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Sophie Calle's art of following and seduction

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This paper considers a number of artworks by contemporary French artist Sophie Calle. The focus is on a number of these that have a 'public' aspect. Through Calle's work, idioms of following, documenting, seduction and love are discussed, and artistic and representational dichotomies: documentation and action are critiqued. The essay contextualizes Calle's art through its dynamic relationships with conceptual art generally and particularly work that involves following as a performance strategy. The possibility of love's fabrication as a dramatic means of critical art practice and analytical writing are foregrounded through encounters with Jean Baudrillard's writings on seduction and on Calle.

Proposition I: art

In the following text I consider a limited number of artworks by Sophie Calle, particularly focusing on her most notorious 'following piece', *Suite vénitienne*, for which she determined to follow a man she hardly knew (Henri B.) to Venice. By way of context, I begin by considering: the relations between Calle's artworks and conceptual art more generally; the relations between love, critique and seduction in her art practice and my writing on it; and the role of *following* as a nuanced idiom in Calle's work.

Sophie Calle's art practice has a specific connection to the legacies of conceptual art, namely the following of a nominal proposition carried out by the artist in the production of the work. Without exception, in Calle's work this proposition is staged as a performative statement within the exhibition, being combined with varied retrospective descriptions, images or objects to make up the artwork. The title statement acts as a kind of prologue in narrative form. By way of illustration, we might take the prologue to *The hotel* (1981), which reads:

On Monday, February 16, 1981 I was hired as a temporary chambermaid for three weeks in a Venetian hotel. I was assigned twelve bedrooms on the fourth floor. In the course of my cleaning duties, I examined the personal belongings of the hotel guests and observed through details lives which remained unknown to me. On Friday, March 6 the job came to an end.¹

The following of 'game-rules', as Calle puts it, is consistent across her works. Thus, this opening for *The hotel* describes in practical terms the challenge that frames her

activities. She was, for this work, a temporary chambermaid, and the duration of her job determined her activities in generating the material that she worked on as an artist. *The hotel*, then, takes the form of a photographic and diaristic series describing her intimate encounters with the business and personal possessions of guests whilst working in the hotel.

Taking a photograph is an act of 'choosing'. If paparazzi photography chooses to show the intimate off-stage activities of celebrated cultural performers, it does so as a continuation and preservation of the logic of celebrity. Schadenfreude belongs to this logic in reverse form. Calle's photographs equate 'choosing' with 'clicking' a camera as an instantaneous form of critique. This mode of critique objectifies its subjective expression without accountability. Moreover, it is bound to 'encounters' that are usually of an antagonistic kind. One form of antagonism is staged between the inanimate, banal and intimate content of her images and our regard for property and rights as spectators. Calle rarely asks permission to photograph. The other form of antagonism belongs to those intersubjective encounters she represents between herself and others. We may find Calle's snooping and photographing in *The hotel* amusing insofar as it challenges our expectations of chambermaids and the etiquettes of social performance that govern them,² but this entertainment is qualified by our awareness that Calle's farce has unknowing guests as her straight men and women. Her work issues a level of voyeuristic anxiety.

Following is a particularly prominent propositional idiom and literal tactic in Calle's work. Its physical enactment has taken various forms: the following of people in the street (*Paris shadows*, 1978–9); arranging to be followed in the street (*The shadow*, 1981); and the combined photographing of people she follows with the diaristic writing out of her following activities (*Suite vénitienne*, 1988). She has also invented and photographed mise-en-scènes of 'her life' during her following rituals (*Gotham handbook*, 1994). She has written immersive first-person stories as integral to her pictorial work and narrativized photographic sequences through literary means (*True stories*, 1988–). She has photographed sleeping people (*The sleepers*, 1979) and people she has travelled with (*Anatoli*, 1984). She has also transferred motifs and stories from one project to another; thus the sequential work *The striptease* (1979) is partially encountered in *Autobiographical stories* (a.k.a. *True stories*, 1988–), insofar as one image and one story appearing in the former forms one of a number of stories in the latter.³

For *The address book* (1983), Calle used a 'found' address book to follow 'virtually' the man to whom the book belonged and whom, we are led to believe, she didn't 'know'. She visited people whose details were contained in the book, and photographed objects in some way connected to the man she was profiling and with whom she otherwise had no relation. Calle then published her work as 'an instalment piece' in the French national newspaper *Libération*. It was in this project that Calle came most closely into conflict with issues of privacy and rights. The man demanded a right of reply in the newspaper, we are told. Calle has also curated her objects within the displays of museums, written on the subject of displays and replaced displays with her writing (for example, *Absent*, 1994).



FIGURE 1 Sophie Calle, *Autobiographical stories* (1988–2003). (© ADAGP, Paris, and DACS, London, 2004.)

For some conceptual artists of the 1960s and 1970s, performative propositions were crucial in disassociating contemporary art from the perceived problems of humanist preoccupations with ‘metaphysical’ expression and the individuated decorative associations of craft. This rejection produced a reevaluation of the status of art and of the conditions for its making. This momentum, if hardly initiated by conceptualism, still has some sway today in the context of art history and visual cultural studies. In his recent book *Conceptual art and the politics of publicity*, Alexander Alberro has made much of the fraught and contradictory relation between conceptual art and commerce in America during the 1960s and 1970s.⁴ In addressing Sol Le Witt’s ‘serial compositions’, he describes something of the paradigmatic challenge such artwork made to expectations of art in its reception:

With the negation of artistic expression it no longer made sense for the viewer to attempt to decipher traces of subjectivity in the act of artistic creation, nor to pretend to penetrate the work, moving from surface to depth.⁵

Sol Le Witt himself wrote of his serial compositions:

In conceptual art the idea of the concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art. ... Conceptual art is not necessarily logical. The logic of the piece or series is a device that is used at times only to be ruined. Logic may be used to camouflage the intent of the artist, to lull the viewer

into the belief that he understands the work, or to infer a paradoxical situation (such as logic vs. illogic).⁶

More recent assessments of conceptual art photography have described some of its practices in more pejorative terms, such as 'reductive', 'dull' and 'boring'.⁷ The focus on mechanical production, however, aided the exploration of literal and documentary forms of representation as a means for artists to 'minimize' the seeming worn-out rhetorics of romantic expression. Artists also made clear that they were aware of the significance of boredom as either a motif or as a significant effect of the work, and explicitly engaged with it. Objections to the reductiveness of conceptual art do not extend to any of the seductive appeals of the object otherwise, nor to the important difference between a performative proposal and the material formations of any specific artwork.

