

Writing & Research

MA Thesis Creative Industries
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This thesis is an Artistic Research that consists of three different documents: My creative writing that was part of the AR methodology resulted in a (unfinished) novella with the title *Superpositie*. In order to research my own creative writing I registered my writing process in a **writing diary**. This text that lies in front of you can be seen as the 'academic' **verbalization** of my research, through which I am trying to bring forth the knowledge that derived from the creative writing process in connection to theory. These three documents must be understood in entanglement with one another. My novella and writing diary cannot be seen as a substitute to this verbalization. However, when assessing these three documents as a master thesis – partly due to the unfinished state of my novella – it does make sense to read this verbalization first. Reading this document helps to contextualize the different documents of this thesis within the broader scope of this research.

As you will read in the second methodological chapter (chapter 3) of this verbalization, my writing diary is a very personal document. I wouldn't have been able to investigate the implications of my creative writing without approaching my research process in such a personal way. Whereas my writing diary served my research in valuable ways while I was writing, its means was not necessarily to be read. I trust you on handling my diary confidentially. The same holds for my novella.

1. Introduction

On an exceptionally warm afternoon/evening in early May 2016 I sat on a slightly uncomfortable chair at the balcony of my student house. It was supposedly 22 degrees, but felt much warmer, especially for it being already 5 or 6 pm. I spent most of the day – moving from my room to the front of the house, back to my room and finally to the balcony as soon as the sun showed up there – brainstorming with pen on paper. Somewhere in between moments of brainstorming about thesis ideas that I wasn't really convinced of, the small talk with my old neighbor, who walked his dog when I sat at the front of my house, gave me some inspiration to write a fragment of a story.

Creative writing was something that I had gradually re-integrated in my life. A few months earlier I had started channeling inspiration derived from my environment in 'fragments' for potential stories. I started writing these fragments to become familiar again with creative writing, basically practicing how to write. But after I was both physically and mentally done with brainstorming concerning my thesis and wanted to bring the inspiration derived from the chat with my neighbor into practice, I felt too tired of writing.

Instead of using the inspiration that I had right away to start writing creatively, I decided to quickly summarize the inspiration that came to me in a few words in a notebook, so that I would be able to access my ideas for future use. But what I didn't expect was that this quick summary led to an entire evening of more handwriting on paper, since the words that I scribbled down suddenly brought me back to something that I had read in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by the Czech author Milan Kundera. And that it was this very association that formed the start of my thesis.

This novel that I, by this time, had read twice – once in the Dutch and once in the English translation – stuck with me because of various reasons. During the first reading I think it was mainly the role of continence in the novel that appealed me. Something that I, at the time, was very interested in or maybe even slightly obsessed with.

During that first reading I was trying to redefine my life after recently having been through a mutual break-up of a relationship that had a big influence on me becoming an adult in this world. Though sad, being single again after 5 years mainly released a sense of freedom mixed with mild anxiety. Ending something that had felt so natural made me think a lot more about the great potential of the freed space in my life and the extent to which I can control and shape this freed space. Instead of constructing my life around this person who

*Within the socio-historical context of the Prague Spring, we start to follow the lives – mainly lived in Prague, Zürich and Geneva – of four characters from early adulthood until their (un-explicated) death or older days. Through these main characters, the narrator of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* explores different topics. Alternately written from the different perspectives of the characters of the novel, Tomas embodies the lightness and weight 'binary' of Parmenides, Tereza the body and soul 'binary', Sabina the urge to betray and Franz, according to Kundera, is born from the situation of 'raising one's fist with the crowds in the Grand March'. These, according to Kundera, 'codes of existence' define how the characters cope with love and life within the novel (Kundera, 1988: 29-30).*

gave me a feeling of steadiness for a long time, I felt that my (near) future now was more open than ever.

I decided that I had to be ultimately attentive to every possibility, trying not to miss out on important chances that life would offer. At its worst I would sometimes even doubt whether I had to leave the house at 12:30 or 12:40, being overly aware of the different unforeseeable things that possibly could happen, such as the (fortuitous) encounter between the characters Tereza and Tomas, that wouldn't have taken place if he hadn't have to substitute for his colleague for a day in the town where she worked. But what appealed to me most – and I think that this specifically made me realize that I was very interested in gaining a certain understanding of and simultaneously sense of certain control over life – was the extent to which the novel foregrounds a sense of investigation.

Somewhere past the first half of the novel, the narrator – who in his persona is also the author of the novel – states that '[t]he novel is not the author's confession; it is an investigation of human life in the trap the world has become' (Kundera 2005: 215). Within the novel, the narrator claims to have invented and developed the characters. The idea that it is Kundera himself speaking is supported by statements outside of the boundaries of the novel, about the novel itself. In his essay "The Art of the Novel" (1988), Kundera explains how his novels can be seen as means for investigation.

But it is not only the voice of Kundera, filtered through the narrator, in which I saw reflected a similar desire to investigate human life. Also the character of Tomas seems to be motivated by his attempt to get a grip on the world through performing his (former) profession as a brain surgeon, as well as his extramarital 'hobby' of sleeping with lots of different women.

Tomas, who had spent the last ten years of his medical practice working exclusively with the human brain, knew that there was nothing more difficult to capture than the human I. There are many more resemblances between Hitler and Einstein or Brezhnev and Solzhenitsyn than there are differences. Using numbers, we might say that there is one-millionth part dissimilarity to nine hundred ninety nine thousand nine hundred ninety nine millionths parts similarity.

Tomas was obsessed by the desire to discover and appropriate that one-millionth part; he saw it as the core of his obsession. He was not obsessed with women; he was obsessed with what in each of them is unimaginable, obsessed, in other words, with the one-millionth part that makes a woman dissimilar to others of her sex. (Kundera 2005: 193)

Reading the section on Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" on page 19, makes clear that this is a rather bold statement. However, further on I will give more examples to support the idea that the narrator can be read as the author Kundera.

After having quit his profession as a brain surgeon, Tomas was obsessed with and convinced of the possibility to, through sex, conquer the 'I' or originality of every woman he slept with. Bringing this obsession into practice, he believed that woman after woman he would access and possess something more of the 'infinite canvas of the universe' (p. 200).

This shared, although in my case less extremely practiced, interest in trying to come to an understanding of life made the book echo along with me months after reading. Especially since I, somewhere in between the first and second reading of the novel, became more familiar with the fields of New Materialism and Artistic Research; fields of research that emphasize the importance of materiality both in general as well as in knowledge-making practices (New Materialism) and acknowledge different artistic methodologies of research (Artistic Research). Recognizing a sense of artistic (through the statements of the narrator) and material (Tomas' profession and hobby) investigation of the novel, made my interest in the novel fortuitously grow even further, as it resonated with both fields that I had gained interest in.

1.1. Questions of research

The idea of the eternal return is a mysterious one, and Nietzsche has often perplexed other philosophers with it: to think that everything recurs as we once experienced it, and that the recurrence itself recurs ad infinitum! What does this mad myth signify? (p. 3)

The first sentence of the novel directly brings up Nietzsche's philosophy, which ends with with a question mark; 'what does this mad myth signify?' A brief elaboration on the idea of the eternal return, embedded within (Western) world history, as well as within a more personal history, follows. In the second fragment the narrator introduces another concept by Nietzsche 'das schwerste Gewicht' and calls in Parmenides' dichotomy between lightness and weight (p. 4-5). According to Parmenides, the world is divided into pairs of opposites, the one half being positive and the other negative. The narrator, however, questions whether Parmenides was right, estimating weight the negative and lightness the positive of the two, and argues that this lightness/weight binary is the most ambiguous of all (p. 5).

The third fragment brings in the character Tomas for the first time; 'I have been thinking about Tomas for many years. But only in the light of these reflections did I see him clearly'. Immediately after this statement the unfolding of the the first encounter between him and Tereza three weeks earlier starts, which led to the 'inexplicable love' that Tomas felt for her (p. 5-6).

Up until here, this section within my introduction can potentially be read as an introduction of an approach that comes to a comparative, reflective reading of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* with texts about Artistic Research (AR). Analyzing the novel in order to find traces of research efforts within the novel would be a possible step towards an understanding of the ways in which Kundera, through his writing, contributes to an *accumulation of knowledge* – to the philosophical questions that are raised. Taking into account both the statement that the narrator sees the character of Tomas clearly in the light of his philosophical questions and Kundera's statements about the novel as an investigation, offer openings to explore – and this is only an example – the extent to which the (unfolding of the) characters within the novel

world can be seen as an exploration in philosophical questions such as the lightness/weight dichotomy and Nietzsche's idea of the eternal return. But what does AR actually entail?

According to Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta and Tere Vadén in *Artistic Research: Theories, methods and practices*, AR is a relatively new field within science and 'its forms and principles have yet to become firmly established' (Hannula, Suoranta & Vadén 2005: 5). Even though the authors of the book argue for an open methodology and room for experiment, the goal of AR is that 'the artist produces an art work and researches the creative process, thus adding to the accumulation of knowledge' (p. 5). According to them,

this way of defining scientific quality itself from the everyday viewpoint of research is quite a different matter than a methodological 'guarantee of quality'. The self-definition of the everyday occurs by throwing oneself on the mercy of the difficulty of the task, and consequently the possibility of failure. (p. 13)

They state that the doors of AR must stay open for experimentation and mistakes, to enhance conceptual understanding. Therefore,

researchers must have the courage to come to terms with the diffuseness and uncertainty of a new research field. Such boldness is not born within the vacuum or muteness of institution (p. 14).

Just like in other forms of research, AR also starts with

an interest in some phenomenon, event, process, etc. According to an established custom, this interest is called the research object. In research something is brought out from this interest (p. 109).

Practically an artistic research methodology can be explained as acknowledging artistic practices, be it creative writing, painting, or photography as a process to create knowledge. This doesn't have to mean that the results of the AR are directly found in the creative work itself, nor that the end result is the most important part of the investigation. Rather, AR produces a creative work that brings forth knowledge through the creative process, but this knowledge – in the form of an interpretation, reflection abstraction etc. – can be verbalized elsewhere, in a separate text such as this one, for example (p. 110).

According to Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén, AR is valuable because,

At the beginning of this research this, to me, sounded very vague. But as you will read in the conclusion, this quote became especially apparent within this thesis. In the following section within this introduction (from page 15 onwards) I will elaborate how I tried to come to terms with the challenges I faced to verbalize my AR in this 'academic' text.

Instead of a mechanical and closed relationship, artistic research is a good example of an activity which by its nature is relative, uncertain and changing, but at the same time (in the best case scenario) experimental, an intellectual pleasure creating new knowledge. In other words, it is an activity which challenges and exposes, opens up and activates in order to consider who we are, where we are, and how we are. (p. 151)

'New Materialism is a category of theories that were generated as a response to the linguistic turn. Infused with commitments to specific knowledge-becoming practices and a history linked to feminisms, new materialism attempts to offer a different perspective to signification, materiality, and methodologies of crafting knowledge.' (van der Tuin & Dolphijn: n.d.)

Not only becoming more familiar with the concept of AR, but also with the lately emerging interdisciplinary field of New Materialism made me strongly support the idea that creative writing can be seen as a research methodology. Feminist philosopher and theoretical physicist Karen Barad helps us to understand that knowledge-production not only takes place within the academic realm. Rather, knowledge should be regarded as a condition that is interwoven with everything around us. She emphasizes that knowing is a direct material engagement which must be understood as something interwoven with the material world that we are trying to grasp, while being part of it (Barad 2007: 379).

This certain material, creative way of gathering knowledge can potentially be found in various levels of the novel; the character Tomas embodies the idea that through material, physical, practices one can investigate the world around oneself. But also Kundera states both within (filtered through the narrator) and outside of the work that his novel is an investigation. In “The Art of the Novel”, Kundera describes his novels as long interrogations and explains how he brings up certain concepts in order to understand certain 'possibilities of existence' (Kundera 1988: 30-31). The dynamics between the philosophical questions at the beginning of the novel and the characters, as well as the statements about the novel as an investigation can be interpreted as evidence to support the idea that his writing is partly motivated by the aim to investigate a certain topic and consequently that his writing is a medium or, in other words, a methodology for this investigation.

In “The Art of the Novel” Kundera also coins the concept of 'existential codes' to explain the keywords that are central to the characters through which he explores their 'possibilities of existence' in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (Kundera 1988: 29-30). Sitting on the balcony chair, the action of quickly, though carefully verbalizing my own creative writing ideas in a summary of a few catch words, suddenly led to an association with these existential codes. And it was this association that involved an insight in or interpretation of Kundera's novel from a different angle instead of when merely reading his statements regarding this topic; it made my focus shift from the finished work to the creative process of writing and emanated ideas about

existential codes in this context. Although the association itself didn't precisely bring me closer to an understanding – the ideas that came forth can just be seen as an interpretation – of the function of these existential codes within the writing process, nor of their role in the writing process that can be seen as an investigation, I did become aware of my altered perspective on the novel, based on *reading* my own act of creative writing together with Kundera's statements both in and about the novel.

I suddenly saw that I was unknowingly conducting an AR. The moment on that balcony chair had shifted my focus from the novel to the writing process and besides sparked another (methodology related) association that informed the start of this project. It was not necessarily the interpretation itself – and it was a rather small idea that I had about the role of existential codes in the writing process – but more the awareness of the potential to read Kundera's novel through the lens of my own creative writing in order to come to new interpretations of his work that made me bring Kundera, AR and New Materialism together.

After the first association with Kundera, another association followed that made me see this act of reading two different texts together as a *diffractive reading*; a concept coined by Karen Barad that I quickly adopted to inform my own AR methodology and that I will elaborate on extensively in the second section on my initial methodology. It was through this concept – among other theoretical concepts – that I was able to connect my writing practice to theory, so that I would be able to verbalize the insights within the context of this AR; my master thesis.

Reading *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* in the light of my own creative writing made me aware of what I wanted to study in this thesis; the investigative possibilities of creative writing as an AR methodology. I only needed a hot, summery day, my neighbor and other inspiration derived from smell and warmth – and most likely, the past brainstorm efforts regarding this novel and both former mentioned research fields lingering somewhere in the sub-consciousness of my brain – to transform the connection that I saw between my own writing and Kundera's into the topic of this thesis.

One of the consequences of using an AR approach in the academic context is to carefully situate this research within the academic realm and understand why I wouldn't have been able to come to terms with my topic of interest through a more traditional, theoretical approach. The reason why I, at the beginning of this second section of my introduction, bring up the possible approach for a comparative reading of Kundera's novel with literature about AR – and maybe also with New Materialist theory – needs to be understood in this light. This fictional proposal helps to come to terms with the limitations of such a, more traditional, research angle to regard literature as a medium for AR.

A textual analysis of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* in relation to what is written about alternative modes of knowledge production in theory from the field of AR and New Materialism could possibly present alternative ways to look at literature; to go beyond the boundaries of the medium and see how the act of creative writing can also serve other means such as research. However, I'm a bit sceptic about the extent to which this would lead to a deeper understanding of creative writing as a research methodology (in relation to Kundera's work). Because; would we be able to prove that Kundera's work can be seen as AR? Probably not. Both the field of AR and of New Materialism go against essentialist ideas of phenomena such as research. 'Proving' why Kundera's writing can be seen as AR would thus somewhat contradict the open character of AR. According to Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén, instead of forming formalities of research, the

'central point must be the contents and its production, participation in the process of forming meanings' (Hannula, Suoranta & Vadén 2005: 153). Besides, the idea of doing AR is that knowledge originates within the process of creation, and not necessarily in the end result. If I were able to 'trace back' multiple aspects of AR in Kundera's novel, I would only be able to show how the novel could be interpreted as a possible symptom of such a research, and not be able to come to an interpretation of his writing process as investigative.

Becoming aware of New Materialist views on knowledge production and conceptions on AR had a big influence on the start of my thesis. Because on the balcony chair I was able to only detect a glimpse of the investigative potential of creative writing to interpret Kundera's writing as an AR I decided to phrase my research question as follows: **In what ways can artistic research be valued as an investigative apparatus into artistic research?** Because I hadn't earlier used creative writing as a means for investigation, I wasn't able to foresee the value of this research methodology to investigate Kundera's writing, nor if it would indeed make me understand Kundera's work as an AR. As you will understand when reading this verbalization of my research, trying to come to terms with the value of my own methodology became of dominant importance within my research.

Phrasing my question this way also has another purpose; it allows me to explore and carefully situate this deviating-from-traditional approach within the field of academic research. Through creative writing, conceived of as an artistic methodology, I will try to answer my research question within the academic realm. However, since AR is such a new territory that is being carefully introduced into scholarship, it is also important to reflect on AR itself and position it both in its own field as well as in the larger academic context. Since I write this thesis in the context of obtaining my master's degree at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, it is not only important to use AR as a methodology to come to an answer to my research question, but also to legitimize my methodology itself as well as possible within the academic realm; which is in through theory.

