

A Denounced Tautology: On *Une Seconde d'éternité* (D'après une idée de Charles Baudelaire) (1970)

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1. A Systematic Use of Digression

[T]he step-by-step method [...] is never anything but the decomposition (in the cinematographic sense) of the work of reading: a slow motion, so to speak, neither wholly image nor analysis; it is, finally, in the very writing of the commentary, a systematic use of digression [...] and thereby a way of observing the reversibility of the structures of which the text is woven.¹

Broodthaers started to deploy his signature—or rather his signed initials—as a motif in 1965. In this year he made a series of drawings intended for inclusion in *Happening News*, a xeroxed magazine produced in Antwerp by a group that included the artist Panamarenko. Two of these drawings feature a swarm of hand-written M.B.s surrounding a line drawing of a broken eggshell, which itself contains a single monogram. Although they were not published at the time, remaining stored in a tube in Panamarenko's possession,² in February the following year a similar drawing appeared as the frontispiece to an issue of the Brussels-based journal *Phantomas* dedicated to Broodthaers. On the outside all eggs look alike, but what hatches from them is, apparently, an individual; in this case, however, Broodthaers's signatures are reproductions from the same mold. In the ensuing years, Broodthaers painted his initials on canvases, reproduced them on prints and exhibition announcements, and inscribed them on pedestals, slide film, writing slates, and projection screens. He also produced a single 35mm film featuring his signature. Consisting of a mere 24 frames, *Une Seconde d'éternité* (D'après une idée de Charles Baudelaire) is the subject of this chapter.

Une Seconde d'éternité is a looped second of celluloid, in which the artist's initials are inscribed only to disappear and recycle again and again. It was made using a simple stop-frame animation technique, Broodthaers decomposing the strokes of the pen that formed the M and the B into twenty-four linear segments. Starting at the left, from the bottom of the first stave of the M, each subsequent frame of the film adds a further segment until by the twenty-fourth frame the monogram is complete. The effect, when the film is projected on the wall of the gallery, is one of subtle vacillation: one moment the projected image reads as an immaterial inscription applied to the physical surface; at the next, the image appears to objectify, in its cinematic frame, the reproduced signature itself.

The film was first exhibited at the Galerie Folker Skulima in Berlin from 28th September to 7th November 1970. Besides his film, with which it shared its title, Broodthaers's exhibition included two plaques. Titled simply *M.B.*, they reproduce the completed signature from the film's final frame in embossed plastic. As with most of his other *Industrial Poems*, this motif was conceived to have a "positive" and "negative" version.³ Where the initials in the one appear in black relief against a white ground, its counterpart is, apart from one solitary exception, unique within the entire series of plastic plaques in being completely black.⁴ The letters it represents seem to be on the verge of disappearance and would be all but indiscernible if it

¹ Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 12-13.

² Lotte Beckwé, email to the author, 10.08.2023.

³ Charlotte Friling, "Note to the Reader," in Charlotte Friling and Dirk Snauwaert (eds.), *Industrial Poems, Marcel Broodthaers: The Complete Catalogue of the Plaques, 1968-1972* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2021), 31.

⁴ The only other completely black plastic plaque that Broodthaers produced was a single copy of *Modèle: la pipe* (1968-69).

were not for the highlights reflected by the camber of their relief. A copy of the film mounted on a sheet of white card made up, it would seem, the third element of the exhibition. Unlike the film and the plaques, this multiple, entitled *M.B. 24 images/seconde*, was not mentioned in the exhibition announcement, possibly because it was added to the exhibition at a later stage—Broodthaers was not averse to changing and rearranging his exhibitions midstream.

Éternité along with the various slide projections, plinths, prints, and paintings in which Broodthaers deployed his initials form a relatively discrete body of work. There are very few examples of the signature coinciding with other tropes or appearing in other contexts, although there are exceptions. The subject of the artist's signature does not play a role in any of the various sections of his fictional *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (1968-72), for example. The exception that proves the rule is *Avis* (1969), a work that I will discuss in the last section of this essay and which features two signatures on the letterhead paper of his museum's *Section Littéraire*. In the case of the eggshell, from which apparently the monogram originally hatched, there is, in addition to the drawings I mentioned above, the example of an exhibition invitation from 1966.⁵ The fig. number symbol coincides with the signature even more rarely than the eggshell does, although Broodthaers introduced it into his work at around the same moment.⁶ I am aware of a single working sketch in which the inscription "fig. M.B." is included, and one short text, "General Theory of Art and Collection" published in an exhibition catalogue in 1973, that consists of two parts, the first labelled "figure M." and the second "figure B."⁷ Otherwise and for by far the most part, Broodthaers's initials do not intersect with the fig. numbers.

There is one other exception, although it is an instance not so much of coincidence as of indirect association: on the white card of *M.B. 24 images/seconde* on which *Éternité*'s filmstrip was presented, Broodthaers numbered each of its twenty-four frames in pencil from top to bottom. As Jean-Christophe Royoux has pointed out, this is an allusion to the symbolism of midnight, the hour of stasis, in Stéphane Mallarmé's poetry;⁸ which by turn is also echoed in the numbering system Broodthaers used most frequently with the figure number symbol: fig. 1, fig. 2, fig. 0 and fig. 12 (twenty-four hours being the completion of a day, its return to zero, and twelve being the hour of midnight on the clockface). This oblique chain of association is a good example of the intertextuality that suffuses Broodthaers's work as a whole and imbues *Éternité* no less. The Freudian term "overdetermination" could legitimately be invoked to describe it: each signifier condenses multiple meanings, and each potential meaning is displaced into multiple signifiers, such that an array of possible and even contrary meanings are stowed within *Éternité*'s twenty-four frame animation. It is this sort of compression that Broodthaers's reference to "film stock as a place for storing ideas—a rather special kind of can" should evoke in us.⁹

⁵ The exhibition *Je retrouve à la matière, je retrouve la tradition des primitifs, peinture à œuf, peinture à œuf* took place at Galerie Cogeime, Brussels, 27 September to 9 October 1966. Its invitation included a grid of twelve signatures alongside a monochromatic image of eight eggshells repeated three times in black, yellow and red.