This latter point, however, does not distract from the intent-centredness of conceptualism, nor from how the propositional intention was somehow understood to transcend subjective content. Coupled with the aspirations of dematerialist gestures more generally to assault the commodification of art, conceptualism did seem to run into something of an impasse as a cultural force by the 1980s, at least insofar as it subscribed to a mechanical self-referential understanding of propositional logic. In her seminal essay *The dematerialization of art*, Lucy Lippard writes that by the 1960s the emotional and intuitive processes associated with art-making in the 1940s and 1950s had 'given way to an ultra-conceptual art that emphasises the thinking processes almost exclusively'. However, she also observed that at this time there was a 'current international obsession with entropy' wherein 'time becomes effective, and the mark of time is the increasing disorder towards which our system tends'.⁸ Perhaps this logic that all that is solid melts into air is persuasive; however, to extend this to art's objecthood also misses a crucial distinction between objecthood and outmoded conceptions of the universal equivalence of linguistic categories and phenomenal references. The equivalency of nouns to substantial entities has been hotly contested across many disciplines historically. Nominalism, for example, understands the name to be a heading for action or use. Art objects, in this context, can be understood to be the products of specific actions and not simple categories of general abstract concepts. Art objects and performative statements do not accordingly and by any necessity act tautologically in a strict sense.

For Lippard, even entropy, through a preoccupation in conceptual art 'with inertia', has the potential to 'incorporate elements of indeterminacy and chance' into the work and to 'empty' to a minimum the role of the artist in the 'liberation of the idea'. In the context of the scholarship on conceptual art in the 1960s, indeterminacy is understood to work integrally with the denotative aims adopted by some artists against expressionism as a means to preserve the 'idea' through a making process. We can appreciate, retrospectively, that these processes never simply conform to or embody a universal principle in any mechanical way. Following on from this, indeterminacy is not understood in opposition to the causal determinacy of the artwork's idea, but rather represents elements of the artwork that contingently issue from the idea as a

non-necessary corollary. Whether or not as a principle of logical causality this approach stands up, it continues to proliferate processes through which conceptual art generates both its critical content and appeal to broader contexts whilst maintaining the specificity of its material formations.

The undermining of the polarity between concept and expression is at the heart of Calle's practice.⁹ She gives more enthusiastic attention to the participatory perspective of observation (observation of rules) than did antecedent conceptual artists, and although the role of game-rules is significant in her work, so too is the emotional register of statements. For *Exquisite pain* (1984–2003) she writes:

In 1984 I was awarded a French foreign ministry grant to go to Japan for three months. I left on October 25, not knowing that this date marked a 92-day countdown to the end of a love affair – nothing unusual, but for me then the unhappiest moment of my whole life. I blamed the trip.

Back in France on January 28, 1985, I opted for exorcism and spoke about my suffering instead of my travels. In exchange, I started asking both friends and chance encounters: 'When did you suffer most?' This exchange would stop when I had told my story to death, or when I had relativized my pain in relation to other people's. The method was radically effective: three months later, I was cured. The exorcism had worked. Fearing a possible relapse, I dropped the project. By the time I returned to it, fifteen years had gone by.¹⁰

Calle's more subjective literary preoccupation with words in relation to image-making conforms more readily to what Suzanne Langer has described as the integral relation of the form of the artwork to the expression of emotion.¹¹ Langer simply argues that expression is a property of the art object. If I can write instead that the seductive or persuasive elements of Calle's work are not restricted in content to its extensive proposition, then, what follows here is an attempt to describe and consider some of the implications of her expressions in aesthetic terms and to acknowledge my perspective as a writer in so doing.



FIGURE 2 Sophie Calle, *Exquisite pain* (1984–2003). (© ADAGP, Paris, and DACS, London, 2004.)

Proposition II: writing

On 19 February 2004 I made a trip to Calle's major show *M'as-tu vu(e)* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Two days before my trip to France I was asked by David Pinder if I would write an article on Sophie Calle for this journal, following a paper I had given at the Royal Geographical Society's Annual Conference in the autumn of 2003, and for which I had been asked to focus on her walk-works. Although it is Calle's walk-works that are most often written about, it is the relation of following (exemplified in numerous ways in the walking pieces) and the romantic idioms of love that persuaded me that more could be written on the subject.

A significant 'positional' motif for this writing is that of love (*philia*), as with the philosopher who is the lover of knowledge. In this writing, and in distinction to Jean Baudrillard's historicizing critique of seduction,¹² I propose to show how the rhetorics of love, of critique and of seduction overlap. Although Baudrillard historicizes seduction in a way that precludes his affirmation of it in capitalist cultures that are seduced by empty spectacle, he does also offer us an excellent qualitative characterization of seduction that is helpful in the consideration of Calle's practice:

Seduction is immediately reversible, and its reversibility is constituted by the challenge it implies and the secret in which it is absorbed.

It is a power of attraction and distraction, of absorption and fascination, a power that causes the collapse of not just sex, but the real in general – a power of defiance... It implies a radical indetermination that distinguishes itself from a drive – drives being indeterminate in relation to their object, but determined as force and origin, while the passion of seduction has neither substance or origin. It is not from some libidinal investment, some energy of desire that this passion acquires its intensity, but from gaming as pure form and from purely formal bluffing. Likewise the challenge...

A challenge terminates all contracts and exchanges regulated by the law (whether the law of nature or value), substituting a highly conventional and ritualised pact, with an unceasing obligation to respond and respond in spades – an obligation that is governed by a fundamental game rule, and proceeds in accord with its own rhythm.¹³

In difference to Baudrillard, I reflect on ways that Calle's current work is grounded in rituals of seduction and simultaneously in gestures of production that are invested in and integral to regulated patterns of modern business. For Baudrillard, these patterns virtually effect an interminable regress. The mechanization of reproduction and of our business more generally suspends ritual experiences in favour of the pure simulation of ritual forms emptied of content:

the origin of seduction, its ritual and aesthetic form disappears in favour of an all-out ventilation whereby seduction becomes *the informal form of politics*, the scaled down framework for an elusive politics devoted to the endless reproduction of form without content.¹⁴

In Calle's work, it is the familiar regulated patterns of modern business that offer her the conditions to ground the rituals of seduction in an indeterminate, even vague 'challenge' to their systemic order through the dramatized idioms of 'off-stage' intimacy, seduction and love. Love as a motif of both attachment and emotional investment in

Calle's work effectively denaturalizes what Baudrillard describes as the circuits of reproduction that seduce us. In Baudrillard's terms, seduction now replaces the violence of master–slave relations and continues to 'psychologize the masses', who 'now must accept domination by dint of seduction' in diffused pure forms. In Calle's work, the circuits of her seduction to follow rules and people are shown to break down in a reverse logic by dint of her intimate probings, her distractions and anxiety. More of this presently.