On the one hand this means that, before describing my own methodology, I will have to explain why I wouldn't have been able to come to an interpretation of Kundera's writing as AR in another way. For instance, by departing from the belief that we can take Kundera's statements for granted, I have to acknowledge that mainstream Literary Theory has extendedly discarded the author as one of the meaning making aspects of literature. However, taking an open stance, incorporating both New Materialism and AR allows me to go beyond these restricting conventions and helped me to create the framework that I need to verbalize the results of this research. Nevertheless, in order to go beyond these limitations that Literary Theory offers, I first need to understand what these limitations are.

In this thesis I'm thus not interested in defining what AR through writing *is*. Nor am I interested in proving how exactly Kundera's writing as research can be made explicit in Kundera's work. Rather, it is my goal to explore the value of creative writing as a research methodology, and to explore in what ways knowledge can be constituted through the act of creative writing. Taking my inspiration from New Materialism, I'm not interested in drawing boundaries and coming up with clear definitions; rather, I'm interested in exploring in what ways knowledge production through a creative practice might function.

Choosing the latter focus is a decision to look (with an open view) at the performance and the process of creative writing. So instead of actively looking for a way to legitimize Kundera's statements – both in “The Art of the Novel” as well as through the narrator in the *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* – about his novels as investigations, I choose to take these statements for granted at the start and explore the value of my own artistic research methodology to investigate Kundera's presumed artistic research.

Although I haven't read enough books to know whether there are other novels that approach writing as investigative and suit my research better, there was no doubt about me letting go off Kundera. I simply felt too strongly connected to his work.

1.2. Deconstructing my introduction

When it comes to scholarly research I sometimes hear people asking themselves – slightly annoyed – why you basically say the same in the introduction of an academic text as in the conclusion. Surprisingly, based on the above two introducing sections the rest of my thesis will continue somewhat unexpectedly. You might think that what follows is a verbalization of my AR with the novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* located in the center of this thesis, so that I, through investigating into this novel with my own AR methodology, will be able to come to an understanding of the value of my methodology. And as you can read at the end of the last section I was really planning to do so.

As explained in the introduction, in this thesis I used an AR methodology to come to terms with its value to investigate AR. But instead of exploring the value of my AR in relation to Kundera's presumed AR within the novel, the insights unexpectedly altered their direction towards my AR methodology itself. The act of quickly summarizing my inspiration and the associations that this act of summarizing sparked marked the starting point of this thesis as it lies in front of you. I decided that, if I was interested in the 'investigative' potential of creative writing as verbalized by Kundera's narrator, and wanted to take seriously the glimpse of its potential that I saw on that balcony chair, I had to continue this AR through creative writing myself. Using AR as a methodology – that I wasn't able to theoretically foresee – however, led to an unforeseen angle.

My thesis entailed a form of research in which I didn't simply use a methodology to come to a certain result; rather, in order to understand its investigative potential, I simultaneously investigated my own methodology. This entailed a focus on process rather than result, which is especially intrinsic to my approach. Because I haven't yet written creatively in order to explore its potential as a research methodology, nor have tried to investigate another creative work through writing before, I started working on this thesis with an initial methodology in mind. Through becoming engaged with the practice of creative writing, my initial methodology developed into the actual methodology of this thesis.

It was through the practice of creative writing that I was able to explore

Together with another key-concept; intra-action, diffraction helped me to inform my initial methodology. But as I will explain regarding my actual methodology, both terms happened to be entangled with the creative writing methodology in surprising ways. In the actual methodology both theory and practice became entangled, which makes it harder to talk about my research as if it was only practically informed.

The above two introducing sections should thus be understood in the light of my initial approach.

When connected to the body text, I will refer to these text boxes by underlining the corresponding concepts or sentences.

(and develop) the implications of my (initial) methodology. In a way, my initial methodology – in relation to the conception of Kundera's work as investigative – can be seen as the hypothesis of my thesis. However, the insights that my actual methodology brought forth were different than expected. Instead of coming closer to an understanding of Kundera's work as an AR, through a diffractive reading, my research started to evolve around the concept of diffraction, in connection with my dynamic research process.

You might wonder why such a large part of this introduction evolves around questions about Kundera. The reason is not that I wanted to fool or surprise you with an introduction that doesn't cohere with the investigative efforts of this thesis. Rather, since the most important insights concerning the value of my AR as a research apparatus must be understood in relation to the dynamic process that could be called both my methodology as well as my research topic (investigating AR through an AR methodology), I need to explain where this research originated. In order to understand the value and knowledge that my AR process might bring forth, you need to understand how my research evolved through practice and theory. It is this combination that led to new ideas. In order to understand the importance and (the altered) role of the concept of diffraction, we first need to understand its role in relation to the initial approach (chapter 2) that takes into account Kundera's work. This is why this verbalization contains two methodological chapters (chapter 2 and 3) – that explores the influence of my creative writing based research to inform the methodological changes – that will be followed by the interpretation (chapter 4) of my research and subsequently the conclusion.

The value of this AR can partly be understood in relation to its changing nature; the fact that my creative writing brought unforeseen dynamics to the table shows the importance of the engagement with the practice itself, as I will argue. The emphasis on process is thus need to show that, through practice – or rather an entanglement of practice and theory – one can come to valuable insights within the academic realm.

Because most of the time I will not be able to emphasize the various entanglements that need to be acknowledged in a linearly text, such a process-related thesis requires a non-linear reading attitude. For instance, sometimes different textual elements require a bit more knowledge that is verbalized later on. By referring back or ahead with text boxes at the sides of the pages within this verbalization or to my writing diary and novella. Hopefully these boxes will help you to navigate through this odd research project.

These boxes are, however, not only used to highlight entanglements between different textual parts, but also to expand the theoretical foundation

when space in the body text is lacking. Instead of working with footnotes, these boxes highlight possible entanglements with other theories and illustrate the non-inherent boundaries of this verbalization. Likewise, certain theoretical quotes that I use will re-occur; not simply to emphasize their importance, but rather to show how using an AR methodology also developed a more specific and deeper understanding of the theory that I use – and not only of the creative practice.

Something that can be understood in relation to Barad's notion of intra-action. I will elaborate on this concept in the section on my initial methodology on page 30.

This introduction thus not only introduces you to the topic of this research but also to the specific materiality of this text, that requires a slightly different-from-traditional reading approach. This also means that some sections of this verbalization, such as the elaboration on the Literary Tradition and the first two sections of this introduction, have to be understood in the light of my initial approach. Especially since their importance in relation to the rest of my research diminished as my methodology developed. Throughout this verbalization I will try to come to terms with the difficulties regarding articulating my research, shedding light on the challenges that the connection between my research and this text, as a means to come to an interpretation of my research, entails.

The personal tone of my introduction is an expression of the personal project that this thesis is. Like the other elements that influence the knowledge that came forth in relation to – or in intra-action with – the process of creative writing, my own presence as a writer and researcher played an influential role in the knowledge production. In my writing diary, this deep engagement with the practice of creative writing and subsequently my own position in this research comes to the fore. However, in my writing diary and this verbalization, I will also emphasize the influence of all sorts of other elements that gather in this thesis in a non-hierarchic, intra-active way. Before jumping to the methodological chapter to start – after having shed light on the Literary Tradition – with an elaboration on the concepts of intra-action and diffraction in relation to my research, I will first introduce some important concepts that help support my argument.

This elaboration on Barthes is something that not only should be understood in the light of my initial approach. As I will argue further on, through the interpretation of my research I've developed a more nuanced stance towards Barthes' statements than before I started. Whereas I saw Barthes' influence on modern Literary Theory mainly as a limitation, now I can actually relate to the difficulties of attributing agency within creative writing solely to the author.

I will first elaborate more on my conception of creative writing. Subsequently I will also shed light on Roland Barthes' concept of the death of the author in relation to the extent to which Kundera's narrator can be conceived of as the author, Kundera himself. I will end this introducing chapter taking a stance on the relevance of this project.

1.0.1. On creative writing

Before I started working on this thesis I had a certain, simple but at the same

Other concepts:

I will often use the word 'insights', to refer to knowledge coming forth of the process of creative writing. The investigative potential of creative writing offered me 'insights in' the ways in which knowledge was entangled with the practice of creative writing.

When it comes to an interpretation of my methodology in this verbalization I will refer to my research using words such as AR, writing and research, writing through research, or sometimes simply creative writing, practice-based research, research or thesis. Although I will use different words throughout this thesis, it is important to understand that my research entailed an entanglement of both practical and theoretical implications within my methodology.

time rather vague, idea about creative writing. As often is the case when you dive into and come to a deeper engagement with a certain topic, the practice of creative writing revealed its more complex characteristics and deemed even harder to define than I had expected. Instead of forming a clearer definition of creative writing in my head, after the research itself, my investigation helped me to realize that creative writing cannot be clearly defined. Not in a fixed way at least.

I started my research with the idea that creative writing can be seen as one of the elements that constitute knowledge within this thesis, or potentially in research in general. That creative writing itself, however, can be seen as consisting of many different elements was something that I really had to experience and understand through the process of this research itself. While investigating my own creative writing process, I began to understand more and more that creative writing can be seen as a non-essential, dynamic, open practice and that the elements that form the practice of creative writing probably are very different and very specific in relation to different contexts. This is something that I will elaborate on more extensively in the interpretation of my research.

I also want to start this thesis with the remark that, in my research, I didn't depart from the belief that I would be able to make claims about creative writing in general or to reveal a certain universal objective truth about creative writing. Instead, I, as a writer and researcher, acknowledge my own very specific influence and presence in this research, as one of the elements that partakes in the practice of creative writing, in which I rather try to expose what creative writing *can do* (instead of what research through creative writing *is* or what it *should look like*), in this case specifically within the context of AR and my academic master's degree. As the investigation into what creative writing *does* – when it comes to knowledge production in this specific context – is part of my research, I will come to more insights further on. However, since it benefits the readability of this thesis to know what I understood as 'creative writing' when I started, I will give a general – but still open enough idea of how I intended to peruse this practice – can be described.

I decided to listen to what different creative writing schools say about creative writing, such as the Iowa writing workshop; mainly because of its prestigious and authoritative place in the field of literature, in which Kundera can be positioned (The University of Iowa n.d.). Although this institute acknowledges their contradictory goal of teaching a practice that, as they confirm the prevailing view that writing cannot be thought, they strive for talent development for those who write texts such as novels, short stories and poems. And it is thus these kinds of texts, and writing, that I intend in my own creative writing.

In the second methodological chapter and interpretation I will reflect on my own 'way' of writing

1.0.2. On “the Death of the Author”

Let's go back to the pink plastic balcony chair. The association that I had on that moment redirected me to page 215 of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. The statement that the 'novel is not an author's confession; it is an investigation of human life in the trap the world has become' can be found somewhere past the first half of the novel (Kundera 2005: 215).

As I have pointed out before, characters are not born like people, of woman; they are born of a situation, a sentence, a metaphor containing in a nutshell a basic human possibility that the author thinks no one else has discovered or said something essential about.

But isn't it true that an author can write only about himself?

Staring impotently across a courtyard, at a loss for what to do; hearing the pertinacious rumbling of one's own stomach during a moment of love; betraying, yet lacking the will to abandon the glamorous path of betrayal; raising one's fist with the crowds in the Grand March; displaying one's wit before hidden microphones—I have known all these situations, I have experienced them myself, yet none of them has given rise to the person my curriculum vitae and I represent. The characters in my novels are my own unrealized possibilities. That is why I am equally fond of them all and equally horrified by them. Each one has crossed a border that I myself have circumvented. It is that crossed border (the border beyond which my own I ends) which attracts me most. For beyond that border begins the secret the novel asks about. The novel is not an author's confession; it is an investigation of human life in the trap the world has become. But enough. Let us return to Tomas. (p. 215)

Because of Kundera's reflections on his writing in “The Art of the Novel”, this quote about the novel as an investigation seems very suitable to read as if it is the author himself speaking. However, ever since philosopher Roland Barthes' famous essay “The Death of the Author” (1967), Mainstream literary studies have extendedly discarded the author as a meaning giving aspect of novels. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* is without doubt Kundera's most famous novel, and besides, has been studied a lot. Following in the footsteps of Barthes, most studies about this novel mistrust the hand of the author, let alone that they would take this quote seriously as a direct confession by the author to the reader. Even though some studies do bring the narrator in relation to Kundera, their approaches don't seem to transcend Barthes' conceptions on the death of the author.

According to Liisa Steinby, 'Appearing' in one's own novel can be seen as a trick known for postmodern authors;

In this famous essay of 1967, Barthes criticizes the habit to use the author as a meaning creating aspect in literary critique. Barthes also acknowledges the agency of text and writing itself and especially emphasizes the interwovenness of texts, which makes that emphasis should be placed more on the reader than on the author when it comes to meaning production, since the reader is the one who can recognize other texts shimmering through. In order for the reader to be born in literary critique, he argued, the author had to die (Barthes 1967).

In *Immortality*, Kundera's alter ego tells his friend Avenarius that he is writing a book that will be given the title *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, referring to the book the reader is reading. Self-reference and playing with fictionality, often regarded as postmodern traits in literature, fit well to Kundera's novels in which he refrains from creating an illusion of reality. (Steinby 2013: 182)

Lately we have witnessed a slight turn towards acknowledging the author again as a meaningful aspect of literature. In his essay "Modern Posterities of Posture", Jérôme Meizos uses the notion of posture which was developed by Jean Jacques Rousseau. The concept of posture allows us to look at the public role of an author inhabited within the field (of literature) that according to Meizos, 'presupposes a dual observation track'; (non)verbal behavior on the one hand and discourse on the other (Meizos 2010: 85). Two aspects that have to do with the public appearance of the author and

posture's discursive dimensions [that] are similar to 'ethos' in rhetoric, that is, the textual self-image offered by the enunciator. The speaker establishes credibility by projecting and imposing a self-image in his discourse (p. 85).

Meizos argues that '[a]t a methodological level, the concept of posture allows to describe the connections between behavior and textual effects in the literary field' (p. 85).

Some studies do explain the narrator as Kundera's alter ego and understand the importance of this 'character' within the context of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*,

The *Unbearable Lightness of Being* features a narrator whose presence in the text is no less important than that of any other character. The narrator creates his own self as he tells the story. He achieves this not only by narrating but also by adopting the function of a creator of characters and a director of the text. (Pichova 1992: 217)

or even seldomly as the author himself but then speaking in service of his characters:

Part 2 of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* begins with a long meditation on the interrelations between the body and the soul. Yes, it is the author speaking, but everything he says is valid only within the magnetic field of a character. It is Tereza's way of seeing things (though never formulated by her)" (The Art 79–80). Kundera's reflections are intellectual and distanced and he strives for clarity, even when the character's experience is a mixture of various, not easily discernible ingredients; however, his reflections are more focused on a specific theme than those of Broch and Musil. Kundera often names the "life theme" of a character directly. (Steinby: 87-88)

Although these studies recognize the existence of a creator beyond the boundaries of the book itself, none of the studies that I came across seem to take the 'appearance' of the author seriously enough to make meaning of his statements on a meta-level.

For me the author's confession about the novel as an investigation can be read as something that exceeds the boundaries of the novel itself. Since Kundera seems to repeat his motivation to investigate through writing quite explicitly in "The Art of the Novel", I believe that the part of the novel that I highlighted on the previous page challenges us to look at his novel with different glasses. Kundera states that

I had to invent Tereza, an "experimental self," to understand that possibility, to

understand vertigo. But it isn't merely particular situations that are thus interrogated; the whole novel is nothing but one long interrogation. (Kundera 1988: 31)

Reading “The Art of the Novel”, we indeed might believe that the author really had the intention to use his writing in the novel in an investigative way. That he, through Tereza, investigates in 'vertigo' as a possibility of existence to come to an understanding (and thus knowledge) of both Tereza and vertigo. A more elaborate understanding of the constraints of Literary Theory to think beyond the author/work dichotomy will follow at the beginning of the chapter on methodology.

1.0.3. Relevance

In April 2016 the Society for Artistic Research held a conference at the KaBK in The Hague titled *Writing* (SAR Conference 2016 n.d). And even though their question 'How do both writing and practice operate as ways to convey new knowledge, understanding and experiences by which we (re)organize our lives?' sounds potentially relevant for my thesis, they didn't discuss research *through* the process of 'creative writing' itself. The conference of the National Association of Writers in Education, that took place in November, did focus on creative writing but then, like the name of the organization reveals, within the field of education (NAWE n.d.).

In my eyes investigating literature, or creative writing as a research it is at least as valuable as for instance looking for intra-or intertextual characteristics such as traces of musical compositions in the novel – something that is studied quite often with regard to Kundera. However, within the academic sphere nobody seems to have paid attention to his writing as interrogative or investigative so far.

