, and combined with images in video editing software. Consistently with my turn to photography fifty years ago, I use the same technical means to produce my works today as predominate in the everyday environment in which common sense is formed. My choice of graphic implements was determined by objective political criteria, and *overdetermined* by subjective desire for the relationship with the real the camera seemed to promise.

16

The essence of the camera is in the Western perspectival system of representation that begins in the Quattrocento. Computer-generated virtual space obeys the laws of perspective but not of physical reality. For example, in a game engine, I may move a camera towards a wall and continue to move it until it passes through the wall. If I then rotate the camera through 180 degrees to face the other side of the wall I may find that the wall is no longer there. It exists when approached from one direction, but not from the other. This real-world impossibility is a result of the routine practice of 'back-face culling' by which the architects of game worlds reduce demands on computer hardware by not requiring calculations of things the gamer will never see.

17

Suppose I'm a photographer or filmmaker and need to shoot a scene in and around a house. If I have a large budget I may design and build a set to materialise the building I have in mind. Otherwise, I must look for an existing house. Once I've found a suitable architectural point of departure I'll then need to adapt it more closely to my needs – for example, by changing the furnishings or adding a wall. The resulting environment must then be lit and camera movements planned. The production process is exactly analogous when I work in computer generated virtual space rather than real space. I might commission a 3D model from a professional architectural model-maker, or I might go looking for existing 'assets' on specialist websites to adapt to my requirements. If I am unable to find a suitable interior online I may have to build the rooms myself. Having built the basic walls, I might find the decorative wall mouldings online, much as I might buy real mouldings from a building supplies store.

18

My works are examples of a widespread material practice (video loops are found on mobile phones and in shop windows) but not of a pre-existing

genre.³⁷ I know what a novel is and what a painting is, but to what category does *Adaptation* belong? All of my works represent a quest for forms of writing appropriate to the video loop conceived as a 'scripto-visual' practice – one in which the text is the vehicle for an image, and neither picture nor text predominates. I return to the haïku in *Adaptation* after previously using the form in a work that makes explicit biographical reference to Barthes – which it is to say it initially made its way into to my work through 'considerations of motivation'.³⁸ I must also search for appropriate narrative forms. The French literary scholar Christine Berthin remarks of my works:

... the narratives are not entangled in causality. There is no plot development to focalise and thus distract the viewer's attention, no linear reconstruction of external or factual reality, no diversions, and no teleological development of story lines or moral implications.³⁹

19

Concluding his 1973 *Le Monde* interview Barthes says: 'The two writing operations that give me the greatest pleasure are, first, beginning, and second, ending.'⁴⁰ In the preface to his 1964 *Critical Essays* (which reads as a summary anticipation of *The Preparation of the Novel*) he remarks, 'one writes perhaps less to materialize an idea than to exhaust a task which bears within itself its own satisfaction'.⁴¹ Ideas do not pre-exist the material practices in which they are formed. I began with the random association of a photograph of Sheffield with Stanisław Lem's *Solaris*. The work that followed was one of presenting the factually implausible as formally irrefutable. I did not 'prepare' *Adaptation* so much as I *began* a prolonged preparation for its end in the moment when a gathering of fragments attained formal and semantic coherence. To end with Barthes: 'the work is written by seeking the work, which begins fictively when it is terminated practically'.⁴²

Victor Burgin



Notes

- ¹ Roland Barthes, 'Par où commencer?', *Poétique*, 1 (1970), 3–4.
- ² Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire, 'The Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Study', trans. by Patrick Coleman, *Yale French Studies*, 48 (1972), 118–75 (pp. 162–63).
- ³ 'About *Afterlife*. An exchange between Victor Burgin and Alexander Streitberger', *Place*, 4 (2021). Available online at: <https://place4.place-plateforme.com/streitberger-burgin/>
- ⁴ Laplanche and Leclaire, 'The Unconscious', p. 135. I use this example to give a psychoanalytic account of Barthes' notion of the 'punctum'. See Victor Burgin, 'Diderot, Barthes, *Vertigo*', in *The End of Art Theory* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 112–39.
- ⁵ Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols (London: Hogarth, 1953–74), vol. VII, pp. 123–246 (p. 222).
- ⁶ Roland Barthes, *La Préparation du roman I et II: Notes de cours et de séminaires au Collège de France 1978-1979 et 1979-80*, ed. by Nathalie Léger (Paris: Seuil/IMEC, 2003), p. 25.
- ⁷ Ross Mitchell Guberman, ed., *Julia Kristeva Interviews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 16.
- ⁸ Philip Guston speaking on 'The Philadelphia Panel', transcribed in *It Is*, 5 (1960), 36–38.
- ⁹ Roland Barthes, *Critical Essays*, trans. by Richard Howard (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972), pp. vi–vii.
- ¹⁰ Barthes, *Critical Essays*, pp. xvii–xviii.
- ¹¹ It was only on opening an issue of the *Guardian Weekly* at home in France that I learned that in 2007 the Sheffield born singer-songwriter Richard Hawley had released an album with the title *Lady's Bridge*. ('Man of Steel', *Guardian Weekly*, 24 May 2024.) I had not previously heard of Hawley, who was born in 1967, the year I graduated from Yale University School of Art and Architecture. A social historian might find anecdotal interest in the cultural and political changes that could foster such divergent lives in working-class children before and after the arrival of rock and roll, and on the symbolic import of the image of Lady's Bridge, which in Sheffield figures 'the tracks' one may be born on the 'wrong side of'.
- ¹² Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, trans. by Jonathan Webber (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 87.
- ¹³ I additionally represent scenes from Lem's novel, also as either images or intertitles. I describe scenes from the novel in condensed indirect speech. As is the case with the haïku the egocentric subject is evacuated.
- ¹⁴ Augustin Berque, *Le Sens de l'Espace au Japon: Vivre, Penser, Bâtir* (Paris: Arguments, 2004), pp. 29–30.
- ¹⁵ Alexis Rygaloff, 'Existence, possession, présence', *Cahiers de linguistique d'Asie orientale*, 1 (1977), 7–16. Cited in Hisayasu Nakagawa, *Introduction à la culture japonaise* (Paris: PUF, 2005), p. 18.