The explicit duel Calle sets up in her work between the mechanical reproduction (of rules) and the dramatic conflict of interests on the one hand seduces her audience and this relies on intimate involvement. On the other hand, the duel itself enables in us a break with our own complicity to follow. The potential for us to break with the imperatives in the work for us to follow narratively is, however, one of the imperatives of the work. In fact, Calle's gaming rituals more generally can be understood in relation to a specific idea of seduction that also breaks with the 'thrall' of spectacle in so-called mass entertainment, but which is nonetheless conventional and regulated. Whereas for Baudrillard seduction in its 'advanced' form is an articulation of mass domination and inertia, in Calle's work we see the overlapping of forms of seduction bound to ritual and described by Baudrillard as either obsolete or appertaining to non-industrialized communities. This overlapping turns Baudrillard's own melancholic (theory of loss) and progressive logic on its head and reverses it (reversal being one of the qualities Baudrillard ascribes to seduction *per se*).

It is the relation of convention to invention (or reconfiguration) that preoccupies my following of Calle's narrative works. In also turning to Jean Baudrillard's interpretation of Calle's major work, *Suite vénitienne*, later in this essay – an interpretation contextualized by his more general economy of fatalism that draws a circular chain of fatal idioms into accord with an appeal to melancholia – I suggest it is Baudrillard's logic that is circular rather than the general economy of representation. The differences between Calle and Baudrillard in their shared preoccupation with seduction and ritual are significant in terms of material and virtual 'representations' of ends. For Calle these ends take the form of dramatic denouement (significance), whilst for Baudrillard (at least for the post-modern Baudrillard) ritual ends have been replaced by a mass interminable suspension in simulated forms empty of any consequences or meaning.

Calle's work does much more than play with philosophical speculation. It also departs from familiar ideas of literalism and circular tautology in conceptual art, from the indexical orthodoxy of documentary photography, and from pedestrianism understood as a flight from regulated patterns of social containment or prohibition.¹⁵ I turn my attention now to describe in more detail the ways in which Calle's following 'games' are configured through an admixture of conventional rhetorics of walking and drama. Ideas of seduction and of ritual are significant in bringing into sharper focus the relation of the formal codes of business and self-conscious critical reflection in the making of her sequential art.

Proposition III: stupid games

Although Calle's notoriety belongs largely to the activities of following people and being followed by people, over the relatively long period I have been following and writing on her work I have come to understand that following is a nuanced idiom operating in various and overlapping ways. These are brought together in narrative and image forms that, I propose, often confound as well as conform to the behavioural etiquettes she shows in the work, effecting a specific acknowledgement of fabrication.

In proposing a game plan, Calle stages at least one known limit for each of her works, albeit nominally, and this also forms the heading and framing for the work as we encounter it. Since for most projects she follows her game plan in public places, not all actions encountered and represented in her work are initially ruled and controlled by her. For Calle, following is also a means of describing an activity within a game, that may or may not conform to the game and acts as a subtext or distraction to her 'when bored'. These are often encounters that are more seductive to Calle (as far as she represents herself to us) than her following activity, however momentarily. Following is also a descriptive means of her making sense of the rituals she observes and/or participates in, a way of regulating any disorientation associated with the dual dynamic and interchangeability of watching and involvement in a specific activity or chase.

Following is, then, the subject matter of her work as well as the technique employed to generate the work. Surveillance imaging techniques and the images produced by them are used and exhibited as an integral part of her work. The diaristically presented dynamic between her involvement in and observing of ritualized activities produces a subjective and affective underlining of the (often changing) perspective of her work. Her deliberate 'fabrication of emotion', as she refers to it, is integral to the dramatic heightening of the public mise-en-scènes she creates through pedestrian means. The author is caught up in the 'drama' as a central character too; Calle fabricates a 'fictional life-world' on public location. Unlike the expensive film crew, who need to clear the streets or pay people to act in accordance to a story-board, Calle incorporates and edits her encounters with strangers as she narrativizes her account and serialises her images. Although she begins with a performative proposal, she is arguably to a greater extent a 'post-production' auteur who works with material generated both under the propositional starting point and in dramatic conflict with it.

Rehearsals, repetitions, rituals

In Calle's recent 'following' work *Twenty years later* (2001) she asks gallerist Emmanuel Perrotin to hire a detective to follow her, in just the same way as she asked her mother to hire a detective to follow her for *The shadow* in 1981. Calle writes:

It sticks to me like glue. People are always calling out: 'I hope you're not planning to follow me,' they say, or: 'So, you're the one who has herself followed.' But I don't – I haven't for twenty years. Not until this Monday, April 16, 2001, when a private detective is waiting for me in the street.¹⁶



FIGURE 3 Sophie Calle, *Twenty years later* (2001). (© ADAGP, Paris, and DACS, London, 2004.)

Although the idioms of regulated social ritual are, again, the material starting points for Calle's work, rather than acting as analytical meditations on bureaucracy, the work effectively frames potentially open intersubjective fields or relatively closed specialized fields through the dynamics of auto-narratives and sequential photography. Calle's repeated attempts to direct events and the qualitative attributes of her subject conform largely to a design mentality; but rather than intervene as an expert, she instead coordinates the 'staging' in conformity to what I have described as a 'back-stage' or 'off-stage' process that becomes centre-stage to her work. For *The wardrobe* (1985), she writes:

I saw him for the first time in December 1985, at a lecture he was giving. I found him attractive, but one thing bothered me: he was wearing an ugly tie. The next day I anonymously sent him a thin brown tie. Later, I saw him at a restaurant and he was wearing it. Unfortunately, it clashed with his shirt. It was then that I decided to take on the task of dressing him from head to toe: I would send him one article of clothing every year at Christmas.¹⁷

The auto-narratives navigate the reader in telling us about the making of a story involving others, but they focus on a first-person account of this 'experience' we imagine as the artist's.

Calle's obligation to and reversal of formal etiquettes unsettles the smooth running of public business. In this regard, Hervé Guilbert has written, Calle is a *'faiseuse d'histoire'*: story-maker, storyteller, history-maker and troublemaker.¹⁸ Calle's practice is directly attentive to *how* located social rituals and their conditions are significant to the making of an artwork and how they can be transformed, reframed, shown to be

staged or re-employed effectively, rather than to *where* and *why* things are already located as they are in any ethnographical way. Her fictional autobiographical narratives take public pedestrian places as settings and familial occasions as providing players in the same way as she takes everyday social rituals as a means to generate these fictive scenarios for her work. Even if Calle affronts other people's right to privacy in this, she more significantly demonstrates a considerable lack of passivity in 'being in the world', and shows a means to fabricate 'a life worth living' in active terms.