With my research, in which I try to look at both literature and knowledge production in an open way, I attempt to challenge multiple common conceptions in theory and research. Especially considering both the fact that mainstream Literary Theory tends to question the author when interpreting a work of fiction, and that AR starts with a clear intention to investigate a certain topic (Hannula, Suoranta & Vadén 2005:152). Having interest in the investigative value of creative writing as a research methodology opens up a new potential to see literature in another light; as something that goes beyond its conventional conceptions. Investigating creative writing as research through AR is not only challenging within in the academic realm – due to the use of an artistic medium – but also with regard to the field of literature and Literary Theory.

2. On Methodologies

I titled this chapter 'on methodologies', because it explores different methodological implications from a theoretical distance in relation to my research topic. My own intended methodology is part of this chapter because I was only able to theoretically inform, but not foresee the effects of the creative writing-based research that I was about to bring into practice. But before shedding light on this preliminary methodology, I will first elaborate on the Literary Tradition.

Deciding on the initial approach of this research went hand in hand with gaining an understanding of its position in the academic realm. In order to explore the value of my AR, it was necessary to understand why I wouldn't have been able to come to an understanding of Kundera's work as an AR in another, more traditional way. I thus decided to map the values and limitations of different literary theories and methodologies. By defining my own research methodology against literary theories and conceptions, I was able to convincingly state why I need this particular practice-based approach to come to an understanding of my research interest.

The elaboration on Literary Theory was of importance with the initial methodology in mind. But rewriting this chapter after having finished my research made me doubt whether this following section would still be relevant. Initially I accompanied every theory and methodology with a brief description on the implications of these approaches in relation to my research topic in the following section. But since, in my actual methodology, my focus shifted from the value of my AR in relation to Kundera, to solely the value of my own writing and research process, also an understanding of literary theories became less relevant.

Because of the diminished focus on Kundera's writing as an AR, also the importance of an understanding of these theories diminished. It was really through being engaged with the process of creative writing that I noticed that the process itself was more important than the end-result. The fact that literary theories and methodologies are most of the time concerned with questions about meaning production of literary texts, already explains the limitations of this tradition to investigate the process of creative writing.

The reason why I decided to maintain the elaboration on different literary theories and methodologies – without the emphasis on their individual limitations – is partly because this elaboration must be understood in the light of my intended methodology. Understanding the value of my AR through its altering nature, an explanation on Literary Theory helps to come to terms with the dynamic process of my research. Maintaining my theoretically informed preliminary methodology and its context, shows the influence of my practice-based methodology when I brought my methodology into practice. But although I don't need this literary tradition in relation to the value of my actual research, concepts such as *performativity*, *deconstruction* (as you have seen in the introduction), and *difference/differance* also play a role in the New Materialist theory that I do use with regard to my actual methodology. In case you are familiar enough with Literary Theory you are free to skip the following section and continue reading about my initial approach in relation to New Materialism. But in case you do decide to read the following section, please do so with the initial methodology, that I will elaborate on afterwards, in mind.

2.1. Literary Theory

Throughout the years, many schools of Literary Theory have been developed. Influence on contemporary Literary Theory can be traced back from the ancient Greeks. Every approach has its own benefits and pitfalls and most approaches mainly focus on only one of the different 'meaning'-creating elements for the interpretation of a work; ranging from artist to audience, the work itself or the universe around it (Leitch e.a. 2001: 4-5). The ancient Greeks saw literature most of the time as mimetic; reflecting reality, or didactic; for educational use (p. 4). Whereas structuralist schools believed that meaning is something that can be found in a literary work, poststructuralist accounts of reading argue that meaning is unstable and cannot simply be constituted within, nor in relation to the work. (Cuddon 2013: 554). But let's start off with *Close Reading*, the methodology used by *New Criticism*.

Textual interpretation has a long and rich history, but the field of narratology is relatively new. The first onset came from the Russian Formalists around 1915 as a reaction to the nineteenth century approach to literature that was mainly historically and biographically grounded and that showed little interest in the textual features itself. Russian formalists, however, were mainly concerned with analyzing entire genres – such as the novel – and literary characteristics in general, whereas the American and English New Critics focused on textual analysis and interpretation of individual literary works, mainly poetry. (van Boven & Dorleijn: 309).

New Criticism was likely to be influenced by the New Aesthetic Philosophy of idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce. Croce resisted against the idea that 'all truth is grounded in empirical facts knowable through scientific methods' (Rivkin & Ryan 2004: 3). According to him, art provides for a different kind of truth, that is immune to scientific investigation because it is accessible only through connotative language such as metaphors and symbolisms, whereas language of science was much more denotative and straight forward (p. 3). Inspired by this view on truth, the American New Critics were interested in the non-rational dimension of art. They believed that 'literature should be studied for the way in which literary language differs from ordinary practical language and for the unique truths conveyed only through such literary language' (p. 3).

NC separated the object of literary study from biography or sociology; which meant that the meaning of a work according this literary tradition wasn't situated in the intentions of the author and reading his or her statements, rather, meaning resides in the verbal design of a literary work itself using a methodology they called Close Reading. CR meant looking at the connotatively aspects of the text, acknowledging that words can evoke secondary meanings, focusing on both universal and specific aspects of language such as metaphors, paradoxes, irony etc. (p. 5-6).

The practical denotative language of science cannot name such truth because such language is limited to the naming of positive empirical facts that can be grasped by the senses. The realm of universal meaning, however, is beyond sensory experience and cannot be analyzed using scientific methods. It can only be alluded to indirectly in poetic language and cannot be paraphrased in literal, denotative speech. For the American New Critics, therefore, the description of literary devices such as metaphor, irony, and paradox was inseparable from a theory of universal meaning that was a polemical response to modern positivist science (p. 6).

By paying attention to these 'universal truths' CR was open for acknowledging religious influences and aesthetic values that were displaced by science. The close reading of texts allows for an analysis of seeing a text in all its complexity and thus required a 'detailed, balanced and rigorous critical examination of a text to discover its

meanings and to assess its effects' (Cuddon 1999: 143). One of the arguments of NC is that it does not need the support of external agents if a text is well made (Leitch e.a. 2001:19).

That not everyone agreed with this methodology becomes clear by looking at, for instance, E. D. Hirsch Junior's critique. According to him, the New Critics had failed to explain how they could identify one reading as right over another reading of the same text. As opposed to this focus on text only – not everyone agreed on Barthes heralding the death of the author – in his famous *Validity in Interpretation* from 1967 Hirsch's overarching goal was to restore the author as one of the meaning making aspects of literary texts (Leitch e.a. 2001: 1683). In his hermeneutic project he argued that, in order to interpret a text, one must imaginatively reconstruct an author's intention (p. 1683). According to him, 'the author's meaning, as represented by his text, is unchanging and reproducible' (Hirsch 1960: 466). Because he realizes that critics most of the time can't access an author's inner world, one of the tactics was to reconstruct an author's *horizon*;

The historical set of typical expectations, prohibitions, norms and limits that define the author's intentions as a whole. [...] The interpreter's primary task is to reproduce in himself the author's 'logic', his attitudes, his cultural givens, in short his world (Leitch e.a. 2001: 1683).

Which means that in order to construct the 'stable' meaning by the author of the text, a reader should also use secondary texts that give us insights about the author. Indeed, in secondary sources such as “The Art of the Novel” Kundera seems to legitimize the idea that his writing can be seen as a research, saying that *Vertigo* is one of the keys to understand Tereza, and that Tereza can be seen as an 'experimental self' to understand vertigo (Kundera 1988: 31). However, even though Hirsch Junior's *Objective Interpretation* has proven itself to be meaningful for textual interpretation, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* describes the pitfalls of his theory as following:

What worries Hirsch is the "chaos" of conflicting and competing readings of the same text, and he has devised a theory to try to address this concern. But in practice critics still find themselves in disagreement and dispute. Differences of opinion about the interpretation of a text get translated into arguments over the author's true intention. Such contention results in part from the problems that horizon and intertextuality pose, but it also reflects the tendency of Hirsch's central distinctions between meaning and significance, interpretation and criticism, to down in practice (Leitch e.a. 2001: 1684).

In the late 60's and the 70's of the 21st century also other influential literary theories and methodologies came into existence such as Reader-Response (RR) theories. These theories reflect on meaning as something that is constituted by the reader, or in between the reader and text. So instead of locating a fixed meaning by looking at the author or text, meaning in the light of RR theories becomes multiple through the various readings of texts. The US critic Stanley Fish, one of the important figures in dismantling this idea once famously argued that 'there is no text in this class' (Rivkin & Ryan 2004: 130).

RR theory thus took many forms of which Wolfgang Iser's Phenomenology forms an influential theory. In his *The Reading Process, a Phenomenological Approach* written in 1972 he explains how 'in considering a literary work, one must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text' (Iser 1972: 279). In order to do so, Iser distinguishes two aspects in literary

texts: the artistic and the aesthetic. The author is placed within the artistic domain since he or she is the creator of the text; the 'aesthetic' domain, on the other hand, is something that the reader accomplishes in the act of reading the text. This polarity, according to Iser, makes that the literary work 'cannot be completely identical with the text, or with the realization of the text, but in fact must lie halfway between the two' (p. 279). He states that:

The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader. (p. 279)

Not only individual readers but also their personal positions and backgrounds play an important role in the interpretation of a text. 'The time-sequence that [the reader] realized on his first reading cannot possibly be repeated on a second reading and this unrepeatability is bound to result in modifications of his reading experience' (p. 286). No reading can thus ever be reproduced and every interpretation is different which makes that 'reading causes the literary work to unfold its inherently dynamic character' (p. 280).

Not only the New Critics' – who emphasize the specific literary characteristics of connotative language such as metaphors, paradoxes, etc. – but also Iser has very clear ideas about what a literary text should look like; in order to allow for the dynamic interplay between text and reader, texts should leave space for imagination and not be totally explanatory:

It is something like an arena in which reader and author participate in a game of the imagination. If the reader were given the whole story, and there were nothing left for him to do, then his imagination would never enter the field, the result would be the boredom which inevitably arises when everything is laid out cut and dried before us. (p. 280)

The way in which a reader interprets a literary text is according to Iser, highly dependent on some of the characteristics of literary texts, such as gaps, sentences that must be connected and missing links that a reader needs to fill in, to come to what he calls the 'Gestalt' of the text (p. 284-285). For Iser it is thus mainly the presence of the unwritten parts of the texts that foreground the literariness and asks for a dynamic relationship with the reader. In the connections that the readers make, the individual meaning of a text is brought to life; examining 'the way in which sequent sentences act upon one another' (p. 281).

the activity of reading can be characterized as a sort of kaleidoscope of perspectives, pre-intentions, recollections. Every sentence contains a preview of the next and forms a kind of view finder for what is to come; and this in turn changes the "preview" and so becomes a "viewfinder" for what has been read. (p. 284)

Instead of looking for a construction of meaning in or in relation to the text there are also literary traditions that focus on the difficulties surrounding meaning itself. From Iser's phenomenology, I will now jump to post-structuralism, and more specifically to Jacques Derrida's notion of deconstruction. Regarding this concept, the meaning of a text cannot simply be found by following the author, nor text. Instead, a deconstructive reading must 'always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses' (p. 1825).

Deconstruction can be seen as a broad philosophical concept, and so far as one of the most influential features of post-structuralism. Within his 'deconstructions', Derrida makes use of – and *at the same time* puts into question – 'the toolbox of classical Western philosophy' (Leitch e.a. 2001: 1815). In his deconstructive readings, Derrida shows how texts – and these can be any kind of texts – can be read as saying something 'quite different from what it appears to be saying' (Cuddon 2013: 189). Derrida states that

A text is not a text unless it hides from the first corner, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game. A text remains, moreover, forever imperceptible. Its law and its rules are not, however, harbored in the inaccessibility of a secret; it is simply that they can never be booked, in the *present*, into anything that could rigorously be called a perception. (Derrida 1968: 63)

Derrida wasn't the only one who worked with the concept of deconstruction; also Paul de Man 'contends that literary language is fundamentally self-reflexive rather than referential and that texts deconstruct themselves.' When looking at texts through a deconstructive lens, a plurality of significance can be read, and since there are many possible meanings, texts cannot have (a) stable meaning (Cuddon 2013: 189-190). According to Barbara Johnson in her book *The Critical Difference*,

The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself. Of anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself. (p. 189)

One of the key principles in deconstruction is that there is nothing outside of the text, because, if I understand Derrida correctly, the absolute present, which is to say the outside of the text, has always escaped words. According to him, 'that what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence' (Derrida 1967: 160). A deconstructive reading therefore must 'be intrinsic and remain within the text' (p. 160). These readings aim not at finding meaning in the text, but at carefully dismantling the 'inherent, subversive, self-contradictory and self-betraying elements in a text' and including that what is not said (Cuddon 2013: 190).

In a critique on Derrida's deconstructive 'methodology', Gerasimos Kakoliris illuminates a 'tension between the two different "gestures" that comprise a

Derrida also offers us a notion that is valuable in relation to this research; the concept of differance, by which he expresses that there are only differences instead of fixed ideas or things (Rivkin & Ryan 2004: 258). This notion overlaps with the New Materialist idea that identity isn't stable but should rather be defined in (differential) relation to other things. On page 30, regarding my Intended Methodology, I will come back to this notion in relation to the concept of intra-action.

deconstructive reading'

namely, between the *first* reading (a reading that reproduces or "doubles" authorial or textual intention) and the *second* reading (a reading that deconstructs the meanings that have been determined and identified during the *first* reading) (Kakoliris 2004: 238).

According to Kakoliris, the idea of following or reproducing an authorial or textual intention is rather problematic and paradoxical with regard to the lack of stable meaning (p. 283). However, Derrida's notion of deconstruction widely influenced fields beyond literary criticism and theory. And his lecture "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man," at the Johns Hopkins University in 1966 can be seen as the articulation of the break between structuralism and post-structuralism (Leitch e.a. 2001: p. 1816).

Like Derrida's deconstruction, Judith Butler's and Enikő Bollobás' notions of performativity can be situated within the poststructuralist tradition that underline the idea that meaning is inherently unstable. Although they have seemingly little to do with one another, Judith Butler takes further the concept of the *performative utterance* by speech-act philosopher J. L. Austin. This term is used to describe various 'executive speech acts, in other words, utterances which possess some degree of inherent agency' (Cuddon 2013: 525).

According to Bollobás in *They Aren't, Until I Call Them: Performing the Subject in American Literature*, a poststructuralist stance on performativity allows for blurred boundaries, overlap and destabilized (binary) oppositions. (Bollobás 2010: 9-10). In contrast to the 'original Austinian framework' which sees the performative in language as something that creates things and events by taking boundaries between signifier and signified or words and things for granted, the poststructuralist approach shows us how

it is not signifieds but other signifiers which are being performed by language, among them, speakers within discourse' and that 'from this perspective performative acts allow speakers to construct themselves: subjects are created performatively, in the speaking and the doing. (p. 10)

This idea of constructing through language also comes back in Butler's notions of performativity in *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*. Butler elaborates on Simone de Beauvoir's statement that one isn't born as a woman but *becomes* one, by stating that we perceive things as they do instead of as they 'are' (Butler 1988: 519). Opposed to sex, something one is born with, gender according to Butler, 'is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*' (519). These repeated stylized acts thus give shape to a person's gender. Engendering language and speech-acts can both be seen as performative.

When we see language as performative, we thus read texts not merely as representations of reality, but rather as something that shapes our reality. Text, then, has a less one-dimensional purpose and is not only informed by the world it describes, but also informs aspects of the reality, as performatives, according to Bollobás, have an 'ontological force'. According to her, performatives can 'create new discourses which

allow for new subjectivities' (Bollobás 2010: 10). She states that, while 'Austinian' performativity keeps binary oppositions in place, poststructuralist performativity allowed for a deconstruction of binary thinking.

During the first phase of the history of the concept of the performative—dominated by the constative-performative dichotomy and the tripartite division of locutionary-illocutionary-perlocutionary acts—came the assumption that the performative powerfully tied together such binaries as word and deed, saying and doing, representation and presentation, mind and body, poetic and ordinary language, and speech and writing. It was also assumed that the performative received its validation, in a transcendental manner, from some outside authority, whose pre-existence and co-presence are necessary for conveying intention determining meaning. In the second phase, the performative was adopted by poststructuralist, especially feminist, deconstructionist, and post-deconstructionist theorists, exactly for the way it helped deconstruct the logic of binary thinking. (p. 12-13)

Bollobás shows how, in different literary texts, performativity can be read through the particular power that these texts have by for instance making strong claims or creating people and things (p. 14). In these readings, and she gives some examples, she will

reveal that reality and identity constructions rely on the same processes when unmarked configurations, or the privileged terms of the binaries, are being created: the male, the white, the straight. Performative analysis offers ways to understand that none of these terms are innocent or neutral but are the end-products of social-historical processes. (p. 19)

A performative methodology might serve as a valuable tool to understand the social constructedness of language that shapes our conceptions of knowledge constructed within the scientific realm and my verbalization might be read as language that, in a way, tries to open up the scientific-nonscientific binary. However, a performative reading remains to closely to text. In the following section in which I will elaborate on my initial methodology I will shed light on how performativity can also be thought beyond text, in a more material fashion.