⁶ Dirk Snauwaert dates its first use to 1966. See Snauwaert, "The Figures," in Benjamin Buchloh (ed.), *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs*, (Cambridge MA.: MIT, 1988), 127.

⁷ The working sketch is a two-sided drawing in felt tip reproduced under the title *Fig. M.B.* (1969-70). See *Industrial Poems, Marcel Broodthaers*, 343. The text "Théorie générale de l'art et de la collection" was published, in German and French, in the catalogue *Bilder-Objekte-Filme-Konzepte* (Munich: Städtische Galerie in Lembachhaus, 1973), 50.

⁸ Jean-Christophe Royoux, "Projet pour un Texte: The Cinematographic Model in the Work of Marcel Broodthaers," in Manuel J. Borja-Villiel and Michael Compton (eds.), *Marcel Broodthaers: Cinéma* (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1997), 298-99

⁹ Marcel Broodthaers, "D is Bigger than T," in Marcel Broodthaers, *Collected Writings* (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2012), 180.

In what follows some of the ideas stored in *Éternité*—including the film’s intertext in the nineteenth-century French poets Mallarmé and Charles Baudelaire, and its condensation of themes and schemas invoked by Broodthaers’s other works, in particular his other films and the slide projections featuring his signed initials—are traced by means of what Roland Barthes called “a systematic use of digression,” with the aim of “observing the reversibility of the structures of which the text is woven”.¹⁰

2. Double Composition

*24 images, the film of a second, a double subject.*¹¹

According to its parenthetical subtitle, *Éternité* is based on an idea drawn from Baudelaire. Shortly before making the film, during the winter of 1969-70, Broodthaers had attended a seminar on the poet given by the French literary theorist Lucien Goldmann.¹² Goldmann’s identification of the contrast between ideal and ephemeral beauty as an essential opposition within Baudelaire’s poetic universe would seem to have been a significant influence on the artist.¹³ However, though Goldmann may well have honed Broodthaers’s sense for the poet’s dialectically shifting concept, his seminar seems not to have been his introduction to it. A text the artist had written around five years previously indicates Baudelaire’s terms were already part of his thinking:

“The preference for eternity and the natural had ended up producing academicism, as we know. Its replacement by a preference for the ephemeral, for the artificial, for all that is false, aroused my enthusiasm as much as my poetic loyalty.”¹⁴

Baudelaire had already alighted on this distinction in his *Salon* of 1846, where, like Broodthaers here, he placed the stress on the ephemeral. “Absolute and eternal beauty,” he had written there, “does not exist;” it is no more than an abstraction “creamed off from the general surface of different types of beauty.”¹⁵ In his poem *La Beauté*, published a decade later in *Les fleurs du mal*, however, the emphasis had moved to the eternal. There, beauty describes itself to the reader (us “mortals”) as like “a stone-fashioned dream,” “eternal, and silent as matter is timeless.”¹⁶ What beauty cannot abide, its antithesis, is “the movement that displaces the lines,”¹⁷ which suggests temporality eroding the chiseled stasis of form.

The opposition between time and eternity surfaces in several other poems in *Les fleurs du mal*, too. *Parisian Dream*, for example, starts with an ecstatic, frozen tableau that unravels at the moment of waking. The poem’s first thirteen quatrains paint a world of marble, metal,

¹⁰ Barthes, *S/Z*, 13.

¹¹ Marcel Broodthaers, “24 Images...,” in Broodthaers, *Collected Writings*, 281.

¹² Broodthaers himself described the seminar as having taken place “in the winter of 1969-70” in his artist’s book *Charles Baudelaire. Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes*, (1973). See Marcel Broodthaers. *Complete Graphic Works and Books*, (Knokke-Duinbergen: Galerie Jos Jamar, 1989), 101. Trevor Stark, however, has ascertained that the seminar began in January 1970. See Stark, “The Reification of the World: Poetry and Conquest in Marcel Broodthaers’s Maps,” *Critical Inquiry* 50:3 (Spring 2024), 517.

¹³ Jean-Christophe Royoux was, to my knowledge, the first to comment on this. See his “Projet pour un Texte,” 297-98.

¹⁴ Marcel Broodthaers, “Like Butter in a Sandwich,” in Broodthaers, *Collected Writings*, 148.

¹⁵ Charles Baudelaire, “Salon of 1846,” *Selected Writings on Art and Literature* (London: Penguin, 2006), 104-105.

¹⁶ Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, translated by James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 39.

¹⁷ Translation altered to a more literal rendering of Baudelaire’s French: “Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes,” Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 38.

and ice that is lit from within. Its ocean has been “subdued,” its waterfalls are of crystal, and it is accompanied by “a silence of eternity.” In the poem’s last two quatrains, however, the dreamer awakens to his squalid room and the clock striking noon, calling him back into the transient present.¹⁸ The timepiece recurs in *The Clock*, where its ticking is likened to a droning insect announcing that it has sucked the life from the reader. Do not waste the passing minutes, the poem admonishes the reader, “They are the ore you must refine for gold!”¹⁹ Likewise, two years after the second edition of *Les fleurs du mal* appeared, for which the last two poems discussed were written, Baudelaire described the artist’s job in “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863) as being “to distil the eternal from the transitory.”²⁰ It was in this essay that the poet described beauty as having a “double composition,” its two parts being “an eternal invariable element,” and “a relative, circumstantial element.”²¹ Without the latter, which Baudelaire located in the fashions and morals of a particular period, there would be no access to ideal beauty.