There are two major strands to her photographic practice. The first is related to a surveillant imaging of a documentary kind. The photographs that fall into this variety may be taken by others as well as herself, and are less attentive to the staging of the image in anything other than generic surveillant terms. The second strand of photography is much more formally staged, through excited moments of proximity, of event or of tonal, geometric and dramatic contrast. This staged photography is, at times, reminiscent of Cartier-Bresson's, Brassai's and Kertész's iconic Paris scenes. The complication of Calle's work lies in her varied representation of unwitting pedestrians as objects.

Calle's work adds a further complexity to this duality between 'staged' and 'documentary' photography insofar as specific rhetorics of documentary are employed as a means through which a staging occurs, in much the same way as naturalised business is treated. This is a preoccupation of contemporary photographic art more generally. Indeed, Jeff Wall has written of his photographic work:

I think of my work in general as cinematography, not as cinema but as cinematography, which is a form of image-making which doesn't distinguish in that kind of polar way between those elements of documentary and artifice, but actually begins from their fusion on the basis of a certain aesthetic project. I see that project as making pictures in the way that pictures have been made in the western tradition.¹⁹

Insofar as Calle undermines the rhetorics that bind the document to the dematerialization of the art object (understood in terms of commodity fetishism), she also recontextualizes the documentary photograph as an art object. This she does by maintaining the links of 'recording' to representation and by maintaining links between representational fiction and documentary 'evidence'. This inventive move allows us to reconfigure our understanding of *fictive documents* in relation to conceptual art's history.²⁰

Calle's following-works have a direct antecedent in Vito Acconci's *Following piece* (1969), for which he followed people in the street until losing sight of them. Acconci's work itself was a photographic series documenting his performance, iterating the regulated act of one man walking in the shadow of strangers. Acconci's work embodies a form of mechanical repetitive action without consequence, and may be understood as a self-referring tautological practice. Although Calle also extends her following and the idiom of following in other ways, to fabricate narrative encounters, she does take up this more formally mechanical approach. In *The shadow* (1981), she writes:

At my request my mother, Rachel S., went to the 'Dulac' detective agency. She hired them to follow me, to report my daily activities, and to provide photographic evidence of my existence.²¹

She tells us she intends to record the idea of the work: 'I will be followed by a detective'. If we understand all Calle's following activities in the same way – as pursuits belonging to a performative logic precisely – it would mean that to follow someone, to follow someone seemingly randomly in a public place until they are lost sight of, proposes an activity that can be repeated, as with Acconci's *Following piece*. The work would denote the proposition, and we would be left to interpret the scenario we followed. If the action that follows from this staging merely demonstrates, mechanically, the endless application of the proposition in descriptive terms, the work would itself function quotationally. However, although this is a familiar strategy in contemporary practice, one that accepts the value of determinate convention over innocent creation, Calle does not simply follow this principle hermetically.

Even the self-conscious framing of pedestrian movement in *The shadow* is thoroughly mediated by the (partially subsequent) ordering of the work formally, narratively, pictorially and emotionally. For Acconci's *Following piece* it is significant that we encounter the photographs as a series of iterated 'action' stills, and that these stills are documents 'after the event' of the work. The significance of this 'after the event' underlines the attempt to counter any commodity status of the performance work. However, what remains to us are the photographs that have become record, trace and access to the work as well as the significant aspect of his performance.

Calle, on the other hand, configures her photo-series *The shadow* to be seen *as* the work. This distinction in approach between Acconci and Calle may be insignificant for our reading, but their attention to ordering or sequencing elements do form imperatives to reading for us. In Calle's work the temporality of performance is disassociated from an idea of an ephemeral and entropic 'utopia' (literally a non-place) and re-placed in relation to situated and agonistic public sites. The formal relation of *The shadow* to the formality of serial addition in Acconci's 'documentary' work is also complicated by Calle's use of autobiographical writing. The use of autobiography in *The shadow* underlines the recontextualization of documentary through fiction, whilst simultaneously both producing an autobiography and suspending our conventional expectations of autobiography as a generic means of getting to know anything about Sophie Calle outside the work.

Following and variation

Suite vénitienne is an adventure story made up of photos and text relating to familiar scenarios of a chase full of anticipation, expected confrontation and flirtations with danger. As Calle pursues someone she hardly knows (Henri B.) for days across Venice, a perfect city for walking and trailing someone, the movement of the work and our following of it is driven by the knowledge that the pursuit began with an incomplete script and without an end. Calle stages the book and the activity 'documented' as the art by descriptive means.

For months I followed strangers on the street – for the pleasure of following them, not because they particularly interested me. I photographed them without their knowledge, took notes of their movements, then finally lost sight of them and forgot them.

At the end of January 1980, on the streets of Paris, I followed a man whom I lost sight of a few minutes later in the crowd. That very evening, quite by chance, he was introduced to me at an opening. During the course of the conversation, he told me he was planning an imminent trip to Venice.²²

The propositional staging is dependent on Calle's ability to persuade others to play her game. It is compelling because such persuasion is shown to meet with resistance and with dead ends, to involve the overcoming of prohibitions, and meets with welcome collusion along the way. Along with an image of a man taken from behind in close proximity (also on the cover of the book), these two paragraphs open *Suite vénitienne* with a transformation of an arbitrary act of surveillance into the particular pursuit of a man who turns up at the opening of an art exhibition 'quite by chance'; a man she had arbitrarily followed previously, we are told. The man's return transforms Calle's general and mechanical prehistory of following into a consequential paradigm sustained over a journey to and from Venice. Calle does still follow a mechanical logic at times, as when she tells us that she phones all hotels and pensions in Venice alphabetically in pursuit of her man. However, more broadly to follow an intent also has the partisan sense of religious passion, of conviction-bound allegiance, of political affiliation or of practical function. To pursue someone in this way has the sense of law enforcement, of the disciplinary prospect of surveillance, and in this respect Calle employs the techniques of surveillance as a means to generate drama within her pedestrian setting and activities, countering the perfunctory logic of serial variation otherwise performed in the work²³ with the subtle and often combative twists and turns of a written dramatic narrative.²⁴

9.00 p.m. This evening is my first night out as a blonde. A man follows me for about ten minutes but doesn't dare to approach me. *I slip through the street. A dread is taking hold of me, he's following me, he knows.*²⁵



FIGURE 4 Sophie Calle, *Suite vénitienne* (1988). (© ADAGP, Paris, and DACS, London, 2004.)