Mapping the above literary theories show that there are various productive approaches through which we can investigate literary texts. But since I believe that questions about knowledge production in relation to creative writing as a research methodology not only transcend the borders of the novel, but also those of text and language itself, the interdisciplinary field of New Materialism inspired me greatly in informing my methodology and support the open and dynamic character of (my) AR. In the following section I will elaborate on my intended approach in connection with Karen Barad's *Agential Realism*.

2.2. Intended methodology

Let's start off this section powerfully with Karen Barad's statement that '[I]anguage has been granted too much power' and argument that materiality has often been overlooked (Barad 2003: 801-802). In her *Posthumanist Performativity: Towards an Understanding of how Matter comes to Matter* Barad coins the term *Agential Realism* for the framework through which she tries to come to an understanding of how matter 'matters'. I can imagine it sounds rather paradoxical to support my investigation of creative writing with theory that aims to go beyond language, but as I will demonstrate further on, approaching creative writing as a material phenomenon offered me a valuable perspective and vocabulary to elaborate on creative writing as a research methodology – and to articulate my creative research in the academic realm.

Barad emphasizes that knowing is a direct material engagement which cannot be seen as existing separately from the matter that we are trying to grasp (Barad 2007: 379). Also New Materialist Tim Ingold respects knowledge creation as something very material. In his book *The Life of Lines* (2015) Ingold uses the metaphor of the *walker* for processes of knowledge-creation that are practice-based and entangled with the world, or let's say matter, around us. He distinguishes the walker from the *Kantian traveler* – described as someone who goes 'from point to point in order to collect the raw data of sensation for subsequent modeling in the mind' – whereas to Ingold, moving in itself already is a form of knowing. 'The walker knows as he goes along' (Ingold 2015: 46-47). This act of walking implies certain material process or performance, and in my eyes, my creative writing as research can be compared best with Ingold's Walker as opposed to the Kantian traveler.

In their book on Artistic Research Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén emphasize that 'research by nature is open, self-critical, explorative in depth and all in all opening and inviting communication' (2015: 152). Since, as I stated earlier, my interest is not to define concepts such as research, creative writing or knowledge, I believe that I need an approach to explore what AR through creative writing can do. Or so to stay, to experience the value and potential of creative writing as a platform for investigation from within; through the process – or performance – of creative writing itself. Because I need this open stance towards my research that I – literally – had to bring into practice, I informed my initial methodology with New Materialist theory. Although I wasn't yet able to foresee what my creative practice would offer within this research exactly, I decided to ground my initial methodology in concepts such as intra-action and diffraction.

These concepts not only helped me to find the vocabulary to think and write about AR through creative writing, but also allowed for the openness that this project need to study knowledge-production beyond the scholarly/non-scholarly binary. When it came to implications regarding the 'practice' within this initial approach, I wasn't able to think much further ahead than the decision to write creatively while registering my creative writing at the same time. This aspect of registration was important to allow myself to be attentive to the different dynamics that are entangled with(in) writing. In order to explain the implications of my actual research through creative writing, first we need to come to an understanding of my initial methodology, since the theoretical concepts that I use not only informed this intended methodology, but also maintained their influence in my actual approach. In order to understand the theoretical concepts that I use throughout my thesis, we need to become more familiar with Barad's account on Agential Realism first.

2.2.1. Agential Realism

Building on important insights from i.a. Niels Bohr's phenomenology, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault and Donna Haraway, Barad proposes a 'materialist and posthumanist reworking of the notion of performativity. This entails a reworking of the familiar notions of discursive practices, materialization, agency, and causality, among others.' (Barad 2003: 811).

Also, the concept of agency must be understood in terms of intra-action. Agency should not be seen as an attribute that something or someone has. According to Barad, 'Matter is agentive and intra-active. Matter is a dynamic intra-active becoming that never sits still' (Barad, 2007: 170). In order to understand how seemingly independently existing features function, we need to understand how they are separated in intra-action.

On page 41 I will elaborate on the notion of agential separability that comes to an understanding of how the separations within 'agential' matter can be understood.

or 'diffractive', as you can see in this quote. The concept of diffraction will be explained in a bit.

In the past, on the basis of the assumption of a clear and simple, Cartesian subject/object cut, we have thought of ourselves as primarily agential beings, able to do things by our own self-instigated, or I-directed, movements, while acting on the basis of our thoughts, ideas, beliefs, or theories. (Shotter 2014: 307)

Barad's Agential Realism can be situated within New Materialism or posthumanism – which, and the word already says it, theorizes forms of agency beyond the human subject. Instead of ordering the world in dualisms such as Cartesian subject-object positions, Agential Realism regards the world in terms of matter and entanglement and acknowledges and respects all sorts of forms of (non-human and non-animate) agency in a non-hierarchical way. Even though the world around us seems to exist of separate things, bounded by their own bodies, Barad proposes to see these elements as intra-active phenomena.

In an agential realist account, matter does not refer to a fixed substance; rather, matter is substance in its intra-active becoming – not a thing but a doing, congealing of agency. Matter is a stabilizing and destabilizing process of iterative intra-activity. Phenomena – the smallest material units (relational “atoms”) – come to matter through this process of ongoing intra-activity. “Matter does not refer to an inherent, fixed property of abstract, independently existing objects; rather, “matter” refers to phenomena in their ongoing materialization. (Barad 2007: 151)

These phenomena, or agents, according to Barad, are

differential patterns of mattering (“diffraction patterns”) produced through complex agential intra-actions of multiple material-discursive practices or apparatuses of bodily production, where apparatuses are not mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practices – specific material (re)configurings of the world – which come to matter. (140)

The word 'differential' in the above quote is used to understand how phenomena – like Derrida explains with his concept of *differance* – are constituted in relation to other phenomena (148-149). This dynamic of configuring phenomena and boundaries is something that Barad explains with her concept of intra-action. She uses this word to – in contrast to the concept of 'interaction', which indicates prior existing boundaries between separate entities – understand things, or rather phenomena, as mutually intertwined. She maintains that things come into existence in relation to one another, instead of preexisting the relations in which they partake. This implicates not only that boundaries of

entities aren't as clear as they might seem, but also that things are ever changing and evolving. Phenomena aren't static. She states that

the universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming. The primary ontological units are not “things” but phenomena – dynamic topological reconfigurings/entanglements/relationalities/(re)articulations. And the primary semantic units are not “words” but material-discursive practices through which boundaries are constituted. (Barad 2003: 818)

Following Barad's line of thought, the practice of creative writing can be seen as an intra-active phenomenon that is not only constituted in relation to other phenomena, but also itself can be seen as a practice in which different material relations (human and non-human) are gathered – instead of seeing writing as something that is mainly influenced by the human subject (author). In this light, the writer is only one of the influential elements – or rather relations, since every element itself can be seen as a phenomenon that exists of multiple relations – within creative writing.

Coming back to where I ended the previous section on the literary theories and methodologies, performativity is a concept that according to Barad, has been misconcepted to equate with a 'form of linguistic monism that takes language to be the stuff of reality' (Barad 2007: 132). It is in this light that she explains the notion of discourse by Foucault the following:

'Discursive practices are the local sociohistorical material conditions that enable and constrain disciplinary knowledge practices such as speaking, writing, thinking, calculating, measuring, filtering, and concentrating. Discursive practices produce rather than merely describe, the subjects and objects of knowledge practices.' (p. 147)

Although notions on discourse are often referred to in the context of linguistic or signifying systems or speech acts, according to Barad, it is a mistake to see discourse as something within the domain of language. Discursive practices are 'historically and culturally specific social conditions' (p. 147). She states that: 'Discourse is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said.' (p. 146). In a posthumanist understanding, discourse, according to Barad, entails the following:

discursive practices are specific material (re)configurings of the world through which the determination of boundaries, properties, and meanings is differentially enacted. That is, discursive practices are ongoing agential intra-

Ironically enough, not only Barad and Ingold acknowledge the agency of material phenomena such as writing, but language's own agency happens to be one of Barthes reasons to herald the death of the author:

Mallarmé was doubtless the first to see and foresee in its full extent the necessity of substituting language itself for the man who hitherto was supposed to own it; for Mallarmé, as for us, it is language which speaks, not the author: to write is to reach, through a preexisting impersonality — never to be confused with the castrating objectivity of the realistic novelist — that point where language alone acts, “performs,” and not “oneself”: Mallarmé's entire poetics consists in suppressing the author for the sake of the writing. (Barthes 1967: 3)

For instance, we humans can be seen as relations because we, too, consist of multiple different elements such as proteins, water and bacteria that live inside us and on our skin. The behavior of these elements together influence or constitute our being, or rather constant becoming in this world; as phenomena are never static.

actions of the world through which specific determinacies (along with complementary indeterminacies) are enacted within the phenomena produced. (p. 148-149)

Within her Agential Realism, Barad thus not only comes to a 'material' understanding of discourse, but also understands performativity as something very material. She tries to make clear that matter itself is performative and that knowledge must be understood in relation to the specific material configurations that bring forth knowledge. Barad's conceptions of discourse and discursive practices are important to understand the role of matter in knowledge making practices, but before I will shed light on the interpretation of my research through these notions such as intra-action and material-discursiveness, we need to understand how her Agential Realism informed my initial methodology.

2.2.2. Initial methodology informed by theory

When I tried to shape my intended methodology based on that moment on the balcony chair, I suspected that Karen Barad's concept of intra-action would be of great value and help me verbalize and understand all sorts of possible important influences in my writing and research. As I noticed on that chair, I was able to come to a certain material-discursive – thus meaning both informed by as well as specific for the material practice of creative writing – knowledge through writing creatively. Putting the inspiration based on the brief conversation with my neighbor into (a few catch) words sparked a new interpretation on Kundera's work.

Both in order to research my own writing as well as possible and to hopefully detect the intra-actions that trigger my inspiration, I decided that I had to register my writing process in a writing diary. I imagined that, through the concept of intra-action, I would be able to verbalize the dynamics between knowledge or insights, creative writing, myself as a writer, inspiration, (derived from) the world around me.

Whereas intra-action was, in my opinion, a valuable concept to say something about the process of my own writing and research with regard to my writing diary, I hadn't yet said anything about the activities concerning the research through writing in relation to Kundera. It was this moment on the balcony chair that not only made me catch a glimpse of creative writing as entangled with a certain material-discursive knowledge (that I yet had to further explore) but it also sparked the associations with the New Materialist conception of diffraction. A few days before that warm day I for some reason had started reading the interview with Karen Barad by Iris van der Tuin and

Intra-action became more than a concept to inform and legitimize the practical decision to keep a writing diary in relation to my own creative writing. As I will explain in the second methodological chapter and interpretation, after I really started writing within this research, the concept of intra-action became, like the concept of diffraction, valuable on multiple levels. Like the connection between the theoretical concepts and my methodology, also the use of my writing diary in connection to these concepts evolved.

Rick Dolphijn again. A detail that attracted my attention led to Googling diffractive reading. After digging deeper into this notion, the idea of taking a diffractive stance seemed more and more relevant within the research that I had in mind.

Diffraction is a term that originated in (quantum) physics to explain a certain pattern that describes the behavior of particular entities. When entities, or phenomena, (such as light) behave like a particle, they will show a *scatter pattern*. But when they act like a wave, they will show a diffraction or *interference pattern* (Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012: 60). Donna Haraway and Karen Barad both use the term diffraction as a metaphor for a feminist methodological approach of knowledge-creating practices, mainly in contrast to what that they call *reflective* methodologies. Since diffraction is such a complex phenomenon and concept, and I'm not familiar enough with quantum physics to fully understand what it entails, I will only be able to work with diffraction as a methodological metaphor. According to Barad,

There is a long history of using vision and optical metaphors to talk and theorize about knowledge. The physical phenomenon of reflection is a common metaphor for thinking – a little reflection shows this to be the case. Donna Haraway proposes diffraction as an alternative to the well-worn metaphor of reflection. As Haraway suggests, diffraction can serve as a useful counterpoint to reflection: both are optical phenomena, but whereas reflection is about mirroring and sameness, diffraction attends to patterns of difference. (Barad 2007: 29)

Iris van der Tuin explains that diffractive reading can be practiced by reading insights of different texts through one another (Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2011: 50). In contrast to a reflexive (think of mirroring) methodology, which according to Barad, entails a certain hierarchical order or a chronological way of building knowledge, 'a diffractive methodology is respectful of the entanglement of ideas and other materials in ways that the, by feminist scholars often critiqued reflexive methodologies are not' (Barad 2007: 30).

reflexivity is founded on representationalism. Reflexivity takes for granted the idea that representations reflect (social or natural) reality. That is, reflexivity is based on the belief that practices of representing have no effect on the objects of investigation and that we have a kind of access to representations that we don't have to the objects themselves. Reflexivity, like reflection, still holds the world at a distance. (p. 87)

When it comes to (classical) physics: particles are material entities that occupy a point in space at a given moment of time. Opposed to particles, waves aren't things per se; they are rather disturbances in mediums such as water or in oscillating fields such as light. Unlike particles, waves can overlap, the resultant wave can be larger or smaller than either component wave (Barad 2007: 76).

A familiar example of how such a pattern looks is when thinking of two stones that are dropped into calm water; they both create disturbances in the water, and when they overlap, 'produce a pattern that results from the relative differences between the overlapping wave components' (p. 77). 'The resultant wave is now the sum of the effects of each individual component wave' (p. 76). Using diffraction as a methodological metaphor;

in contrast to reflecting apparatuses, like mirrors, which produce images – more or less faithful – of objects placed a distance from the mirror, diffraction gratings are instruments that produce patterns that mark differences in the relative characters (i.e., amplitude and phase) of individual waves as they combine. (p. 81)

instead of understanding the world from a distance through representations, diffraction 'attends to specific material entanglements' and is about understanding the world from within (p. 88). According to Barad, diffraction is a productive tool for thinking about practices in performative rather than in representationalist modes. She states that

diffraction does not fix what is the object and what is the subject in advance, and so, unlike methods of reading one text or set of ideas against another where one set serves as a fixed frame of reference, diffraction involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge: how different differences get made, what gets excluded, and how those exclusions matter. (p. 30)

Diffraction thus not only reads – as van der Tuin explains – insights of different texts through one another, but consequentially, through taking a non-hierarchical position, also takes into account how differences between these texts get made. Strongly originating from a feminist tradition, a diffractive reading

is suitable for affirming and strengthening links between writers without fencing them away from each other in distinct temporalities, and for reading them through one another without hierarchizing one over the other (van der Tuin 2014: 97).

An example of how to practice a diffractive reading – Barad uses an example of how to understand the nature and social together – is to take into account how both elements matter, instead of simply recognizing that they do matter. A way to study nature and social is to read nature through conceptions of the social and the other way around (Barad, 2007: 30). Instead of analyzing what the topic of research *is*, diffraction rather studies what it *does*. Diffraction allows for openness and seeing things as constructed through one another, or in other words; in intra-action.

Diffractive methodologies do not only acknowledge the entanglement of different elements such as subject-object relations within research, also epistemology and ontology don't exist separately from one another. As we have seen, Barad argues for regarding knowledge as something interwoven with materiality. She states that 'knowing is a matter of intra-acting' (p. 149). In order to understand what she means by phenomena as 'specific intra-action of an object and the measuring agencies', it makes sense to look at the inspiration she took from theoretical physicist Niels Bohr (128).

[Bohr] [...] believes that the interaction between the objects of investigation and what he calls "the agencies of observation" is not determinable and therefore cannot be "subtracted out" to leave a representation of the world as it exists independently of human beings. (p. 31)

For example, Bohr calls into question representationalism's taken-for-granted stance toward both words and things. While poststructuralist and science studies accounts emphasize either the discursive or material nature of practices, for Bohr word and thing, or knowledge and reality are inextricably linked (p. 31-32).

According to Bohr, our ability to understand the physical world hinges on our recognizing that our knowledge-making practices, including the use and testing of scientific concepts, are material enactments that contribute to, and are a part of, the phenomena we describe. (p. 31)

Instead of seeing ontology and epistemology separately, Barad suggests for the term 'onto-epistem-ology' (p. 89). She states that knowing is a direct material engagement and that results and practice should be understood in entanglement with one another. Reading about Barad's and Ingold's ways of looking at knowledge made me wonder how we can understand creative writing as a specific material practice that brings forth knowledge in a specific kind of way.