Baudelaire’s doubleness finds many echoes in Broodthaers. The artist described, for example, the representations of eagles in the *Section des Figures* of his fictional *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (1972) as forming a “double projection,” coming from art history (eternity) on the one hand and advertising or commerce (the moment) on the other, as they did. Of his *Industrial Poems* he said, they were intended to be read on a “double level,” with their message not placed “completely on one side alone, neither image nor text.”²² *Le Corbeau et le renard* (1967), which was projected on a screen printed tautologically with the same text that featured in the film itself, he described as a “relation between two images.”²³ Finally, he wrote that *Éternité*, too, had “a double subject,” which he glossed as “the meaning or meaninglessness of the relation between two languages,” whether it be “that of words and that of cinema, or again, the relation between a static image and a moving image.”²⁴

Writing about filmmaking the previous year in “Project for a Text” (1969), Broodthaers had expressed this last dichotomy of movement and immobility as the horns of a dilemma. The text begins by quoting a verse from Baudelaire’s *La Beauté*: “I hate the movement that shifts the lines”. It then goes on to list ways to avoid the displacement that cinema’s movement imposes on literary form, before dismissing them and concluding: “I am cruelly torn between something immobile that has already been written and the comic movement that animates 24 images per second.”²⁵ Baudelaire’s line appears again in the artist’s book *Charles Baudelaire: Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes* (1973), where, by contrast, Broodthaers subjects it to exactly the fragmentation it expresses hatred for by dismembering and distributing it a word per page through the book’s length.

What the examples listed above demonstrate is less a consistent concept than, as Barthes says of the writerly text, “the reversibility of the structures” that make up the weave of Broodthaers’s work. Like all the other motifs and subjects of which he produced ever-new variations, eternity and the ephemeral did not settle into a definitive relation or take on determinate meanings. Playing on the reversible tensions between them belonged to the ironic hue of his rhetoric; their pairing also constitutes an implicit formal thread running through his cinematic work from beginning to end.

¹⁸ Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 204-209.

¹⁹ Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 160-63.

²⁰ Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life,” in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon, 1995), 12.

²¹ Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life,” 3.

²² Marcel Broodthaers, “Interview with Marcel Broodthaers by Georges Adé,” in Broodthaers, *Collected Writings*, 353; and “Ten Thousand Francs Rewards,” 414-15.

²³ Marcel Broodthaers, “Experimental in as much as,” in Broodthaers, *Collected Writings*, 178.

²⁴ Broodthaers, “24 Images...,” 281.

²⁵ Marcel Broodthaers, “Project for a Text,” in Broodthaers, *Collected Writings*, 160.

In many of the films, the contrast is implicit in the way they were made: they are moving images—shot with a cinecamera—of images, texts or objects that are, in themselves, essentially still. In *A Voyage on the North Sea* (1973-74), for example, the static images that form its content are distinguishable from a slide projection only by the characteristic shimmer of the filmic image, a format largely followed in *Analyse d'une peinture* (1973), too. In other films, it is text that alternates between motion and immobility. *Le Corbeau et le renard* consists of close-up shots of a printed text, sometimes with objects and photos placed in front of it. Some of these shots are static, while others travel across the text. The latter, in which the text appears to move, are echoed in a sequence included in both *Une Discussion inaugurale* (1968) and some versions of *Un voyage à Waterloo* (1969), in which a Menkes transport lorry, shot through the windows of the *Nineteenth Century Section* of Broodthaers's *Musée* in the Rue de la Pépinière, moves backwards and forwards as it parks. All we see of the vehicle are changing portions of the text painted on its side as it travels behind the apertures formed by the windows.

Un Film de Charles Baudelaire (1970), to take another example, consists entirely of static shots of a world map. Dates that appear as intertitles and subtitles, interspersed with words suggestive of a sea voyage, evoke the grueling creep of time. Starting on 3rd January 1850, the progression through the calendar halts around the mid-point of the film. Here the same date, 17th December, is repeated several times before the sequence is thrown into reverse, possibly in reference to Baudelaire's aborted journey to India after the boat carrying him was damaged in a storm rounding the Cape of Good Hope in 1841.²⁶ Towards the film's end, in an echo of Baudelaire's poem, a clock strikes twelve and we are left with only its monotonous ticking for the remainder. As a whole, the film thematizes the tension between the static and the temporal by pitting, in Eric de Bruyn's words, "the reversibility of a fully reified time—the abstract chronology of the clock or calendar—against the forgetfulness of an existence locked in a perpetual present."²⁷

Éternité, made shortly after *Un Film de Charles Baudelaire*, could be thought of as a pendant to the latter. It, too, folds the static image into the moving and vice versa: it is both static (i.e. eternal), being as it is "projected in an endless loop,"²⁸ while simultaneously representing "the time of a second of cinema"²⁹ (the ephemeral), which its constant cycling from inscription to erasure underlines. In this way, Broodthaers's film seems to transpose into its own idiom the two sides of Baudelaire's thesis of beauty's "double composition". Turning next to Broodthaers's relation to another nineteenth-century French poet will help demonstrate the way it does this.

3. A Constellation

*A throw of the dice/ This would be a treatise on art.*³⁰

While *Une Seconde d'éternité*'s connection to Baudelaire is assured visibility since the poet's name appears in the film's subtitle, its relation to Stéphane Mallarmé is more obscure. On the draft for the announcement of his exhibition at the Skulima gallery, Broodthaers sketched a

²⁶ Stark, "The Reification of the World," 521.

²⁷ Eric de Bruyn, "Marcel Broodthaers: Cinéma Modèle," in Gregor Jansen and Vanessa Joan Müller (eds.), *Real Presences: Marcel Broodthaers Today* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2011), 17.

²⁸ See Marcel Broodthaers, "Announcement issued by the Galerie Folker Skulima," reproduced in Manuel J. Borja-Villel and Michael Compton (eds.), *Marcel Broodthaers: Cinéma* (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1997), 128.

²⁹ Broodthaers, "24 Images..." 281.

³⁰ Marcel Broodthaers, "A Throw of the Dice," in Broodthaers, *Collected Writings*, 239.

swift but immediately recognizable portrait of Mallarmé accompanied by the poet's name in large and deliberate cursive script.³¹ In the text that went to print, however, neither his image nor name were retained. What, then, is Mallarmé's relevance to *Éternité*?

It was René Magritte, Broodthaers recorded, who had given him a copy of the typographically ground-breaking 1914 Nouvelle Revue Française edition of Mallarmé's famous *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*. This was in 1945 or 46.³² Assimilating the poem seems to have taken Broodthaers some time, however. Between this initial encounter with the work and his eventual artistic response to it lay a gestation period of two decades and more. His text *Investigating Dreamland* (1960), where he described himself as being "like the phantom of Mallarmé, whom I could not understand," suggests the process was not yet complete at this time.³³ Nonetheless, Mallarmé seems here already to be a model for Broodthaers, who depicts himself, like the figure of Igitur from the poet's eponymous tale, "sitting down in a chair" and "practicing immobility".