Calle's anxiety in this passage is doubtless precipitated by the knowledge that she is followed by someone who does not know that she, too, follows in the footsteps of another. Or does she merely 'fabricate' an anxiety in retrospect for dramatic effect? This level of responsiveness involved in generating a fiction, or indeed in our going along with it as we follow, demonstrates the kind of reflexivity that comes with mimetic shadowing: a self-consciousness that issues from an extended, unacknowledged, even guilty form of kinship related to an attachment to strangers. Her attachment to public characters and social rituals, along with her self-conscious reflections on her immersive following, makes the work more than hermetically self-referential as it narrativizes the efficacy of the literal 'following' through her encounters. She addresses us by introducing responses to her public encounters involving complex cultural competences we are familiar with in other contexts. It is here that we encounter the implicit critical content of her work.

We are also made aware of the etiquettes of correct distance in ordering social interactions. The spatial relation between follower and followed is often too distant to be represented through surveillant imaging, and sometimes so close that conflict ensues. Moments of choreographic closeness between Calle and Henri B., and the experiential sensations that she describes at these moments, affirm and reverse ideas of 'correct distance' and of 'familial intimacy' taken from structural anthropological study. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss' ideas of correct distance, peaceful coexistence of distinct social groupings relies upon observation of kinship rules of dwelling not too near to, nor too far from, neighbours.²⁶ Close proximity engenders hostility and distantiation engenders alienation (which can take the form of exoticization). Calle choreographs closeness and distance to dramatic effect, and in so doing she stages a close proximity between the general flow of pedestrian activity and rules of kinship to critical effect. Kinship dynamics are extended, and the dynamics of attachment and detachment are introduced to the realm of public encounter. This is underlined in her fabrication of emotion. Insofar as her emotional narrative provides the element of commentary on the practice of following, the corollary between detachment and critical objectivity is also reversed. It is precisely the narratives of anxiety, the dramatic effects of proximity and encounter, that issue a de-realization of naturalized business structures of pragmatic coexistence.

Calle makes some trouble of the idea of peaceful coexistence as a passive obligation, first by observing formal codes of proximity and then by also trying her luck in closing down acceptable expectations of distance through pursuit (closely akin to stalking). Her emphasis on drama is complicated by her use of documentary sequencing in conjunction with autobiographical writing. These would both in another context appeal as indexical verifications, or records of events lived through, rather than index the deliberate staging and fabrication of events. Image-sequencing and diaristic writing are put to the service of Calle's practice, which is emotionally invested *and* detached. This practice is (subsequently) bounded as a *thing done*; her drama has an objective called critical art.

Thus although much of Calle's work has an intersubjective dimension, key to its ability to seduce us is its form as an artwork. It is clearly authored. In *Suite vénitienne*

we see her pedestrian activity artfully crafted through classical dramatic means: unities of time and place are observed. She observes conventions of sequencing action and the dramatic consequences of one scene on another. Although there are numerous variations to the public form of the work – it is a book, an installation, a number of different photo-text wall-work exhibitions – it is consistent as a narrative work. Of course, there is also in *Suite vénitienne*, along with other works, a central protagonist/antagonist relation which undermines the self-referentiality of her authorship designated by the proposition. The author is subject to chance encounters and to the wishes of others, insofar as the work is partially produced on location and she is dependent on others in getting to where she proposes to get to by the end at the start. This element of chance encounter in the making of the work returns me to a key distinction of her practice to antecedent forms of propositional conceptual art, insofar as any determination to preserve the idea of the work through its proposition encounters chance through its intersubjective dimension rather than as its entropic end.

Imperatives of following

Again the *Suite* writes and 'I' follow. The demand of our readership is one of complicity, of following leads. Although there is, perhaps, no categorical imperative issued from *Suite vénitienne* as a prospect of authoritarian complicity, an imperative issues from us as we follow in the questions of how to judge the book, how to dis sever the confluence of seduction and a simple confirmation. To be a follower carries with it this idea of *disciple*, a kind of agency motivated by belief. Belief we might say, is blind as love is blind. Is this also what we respond to in Calle's work? Is watching someone else following in blind faith as close to watching an immersive state as we get, despite our scepticism? Do we empathize with her submission to follow and with the anxiety she represents?

Without the following activities there is no fiction. The chance encounters that we attend following Calle's practice are no less political than they are blind. They force a certain accommodation in following, to others motivated otherwise in action. Thus Calle is neither only blind nor a zealot. The issue of performance through an ordered or disciplined following does, however, put into question the opposition between the *romance* of chance as a literary mode and the *instrumentalism* of rule as with science, without erasing either. To follow in the context of art, as with other practices, recalls learning by rote and the mastering of knowledge, acquiring competence. Calle's pedestrian acts are also the subject of the art, not only a preparation for it. Following is suggestive of coming after an event, coming up behind a someone or something. It suggests a mode of listening, of paying attention to, as with following a story, a song, a film, a TV programme, an instruction or a habit naturalized or unacknowledged.

Following also implies a practice in the sense of a reiteration, a repetition, a rehearsal. Calle's following, in accord with this understanding, is a generative activity that reissues convention, a series of conventions in play form bound to representation. We become

aware, very quickly, of her mediations, given the conventions taken up and represented, however partially. Following in this sense implies an attachment, a continuous attention through attraction to something happening to us and playing through us. This shadowing is reminiscent of improvised music and pedestrian dance, in which we have antecedents for Calle's work. The rhetorics of convention and invention are bound to the processes and seductions of following, not subordinated to an ideal (unlike the seductions of fascism). This form of following is not contradictory to learning (by rote), but neither is it bound to conformity in a mechanical sense.

Since in *Suite vénitienne* Calle cannot for a long time find the man she follows, she writes out other encounters that entertain her while she figures out how to get closer to him:

I return to Calle del Traghetto. I seek out a certain profile. I'm blind to all else. Noon, I give up. I go to Piazza San Marco. I have a drink at the Café Florian, where I meet Jean, the barman. He explains to me why Europe is the most beautiful of continents, Italy the most beautiful country in Europe, Venice the most beautiful city in Italy, San Marco the most beautiful piazza in Venice, the Florian the most beautiful cafe on Piazza San Marco, and that *he*, Jean, is *the* barman at the Florian. He invites me to lunch and I accept.²⁷

She represents momentary scenes of intimacy in an attention to chance encounters that distract her from the continuity of pursuit. The choreography of encounter produces a sense of interpersonal space that counters the distantiations that guard the regulated continuity of her preoccupation with one man. In employing the dynamics of distantiation and intimacy, Calle fabricates the anxiety that anticipates and produces conflict in accord, again, with the classic narrative principles through which she shapes the work. As the narrative proceeds she does get closer to her man until, when she is too close, we see an image of confrontation as Henri B. recognizes her. In this proximity she effectively breaks the sequence of, and our complicity with, her immersion in following as a continuous movement. The temporal dynamics of continuity and discontinuity map onto the co-ordinates of spatial distantiation and proximity. These breaks in the flow of pursuit are significant, as they offer critical pauses in the singular momentum of the *Suite*.