Departing from the specific moment on the balcony chair, my preliminary methodology entailed the following; I would start writing and investigating my writing at the same time, by the use of a writing diary, to explore the investigative potential of creative writing. Then, after this writing would be done, I imagined that a diffractive reading of my own writing – that would contain a creatively written text through which I, by the use of my writing diary, would have come to an understanding of the material-discursive, investigative, potential of this creative practice – with Kundera's would help me to answer my research question. I imagined that researching my own creative writing – by investigating the material-discursive onto-epistemology of my own writing in order to understand how the knowledge that comes forth from my methodology is entangled with the apparatus that I use – would make the investigative potential of creative writing insightful. I imagined that such a diffractive reading would help me to come to an understanding of his work as AR, as well as the value of my own methodology as a means for investigation.

Even though the association through creative writing on that chair can, retrospectively, be seen as a less consciously initiated diffractive reading of both my and Kundera's writing, I considered that a diffractive reading would be a conscious methodological step that I would *take* within the research. But instead of actively doing diffraction, my final methodology gave me more other and deeper insights about the connection between creative writing and diffraction during the writing and research process itself. In the following, second methodological chapter, I will elaborate on the actual methodology and its (material-discursive) relation to the interpretation of this research.

3. Writing and research

My conceptions of diffraction – as well as of intra-action – stayed quite ‘theoretical’ until I had the chance to, through the practice of creative writing and researching my own writing, develop my understanding of the different methodological notions within the research itself. On July 27th I finally really started writing. I probably started my writing adventure slightly differently than other writers since a finished written text wasn't going to be the main goal of this thesis – focussing on my writing while researching was a more process-oriented activity. Even though my writing didn't start with the immediate urge to write about a certain topic, it wasn't hard to decide what I wanted to write about; without further extensive brainstorming efforts, I used the ideas that slowly formed themselves in my head while I was still concerned with the theoretical base of this thesis. Luckily, inspiration for my writing had started to come quite naturally.

Through practicing my writing-based research, I was able to come to terms with my theoretical toolbox. What I practically did when I started was, just like Ingold explains with his walker, starting to partake in the process of creative writing and gathering knowledge as I wrote (walked) along, trying to be as attentive as possible to every single influential detail, gaining a deeper understanding of my methodology. Being engaged with the writing practice eventually showed how the theoretical concepts of diffraction and intra-action not only informed my approach, but how I, through the practice of writing was also able to develop my own methodology and come to new insights on these theories reciprocally.

In the sections below, I will reflect on the different elements that together formed my actual methodology; the practice of creative writing, my writing diary and the theoretical toolbox. I will elaborate on the value and entanglement of these elements, to prepare you for the interpretation of the knowledge that these methodological implications brought forth. To make it even more complex, this second methodological chapter and the interpretation of my research also have to be understood in entanglement with one another. It was through practicing and interpreting my research that I was able to come to terms with my methodology. Although the following sections – form the second section on the writing diary onwards – might look like a theoretical exploration of my own methodology, I used theory to verbalize – into the academic realm – what the process already showed me.

This chapter is titled 'writing and research' because it emphasizes and acknowledges the entanglement of both the 'practical' implications of creative writing and my writing diary and theory as part of my methodology. Barad states that the material and discursive cannot be seen separately from one another, and there is no essentially right order to read these two chapters (Barad 2007: 152). You can see this chapter on the actual methodology together with the interpretation (chapter 4) as the elaboration on my material-discursive research; describing both the material process and the knowledge that was entangled with this process. I will first tell you a bit more about my creative writing – the least scholarly informed section of this thesis – and follow with reflections on the role of my writing diary and theoretical toolbox. Some of the things that I will explain in the last two sections will hopefully become more insightful in the (light of the) interpretation of this research.

3.1. Reflections on creative writing

There I was, having finished the theoretical ground of my thesis with the ambition to write a fictional story. I decided to write this story in Dutch, because writing a fictional work while simultaneously investigating the process of creative writing was already challenging enough. Writing in my mother tongue offered me the biggest vocabulary to express myself and besides, the comfort and safety that I needed to start this – quite vulnerable – project.

Since this is my master thesis, I didn't have enough time to write an entire novel, but I imagined that writing a short story would be too far removed from a similar writing experience that Kundera did in his novel, since length has implications on, for instance, structure and theme. I imagined that it would be important to come to an understanding of the investigative potential of a 'sort' of creative writing that would be, somehow, similar to Kundera's work. Therefore, I decided that my work would have to be lengthy enough to follow and elaborate on a fictional character, trying to let this character embody and develop certain ideas that I had in mind over a longer course of time. Instead of being too fixated on the end result I decided to challenge myself and explore what I would be able to write in a period of approximately a month.

After that month I ended up with something of the length and further characteristics of a(n unfinished) novella. Since I support the common conception that creative writing cannot necessarily be thought I decided to try to be not too externally informed about conventions about creative writing. The term 'novella' in this thesis thus mainly serves as a loose description of what you can expect of my writing and benefits the readability of my verbalization as it helps me to refer to my writing in an agreeable way. Since, as you can read in the conclusion, I am still not sure about how to come to terms with my 'novella', nor writing diary as creative products.

In this month of writing, that I started quite bluntly, I mainly used my own intuition of what it means to write a fictional story and tried to rely as much as possible on my own creativity. On the first day of this creative writing adventure, I decided to simply start off with the topic that I had in mind based on the ideas that I had gathered in my head during the few weeks before. And since it was simply about time to start, I decided to just begin (instead of doubting too much about the topic of my writing). So I did.

On some days I wrote quite large fragments, say 500 words in a row, while on others I felt stuck – since that also happens within the creative process – and wrote basically nothing. On other days I was more concerned with only a single sentence or the syntax or structure of my work. Since I quickly found out that I had the most inspiration when I just lived my life in an enjoyable way, instead of locking myself in behind a computer, I also went outside, experienced things, met with friends, visited places, partied, kept on working for my student job at the psychology praxis and even went on a short vacation (or two).

Summer happened to be a great time for writing. Or at least for lots of writing courses, summer schools, or online articles supposedly full of do's and don'ts on how to write. Supposedly, because I didn't open the links that I scrolled by on my social media timelines. In the same way, I tried to save myself from reading too inspiring novels or stories (reading, during my period of writing, I decided, had to be solely entertaining and not too intellectual challenging or great, a rule I actually sometimes broke). I wanted to experience writing as much according to my own insights as possible. Partly because I noticed that I, through practicing 'how to write', became very conscious of the practice itself, but also because I didn't want to be

As you can read in the body text, after a month of writing, I still imagined that I would finish my novella. However, during the interpretation I noticed that I didn't need to finish my creatively written text per se.

Every step in this thesis can be seen as a development in working with my own methodology, something that also counted for the interpretation itself – I already argued before that practice and theory cannot be separated, but will emphasize this even more so in the last two sections of this chapter. It was really through practicing my own writing-based research, while simultaneously trying to come to an understanding of its own onto-epistemological implications, or material-discursiveness, that I gradually began to come to terms with the implications of my process-oriented approach. This means that I began to see that finishing my novella, just because I wanted to hand in a finished text, didn't make a lot of sense, except, maybe, for trying to soothe my ego.

Basically I cannot even say that it's a novella, because, in case I want to edit the work, I might make it into a shorter story or maybe even a more lengthy piece. Confession: I simultaneously think that it is interesting that my novella too, through the unfinished state, foregrounds a sense of process rather than result.

too consciously inspired or influenced by other writers, 'experts' or knowledge. But, after at least four years of Cultural Studies with a minor in Literary Theory, I of course already had internalized and used some of the knowledge about literature and Literary Theory, as well as the input from multiple novels and stories that I had read in my life.

It was both surprising and affirmative that, through the act of creative writing, I began to gain insights about the processes of creative writing that I couldn't have foreseen before I started. Approximately a month after I started, I wrote in my writing diary that I thought I had more or less 'everything' – concerning the content and structure of the novella, though still very sketchy – on paper. But, more importantly, I felt that I had gathered enough insights in my writing diary to say something meaningful about the process of creative writing. After approximately a month of writing, I thus decided to start focussing on my interpretation and 'finish' the novella afterwards – as long as I wouldn't add entire new fragments.

3.2. Reflections on my writing diary

From the first day of writing onwards, my creative writing went hand in hand with the registration of the writing process. I needed a medium that somewhat offered me a distance from the fiction that I was writing, to be able to come to the understanding of the creative writing as investigative. I opened a document, that I initially in Dutch called my *logboek* and later in English my writing diary, to capture the insights in the creative writing process, since I most of the time didn't verbalize them in the novella – at least not in a recognizable way.

As I already mentioned, I didn't yet write while simultaneously investigating my writing before. Because I didn't yet know what exactly to expect from my writing diary, I departed from the idea that the context in which I wrote – and the inspiration from my surroundings – would make important intra-actions within the practice of creative writing insightful. However, it didn't take long before my writing diary became an open place for all sorts of different writing related registrations that I wasn't yet able to recognize or describe beforehand.

Because my writing practice was yet to unfold and I, through an engagement with my writing and writing diary, still had to come to terms with my research process, I decided that I had to engage in a rather loose relationship with the writing diary. However, when seeking for literature to accurately describe the use of my writing diary, the concept of *free writing* comes closest to what most of the time went hand in hand with registering or contemplating (my) creative writing as an AR methodology. Without being very aware, I quite instantly adopted this writing 'technique' in my diary.

The difficulties and consequences of focussing on processes of creative writing with regard to literature is that, within the academic realm, there is written way more about the end result (literature) than about the creative work itself. Summer schools, workshops, practice-based events or blogpost, experiences by actual authors, in the creative field everyone has his or her own conceptions of creative writing. But when I looked on Academia.edu, I could only find two useful sources about free writing (and none in the Radboud library). Whereas one of these texts; by PhD student Reed Stratton, is clearly situated within the scholarly sphere, the other text by International Development Researcher Penny Plowman is written as an online article for the university of East Anglia website.

Both articles come to a rather free and open understanding of free writing (Plowman, n.d.). In her text *Reflective Practice – Ideas for how to begin: Free Writing*, Penny Plowman explains free writing as 'a powerful technique which allows your thoughts to flow onto the page, in a stream of consciousness kind of way' (Plowman). She understands free writing as a very personal, non-formal way of writing and states that 'There is an inherent freedom in the instruction to write and keep on writing without worrying about spelling, punctuation and grammar' (Plowman).

PhD student Reed Stratton in his unpublished article *Write Free or Die : Liberation through Free Writing in College Composition* tries to articulate the value of free writing for university students. He discusses multiple ideas on the possible uses and effects of free writing. These conceptions range from the belief that free writing would serve as a medium for unconscious, to more sober conceptions saying that free writing is mainly liberating because everything is accepted since it liberates from the limiting pressure to write something good. Most importantly he concludes his elaboration with the statement that free writing is so valuable because (very surprising) it is free (Stratton n.d.).

when writing in my diary I indeed let go of the idea of constructing sentences the right way, and wasn't concerned with spelling. For me, writing in my writing diary predominantly meant that I didn't think about the end result of my writing diary, and wrote as freely as possible about my creative writing process and other things that – during creative writing – popped up as associations. From the beginning onwards I treated my diary as a confidential document in which I would allow myself to write down everything that came to mind. This is also why the title 'diary' fits so well.

I imagined that, writing as free as possible would serve my research the best way, not keeping a future reader in mind. Although I knew, of course, that I had to show my diary to the readers of this research, I just decided to deny these future readers for a while, in order to not to feel too embarrassed. Although we probably cannot completely define free writing, I really noticed that I – writing down free associations during or regarding the process of creative writing – was able to focus better on the process of my writing, not being too occupied with textual formalities. Writing in a free way helped me to engage with my creative writing process as I tried to register my process as it occurred to me.

Constructing my writing diary this way meant that I mainly wrote in Dutch, but also sometimes in English when my thoughts were shaped in that way. This also meant that I, on writing days, sometimes wrote more words in my writing diary than I contributed to the actual novella. Starting my writing diary off with the plan to mainly register the situations in which I wrote was a good way to unleash further insights in the writing process. Because the main role of my writing diary was to support the investigation of my own

(unfolding) writing process – in such a way that I would be able to research and verbalize the investigative potential of my creative writing within the academic realm – I quickly opened up my writing diary for other kinds of registrations and didn't only write freely in this non-formal, less conscious way. Since my own methodology was open – although theoretically informed in the initial approach – my diary had to be open as well.

This doesn't necessarily mean that I (still) agree with everything that I've written down – something which I think is inherent to free writing. Also, thoughts regarding theories and thinkers throughout my writing diary must be understood in the light of my free writings. They are not meant to be read as theoretical elaborations. Besides, I probably don't relate to these 'statements' correctly most of the time.

Writing in a free way helped me to both formulate and shape my thoughts – in a chaotic and unstructured way – about both the story that I was writing and about the (process of) my writing and research. But I also used my writing diary as a sort of external memory with to do lists and information that I needed to remember within my research. Most importantly for the interpretation of my research was the collection direct insights in the writing process as investigative. Through being engaged with the performance of creative writing and simultaneously registering my own writing, both surprisingly and affirmingly, insights in the way in which creative writing constituted knowledge indeed began to come. In order to be able to come back to these moments of insights that I had in the process of my creative writing as a research, I captured and elaborated on them – sometimes more free than other times – in my writing diary as well. Eventually my writing diary thus became a place in which I both consciously and less consciously collected all sorts of different information about my creative writing.

Because I most of the time worked on my novella and writing diary alternately or simultaneously, I decided to start my writing diary – like my novella – on my computer. Not only for the convenience of having the two tabs open, being able to switch from the one document to the other quickly, but also because it would allow me to faster than when writing by hand. Something that I found out that I need; a medium that could, more or less, keep up with the speed of my thoughts. The reason why I didn't work with spoken messages (an even faster way to capture my thinking) is because my writing-based research evolved in a non-linear way. Especially when insights began to come for the first time, the act of trying to register everything regarding these insights caused me a lot of headache.

On 01-08-16, I wrote in my writing diary that it would have been helpful to have multiple heads for the things that I sometimes tried to put on paper.

Besides, this computer document helped me to find back certain elements more easily, but also allowed me to edit or add certain fragments when needed – I only did this during my writing process, and didn't add or edit my text after I stopped. Or to change the color or highlight pieces of the text, to add a lot of explanation marks (something I discovered that I do way more often than I thought I did) or to simultaneously work on multiple threads of thought, typing these thoughts out alternately. On moments of writing diary related thoughts,

when not having my document close, I would quickly take note of these thoughts to work them out later, also mentioning the context in which I they originated.

Most of the time, the act of typing out insight-related thoughts accumulated and brought these thoughts further. As both my writing and the writing diary evolved, I noticed that it wasn't just the creative writing itself that made me have insights in the investigative character of writing, but rather the entanglement of my writing diary with my creative writing – through the act of contemplating these insights that my writing and research process brought forth. This happened – sometimes unnoticed, but also sometimes consciously – when I started to simply register 'intra-actions' that I estimated worth keeping.

After I was done registering and investigating my own creative writing, my writing diary served as a tool to interpret the investigative potential of writing through the insights that I had along the way. The interpretation of my research made me not only regard my creative writing and writing diary as entangled with one another, also the theoretical toolbox cannot be seen separately. In the following two sections I will shed light on the importance of intra-action of theory and practice to understand the ways in which the different methodological elements produced knowledge in entanglement with each other.

3.3. Reflections on my writing diary in terms of entanglement

Now you know something more about the way in which I brought my writing diary into practice, it is also important to gain a bit more insight in the role of my writing diary in relation to the other elements of my methodology. It is important to know that, especially, these last two sections of this chapter are written after the major part of my interpretation. This theoretical section can thus be seen as an elaboration on the entanglement of the documents and/of my (diary) writing with theory as I experienced it through my research.

In order to emphasize that theory and practice, within my research, aren't clearly separable, I will continue using Barad's Agential Realism. This not only helps us to understand the value of my writing diary and theoretical concepts such as intra-action as a vocabulary within (or in entanglement with) this verbalization, but also highlights the entanglement of these elements within my thesis itself. In this section I will elaborate on the role of my writing diary as a tool for documentation and in the section that follows after this elaboration, I will approach my theoretical toolbox from the same point of view.

Barad's Agential Realism helps us to understand that, although my creative writing and the writing diary are not one and the same text, they don't function as two separate things with a fixed essence and fixed boundaries. Nor does this verbalization in relation to the two. Rather, these three documents are entangled in a process of intra-active performances and becoming. The material separation of these three documents – in print, but also in terms of function – can be understood by what Barad points out as an agential cut. She 'defines' this agential cut against the notion of the so called 'Cartesian cut', that defines inherent distinctions between subject and object, as we have already seen in the explanation of intra-action against interaction (Barad 2003: 815).

