

## ADDENDUM A



At Castrum Peregrini many manuscripts and poems were transcribed during the Second World War. For those hiding at Castrum Peregrini, calligraphy was firstly a means to copy literary texts for dispersal among friends.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, it fit in the regime to remain healthy, being secluded in a small place. Wolfgang Frommel advised Claus Bock, as can be read in Bock's memoir, to learn to control himself through concentrated labour and avoid boredom and agitation to enter the hiding place.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, Claus Bock engaged in, inter alia, the development of a system to arrange keywords and quotations from the work of the German poet Stefan George, using tiny handwriting on index cards.<sup>3</sup> A third way in which handwriting played a role at Castrum Peregrini, was in the activity of handwriting analysis. A book written by the German philosopher Ludwig Klages, 'Handwriting and Character', was at hand in Castrum Peregrini. Through Klages' theory, character is analyzed focusing on the characteristics of script such as regularity, balance, size, speed and pressure.<sup>4</sup>

In this first addendum to *Pharmakon*,<sup>5</sup>

I will focus on the gesture of writing.

From the artist's studio, the monastic scriptorium, the psychiatric hospital, to a hiding place in wartime such as Castrum

Peregrini, the gesture of writing, or mark making, seems to offer a sense of control that the operators of gestures find beneficial. As Walter Benjamin wrote to a friend in 1926: "You will see that—starting about a week ago, I have once more entered a period of small writing, in which, even after long intervals, I always find some kind of home again."<sup>6</sup>

There seem to be two issues at hand regarding script and mark making. First there is the issue of marks as acts of inscription, encoded as signs within a framework of symbolic language. Then there are the marks that hold some personal history even before perception (and interpretation) of the eye, a time when gesture exists as the pure undifferentiated action gesticulating into the world.<sup>7</sup>

Serge Tisseron writes that the earliest drawings are not guided by a visual exploration of space but by an exploration of movement. At its origin graphic expression is blind, as can be seen with children under the age of two. For them drawing, or mark making, is not a process originated by a concept in the mind that guides the eye and eventually the hand. Rather, there is movement first. Disconnected from perception, it is led by muscular, tonic and plastic sensations. Only

1 C.V. Bock, *Zolang wij gedichten schrijven kan ons niets gebeuren*, Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini 2007, p. 13.

2 Ibid., p. 49.

3 Ibid., p. 64.

4 L. Klages, *Handschrift en karakter*, Den Haag: Boek en periodiek 1948.

5 M. Berghuis, *Pharmakon: De magie van het schrift* (graduation thesis Gerrit Rietveld Academie) 2012.

6 W. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe III*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1997, p. 171, cited in: U. Marx e.a. (eds.), *Walter Benjamin's Archive*, London/New York: Verso 2007, p. 52.

7 Conversation between A. Newman and M.C. de Zegher, in: A. Newman & M.C. de Zegher (eds.), *The stage of drawing: Gesture and act*, New York/London: Drawing Center/Tate Publishing 2003, p. 67.

later is drawing guided by the eye. For young children, Tisseron writes, marking gestures are “a way for the child to stage the mother’s coming and going—really her frequent absences—so as to tame and master the experience in the imaginary as an early form of kinetic symbolization.”<sup>8</sup>

Opened and closed by the mark, the inscriptive game, both motional and emotional, enables an active control over separation anxiety while unlocking the child’s independence.

Drawing is close to writing, perhaps closer to writing than to painting. For instance, a painting usually demands to be viewed vertically, while drawings and writings are best viewed flat. Walter Benjamin writes in this regard: “We might say that there are two sections through the substance of the world: the longitudinal section of painting and the transverse section of certain graphic works. The longitudinal seems representational—it somehow contains things; the transverse section seems symbolic—it contains signs.”<sup>9</sup>

The use of symbolic signs in drawing presupposes a direct connection to thought.

A drawing is a record of the workings of thought embedded in the drawing. In that sense the drawing is the connection between thought and action. The murmurings of the mind are materialized in the markers of an action. Drawing as an investigation of thought, rather than an investigation of observation.<sup>10</sup> The impulse to draw is not to capture appearance so much as a demand to animate thought.

What about writing in a graphic form, ‘graphic work’ as Benjamin describes it, in between drawing and writing, suspended between gesture and thought?

German writer Robert Walser tried to solve writer’s block when he started “to jot in pencil, to sketch, to dilly-dally.”<sup>11</sup> In graphic works, manuscripts that appeal to the eye as a textual image, the sign placing and the gesticulating of the hand and arm could—in a perfect equilibrium—lead to one subject, one body. Its own enjoyment realizes that this body, this enjoyment comes into meaning directly from itself.<sup>12</sup>

What comes first, action or thought? Richard Serra said in an interview: “Anything you can project as expressive in terms of drawing—ideas, metaphors, emotions, language structures—results from the act of doing.”<sup>13</sup> With the young child in mind, Tisseron gives the same answer. In the act of tracing the child creates a game and the practice of this game produces meaning. This is what could well be the meaning of rewriting texts. Creating a meaning in action, and deducting rules from action while in action. Reversing the usual order where formulated intentions lead to expression, rather the work becomes thought that thinks itself through the material. Through the gesture of writing or drawing, through practice, a meaningful method surfaces. It might then attract—with magnetic power—literature, art, well-being, some kind of home again.

Marieke Berghuis, September 2012

8 S. Tisseron, ‘All Writing Is Drawing: The Spatial Development of the Manuscript’, *Yale French Studies* 1994-84, p. 33.

9 W. Benjamin, ‘Painting and the Graphic Arts’, in: *The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility and other writings on media*, Cambridge: Belknap 2008, p. 219.

10 M. Manders, *On Drawings*, <http://www.markmanders.org/texts/english/06/>.

11 W. Morlang, ‘Im Tarnzauber der Mikrographie’, in: *Du. Zeitschrift für Kultur*, 2002-730, p. 58, cited in: U. Marx e.a. (eds.), *Walter Benjamin’s Archive*, London/New York: Verso 2007, p. 50.

12 J. Fisher, ‘On drawing’, in: A. Newman & M.C. de Zegher (eds.), *The stage of drawing: Gesture and act*, New York/London: Drawing Center/Tate Publishing 2003, p. 220.

13 Cited in: E. Dexter, *Vitamin D: New perspectives in drawing*, London/New York: Phaidon 2005, p. 7.