Calle has discussed her motivations for the initial arbitrary following of strangers in an uninterested and seemingly divested manner, as an activity of resocialization into a culture she had left seven years before. Her declared wish to follow strangers as a 'getting to know' them returns knowing to its etymological link with narration: *gnarus*. This mutual etymological sense effectively makes the sense-making process the very drive of a compulsive narration in relation to an extended form of kinship. In *Suite vénitienne* the attachment to a 'getting to know' someone is a 'micro' form of kinship in a public and anonymous setting, acted out through the conventions of a chase with all its connotations of love and danger. Calle lives her art like a film, lives her art as a life and fabricates a life for her art; but most significantly, as we get to know the subjective content of the work, the strict dichotomies of private and public, of emotional attachment and critical detachment, slip away from us. The result is not a narcissistic



FIGURE 5 Sophie Calle, *Suite vénitienne* (1988). (© ADAGP, Paris, and DACS, London, 2004.)

'feminization' of social practice (art is a social practice), with all the demands of infantile gratification that are implied by narcissism, nor a melancholic taking up of one's own ego investments as an object, but, rather, an accommodation in practice to the seriousness of fabrication, to role-playing in cultural spheres, and to the seriousness of aesthetic contents in conceptual art.

The most insistent narrative address of Calle's writing leads us to believe that the shape of *Suite vénitienne* is bound to the unfolding of events in the present tense. In fact, the editing and ordering of the work in narrative sequence is precisely indicated by the switch in tense in the writing as an indication of retrospection. What is happening, what has happened and what is anticipated to happen next, seduce our attention to the dynamics of sequencing and the issues of consequence. When Calle encounters Henri B., when he recognizes her and prohibits her from taking his photograph in Venice, even when she follows him back to Paris by train, we are invited to ask what she wants from him. It is to the dramatized issues of consequence and judgement, and to the relation of judgement to aesthetics, that the chase demands our attention. Calle may conjure and preserve the idea of the work in the narrative of *Suite vénitienne*, but just as significantly, the narrative itself is irreducible to a self-referring statement in distinction from an authoring subject.

Following as erasure and nihilism

For Jean Baudrillard, the seductions in Calle's work are not issued by her authoring of following; rather, they are issued by means of 'her erasure' in the work as a 'subject'. Baudrillard's commentary can be further contextualized by his ideas of seduction, ritual and melancholy.

'Please follow me,' Baudrillard appeals to Sophie Calle. And again, he appeals at the end of his essay on or to her, 'please follow me': let it be me that erases you, let it be me you erase. Published with Calle's book-work *Suite vénitienne*, Baudrillard's essay starts as it ends with the circular logic of negation that insists on a disappearance of a 'self' seduced by and subordinated to a shadow.²⁸ Such disappearance is conceived as an effect of the act of following, furtive and fatal. The neo-Platonic echo of the shadow, a self as illusion, performs a logic wherein the self or subject can be erased. Like an animator, Baudrillard the philosopher conceives 'the subject' as a sleight-of-hand, a drawn fiction of continuity, a linear drawing, to be erased, forgetting of course, this is an act of his hand.

Baudrillard's effort is one of according coincidence with desire in written form, the writer's means of conjoining fantasy with actuality or, more precisely, his means of contesting their distinction whilst being careful to fuse them in a mystical operation. His logic, however, is fatalistic; erasure is consequent to ideas of ideal violation that may, too, coincide with ideal love. He may be careful not to throw his plea down as a law, and instead formulate it as a game, but insofar as his logic concerns 'destiny' it is ideal and Calle will follow; and insofar as it concerns love, Baudrillard writes the desire to marry his wishes and her action. Erasure is, however, a form of disavowal common in philosophy, one that objectifies and distances itself from its own vested interests. *Please* (follow me) is read as an issue of nihilistic mastery. His proposal – follow me – is a demand to extermination. He cannot, of course, unwrite this calling to be confirmed and erased in the same act. Perhaps that too is its appeal. Baudrillard rejoins philosophy to aesthetics, to the beauty of absolution. Pardon my suicidal determinacy please. Like the lyrics of a love song: 'You made me love you' followed by 'Love will tear us apart'.²⁹

In *Please follow me* Baudrillard casts a conventional scenario through which his paradox is transformed. The scenario is dramatic, conflictual, classical. He asks that she unwrites him. His request, however, *is*; it is written, it exists, it exhibits its own affirmation of action, albeit through the actions of Sophie Calle. He nominates her as the agent of his call to nothingness, and goes as far as to suggest she is perfectly primed as a shadow – she too disappears in the act of following. He will, of course, never know if she has followed him in secret, and because of this small matter of anonymity his request can only repeat itself to her, be forgotten or imagined by him. His seduction is perhaps bound to the possibility of her following him secretly, indeed, that he is seduced by the enigma of seduction itself. The repetition of the request for erasure can only ensue from a subject who negates at all costs. He, love-blind to the end of the essay, awaits his total obliteration at her hand in a determined (passive) expectation.

The proximity of this essay form to a love letter is also a call to limits. There is a certainty that existential death casts its shadow as a limit of representation; indeed Baudrillard negates even the possibility of such a representation. Such a limit is thrown back into the picture, as a simple if paradoxical artifice in Baudrillard's desire for erasure, in an effort to picture the final scene. It is perfectly criminal, no blood and no anguish, no matter, just pleasure and disappearance as dual elements of *the* one image through his words. Baudrillard completes his perfect scenario in conceiving photography, as Roland Barthes has done, as a passing.³⁰

Baudrillard's philosophical appeal for Calle to follow him through city streets is made improbable by the odds of chance, but then for Baudrillard chance is problematic in the context of desire and liberty. Can you imagine how long he would wander in proximity to her before she follows by chance? Then, of course, how would he know that she follows, who follows him on foot? The very idea belongs to a filmic scenario. A spy film or a love film? These are similarly motivated by ends, by attachment to a desirable stranger with no complications to affect his desire to love. The concept of erasure pursued in Baudrillard's writing denies its generative principle of love in alloying demand with negation. In effect the plea is rhetorically parodic of love insofar as it denies love and affirms death. Baudrillard eloquently demonstrates his Platonic disembodiment as a stand-off.