Barad explains that differences and 'boundaries' between phenomena are enacted as 'a local resolution within the phenomenon of the inherent ontological indeterminacy [...] Crucially then, intra-actions enact agential separability—the local condition of exteriority-within-phenomena' (p. 815). This means that,

This notion of agential separability also applies to the material-discursive insights that I will articulate in the interpretation of this research.

seeing this thesis as a phenomena in itself, the writing diary, verbalization and novella are not automatically separated through preexisting boundaries. Rather, these documents should be seen as separated within my thesis. As you will read in the interpretation of this research, I will especially zoom in on the different intra-active phenomena within the phenomenon of creative writing, and their role in relation to this research through. But let's limit the scope to these three documents for a bit longer.

On beforehand I was only able to understand the intra-action of my writing diary within the rest of my research on a theoretical level and in a very general sense. However, Swedish feminist pedagogue Hillevi Lenz Taguchi comes up with a valuable take on tools of documentation that approaches the intra-connectedness that I experienced on the level of these documents.

Taguchi uses Barad's Agential Realism to reflect on the use of pedagogical documentation in her *Going Beyond the Theory/Practice Divide in Early Childhood Education*. Although she works in a different field, her elaboration on the entanglement and role of documentation within her research is very valuable to reflect on the role of my writing diary. When talking about pedagogical documentation she means writing, photography, video and for example children's drawings that can be used as tools of observation within pedagogical research. As she relies on Barad's thinking, Taguchi states that the pedagogical documentation must be seen as material-discursive apparatuses (Taguchi, H. L. 2010: 63). She states that:

apparatus used for observing something can be understood as taking part in a process of 'material (re)configurations or discursive practices' (Barad, 2007: 184). This means that the apparatus of pedagogical documentation *is in itself* an active agent in generating discursive knowledge. (p. 63)

Tools for documentation, such as my writing diary, do not exist separately from the topic of investigation and enact their own, material-discursive, agency within the writing and research.

In my research I've really been able to experience my writing diary as what Taguchi refers to as a tool for documentation that 'can be understood to create a temporary 'territory' or space where a constructed cut of the event is actualized and from which further intra-activity emerges' (p. 65). The relationship between my creative writing, writing diary and consequentially this verbalization, is a rather clear example of a certain agential cut within the phenomenon of this AR, because, within my research process, their strong interdependence came to light. Although my verbalization, writing diary and novella consist of separate documents and implied different ways of writing (and reading), they couldn't

have existed without each other. However, their specific performance – for instance based on the different implied readers – makes these texts into separate documents within their relation.

My diary in the end wasn't just a container for all the things that I had to secure or capture along the way, so that I would be able to come back to it later. Instead, it became a valuable place for further inspiration and elaboration within my writing and research process that my thesis not only benefited from after my writing, but also unexpectedly – and maybe it is naïve that I didn't expect this – influenced the writing and research process itself while practicing. It is thus important to see that my diary plays a big part in this research and that insights didn't come from creative writing *only*, but that its the intra-play of all of the different phenomena-within-phenomena that form (the methodology of) my thesis.

Another important statement that Taguchi makes is that 'it is impossible to separate the subject or knower from the object or known' (p. 68). Just like in any other research, my own position as a 'researcher' isn't neutral. And just like my own interests have led me to this AR, also other personal characteristics that are related to my becoming in this world might be of influence in my research. Things such as my slightly restless nature or my experience with diary writing, for example. My choice to enter into a rather loose relationship with my writing diary is also an example of how the writing diary that I first only expected to use for registering intra-actions regarding inspiration from my surroundings for my writing, was open enough to become something else, something bigger, that influenced my research to a(n even) greater extent.

3.4. Reflections on my theoretical toolbox in terms of entanglement

Within this research it was not only difficult to foresee the function and value of my creative writing and writing diary on beforehand. Also the role of the theoretical key-concepts and my conceptions of intra-action and diffraction developed over the course of my writing. Even though I already imagined a certain use and value of my theoretical toolbox, in relation to the practice of writing, the theoretical key-concepts unexpectedly became territories for further elaboration in themselves as well.

Through both writing creatively and writing about (my) creative writing in my writing diary, I came to insights in creative writing as an investigative practice – insights that I tried to articulate using a theoretical vocabulary. But as I used the theoretical concepts that helped me to inform my (initial) methodology to interpret and verbalize the knowledge that came forth, I also came to new understandings of the value of these concepts themselves.

This is an influence that I will come back to in relation to my novella on page 47 of my interpretation.

This section (3.4.) directly emphasizes the entanglement of the theory I used (instead of following a section titled 'reflections on my theoretical toolbox'), since I here reflect on the conceptions that I've already introduced in the previous chapter regarding my initial approach.

Although it is a bit early to make this statement; after reading the interpretation of my thesis, it will be legitimized even more to see that the way in which insights in both theory as well as in practice – through an entanglement of both elements – are brought forth can be seen as diffractive.

Like my writing diary as a territory, I would like to argue that also the theoretical concepts of intra-action and diffraction can be regarded as a place for further elaboration. Using my chosen theoretical toolbox to inform my methodology and verbalize the entangled material-discursive knowledge into the academic realm didn't make these insights purely theoretical. But the knowledge that I verbalized also didn't stay purely materially or practically informed. It was really in intra-action that theory and practice brought forth something specifically entangled with and informed by this specific combination, as will become apparent in the interpretation.

Using Taguchi's insights on tools for documentation made me understand that, just like the writing diary as a tool for documentation can't be seen as a passive aspect of my research, also the theoretical concepts such as 'diffraction' and 'material-discursiveness' within my thesis are active agents in themselves. Not only by means of informing my initial methodology, but also in relation to the interpretation of my research these concepts were very influential. For instance, the concept of diffraction supported my research in unforeseeable ways when I not only came to new insights in the investigative aspects of creative writing interpreting the insights from my writing through this concept, but simultaneously also to a new understanding of the term of diffraction itself.

I will explain how this worked in the interpretation of my research.

Also, seeing creative writing as a material-discursive practice from the start established a certain (material) stance towards creative writing. Connecting the insights that I had, through writing, to the theoretical key-concepts allowed me to extricate how this specific kind of knowledge can be understood as entangled with creative writing as an intra-active, material phenomenon. The same holds for intra-action, a concept that not only informed and legitimized my methodological decision to start a writing diary, but also helped me to understand both theory and practice – as well as the other elements that gartered in this research – as intra-active.

Taguchi's statement that the phenomena that tools for documentation produce 'in the intra-actions are more and other than the intra-acting bodies or matters themselves' comes clearly to the fore in the light of the different intra-acting elements of my methodology (p. 67). The intra-action of the different relations such as my theoretical toolbox, writing diary, myself, the practice of creative writing (and many other agents that in themselves are relational within this research, such as different intra-actions that I disentangled in the process of creative writing as I will argue in the following chapter), brought forth something more and other than the simple sum of its parts. In order to understand the implications of the intra-action of the different methodological elements, we need to head towards the interpretation of the knowledge that my

research brought forth.

I would love to say more about the exact way in which I interpreted the very personal text that my writing diary is, in entanglement with the theoretical toolbox within this verbalization, but unfortunately this is hard to grasp. However, I want to share a remarkable detail with you. Reading back into Barad's agential realism, verbalizing the influence and value of my methodological decisions through theory, my eyes got caught by Barad's claim that 'Bohr's style is atypical of most science writing'. According to her,

[h]is writing reflects a self-conscious regard of his own descriptive process, which is consistent with his thoroughgoing examination of the role of description in scientific knowledge production which is fundamental to his approach to understanding quantum physics. (Barad 2007: 121)

Bohr, according to Barad, felt that it was necessary to study his own writing with regard to his approach to understand his object of study; quantum physics. As I explained above, creative writing, my writing diary, the theoretical toolbox, myself and many other agents, intra-actively formed the process of my research. I didn't find any specific theoretical terms to verbalize the exact way(s) in which I interpreted my writing diary in relation to theory – and maybe the concept of intra-action already covers the dynamic between the different methodological elements that brought forth this knowledge, seeing myself as an intra-active medium in the act of interpretation.

What I basically did, after having stopped creative writing, was starting to read my writing diary again for re-occurring notes or certain patterns. I didn't really have a fixed plan or methodology in doing so, because I quickly noticed that there wasn't really a system to work with. One of the things that I did notice, was that I – through the process of interpreting my writing diary – perceived certain elements that I highlighted in my document and deemed important when taking note of them, in the end less important. Also, as I will point out in the following chapter, sometimes the most important interpretative insights came when I least expected them – for instance in memory when talking to a stranger at a party or during the simple act of getting off a train. It were not exactly the insights individually that I had collected in my writing diary and 'simply' had to verbalize in this text in order to come to an understanding of the value of my methodology. Rather, it was somewhere in between all of the material-discursive elements that together formed my methodology, that made me understand how these small insights all together brought forth an understanding of the value of my own writing as research.

4. Interpretation

'Schreiben heißt sich selber lesen'; this quote by Max Frisch kept on echoing through my head after I started writing *Superpositie*. This quote, that I found back in my room, on the cover of the notebook that I bought a year before I started writing in the museum shop of the Berlinische Galerie, for some reason resonated with what I read in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*:

And once more I see him the way he appeared to me at the very beginning of the novel: standing at the window and staring across the courtyard at the walls opposite.

As I have pointed out before, characters are not born like people, of woman; they are born of a situation, a sentence, a metaphor containing in a nutshell a basic human possibility that the author thinks no one else has discovered or said something essential about.

But isn't it true that an author can write only about himself?

Staring impotently across a courtyard, at a loss for what to do; hearing the pertinacious rumbling of one's own stomach during a moment of love; betraying, yet lacking the will to abandon the glamorous path of betrayal; raising one's fist with the crowds in the Grand March; displaying one's wit before hidden microphones—I have known all these situations, I have experienced them myself, yet none of them has given rise to the person my curriculum vitae and I represent. The characters in my novels are my own unrealized possibilities. That is why I am equally fond of them all and equally horrified by them. Each one has crossed a border that I myself have circumvented. It is that crossed border (the border beyond which my own I ends) which attracts me most. For beyond that border begins the secret the novel asks about. The novel is not an author's confession; it is an investigation of human life in the trap the world has become. But enough. Let us return to Tomas. (Kundera 2005: p. 215)

Reading the above fragment again, after having written creatively myself, there are now more points that I can relate to than I had imagined before I started this writing and research adventure. For example, I can now better relate to the idea that you, as a writer, write about something that you feel nobody has discovered yet or said something 'essential' about. When I started writing, I was first held back by the idea that it didn't really make sense to write, because aren't there enough novels and stories already? Is there really someone who wants to read another – and this is my own view on 'literature', after having tried to write a fiction myself – wordy assemblage about a topic that is somehow close to reality but at the same time very medium-specific and tries to challenge the medium of literature at the same time?

When I started writing, most of my inspiration came from situations I've been through or derived from a topic that I 'struggle' (also in a positive sense) with myself. In brainstorming about the story that I was about to write – I did this without really consciously planning to do so, it just happened, in the same way that inspiration just happened, sometimes when standing under the shower at a friend's place, or sometimes when working on my initial methodology – I realized that I found it almost impossible to come up with a totally fictional, distanced character. It simply felt too difficult to relate to or have insights in a character's 'way of acting' when I didn't know who she, or he, was and when I had to invent this character 'from scratch'.

Since creative writing in this research was more a means for investigation instead of a goal, I decided to do what felt most natural to me, which apparently entailed using things that are familiar to me as the building blocks for the novella and the character. I tried to forefront a sense of restlessness in my writing – with regard to the idea that a person can be characterized by many different, contrasting sides or traits – embodied by a character that I've put into a more or less familiar environment; that was yet distanced enough to make it 'fictional' (whatever fiction might mean).

Through conducting my research, I cannot only compliment Max Frisch' quote in Kundera's words by saying that writing is reading oneself within the world (that can be seen as a trap), to investigate human life. Creating a character around a basic struggle, or idea, on how life can manifest itself for a person – or as Kundera would say; 'possibilities of existence' – I felt that restlessness was not only investigated in within the 'world'.

Above all, I was occupied with gaining insights (with)in the investigative potential of creative writing in medium-specific ways. Through writing creatively and investigating my writing, I became more familiar with all sorts of material relations that were gathered within the phenomenon of creative writing and with their influence on the investigative potential of this practice. These were different relations that need more specification than merely the label 'the world'. Not because I feel that we should define these elements, rather because we need to understand their performance within creative writing. I felt that, through writing and paying attention to the investigative characteristic within the 'phenomenon' of creative writing, investigation took place at the level of the entanglement of all sorts of intra-active relations, that together shape the rich and quite open practice of creative writing.

In the light of this thesis, I would thus rather propose a reformulation of Max Frisch's quote in combination with Kundera's beliefs, also taking into account medium-discursive aspects of the writing practice, saying that; writing is reading oneself in intra-action within the worldly becoming through various material relations that together form the intra-active practice of creative writing.

In this chapter I will not only explain how I, in my writing and research process, came to an understanding of the intra-active elements within creative writing that led to this statement. More importantly, I will interpret how these insights became insightful. In so doing, I acknowledge that my artistic methodology wasn't solely informed by the practice of creative writing, but of course, also embedded within the very specific combination of the

I must say that this is slightly ironic: through investigating my writing, I'm now even more aware of the limits to know one's own motivations (writing diary 14-08-16). When I just started this writing-based research I saw Barthes' notion of the Death of the Author as a limitation to think about Kundera's writing as an AR, because of the limitations to take Kundera's statements both in and about the novel seriously. However, now I'm more familiar with the practice of creative writing – as an open and dynamic phenomenon – I see that beyond me, as a writer, there are so many intra-active elements that have agency in my writing as well.

Although, I will, further on, elaborate on a certain investigative sensitivity that I saw reflected (not diffracted) between Kundera's writing and my own process – regarding the phenomenon of restlessness – it wasn't my intention to investigate a 'possibility of existence' through creative writing (on the contrary).

methodological elements that together (in)formed this research.

I will start this interpretation with some examples – I will not mention all of them here – of the specific insights that derived from my writing diary. From there on I will elaborate on my insights, reading them through the theoretical key-concepts, in the second section of this interpretation; starting my exploration with intra-action, followed by the (role of) diffraction.

After we have come to an understanding of how theory and practice together brought forth new understandings within this writing and research, I will also elaborate on something more unexpected. As you have read in the text box on the previous page my work surprisingly happened to be more connected to Kundera's statements about investigating into human life. In the last section of this conclusion I will shed light on this 'investigative' sensitivity that I believe I witnessed regarding the phenomenon of restlessness.

In this section I will communicate some of the, what I call, medium-specific insights – meaning that the writing process brought forth specifically insights regarding the process of writing – that I gathered in my writing diary. Although this first section might seem to present a rather unsurprising perspective on the writing process as investigative, I need the examples here, to interpret the material-discursive knowledge production of creative writing through theory in the following section.

*It is important to understand that, although I wasn't able to foresee the insights and the way in which they came forth before I started engaging with the practice of creative writing, I did expect to disentangle a certain material-discursive knowledge. These expectations were based on reading Barad's *Agential Realism* and Tim Ingold's conception of the walker.*

4.1. Insights

Before I started writing I imagined that writing would be investigative in multiple ways. For instance, since the main character of the novella is a fashion model, I had to do some desk research into the modeling industry. After having used my memories and Google Maps, also physically visiting Paris during the summer gave me inspiration to add a few spatial and visual characteristics to the story. Through writing about a certain topic, I gained knowledge about 'external' elements such as places and industries. But what I was interested in most, was disentangling the moments of knowledge about the writing process itself, that I wasn't able to foresee before I started creative writing.

Instead of further elaborating on the above described 'desk' or 'field' research, I will mainly build my argument based on the insights that I refer to as medium-specific. This doesn't mean that 'field' and 'desk' research cannot be seen as material-discursive, since also this 'kind of research' can be described in relation to the process of creative writing. Although desk and field research only brought forth knowledge about 'external' – to the practice of writing – elements such as Paris, these elements in my opinion become relations within the writing process as well, as soon as the words that, in any way, relate to them give rise to the story.

Even though I wasn't able to foresee these medium-specific insights before I started, being engaged with the process of creative writing luckily indeed gave me insights into its material-discursiveness. Writing happened to be not simply an act of writing down the exact words that I had in mind. Rather, while writing I noticed – as I wrote in my writing diary on the first of August – that 'simply' partaking in the activity of creative writing unleashed a certain creativity, or

capacity to create. It was not only me, as a writer, who had agency in the practice of writing, but also the act of writing itself that made me come to other words and sentences than I had planned in my head. Although I most of the time roughly knew what I was going to write, the practice of writing itself helped me to deepen these initial ideas and made me go beyond them. It is hard to exactly pinpoint what made the activity of writing further the ideas, both on paper as well as in my head. However, through writing more and collecting more medium-specific insights, I was able to gradually come to an understanding of knowledge production through creative writing and some of the relations that together formed this process.