A period of particularly intense engagement with Mallarmé began around 1969. Over the next couple of years Broodthaers repeatedly recast Mallarmé's dice, most explicitly in his redacted reproduction of *Un coup de dés* printed as an artist's book, which he presented in two exhibitions dedicated to the poet, one at the end of 1969 in the Wide White Space Gallery in Antwerp and the other a month into 1970 at the Galerie Michael Werner in Cologne.³⁴ Baudelaire may be the most frequently cited figure in the artist's work, but Mallarmé, who Broodthaers described as "the founder of contemporary art," was of no lesser importance.³⁵

Un coup de dés depicts a ship foundering in a storm. As it is wrecked, the ship's Master, who has let go of the helm, hesitates to cast the dice he holds in his hands instead. This scene is an allegory of the writer's situation, in which literary composition is likened to a dice throw. Whether words can be secured a meaning is uncertain in this game of chance; unless "perhaps/a constellation" (i.e. the poem's syntax resulting from the throw) can do so.³⁶ The significance of *Un coup de dés*'s fixing of language in a syntactical arrangement was spelled out in Mallarmé's essay *Crisis in Verse*, where he wrote: "everything is suspended, an arrangement of fragments with alternatives and confrontations, adding up to a total rhythm, which would be the poem stilled".³⁷ The poem's internal order was, he mooted, capable of "eliminating chance;" in its *stillness* it would negate "the arbitrariness that remains in the terms" of ordinary speech, from which the poem must necessarily be constructed.³⁸ *Un coup de dés* itself, however, seems to turn away from this hope. One implication of its title, which forms a line disseminated in large capitals through a good portion of the poem's length, is that the whirlpool contingency of reading will win out against the bulwark of the constellation: "A THROW OF THE DICE/ WILL NEVER/ ABOLISH/ CHANCE".

³¹ Similar drawings of Mallarmé appear on a number of related studies Broodthaers produced when making the film in Berlin, which are in Folker Skulima's archive. I thank Raf Wollaerts for sharing them with me along with other related information from his research with Skulima.

³² Deborah Schultz and Sam Sacherhoff date this event to the year 1945. See Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers: Strategy and Dialogue*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007) 35, and Sacherhoff, "Literary Exhibitions," in *Marcel Broodthaers, A Retrospective* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2016), 137. Charlotte Friling by contrast, has 1946. See Friling, in Friling and Snauwaert (eds.), *Industrial Poems*, 334.

³³ Marcel Broodthaers, "Investigating Dreamland," in Broodthaers, *Collected Writings*, 80.

³⁴ These exhibitions were: *Exposition littéraire autour de Mallarmé* in Antwerp 2-20 December 1969, and *Exposition littéraire et musicale autour de Mallarmé* in Cologne 20 January to 22 February 1970.

³⁵ Marcel Broodthaers, "Ma Collection," in Broodthaers, *Collected Writings*, 305.

³⁶ Stéphane Mallarmé, "A Throw of the Dice," *Collected Poems*, translated by Henry Weinfield (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 124-45. All quotes from *Un coup de dés* are taken from this translation.

³⁷ Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Verse," *Divagations*, translated by Barbara Johnson (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 209.

³⁸ Mallarmé, "Crisis in Verse," 211; 208.

Shortly before staging the first of his explicitly Mallarméan exhibitions in December 1969, Broodthaers made a film entitled *La Pluie (Projet pour un texte)* (1969). Shot during the period that the *Nineteenth Century Section* of his fictional museum was installed inside the building, this two-minute film features the artist sitting in the garden of his Brussels home stymied in his attempts at writing by a curtain of theatrical rain. Although it makes no direct reference to the poet, *La Pluie* clearly belongs to the series of Broodthaers's meditations on *Un coup de dés*.

The affinity between the film and Mallarmé's poem is twofold. Firstly and most obviously, the scenario of Broodthaers's film is a slapstick translation of that discernable in the poem. The artist cast himself in the role of *Un coup de dés*'s Master writing in the face of the deluge that washes the ink from his sheet of paper as soon as applied. Like the storm symbolizing chance in the poem, the rain in the film prevails. Broodthaers, though, transposes Mallarmé's cosmic tragedy into his own comedic farce.

The correspondence does not stop there, however: not only the scenario but also the film's form chimes with Mallarmé's poem. The other half of *La Pluie*'s "double composition" is informed by Mallarmé's revolutionary emphasis on his poem's visual dimension. Where Baudelaire, in *La Beauté*, seems to espouse the ideal stasis of metrical form, Mallarmé bridled at the linearity of conventional reading: "the back-and-forth movement of the eye finishing one line, starting another".³⁹ In his *Un coup de dés* the page rather than the line "is taken as the basic unit," which entails the paper's white expanse being "incorporated into the work itself" where it "intervenes each time an image".⁴⁰ Similarly, in *La Pluie* image and text form a counterpoint. The film starts with a wide shot: Broodthaers in the foreground writing on a low wooden box he uses as a desk, behind him the white-washed garden wall bearing the inscription "Département des Aigles" in black capitals. The second shot, taken from a lower angle so that these stenciled capitals appear directly beside the artist, emphasizes their juxtaposition in its tighter frame. The camera then tilts down to more words, those the artist is writing on the page in front of him. No sooner written, however, this text becomes image under the downpour that starts in the next shot, looking in no time more like a Tachist watercolor than a page of writing. At the film's end, its subtitle "projet pour un text" appears printed on top of the image of this erased writing, although this phrase only defers to yet another (although apparently unrealized) text.