This standing back from passion in the pursuit of 'necessary and rigorous'³¹ death nonetheless writes love in an effort to overcome love. Baudrillard rewrites Calle's following, her shadowing, as an embodiment of his own melancholic seduction to overcome himself. For Baudrillard, Calle's acts follow the same crazy performative function as his wish to be erased. Please follow me, erase me, mirrors I follow you, erase you. The will to negate attachment through violence writes itself. His mastery as a writer in this assimilation of her act to his wish is married to an 'agonistic duel'. Notably the forms of seduction that Baudrillard affirms in his book *Seduction* are linked to obligation and game-rules, but not to law or to transgression. Seduction, he writes, is the 'very artifice of the world', and he asks whether conventional signs can be treated 'in terms of their seductive attraction' rather than in terms of 'their contrasts and opposition'.³² He proposes that we imagine a theory in which signs 'seduce each other and, thereby, seduce us' and that this image of seduction calls for a response that is 'not a matter of mystical fusion of subject or object, or signifier and signified, masculine and feminine, etc., but of seduction, that is, *a duel and agonistic relation*'.³³

The reiteration of the plea to 'follow me' in the book *Suite vénitienne* perversely acknowledges the attachment that motors the seduction of desire and issues concepts of criticality. Sophie Calle is taken as Baudrillard's own executioner because she too is motivated, by an uninterested 'fabrication of emotion' she writes. Would it not be too romantic a coincidence that, if, just by chance as he wishes, as André Breton has so eloquently imagined for 'his' Nadja,³⁴ Sophie Calle acts without knowing in accordance to his wishes? A charming wish or a shameful omnipotence? Her refusal, she has said, was an end of the matter.³⁵

Double game

In Calle's more recent book-work *Double game* this relational element is extended, as it is too in her collaboration with Greg Shephard for *Double blind* (1992), also known as *No sex last night*.

Double game is, ostensibly, a monograph documenting the relation of a number of her first-person artworks to the fictional character Maria in Paul Auster's *Leviathan*, who, based on 'Sophie Calle', is an eccentric secondary character to the central narrator of his book, Maria.³⁶ *Double game* documents Calle's response to Auster's appropriations of 'Sophie Calle' in acting on the additional projects he makes up for Maria in his book. She reiterates his recasting to develop further the idea of experience as made-up (a fiction) and lived through, in and as a first order of representation (an actuality). For *The rules of the game* her response to Auster's Maria takes the form of three serial artworks. Under the first heading, for example, she writes:

I

The life of Maria and how it influenced the life of Sophie. In *Leviathan*, Maria puts herself through the same rituals as I did. But Paul Auster has slipped some rules of his own inventing into his portrait of Maria. In order to bring Maria and myself closer together I decided to go by the book. The author imposes on his creature a chromatic regimen which consists in restricting herself to foods of a single color for any given day. I followed his instructions. He has her base whole days on a single letter of the alphabet. I did as she does.³⁷

In each of the artworks that follow this heading, the confluence of Maria and Sophie is cast in a formalized sequence of photography and text. These works are more strictly determined by the propositional rules and less dependent on chance encounters. Calle as an artist-fiction extends the fiction called Maria, her own double, in a gesture that mimics the copy provided by Paul Auster in his mimicry of her rituals. This kind of call and response extends her concern for gaming.

Maria, in *Leviathan*, performs the central role of 'Sophie Calle' as a maker of artworks dependent on her performing 'self'. Auster's book draws descriptively on the artwork of Calle through Maria. Calle uses this dedication as a contractual lever to work from the scenario Paul Auster writes and extends from his additional contact with her. When Calle writes the heading above into the body of *Rules of the game*, she tacitly ventriloquizes the actions of the author, Auster and, at the same time, reappropriates her 'life project'. When she subsequently asks him to author her actions for up to a year, she simultaneously proposes to author his authorship in her own work. If he takes her as a fiction, she acts in kind and reciprocates the gesture. When she includes in *Double game* the extracts of his novel on Maria, she does not leave them alone. Rather, she edits the work with red marks, 'correcting' the text in such a way that the fiction is not only fiction. By involving his account in her own rather than insisting on the autobiographical authenticity of her life apart from the fictions now proliferating at others' hands, she persists in indicating the confluence of 'her experience' and art. In leaving Auster's text legible, she ensures that the contestations between them are foregrounded and in full view to us on the subject of 'life projects'.

The pedestrian idioms in her work, like her pedestrian activities through city streets, are fully immersed in the play of art-life, and bring into accord the rhetorics of art practice and experience *as* rhetorical through various game-plays. The 'rules' of the game indicate the contingent starting points of each work. Calle's authoring perspective, however, accommodates the intersubjective relations gathered to make her works. The dramatic scenes she fabricates affect her continuity as an author-actor-subject insofar as the conflict of interests she courts both affect her propositional game rules and transform her life-experience and her life-art.

This is further complicated by the impact of her dramas on our experiences of reading the public protocols of anonymity through which she stages events. Such protocols are effectively denaturalized in her works. Her following activities, like the following of rules, are uncontrolled by their preliminary locations and their actors, since these are neither built and marked off for scripted action with a unified preview by her nor fully unified by her framing mediations. Calle reintroduces productive fiction into the actions she records in a proximity to strangers going about their business. The pedestrian locales she employs are also shown as regulated artifices. We may take a further interest in her work precisely because naturalized pedestrian protocols stand out as social fabrications more generally. In the name of artifice, on the other hand, Calle's practice is able to embody the distinction between one mode of tacit social agreement, in the form of naturalized codes of public business, and the business of making art as a representational mode. That these modes overlap both in business and in her work is no reason to underestimate art as an artifice which, in Calle's case, ensures that ritualized gestures of production are far from obsolete in the modern cityscapes she inhabits.

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Thanks to Sophie Calle and galerie Emmanuel Perrotin for kind permission to use the images reproduced in this article. Copyright ADAGP, Paris, and DACS, London, 2004.

Notes

¹ *The hotel* is documented in S. Calle, *Double game* (London, Violette Editions, 1999).

² Calle's work often brings to the fore the relation of performance, as a mode of artifice, to the etiquettes of everyday social performance. The latter have been famously analysed in Erving Goffman's 'micro-sociology', with its use of performance idioms and extended analogy to theatrical conventions; see *The presentation of self in everyday life* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990).