One of the examples of insights that I had concerned brainstorming with the use of pen and paper. Being engaged with the very specific combination of these materials, allowed myself to unleash some further ideas. I noticed that this combination made me have a better overview on physical paper and made me think more slowly because I'm writing less quickly with pen – which made me create differently than when I would write on my computer.

I also noticed that adding a specific sentence to a specific part of the text can be very influential for the meaning of the text. Sometimes I simply had to add or edit one sentence or change one major word to become aware of the 'meaning'-carrying aspects of both these small textual elements within the larger whole of the text, as they exist in relation to one another. I already knew, but now really experienced, that through the play with placement – but also with word choice and most likely other literary interventions – an author can try to come to (a certain) meaning within the work. This insight made me more and more familiar with compositional aspects of writing a fictional work and revealed that one well-placed sentence can potentially do more for the story than a bunch, or two chapters.

Although these insights gave me a deeper understanding of the rich and open practice of creative writing – because, as I will argue in the next section they not only fore fronted knowledge, but also the entangled material relations – individually these insights weren't the most important aspects in the interpretation of creative writing as investigative. After this period of writing that I earlier referred to as a month – but in fact turned out to be longer – I decided to stop writing and start interpreting. Being concerned with fine tuning my story, I noticed that I didn't really come to new insights anymore.

For the first time since I began this research, I started to read everything – and this took me two days – that I had written down in my writing diary. Being mainly focussed on moments of insights, I for a moment briefly

*In my writing diary, 11-08-16:
Ik wilde een stuk tekst schrijven
maar merkte dat het al typende op
de computer niet echt tot me
kwam. Besloot dat langzamer
denken, met pen op papier
waarschijnlijk een oplossing zou
zijn.*

*In my writing diary, 11-09-16:
Ik merkte het ook al eerder bij de
waterfiets eend en eikels, dat ik
plotseling een andere draai of
andere betekenis gaf aan een
fragment door er iets anders aan
toe te voegen. Het geldt ook op
het niveau van woorden
natuurlijk. Woorden betekenen
dingen in een bepaalde zin, net
als zinnen dat doen in een
bepaalde paragraaf.*

felt disappointed when I realized that the insightful moments most of the time revealed rather obvious knowledge to me. I didn't have the idea that the insights that the act of writing and registering my own writing had revealed through my writing diary were novel nor surprising to me, or to anyone.

Far more important, though, was the collection of all of these insights together. The medium-specific insights, that I had gathered both in my head and in my writing diary together, in relation to theory, brought forth a deeper understanding of the material-discursive potential of writing as investigative. In the following section I will elaborate on how these insights together, in relation to intra-action and diffraction, brought forth both an understanding of both these theoretical concepts and my practice as investigative.

4.2. Insights through theory

As I extensively went through my writing diary (and again, I can't exactly tell you how this interpretation within my verbalization of my writing diary through theory worked), I found out that a lot of the insights that I had, together revealed a deeper logic. I noticed that, through writing, not only insights came forth, but that these insights simultaneously also illuminated the material-discursiveness of the knowledge that came forth. Reading back into my insights highlighted not only the individual insights themselves but also the various material relations that were entangled with these insights. For instance, my process didn't only show that writing with pen on paper helps me to brainstorm, but also highlighted the presence of the different material phenomena such as pen, paper, the novella and myself within this insight.

Another example entailed reading fragments of authors that inspired me. Even though I tried to avoid this – and I think that this was about the only time that I was aware of the inspiration that I got and used from reading another author's work – reading other stories or novels must have influenced my own writing, at least a subconsciously. For instance, briefly browsing through Joost de Vries' novel Clausewitz (2010) gave me inspiration to split my text up in shorter fragments; an act that helped me to let the inspiration and writing process flow again after I felt stuck for a moment. Looking at my own text in relation to this novel by de Vries made me look at my own writing differently. It illuminated a specific detail in both this novel as well as in what my own writing lacked so far – the fragmentary structure – as well as other intra-acting elements such as the novel by de Vries (as a whole), my own ideas and the different (lengthier) fragments that I, until then, had constructed.

Although I on beforehand imagined that intra-action would be a valuable concept, witnessing the practice of creative writing up close and interpreting

*In my writing diary, 15-08-16:
Bij het zoeken van eerste woorden van romans vind ik Clausewitz terug in mijn kast. Ik kijk naar de ultrakorte fragmenten die hij schreef. Grappig; ik dacht dat ik onderzocht hoe te schrijven, maar liep tot nu toe een beetje vast op die fragmenten, dacht dat ze lang genoeg moesten zijn. Ik had er nog niet aan gedacht om dat te 'rethinken'. Mijn structuur kritisch onder de loep te nemen. Goed om dit even te herzien. Ik kan iets van zijn structuur leren. Verschillende dingen kunnen nu wel werken wanneer de fragmenten korter zijn*

How this insight through a reading of my own work with de Vries' novel can be seen as diffractive will become clear from page 53 onwards; specifically regarding the aspect of 'rethinking' described above.

these insights through the concept of intra-action made me really understand creative writing as an open and dynamic phenomenon. I use the word 'understanding' here because I already theoretically knew that creative writing could be seen as an intra-active practice, but it was really through the material process of this research, that I was able to disentangle some of the various relations that were gathered within this practice.

In the introduction I made the remark that I can only interpret the investigative aspects of writing a novella within this very context of research and don't want to make claims about creative writing in general. Nevertheless, using New Materialist theory which considers matter, or phenomena, as intra-active is something that in my opinion might also apply on other creatively written texts or the process of writing. Specifically for this research, however, are the different individual intra-actions that I disentangled from my writing diary.

What the moments of insight within this specific writing and research process brought forth was thus not only knowledge, but also an understanding – through the concept of intra-action – of the various relations that in difference (enacted through agential cuts) were gathered in the creation of this knowledge. Reading my writing diary, I didn't only see the insights themselves – in the way I which I captured them – but also the materiality that these insights were entangled with. According to Barad, 'the material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity. The relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment' (Barad 2007: 152). This means that the insight nor the matter that the insight is entangled with, is prior to the other. Rather, the insightful moments that I registered in my writing diary brought to the fore both the material and the discursive in entanglement with one another.

Another thing I became aware of is that it is impossible to list all of the relations that are gathered within the process of writing, especially when we acknowledge that these phenomena consist of multiple, dynamic, relations in themselves. Some of the intra-acting relations in creative writing that the insightful moments revealed were; (my) computer(s) with Word or Open Office, paper, notebooks, (my favorite) pen(s), the note field in my phone, (future) readers, Literary Theory (and everything I knew about literary conventions and) other authors, other creatively written texts, myself as a writer and researcher, (potential) publishers, Paris, but also Utrecht, Nijmegen, Tilburg, Trains, Busses, Berlin and Normandy and all sorts of (virtual) places in between (since those were places where I wrote), (my) life in general with (my) friends, family, the activities that I partake in, the things that I encounter and the people I meet. But also social conventions, words, specific sentences and other linguistic constructs and specifically the modeling industry, etc. Basically this list can go on forever. Think also about the alphabet, the internet, the physical places where books are printed and specifically for this research; my writing diary, New Materialist Theory, the concept of a master thesis, the master program that I'm writing it for, the field of AR, the agreements with my supervisor, within the institute of the university, etc.

Although we can question whether the different relations, or phenomena, always have to be 'present' during every moment of writing – and I think that this is impossible since I earlier referred to creative writing as a dynamic and open practice – I realized that the insights came forth when at least two or more relations were dominantly active when the individual, medium-specific insights occurred to me. But even though I was now aware of the relations that were entangled with the insights that the writing process brought forth, I haven't yet been able to explain how the investigative dynamic constituting these material-

On page 45 I already mentioned that insights sometimes came highly unexpected. I choose to leave my explanation on the act of interpreting my insights with a brief explanation of that I was strongly engaged – and thus in intra-action – with the process of my research through writing. However, Rosi Braidotti makes some valuable comments on memory in her book Transpositions that are worth further investigation:

Memory is fluid and flowing; it opens up unexpected or virtual possibilities. It is also transgressive in that it works against the programs of the dominant memory system. This continuous memory is, however, not necessarily or inevitably linked to 'real' experience'. (Braidotti, 2006: 168)

The way in which I got this insight can be seen as a way of working from memory, as the insight that derived from the research first, came to me at a later moment, when not actively working on the research. I could explain this as if the material-discursive knowledge of this particular writing and research got materialized through my own memory as I was intra-actively engaged with the research practice itself. But of course I do not have any insight in how this practically, physically took place.

discursive insights within the process of writing can be described.

As I was deeply engaged with the practice of creative writing, I began to notice that writing never stopped. Sometimes, 'after' writing, it was weird to realize that I physically was somewhere in the Netherlands – Maastricht in this case – but mentally really in Paris. Even when I wasn't actively engaged with the performance of writing, writing in fact was continuously interwoven with almost every activity that I participated in. Gradually writing thus happened to occupy a big part of my life and I started to notice that I was writing when I wasn't, because the ideas and sentences kept coming and inspiration knocked on my door at the most unexpected moments. Since writing and research were entangled, this also sometimes applied to the insights that I had. Insights too, sometimes came when I least expected them.

One of the most important insights even suddenly hit me when I got off the train. I still cannot recall how this insight exactly came to me. I can't remember that I was consciously thinking about my thesis, nor was I writing or in any other way performing anything related to this thesis. However, I suddenly realized that the way in which the different – what I became to understand as 'dominantly present' – phenomena within the phenomenon of writing, constituted knowledge can be seen as diffractive. While quickly capturing this realization in my phone on my way home from the train station, I became aware of how I not only came to an insight in how to see the material-discursive dynamics of creative writing as diffractive, but also how we can interpret the methodological metaphor of diffraction and diffractive reading itself differently.

At that moment of standing in front of the doors of the train, ready to hop off, I suddenly understood that it wasn't simply the intra-active, lively process of creative writing that made me gain insights about the material discursive, investigative aspects of creative writing. In order to understand how diffraction can be read as a theoretical tool to understand the investigative potential of matter's performativity within my writing and research – and subsequently understand how my research helped me to develop this new conception of diffraction in relation to this thesis – we have to go back to Barad's definitions of this term.

According to Barad, taking a diffractive stance means to be attentive to details of the phenomena that we want to understand (Barad 2007: 73). Performing a diffractive reading – explained as reading insights of different texts through one another – can be seen as an ethical act; acknowledging the diverse backgrounds and entanglements of each text. Barad states that

building new insights, and attentively and carefully reading for differences that

matter in their fine details, together with the recognition that there intrinsic to this analysis is an ethics that is not predicated on externality but rather entanglement. (Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012: 50).

If I understand Barad right, ethics is something that is intrinsic to an agential realist approach on the intra-active becoming of matter. A diffractive reading can be seen as ethical since it takes into account the fine details and entanglements of different material-discursive, intra-active phenomena.

ethics is not simply about responsible actions in relation to human experiences of the world; rather, it is a question of material entanglements and how each intra-action matters in the reconfiguring of these entanglements (Barad 2007: 160).

Using a diffractive reading can thus be seen as an ethical act because it takes a responsible stance towards these entanglements, that understands phenomena as constructed through one another instead of being exclusive and defined by fixed boundaries, not only taking into account only human, but also non-human forms of agency.

Although 'reading insights through one another' sounded rather vague to me in the beginning, I, in my initial methodology, kind of trusted and hoped that this would work somehow self-explanatorily as soon as I would have been 'finished' with creative writing, ready to read it diffractively with Kundera's work. However, my writing and research – as that moment of getting off the train suddenly made insightful to me – had brought me to an understanding of the methodological implications of diffraction in a more specific way.

I suddenly began to understand the methodological implication of diffraction as 'reading' insights of the various material relations that were gathered in the practice of this writing and research. Instead of seeing the metaphor of diffraction as a methodological intervention on the level of the researcher – who actively reads different texts through one another – I rather propose to understand diffraction as a lens for something that matter performs itself in entanglement. Reading my writing diary through my theoretical toolbox, I would like to argue that the material-discursive insights that I had not only presented both the material and the discursive in entanglement (both the insights and intra-acting relations within the practice of writing). Rather, I would like to understand the metaphor of diffraction as a lens for what happens when the insights – van der Tuin explains a diffractive reading as reading insights of different texts through one another, but we can also replace the word insights for 'logics' or 'material-discursiveness' – of two (or more) dominantly present material phenomena interfere or are being 'read' through one another (reading intended as a performance not exclusively practiced by the human subject).

In reading the gathered insights entangled with two or more relations back in my writing diary, I as a researcher, thus was not only able to acknowledge the presence of these relations within the process of creative writing, but also to read their material-discursive logics, or insights, through one another backwards. I say backwards here, because the diffraction of the different relations already took place, as the insights were already brought forth in my writing diary. I only needed to recognize – or thus 'read backwards' – this diffraction when interpreting my writing diary through the insight that hit me when I hopped of the train.

It was through the act of writing with pen on paper that the material-discursive knowledge that was

It is difficult to exactly determine what made different relations within writing appear as 'dominantly present'.

Sometimes I was consciously thinking about my own work in relation to Literary Theory.

Other times I was just writing with pen on paper or browsing through a book that I found in my room. But I wasn't able to understand why exactly these insights were brought forth at these moments instead of potential other insights, entangled with other intra-acting relations.

Looking at the quotes by Barad on page 52 and 53 we can understand a diffractive 'reading' of intra-active relations within the writing process as an ethical act. Seeing the insights as entangled with the intra-active relations makes us attentive to the differences within this material-discursive entanglement, reading the logics of these different elements diffractively.

Interpreting the different insights in my writing as a diffractive reading of the different relations makes us take into account the fine details of matter within the practice of creative writing, acknowledging all sorts of human and non-human agents.

See next page for text boxes corresponding to this paragraph.

entangled with both pen, paper, me, the story, etc. – enacted through an agential cut – within the process of creative writing, led to a 'reading' of their own logics through one another. Also browsing through the novel of de Vries in relation to my own writing process can be seen this way; encountering the fragmented structure of his text made me aware of certain implications of the structure that my own text lacked so far. This moment of insight not only brought forth inspiration but also consequently revealed the presence of the different intra-acting material relations entangled with this insight.

In my opinion, it is exactly the dynamic of the different 'dominantly' present elements within writing that in some way diffracted their material-discursive logics, which brought forth the insights in my writing diary. The only thing that I had to do as a researcher, was to be attentive to these relational entanglements as they brought forth their knowledge. Although the above examples are rather small and might seem insignificant, after that moment of getting off the train, the interpretation of my research offered me a more specific understanding of diffraction; as a metaphor for something that is already entangled within the performance of my writing and research itself. Instead of *doing* diffraction as a researcher, I would like to argue that we can see the concept of diffraction as an ethical lens to acknowledge the investigative dynamic of matter in its intra-activity. Looking at diffraction from this point of view, we can look at knowledge creation within the practice of (research through) writing in a more democratic way, being attentive to both human and non-human relations within this practice.

Understanding diffraction as a lens through which we can understand the investigative dynamic of the material phenomenon of creative writing is not only an ethical intervention because it recognizes the agency of material-discursive knowledge-making practices, this recognition is also valuable to rethink certain ideas. As Barad explains – and regarding this point I really used theory to verbalize what my practice already made insightful to me – in her interview with Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn:

Diffraction, understood using quantum physics, is not just a matter of interference, but of entanglement, an ethico-onto-epistemological matter. This difference is very important. It underlines the fact that knowing is a direct material engagement, a cutting together-apart, where cuts do violence but also open up and rework the agential conditions of possibility. (Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012: 52)

Being attentive to the entanglements within the practice of writing didn't only present all sorts of different material-discursive relations, but subsequently also showed how these entanglements can be reworked. For instance, when I decided that I wanted to name the protagonist of the story Sofie, I found out that I already

had a Sophie in my story. Wondering whether I had to give every character a different name, I suddenly became aware of the relationship between literature and something so worldly and common as two people having the 'same' name. I realized that I haven't read many stories in which two characters had the same name, and decided to, for the sake playing with the medium of creative writing, preserve both names in my text.

Becoming aware of this small, medium-specific intervention and the material-discursive entanglement (of both names within the story, but also of the relations of literature and reality) immediately led to questions such as; do readers want to read about characters with different names for the readability of a text? How can we describe the relationship between literature and reality? Does literature want to be mimetic? What is my own stance in this case? What is my attitude towards certain 'unwritten conventions' such as these? In other words; how would I rework the entanglement that I just became aware of?