These affinities notwithstanding, the intervention of the image in the text has a different value, it would seem, for Broodthaers than for Mallarmé. For the latter, the *integration* of the word with the image (the space of the page) releases it from its communicative function. *La Pluie*, however, seems to suggest the *displacement* of the word by the image—and, by turn, of the image by the text. The film's last shot illustrates this in condensed form. The final gesture of Broodthaers's pen appears to be a signature.⁴¹ We see the hand make the characteristic flourish, but the pen's trace on the page is erased by the rain even before the gesture ends. We might conjecture that *Éternité*, made around a year later, took this concluding image as the model for its ouroboros-like cycle of inscription and erasure.

The theme of the text's negation by an image or object is an integral thread running through Broodthaers's work and, unsurprisingly, has been an emphasis in much critical commentary. Broodthaers's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard, image* (1969) enacts this negation by replacing Mallarmé's text with graphic bars, whose scale and placement follow that of the poem's original typography. This modified copy of *Un coup de dés*, suggests

³⁹ Stéphane Mallarmé, "The Book as Spiritual Instrument," *Divagations*, 228.

⁴⁰ Stéphane Mallarmé, "Preface," *Collected Poems*, 121-122.

⁴¹ This is pointed out by Bruce Jenkins, who nonetheless seems to describe a slightly different version of the film than the one I have seen. See Jenkins, "CB: Cinema Broodthaers," in Marge Goldwater and Michael Compton (eds.) *Marcel Broodthaers* New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 93.

Broodthaers had come to the same conclusion as Jean-Paul Sartre, who in *What is Literature?* (1948) had written that a literary work only exists if it is read, “and it lasts only as long as this act can last [...] beyond that, there are only black marks on paper.”⁴² In Benjamin Buchloh’s words Broodthaers was, in carrying out his *détournement*, “literally reifying and deliberately commodifying the poem’s insistence on its linguistic and visual autonomy.”⁴³ The original instance of this apparently distinctively Broodthaersian approach to art’s entanglement with the commodity has widely been identified as his sculpture *Pense-Bête* (1964), which consists of fifty copies of Broodthaers’s last collection of poetry stood in a roughly formed base of plaster. For Birgit Pelzer, *Pense-Bête* “materializes the fiction of passage from one status to another,” namely from unread poet to artist producing reified objects;⁴⁴ and Buchloh adds of this the “first performative erasure of his own poetical text,” that it seems to announce “poetry’s objective historical erasure and failure to communicate any longer.”⁴⁵

Buchloh, Pelzer, and later critics who follow their lead are certainly not mistaken. Folded into these works, however, are other implications beyond their allusions to textual erasure and reification. As Jean-Christophe Royoux has pointed out, *Pense-Bête* not only implies the immobilization of reading, but the French phrase signifies a reminder, too. Therefore, the work presents an alternative: “either one can destroy the plastic aspect of the sculpture to remobilize the movement of the lines and thus gain access to the text of the past, or one can build a new kind of writing on the memory of the buried text.”⁴⁶ With this in mind, we might want to look at *Pense-Bête* afresh. It, too, might be said to possess a double subject, which comes into focus when we add to Buchloh’s allusion to poetry’s “historical erasure,” the complement of Royoux’s insight that “Broodthaers’s project is to make the immobility of art mobile once again – as textuality.”⁴⁷ Read in this way, the sculpture would not only figure poetry’s occlusion, but simultaneously its continuing relevance, in particular the relevance of what Mallarmé termed the poetic word’s mobility.

Mallarmé thought that if words could be levered free from the linearity of discourse and removed from the instrumental context of speech, they would “attain a ‘mobility’ deriving from their innate instability.”⁴⁸ In contrast to the exigencies of communication which reduce language to something like an exchange value, the mobile word is manifold, semantically capacious, and equivocal. The terms the poet used to circumscribe it evoke volatility and effervescence. Whereas reality is banally “spread out like a street vendor’s wares” by communicative speech, the mobile word transforms it into its “vibratory near-disappearance.”⁴⁹ Words are mobile where they “light each other up through reciprocal reflections.”⁵⁰ Mobility is the quicksilver of “language playing,” a kind of linguistic unconscious. In it Mallarmé saw a glimpse of the infinite; it was, as it were, a second of eternity.

How might Broodthaers’s *Un coup... image* be read in Royoux’s spirit not only as an immobilization of poetry, but also as a remobilization of art? Maybe by taking a cue from how *Un coup de dés* itself developed a lesson that Mallarmé had found in the “simple maculation”

⁴² Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 29.

⁴³ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Marcel Broodthaers: Open Letters, Industrial Poems,” in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT, 2000), 108.

⁴⁴ Birgit Pelzer, “Marcel Broodthaers: The Place of the Subject,” in Michael Newman and Jon Bird (eds.), *Rewriting Conceptual Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 202; 203.

⁴⁵ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “First and Last: Two Books by Marcel Broodthaers,” in Manuel J. Borja-Villel and Christophe Cherix (eds.), *Marcel Broodthaers, A Retrospective* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2016), 42.

⁴⁶ Royoux, “Projet pour un Texte,” 300.

⁴⁷ Royoux, “Projet pour un Texte,” 299.

⁴⁸ Trevor Stark, *Total Expansion of the Letter: Avant-Garde Art and Language after Mallarmé* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT, 2020), 137.

⁴⁹ Stéphane Mallarmé, “The Mystery in Letters,” *Divagations*, 233; and “Crisis in Verse,” 210.

⁵⁰ Mallarmé, “Crisis in Verse,” 208.

of newsprint. In the way that the inked letters were disposed on the newspaper's pages in different sizes and relations he saw the potential for a new form of writing, which would derive "a spacious mobility" from their typographic image.⁵¹ In Broodthaers's reworking of Mallarmé's poem the relations between legible text and the page's spatiality were *not only* suspended, *but also* recast at another level: his graphic bars still find their significance in relation to the words they displace. If on the one hand poetry is spatially immobilized, on the other, the promise of "a spacious mobility" is reintroduced at a different point. In the original poem, the white of the page "that separates groups of words from one another" seems, as Mallarmé wrote, "to speed up and slow down the movement" of reading.⁵² Although the separation that Broodthaers's abstraction of the poem's typography creates is greater and the variable tempo of reading turned into an indefinite delay, the text is not forgotten.