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- ¹⁶ Richard Wright, *Haiku* (New York: Arcade, 2012); Jack Kerouac, *Book of Haikus* (New York: Penguin, 2003).
- ¹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Explications de *L'Étranger*', *Les Cahiers du Sud*, 243 (février 1943); reprinted in *Situations I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 109.
- ¹⁸ Phillipe Forest, 'Fleurs et flocons dans le froid', in *Haikus, etc.* (Nantes: Cécile Defaut, 2008), p. 29.
- ¹⁹ Phillipe Forest, 'Vie Nouvelle de Kobatashi Issa', in *Haikus, etc.*, p. 74
- ²⁰ See particularly the nine sessions from 6 January to 3 March 1979.
- ²¹ Roland Barthes, 'Lecture in Inauguration of the Chair of Literary Semiology, Collège de France, January 7, 1977', trans. by Richard Howard, *October*, 8 (1979), 3–16 (p. 8).
- ²² Éric Sadin, *La Vie Spectrale. Penser l'ère du métavers et des IA génératives* (Paris: Grasset, 2023).
- ²³ Éric Sadin, 'L'humain diminué', *Le Monde diplomatique*, novembre 2023, p. 27.
- ²⁴ Most images on the Internet are accompanied by 'alt text', a brief textual description of the contents of the image originally devised for the benefit of the visually impaired. Images are also associated with the words on the web pages on which they appear. Words are additionally linked to images on an individual basis either by paid workers or by all of us when we click on such things as 'Captchas'.
- ²⁵ Sadin, 'L'humain diminué', p. 27.
- ²⁶ Barthes, 'Lecture', p. 5. Translation modified.
- ²⁷ Barthes, 'Lecture', p. 6. Translation modified.
- ²⁸ Gilbert Simondon, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, trans. by Cecile Malaspina and John Rogrove (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
- ²⁹ Cited in Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. by Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 154.
- ³⁰ Roland Barthes, 'Variations sur l'écriture', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Éric Marty, 5 vols (Paris: Seuil, 2002), vol. 4, pp. 267–316 (p. 267). Further references to the *Œuvres complètes* will be given in the form of *OC*, followed by the volume and page numbers
- ³¹ Barthes, 'Variations sur l'écriture', p. 267.
- ³² Barthes, *La Préparation du Roman*, p. 339.
- ³³ Roland Barthes, 'Un rapport presque maniaque avec les instruments graphiques', *Le Monde*, 27 septembre 1973, reprinted in *OC IV*, pp. 483–87.
- ³⁴ See Jean François Billeter, *L'art choinois de l'écriture* (Geneva: Skira, 1989).
- ³⁵ Roland Barthes, 'Writing', in *A Very Fine Gift and Other Writings on Theory*, trans. by Chris Turner (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2015), pp. 167–70 (p. 168). Translation modified. Originally published as a preface to Roger Druet and Herman Grégoire, *La Civilisation de l'écriture* (Paris: Fayard/Dessain et Tolra, 1973).
- ³⁶ Barthes, 'Un rapport presque maniaque', p. 483.

³⁷ The American philosopher David Rodowick refers to a ‘crisis of naming’.

³⁸ The work is *Belledonne* (2016); see Ryan Bishop and Sunil Manghani, eds, *Seeing Degree Zero: Barthes / Burgin and Political Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2003, pp. 43–106.

³⁹ Christine Berthin, ‘Pre-occupations: Calling Up Ghosts in *A Place to Read* and *Belledonne*’, in Bishop and Manghani, eds, *Seeing Degree Zero*, pp. 333–54 (p. 341).

⁴⁰ Barthes, ‘Un rapport presque maniaque’, p. 487.

⁴¹ Barthes, *Critical Essays*, p. xi.

⁴² Barthes, *Critical Essays*, p. xviii.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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