³ All the projects listed here are documented in S. Calle, *Sophie Calle: M'as-tu vue* (Munich, Prestel, 2003).

⁴ A. Alberro, *Conceptual art and the politics of publicity* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2003).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

- ⁶ A. Alberro and B. Stimson, eds, *Conceptual art: a critical anthology* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2000), pp. 13–14.
- ⁷ See e.g. J. Wall, 'Marks of indifference: aspects of photography, in, or as, conceptual art', in A. Goldstein and A. Rorimer, eds, *Reconsidering the object of art* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1995), p. 266. I am grateful to Virginia Nimarkoh for alerting me to this essay.
- ⁸ See L. R. Lippard, *Six years: the dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996). Lippard's original essay was published in *Art international* **12** (1968); the quotation is from p. 31.
- ⁹ In discussing Calle's work and this dynamic, I will prefer the terms 'perspective' or 'crafting' to 'expression', owing to the historical baggage that 'expression' comes with.
- ¹⁰ *Exquisite pain* was first exhibited in *Sophie Calle: M'as-tu vue?*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 19 Nov. 2003–15 Mar. 2004, and is documented in the catalogue of the show.
- ¹¹ See e.g. S. Langer, *Feeling and form: a theory of art developed from a new key* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953).
- ¹² J. Baudrillard, *Seduction*, trans. B. Singer (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1990).
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 81–2.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 180.
- ¹⁵ Both Guy Debord and Michel de Certeau have contributed to and influenced discussion of the minutiae of public life and taken issue with the regulatory principles of its dominant systems. De Certeau is by far the more influential on the present writer, in his development of the idea of a 'poiesis' (creation, invention) that takes varied scattered forms and is associated with the various uses to which people put external 'systems' of production. Although Debord, on the other hand, fully acknowledges the problem of studying 'everyday life', understanding that critiques of cultural production are bound to the same alienating predicament as other cultural formations, he proceeds by employing a mode of critique that distinguishes 'critique of' and 'society of spectacle'. His 'radical critique' of a society 'scandalously' impoverished by having 'emptied the gestures of work of all meaning' insists that revolution must take an oppositional form, pitching 'conscious choice and gamble' against the 'repetitive' and regulated patterns of work most citizens are obliged to follow. Debord is both an influence on Jean Baudrillard and seduced by a similar melancholic circularity. See G. Debord, *Society of the spectacle* (Detroit, Black & Red, 1983); M. de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life* (Berkeley, University of California, 1984).
- ¹⁶ See 'The shadow (1981)' and 'Twenty years later (2001)', in *Sophie Calle: M'as-tu vue*, pp. 101–12, 113–24; quotation, p. 116.
- ¹⁷ See Calle, *Double game*, pp. 34–43.
- ¹⁸ Cited in J.-L. Chalumeau, 'Photography to the rescue of art?', in *Ninety* **9**, (1991), p. 12.
- ¹⁹ J. Miller and J. Wall, 'Digital phantoms', *Creative camera* (Feb. 1994). See also the photographic works and essays in the catalogue *Settings and players: theatrical ambiguity in American photography* (London, White Cube², 2001), in which this citation is reproduced.
- ²⁰ In 'Documentary and corporate violence' Allan Sekula writes that, in the hands of artists who work with 'the social ordering of people's lives', documentary must be disentangled from 'the authoritarian and bureaucratic aspects of the genre, from its implicit positivism'. He goes on to ask, 'How do we produce an art that elicits dialogue rather than uncritical, pseudo-political affirmation?' Although Sekula's essay was written in 1978, and thus should be read bearing in mind the historical context of the 'culture wars' in the US at this time, his essay goes on to say that the romantic idea of the artist as a liberal humanist is a continuing problem for artists working with documentary forms. He writes that in the context of a gallery the documentary photograph is generally judged in subjective and mannerist terms that continue to distance the

artist and artwork from 'the 'ordinary' humanity of those who have been photographed'. In stark contrast to this generality, Sekula cites the work of Fred Lonidier, making general claims for his specific practice. He writes that Lonidier photographs and displays his work in 'case study' form – already an authoritarian form for Sekula, but with the additional element of 'telling the story from below'. In so doing Lonidier subverts his own use of the case study and the evidential aesthetic of the images. Although Sekula is critical of the hierarchy of high and low forms of cultural production, in attempting to represent the lives of workers 'from below' in the manner his essay affirms, he reinforces the exact logic of opposition he is himself critical of. See Alberro and Stimson, *Conceptual art*, pp. 360–4.

This recent history of ethnographic fetishism by the political left, as well as the fetishism appertaining to the romantic liberal artist Sekula describes, is more fully discussed by Hal Foster, 'The artist as ethnographer', in *The return of the real* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1996), pp. 171–204. This is a not unproblematic book in which Foster insists that through the process of framing the framer, art can indeed maintain its critical cultural force.

²¹ See 'The detective', in Calle, *Double game*, p. 122.

²² S. Calle, *Suite vénitienne*, p. 2; J. Baudrillard, *Please follow me* (Seattle, WA, Bay Press, 1988).

²³ See L. Althusser and E. Balibar, *Reading capital* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1979); M. Foucault, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1982).

²⁴ *Suite vénitienne* has also been exhibited as a photo-text and in the form of a confessional box. For the latter, see R. Storr, *Dislocations* (New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1991), p. 53.

²⁵ Calle, *Suite vénitienne*, p. 8.

²⁶ See C. Lévi-Strauss, 'Relations of symmetry between rituals and myths of neighbouring peoples', in *Structural anthropology*, vol. II (Hamondsworth, Penguin, 1977), pp. 238–55.

²⁷ Calle, *Suite vénitienne*, p. 22.

²⁸ Baudrillard, *Please follow me*.

²⁹ J. McCarthy and J. V. Monaco, 'You made me love you' (1959), recorded by Judy Garland; Joy Division, 'Love will tear us apart' (Factory Records, 1980).

³⁰ See R. Barthes, *Camera lucida* (New York, Hill & Wang, 1981).

³¹ Baudrillard, *Please follow me*, p. 124.

³² Baudrillard, *Seduction*, p. 103.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

³⁴ A. Breton, *Nadja* (1928), (New York, Grove Press, 1960).

³⁵ As one of a series of artists' talks at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London, in 1993 titled *Talking art*, Calle spoke of Baudrillard's express wish to be followed by her and she told us at this time that her answer was no.

³⁶ Calle, *Double game*; P. Auster, *Leviathan* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992).

³⁷ Calle, *Double game*, p. 1.