This brings me to the connection between Mallarméan mobility and chance. In fact, the chance that poetry's syntax will not annul has two sides. Firstly, there is the chance innate to language itself, the arbitrary association of this phonetic form with that idea. Then there is the aleatory dimension released once words have been set within the constellation of the poem. Mallarmé referred to poetry as a "superior supplement"⁵³ that abolished chance of the first sort "word-by-word."⁵⁴ Poetry's stilling of speech, however, rather than ultimately ridding language of chance, transforms the word's arbitrariness into mobility, turning the *in-itself* chance of speech into the *for-itself* volatility of the poetic word (to use the Hegelian terminology that Mallarmé would have known well). So, although meaning remains uncertain in the poem's linguistic and spatial arrangement, its uncertainty changes valence: the sign's arbitrariness becomes integral to the poem's form; and, although "a throw of the dice does not abolish chance," Mallarmé believed that the constellation of the poem might yet absorb it.

A similar model of meaning, I think, could be applied to Broodthaers's work. Both the signed initials and the fig. number symbols have arbitrary connections to their referents. They attach a text (a name, a biography) to an image or object (a work, or an illustration of one). On both sides what they connect is interchangeable: this or that author with one object or another, any image with any legend. It is not by chance that Broodthaers reduced his signature to his name's initials when deploying it in his work, because initials can accommodate any number of names or words as their referents and in this sense are more arbitrary as symbols than words themselves. Broodthaers's recourse to this encompassing obtuseness demonstrates the principle. An example is found in a manuscript relating to his reworking of *Un coup de dés*, where the artist concatenates himself (Marcel) with Mallarmé and Magritte, as well as the terms Model (which Mallarmé as "forerunner of Contemporary Art" represents) and Museum – all threaded together by the letter 'M'.⁵⁵

A related capaciousness is evident in Broodthaers's *Le Catalogue et la Signature* (1968). This work consists of a black screen inscribed with five signatures and enclosed by a frame printed with black and white images of previous works. On to this signed screen eighty to one hundred slides representing Broodthaers's back catalogue were projected in rotation. Rather than the signature being applied to the object, here the object is attached to the signature: Broodthaers's initials become the overt center of the catalogue's solar system and, simultaneously, an empty reference holding a potentially infinite array of works in their orbits.

One commonality between *Le Catalogue* and *Éternité* is the way in which the signature's reference to a concrete individual is displaced by its impersonal reality as a social institution. In this regard, responding to an interviewer's question about *Éternité* in 1971,

⁵¹ Mallarmé, "The Book as Spiritual Instrument," 228.

⁵² Mallarmé, "Preface," 121.

⁵³ Mallarmé, "Crisis in Verse," 206.

⁵⁴ Mallarmé, "The Mystery in Letters," 236.

⁵⁵ Broodthaers, "A Throw of the Dice...," 239.

Broodthaers said “the important thing is not that it’s my signature or anyone else’s; but the very fact of the signature”.⁵⁶ Another commonality would be the way in which the reproductions in the slide carousel cycle past the static signatures on *Le Catalogue*’s screen like the second hand around a clockface.

Among the works reproduced in *Le Catalogue*’s slides are two paintings of daubed inscriptions in white and red on black grounds: *Il n’y a pas de structures primaires* and *M.B. M.B. M.B...*, (both 1968). Signatures form each work’s motif, or part of it. As such, they can be seen as being in the same vein as the drawings the artist had made for *Happening News* three years previously, where his initials had already departed from their habitual auxiliary role to become part of a rebus of sorts. Arguably, the signature’s function as an index of authorship remains in all these works, but it has become distanced, nonetheless, by dint of being integrated into the work’s image, its statement, rather than discretely underwriting it.

Projected on to *Le Catalogue*’s signed screen, however, the signatures from these paintings establish a new dimension: not only is the signature included as motif, but it is now also applied tautologically to itself. Although the convention of the countersignature is suggested, in Broodthaers’s hands the added signature, rather than shoring up the authority of the first, confers on it a Mallarméan mobility. He deployed similar doublings of the signature in a series of other works, including *24 images/seconde* (1970) in which his initials were penciled in beside the film strip. In *La Signature, Série 1. Tirage illimité* (1969), another example, Broodthaers added one further signature by hand at the bottom of the screen-printed field of signed initials it reproduced. Any impression of spontaneity that the irregular rows duplicating the handwritten monogram produce, fades once their uniform identity, highlighted by the addition of the original, is recognized. The unique, penciled initials themselves, by turn, juxtaposed with their serial reproduction in a print that declares itself an “unlimited edition,” seem to invert into a copy, a repetition of a repetition, leached of authenticity.

A similar vacillation is set in train between image (motif) and text (the authenticating signature) in the slide carousel work *Où est la signature?* (1971). In this case, Broodthaers drew his initials in red, blue, and black directly onto the slide film using Indian ink and felt tip pens. These “drawings” were then projected onto a screen filled with rows of monograms very like the 1969 print *La Signature*.⁵⁷ Appearing enlarged in the image thrown by the light of the projector, the unique signs on the slides read simultaneously as reproductions. Their superimposition with the signatures inscribed on the screen underlines this equivocality: which is the authentic signature and which its image? The question of what their referents would be outside of their relation to one another seems to have been suspended, with the result that their status oscillates between reproduced signatures and signed reproductions.

An equivalent duplicity imbues *Éternité*’s animated reconstitution of the signature’s inscription. Firstly, in the film the initials seem to write themselves. This farcical effect gives them the appearance of having “no signatory” (itself the hallmark of pure poetry, according to Mallarmé);⁵⁸ it implies that, like the signatures in *Où est la signature?*, they have been isolated from their indexical function and now refer in a circular fashion only to themselves.

In addition, their separate segments added frame by frame do not flow seamlessly together: slight deviances in direction, width, or alignment of the lines make the progression from one frame to the next noticeably staccato. Much hinges on this detail. We do indeed recognize the lines of the animation as tokens of the letters M and B; but, at the same time, their physical construction out of drawn lines is obtrusive: they are clearly a *drawing* simulating *writing*, the one acting as the tautological double of the other. The letters waver between these

⁵⁶ Marcel Broodthaers, “Interview with Marcel Broodthaers by Freddy de Vree,” *Collected Writings*, 312.

⁵⁷ Broodthaers described the slides used in a later work, *La signature de l’artiste* (1972), as “a projection of drawings.” See Broodthaers, “The Artist’s Signature,” *Collected Writings*, 286.

⁵⁸ Stéphane Mallarmé, “The Book as Spiritual Instrument,” *Divagations*, 226.

two possibilities (image and text) and so condense within themselves *Éternité's* double subject; the signature as text seemingly superimposed with itself as image flips between letter and line, and in this way the relation found in Mallarmé between text and page, is transferred in *Éternité* into one and the same sign: *M.B.*.

4. A Denounced Tautology

*Slide show. My initials: M.B. are drawn onto the film. It's a projection of drawings.
[...]
It's a denounced tautology in the vein of L'Arroseur Arrosé (The Sprinkler Sprinkled),
one of Lumiere's first films.⁵⁹*

When *Une Seconde d'éternité* was shown in Berlin in autumn 1970, Broodthaers's film and the other elements of his ensemble shared Skulima's gallery with a second exhibition that the gallerist had arranged for the same period. The centerpiece of that other exhibition, *The Pencil on Paper Descriptive Works of Gilbert & George*, was a large-scale drawing called *Walking* (1970), one part of a triptych Skulima had acquired by the London-based duo that depicts them against a pastoral backdrop of trees. Each show was announced separately, which perhaps explains in part why they have rarely been associated since. Nonetheless, their coincidence is fortuitous. At the start of the final section of this chapter, where my purpose is to outline Broodthaers's deployment of tautology as trope, it offers the opportunity of a comparison.

Between the autumn of 1969 and the summer of 1970 Gilbert & George had made their first forays on the continental gallery circuit. They appeared as a singing sculpture in two major survey shows of the new conceptual art at the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle and the Städtisches Museum in Leverkusen in late 1969, and then at a series of commercial galleries in 1970, including Konrad Fischer's gallery in Düsseldorf and Art & Project in Amsterdam in May that year.⁶⁰

In the midst of this itinerary, on a weekend in mid-February 1970, both Broodthaers and Gilbert & George had participated in the fourth *Between* event at Düsseldorf's Kunsthalle. Broodthaers showed the *Section XIXe Siècle (Bis)* of his *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, a version and documentation of his fictional museum's first iteration, while Gilbert & George performed *The Singing Sculpture* (1969), for which they stood on a table to sing along to a recording of the music hall number *Underneath the Arches*.⁶¹ Their heads and hands were transformed by metallic make-up and they wore identical English gentleman's suits. Six months later, "the sculptors," as they were described on Skulima's announcement, appeared in the same outfits as a "living sculpture" for the first few days of their exhibition in Berlin.⁶²

In their public personae, Gilbert & George sought to remove all individual and private personality from themselves.⁶³ Subsuming themselves under the trademark of their conjoined first names with their common first letters, and mirroring each other in their studied clothing

⁵⁹ Broodthaers, "The Artist's Signature," 286.

⁶⁰ Sophie Richard, *Unconcealed. The International Network of Conceptual Artists 1967-77*, (London: Ridinghouse, 2009), 306.

⁶¹ Whereas previously mimed, this was apparently the first time they sang along. See Barbara Reise, "Presenting Gilbert & George: The Living Sculptures," excerpted from the November 1971 issue of *Art News* in Anthony McCall (ed.), *Gilbert & George: The Living Sculptures* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 55.

⁶² Exhibition announcement for *The Pencil on Paper Descriptive Works of Gilbert & George*, reproduced in Franz Maciejewski, *Mia Casa Tu Casa. Folker Skulima, Ein Haus für die Kunst* (Heidelberg: Edition Braus, 202), 16.

⁶³ See Carter Radcliff, "Gilbert & George and Modern Life," in *Gilbert & George 1968-1980* (Eindhoven: Municipal Van Abbemuseum, 1980), 7-35.

and manners, they fitted themselves into a mold they had fashioned for themselves. It is not only the careful crafting of this exterior but more so its doubling, the copy that Gilbert is of George and George of Gilbert, that signals that this persona is a sign. George *or* Gilbert alone would hardly have the effect that their dual embodiment of the same identity produces. The pair's apparently total identification with their chosen role is also emphasized by its conflation of subject and object: they are "sculptors" who are also "sculpture".

Whereas Gilbert & George's living sculpture emphasizes a form freely chosen, Broodthaers's signatures, exhibited alongside it, suggest an alienation deriving from the artist's mercantile existence and their need for institutional recognition. One of their implications is the commodity status conferred by and on authorship; the cycling of Broodthaers's initials between inscription and erasure in *Éternité's* loop evokes the eclipse of the artist as subject by the signifier with which they are metonymically invoked: the bureaucratic form of the authenticating signature. Likewise, in the form of the plastic plaques, which were manufactured in the same manner as municipal street signs, his initials have literally been reified as an institutional sign.⁶⁴ In contrast to Gilbert & George, when Broodthaers colluded in the production of images of himself as an artworld persona—as when he modelled a shirt in an advert for the German magazine *Der Spiegel* in 1971, and then again when he had himself photographed in a smart suit, serious glasses, and with carefully coiffured hair, looking every inch the bourgeois museum director, for an exhibition invitation in 1975—it was a self-conscious performance of a role not fully identified with, ironically foregrounding the economic and institutional structures implicit in the image.

Here a second point of comparison can be introduced alongside Gilbert & George's living sculpture by bringing Piero Manzoni's *sculture vivente* into the discussion. Again, the example comes from Broodthaers's immediate context. In February 1962 Manzoni was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Galerie Aujour'hui of the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels. Here the Italian artist met Broodthaers, signed him as a living sculpture, and issued him with a "Declaration of Authenticity" bearing his autograph. The primary subject of Manzoni's living sculpture, however, is not the person signed but the artist's signature. Indeed, it is in this encounter with Manzoni that the beginnings of Broodthaers's preoccupation with the theme is surely to be located. What the doubling of the act of signing in the signed certificate will undoubtedly have underlined for him, is that signatures themselves are tautologies of a latent sort: the signatory authenticates the signature by producing it, and the signature by turn vouches for the authenticity of the signatory in their absence. The declaration, one of many Manzoni dispensed, was of course itself an overt tautology—it says, "this person is a sculpture because I say he is one"—and as such resonates with Broodthaers's wider interest in the trope that stretches from his earlier poetry to his late *Décors*.

Seven years later, Broodthaers reproduced Manzoni's certificate on paper bearing the letterhead of his *Musée d'Art Moderne*, appending his signature as the museum's curator to the artist's. This work, *Avis* (1969), introduces a subtle but decisive change to the tautological figure. Not only does it say the same thing twice—the basic definition of a tautology—it also links together two different signatures in what appears to be a closed circuit. By countersigning Manzoni's certificate under the auspices of his museum, Broodthaers notarized the signature that vouched for his own authenticity. That is to say, the signature is reflected back on itself through the intermediary of the countersignature, which, however, by a certain reversal of the original, introduces a delay.

Returning once more to Mallarmé provides us with a third point of comparison. When Barthes, in his essay "Authors and Writers" (1960), described literary writing as an "intransitive act"—meaning that its primary object is its own language—and the author's

⁶⁴ Friling, "Note to the Reader," 31.

activity as “narcissistic” and “tautological,” he surely had Mallarmé in mind.⁶⁵ The poet’s career was devoted to the search for a self-referential sublation of common speech into literary writing. In key works such as *Herodiade* and *Igitur*, he used the image of a figure narcissistically gazing into a mirror to symbolise this self-reflective structure within the work itself. The last stanza of his *Sonnet Allégorique de Lui-Même*,⁶⁶ which he described as “a null sonnet reflecting itself in every way,”⁶⁷ also contains a mirror. The septet of stars reflected in it echoes and fixes in a poetic image the structure of the sonnet itself, seven of whose lines end in a rhyme on the letter x. While there is no mention of a mirror in *Un Coup de dés*, symmetries and reflections are nonetheless found throughout its overall form. As Jean-François Lyotard pointed out, the signified content of the poem’s text is reflected in its spatial placement on the page, and this relation between text and image, in turn, is itself mirrored in the way the text’s linear flow is countered by its overall chiasmic form, the latter being exemplified by the fact that it begins and ends with the phrase “a throw of the dice.”⁶⁸

Sequestered from speech within the constellation of such relationships, words, Mallarmé foresaw, would turn inward upon themselves and, refracting one another, attain the mobility he aspired to. Both *Avis* and *Éternité* could be described as constellations of a similar ilk, only ones not of words but rather of other signs also secluded from their everyday use: in *Avis*, two documents with bureaucratic pretensions and their accompanying signatures; in *Éternité*, a single monogram with a double subject in which drawing mirrors writing, and the handwritten token the institutional sign it cites, etcetera. Nonetheless, in contrast to Mallarmé, the circle between one side of the mirror and the other does not close; the work’s constellation proves not to be sufficient unto itself: in *Avis*, the signatory (Manzoni, Broodthaers) is reflected in its tautological copy (Broodthaers’s notice, Manzoni’s certificate), *but only in the reversed form* of the signed (i.e. as signatory they are subject, but as the signed, object). The text of *Éternité*’s monogram, too, finds its double not in another text, but in its obverse, an image, and a moving one at that.

This phenomenon would seem to be the reason for Broodthaers describing his signed initials projected as images as a “denounced tautology”.⁶⁹ Rather than define this term, he illustrated the phrase with the example of Louis Lumiere’s *L’Arroseur Arrosé* (1895). In this short film (an echo of which can be seen in *La Pluie*, I would suggest), a gardener finds that the water to his hose mysteriously stops. When he looks into the nozzle to find the cause, the boy who has stemmed the flow by standing on the pipe behind his back, releases the pressure with inevitable consequences.

Broodthaers’s denounced tautology is the same phenomenon as that described in *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* as a “dislocated copy”.⁷⁰ Barthes gave the example of two waiters on their night off going to another café and being waited on by a third waiter. The scene suggests to him an autonym: the served upon and serving waiters seem to refer to one another as name does to thing. Like the sprinkler and the sprinkled, they become self-referential signs; but, as the critic adds, “the roles remain inevitably separated”. Just as the thing that becomes a name is no longer a thing, since it acts now as a sign, it is the difference in status that both enables and denounces the tautology: only as distinct from writing does the drawn animation

⁶⁵ Roland Barthes, “Authors and Writers,” *Critical Essays* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 147; 145; 144.

⁶⁶ Stéphane Mallarmé, “Several Sonnets,” *Collected Poems*, 69. This poem is otherwise referred to as the “Sonnet en – yx”.

⁶⁷ Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance, lettres sur la poésie*, ed. Bertrand Marchal (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 392. Cited and translated in Barnaby Norman, *Mallarmé’s Sunset: Poetry at the End of Time* (London: Routledge, 2014), 63, fn. 15.

⁶⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011), 70.

⁶⁹ Broodthaers, “The Artist’s Signature,” 286.

⁷⁰ Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1977), 49.

function as its tautological repetition, and simultaneously, by dint of the same distinction, it also denounces the tautology. It is the second moment of this figure that Gilbert & George's living sculpture seems pointedly to avoid.

The signature that *Éternité* animates is both a text *and* an image of a text, and, as such, it is effectively “neither image nor text”. Through this double subject—its suspension of meaning “between two languages”—it serves both as an acknowledgement of poetry's erasure and a transfer of its mobility to “a new kind of writing”. The film generates this transposed mobility precisely by placing the immobility of the signature as alienated sign into a tautological *and* dislocated relation to itself. That is to say, as a denounced tautology *Éternité* is both a tautology *and* its denunciation. The film loop's cycling between inscription and eclipse serves as a metaphor of sorts for this and various other dislocated dualities—between drawing and writing, static and moving images, eternity and temporality, subjective sign and reified subject, etcetera—and, finally, it evokes too the mobile sign's mercurial uncertainty, what Mallarmé described as its “vibratory suspense”.⁷¹

⁷¹ Mallarmé, “The Mystery in Letters,” 235.