Seeing knowledge creation this way not only foregrounds knowledge in a stable or fixed way, but rather creates space for further elaboration. I feel that, in my research, I've literally been able to witness and thereby understand what van der Tuin and Dolphijn describe as Barad's proposal for an onto-epistemology of how 'matter (among others bodily matter) and meaning are always already immanently enfolded and transitional' (Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012: 58). Using diffraction as a concept to explain the constitution of material-discursive knowledge offers thus not only an ethical lens through which we can acknowledge the importance of other-than-human elements within this writing and research, but it also recognizes the investigative dynamic of matter to rethink and rework certain conceptions in intra-action.

I think that my elaboration on the concept of diffraction also worked in a diffractive way. This section, in which I use New Materialist conceptions as a vocabulary to verbalize my AR, cannot simply be seen as a way of describing my practice merely using theory as a vocabulary. As I already argued in the last section of the previous chapter, theory and practice in intra-action became more and other than the simple sum of their parts. Reading insights from my own writing-based research and methodological conceptions on diffraction diffractively, helped me to rework and rethink not only the individual, rather obvious, insights that I wrote down in my writing diary in terms of intra-action and diffraction, but also developed my understanding and the value within this research of the metaphor of diffraction itself.

This interpretation of my writing practice can thus be seen as a diffractive reading of my creative practice and the theoretical toolbox in their entanglement. Although I cannot exactly explain how I (consciously or actively)

*In my writing diary, 21-08-16:
(Ik bedenk me dat personages vaak geen namen hebben die op elkaar lijken, wat onzin is, want in het echte leven ken je altijd meerdere mensen met dezelfde naam, dus dat kan hier ook in als trucje, waarmee ik weer zou suggereren dat het schrijven op het echte leven zou moeten lijken..)*

*In my Novella, second fragment:
maar omdat het niet mijn talent is om bij het begin te beginnen [...] volg ik in de vertelling ervan het advies op van mijn op een na oudste vriendin Sophie: 'begin maar in het midden, met een heleboel oja's.' Dus zo komt het dat ik op een zondag met fingekeknepen ogen [...] letters voor mijn ogen zie verschijnen die een bijdrage leveren aan de woorden die ik al over Sofie heb verzameld.*

I don't intend to deconstruct Barad's or Haraway's understanding of diffraction in any way. As I mentioned, I'm not familiar enough with quantum physics, and don't understand the phenomenon of diffraction in the same complexity as Barad does. I only want to contribute to this concept by understanding the methodological metaphor of diffraction as a lens to detect valuable intra-actions when being engaged with(in) material practices to study their material-discursive knowledge.

I also figured that, even if I would read this interpretation (of my creative writing as investigative) diffractively with Kundera's work – in order to position my own research in relation to his writing – this would still direct me away from my research question. This interpretation emerged from an entanglement of writing and theory, and thus not from creative writing only. Since I cannot undo this entanglement, such a reading would only possibly make the value of this AR which entailed creative writing in entanglement with theory insightful in order to study Kundera's presumed AR. Which, of course isn't necessarily a bad thing.

In my conclusion I will elaborate on different nuances of the value of my AR to 'answer' my research question.

interpreted my writing diary through theory – as also this didn't happen as an act of actively *doing* diffraction – the insights that I presented so far in this section can be seen as a reading of the insights of both methodological elements through one another. This acknowledges and explains how – not fixing the subject or object of research in an hierarchical way – the concept of diffraction not only helped me to interpret my practice-based research, but that I, in return, also came to another understanding of the methodological concept of diffraction itself.

With only a few pages left in your right hand, you might wonder when I will bring in Kundera in relation to (this) AR. As you've read in the intended methodology and on first pages of my introduction, I truly had the intention to investigate the value of my own AR methodology in relation to Kundera's work by conducting a diffractive reading in which I would read both my own insights and his novel together. However, having investigated the potential of my own creative writing as investigative mainly brought forth an understanding of its potential in relation to its own process.

As I noticed, reading my writing diary suddenly brought forth insights in the investigative dynamic of creative writing in terms of intra-action and diffraction. Because I felt that I had to come to an understanding of the value of creative writing as investigative by engaging with the material practice of creative writing and using the knowledge that this engagement would bring forth, I decided that my new conception of diffraction was more important to come to an answer to my research question. After respecting the knowledge that came forth from of the writing practice itself in relation to theory, a diffractive reading of Kundera's and my work now seemed like a predominantly scholarly methodological step and besides quite 'distanced'.

The way in which my research developed thus made a diffractive reading with Kundera's work less meaningful. Not necessarily because my conceptions on diffractive reading changed and I imagined that my insights, as constituted through New Materialist concepts, were less relevant to read diffractively with Kundera's work, but because this focus on my own process (and the insights that were entangled with it) brought forth more important answers to my research question. In order to come to an understanding of the potential and value of my writing-based research, I had to stay close to my own process and interpretation of my process, which directed its attention more towards itself than in relation to Kundera.

Although I decided I didn't want to read insights of Kundera's work through my own research anymore, through the process of creative writing I did surprisingly – or maybe not that surprisingly since Kundera was such a big

influence in (the start of) this thesis – come to associations with Kundera's work. Finding back notes in my writing diary on the connections that I saw between both my own and his writing, made me feel obliged to word the connection that I stumbled upon. As I will elaborate in the following section, I noticed that I, in some way, came to Kundera-like insights regarding the phenomenon of restlessness.

The following section about these Kundera-like insights can be read as a sort of epilogue prior to the conclusion of this verbalization. It can be seen as a rather loose elaboration on the relation between my research, Kundera's work, and diffraction. This elaboration, however, doesn't contribute to an understanding on my research question by bringing my investigation in relation to Kundera's writing – except for perceiving that it doesn't, partly does answer my question. And maybe this automatically is the answer to why I decided to place this following section before the conclusion.

*Throughout these two last chapters I argued how theory and practice became entangled within this research; The process of creative writing, my writing diary, this verbalization, my theoretical toolbox, myself and probably also other, unforeseeable relations in intra-action illuminated material-discursive knowledge. Surprisingly, the only thing that remained quite distanced for me throughout my research, was Kundera's writing. Within this thesis Kundera's novel and statement outside of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* served more as platform for interaction with my research instead of intra-action. Although I in the following section will try come to an elaboration on the Kundera-like insights that I had, the 'investigative sensitivity' that I saw reflected in Kundera's novel remains a reflection, instead of a connection that can be articulated in terms of entanglement or diffraction.*

Epilogue: Kundera, me and (everything that surrounds) our work(s)

When I just started writing creatively, I in a way tried to consciously do something different from what I read in Kundera's writing. I really tried to find my 'own voice' and stay as close as possible to 'my' way of writing, not being influenced by others too much. But as time passed, and my writing and investigation of my own writing evolved, I at one point had to admit that my writing was more connected to *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, and Kundera's statements about his writing, than I had foreseen.

Before I started writing I knew that I wanted to title my novella *Superpositie*, as well as that I wanted to write about a certain sense of restlessness – I used the word 'kriebel' in my writing diary. Not necessarily because I felt that it would be an interesting 'possibility of existence' to explore – when, at the start of writing, I associated my ideas with Kundera's, I even consciously told myself that I was doing the opposite rather than something similar – but most importantly because it suited the play with structure that I had in mind. The idea of restlessness served an opening to experiment with the entanglement of, or relationship between, the main character and narrator that I had in mind; expressing how both can be seen as embodiments of different possibilities within the same (kind of) person or character.

I also liked the title *Superpositie* because it refers to quantum entanglements, and I thought it would be fun to let Karen Barad's influence on this thesis work through in the novella that I was writing. In a way, I wanted to forefront the idea of wanting to be at multiple (not necessarily spatial) places at the same time. But I also used the idea of restlessness as a thematic concept, to motivate the hurry for success and safety – and in a way the 'successful' position that Sofie accomplished. In the beginning these ideas merely consisted of a few catchwords. But as the writing process evolved and these ideas became filled with sentences, also my understanding about restlessness as a 'possibility of existence' deepened.

Instead of forming just a pillar to construct my story around, my conceptions of the concept of restlessness began to deepen not only within but also outside the boundaries of the novella that I was writing. With regard to this concept, writing didn't only feel like a matter of reflecting or representing the world within my writing. Rather, writing, in relation to this concept almost felt like an act of philosophy.

If writing can be seen as reading yourself, like Frisch suggests, then why did it feel as if I discovered new things about myself – or maybe restlessness in relation to life in general – through writing about this 'phenomenon'? Although this sounds vague – and since I believe that we can't speak of restlessness as a

*In my writing diary, 02-08-16:
[...] had ik 'kriebels' als een van de grote drijfveren in het verhaal. Net zoals je zou kunnen zeggen dat Duizeling een thema is in de roman van Kundera, vooral uitgewerkt met betrekking tot het karakter Thereza. Alleen heb ik niet dezelfde ambitie; ik werk het idee van kriebels niet uit omdat ik het thema wil onderzoeken, daar waar Kundera in de kunst van de roman zegt duizeling als bestaansmogelijkheid te onderzoeken via Tereza.*

*In my writing diary, 14-08-16:
Terwijl ik dit opschrijf merk ik (wederom) dat, door over een karakter te schrijven, waarin elementen van mezelf vertegenwoordigd zijn, ik tot verbanden kom die ik anders niet zou hebben gelegd, en reflecteer op hoe ik dingen zelf normaalgesproken aanpak. Ondanks dat het niet hoeft te zeggen dat ik mezelf ook beter leer kennen (want wie zegt dat dat wat ik me realiseer 'juist' is, of dat het mogelijk is om jezelf te kennen [...] wordt zo wel duidelijk dat het schrijven een bepaalde intra-actie laat zien tussen mijzelf, de wereld om me heen, het personage, (door) het schrijven.*

phenomenon with a clear reference in this world, there is no way to test whether this actually was the case – it was almost as if the fictional revealed something very true. Not simply in writing down ideas from the mind, but through interweaving elements from 'reality' within the material-discursive practice of creative writing. It was as if writing unleashed a certain way of contemplating about the world and that, through writing, I was able to come to a deeper understanding of the elements that I wrote about in my story. Suddenly I was able to relate better to Kundera's statement that he is writing about 'possibilities of existence' and that his novels can be seen as long interrogations.

I also suddenly remembered why I was so much drawn to Kundera's work in the first place. It is not only his style, the structure of the novel or the characters that appealed to me, but maybe even more so this sense of aiming to get a grip on or understanding of the world that I read fore fronted by both Tomas' character but also through statements of the narrator and Kundera himself in 'The Art of the Novel'. As I explained in my introduction, I can very much relate to the urge to come to an understanding of life or the world. Could it have been possible that I, since I was one of the material relations within the writing process, in my writing unintentionally or unconsciously tried to investigate – to put it into Kundera's words – 'possibilities of existence' more than I wanted? Or did something else happen? Although I'm quite convinced that we can in no way grasp what happened, in this section I will try to read the 'Kundera-like' 'investigative sensitivity' regarding 'restlessness' backwards in terms of diffraction, trying to see if diffraction can help to bring us towards an understanding of this (vaguely formulated) investigative sensitivity in terms of entanglement.

At the end of the previous section I stated that this section can be read as an epilogue prior to my conclusion. This is because, trying to use diffraction as a lens for reading these Kundera-like insights still won't help me to come closer to an understanding of my AR as a valuable apparatus to investigate Kundera's writing as investigative. If I were able to come to an understanding of Kundera-like – the term 'Kundera-like' emphasizes the interaction between both his and my writing, seeing my own insights as reflected in (not diffracted or entangled with) his work – insights as diffractive, it would only say something about my own insights, and not make Kundera's writing as research more insightful. You can see this section thus more as a sort of playful attempt to test whether also my new perspective on diffraction and the investigative sensitivity regarding the concept of restlessness can be brought in relation to one another. You can see this section as a short essay within this thesis.

*In my writing diary, 04-08-16:
Toch merk ik dat ik kennis opdoe die niet alleen met het schrijven te maken heeft. Ik merk dat ik na begin te denken over bepaalde processen die passen bij de kriebel [...] Misschien schrijf ik dan wel niet bewust om bepaalde dingen in de wereld buiten het verhaal te ontdekken, over het bestaan bijvoorbeeld, zoals Kundera wel doet, Ik moet toegeven dat ik persoonlijk wel altijd graag grip probeer te krijgen op de wereld om me heen, dus wellicht sijpelt de manier waarop ik inzichten zie wel heel erg vanuit dit beginsel, deze basis door. En begin ik toch dingen te bevragen/ontrafelen over het leven [...]*

This is where my writing diary deprives. Although the words that I wrote down in my writing diary don't explicitly reflect on the 'investigative sensitivity' that I witnessed – maybe also because it, back then, was hard to grasp – in a convincing way, you have to trust me when I say that I did really feel as if I, through writing, was gaining a better understanding of what 'restlessness' felt for me, and potentially meant in life more in general.

Important to state here, is that the investigative sensitivity worked differently than when gathering exterior information to give substance to the story like I did with regard to the modeling industry as a practice or Paris as a place. This (unintentional) investigation of restlessness of course started with an – rather intuitive – idea of what restlessness entailed, but instead of gathering information about restlessness to portray this in my writing, I felt like, through writing about restlessness, I was really investigating into something that transcended the boundaries of my writing, from my writing outwards to 'the world' (instead of the other way around, regarding the desk or field research).

When it came to the medium-specific insights that I had, concepts such as intra-action and diffraction offered me a vocabulary to explain the ways in which knowledge, through various relations within and on creative writing, came forth. In intra-action with my chosen and developed theoretical toolbox, the investigative practice of writing became almost tactile. However, the Kundera-like investigation of 'human life in the world' that vaguely became more familiar is much harder to grasp. Although it is a lot harder to verbalize how this Kundera-like investigation is interwoven with creative writing, I will try to explore in what ways my developed understanding of diffraction is valuable to come to terms with these Kundera-like insights that I seemed to witness.

We could start by proposing that writing about restlessness was simultaneously entangled with an investigation of this 'possibility of existence', or phenomenon, beyond the boundaries of writing itself, in a diffractive reading between the relations; myself, the novella, language, the 'non-essential phenomenon' of restlessness, reality or the world. If we use the concept of intra-action to see that these relations are gathered within the (investigative) material-discursive practice of my writing, then diffraction might be a valuable tool to understand the investigative sensitivity insights as a diffractive 'reading' of all of these different relations. Since diffraction takes into account the position of the relations within knowledge-making practices, we might understand that we can not only take into account influences from life outside of the novella within the writing, but also that in intra-action, we can come to an understanding of these phenomena themselves through writing.

Of course we must understand that restlessness is a word that that can be used in many different ways, and refers to something much more diffuse than for instance a chair. However, being engaged with this writing and research, it did feel as if I was able to explore the meaning or potential of this 'possibility of existence' beyond the mere boundaries of my writing. Besides; is creative writing in the sense of finding words and describing 'the world', 'reality' or 'life' within a fictional work not already an investigative practice? Can't we see this too as

The idea of 'possibilities of existence' gained more substance when I was writing myself. Through writing I began to recognize that 'vertigo' with regard to Kundera's character Tereza (you can find back the quote on page 20-21), can indeed be seen as a possibility of existence, when I began to understand restlessness not only in the context of my creative writing, but also within the context of the world, at least around me.

diffractive? If we would, for instance, understand writing at the intersection (rather intra-section) of reality and language that reads insights of both phenomena through one another, we would not only acknowledge that writing can be seen as extracting knowledge from reality, informing a writer what or how to write, but also that writing about reality simultaneously constitutes insights in 'reality'.

Seeing the above questions that follow after my Kundera-like insights in restlessness, we can already conclude that this is a problem way too complex to solve. But what if we would see the interpretation of this Kundera-like investigative sensitivity in terms of diffraction as an attempt to rework and go beyond structuralist and post-structuralist accounts on the – rather distanced – relation between writing and reality? Instead of thinking on the level of language as a structure to understand – or problematize language to understand – reality, we can take into account the entanglement of matter. Wouldn't we then be able to understand how writing and reality are more intra-actively entangled with one another? Seeing this Kundera-like investigative sensitivity through the lens of diffraction helps us to open up our thinking about the relation between reality and writing in a more entangled way.

According to Barad, making knowledge is not simply about making sense of or making worlds, through for instance language, beliefs or ideas. Instead, making knowledge is about materially engaging as part of the world (p. 91). Instead of using a reflexive mode of looking at the relationship between the world and writing, a diffractive methodology is productive in performative rather than representationalist modes (Barad 2007: 29-30). Of course writing a creative work needs to be considered as something more complex and different than 'just' finding words for reality. However, I do think it might be valuable to – theoretically – regard the investigative potential of creative writing in the world as the diffraction of all sorts of different intra-acting relations, such as the novella that I was writing, the practice of writing in general, myself and 'life outside' myself or the novella.

While I actually, quite clearly, tried not to investigate 'human life' or 'possibilities of existence' through my writing, it is hard to explain why and how this happened anyway. It is impossible, to answer why I came to this Kundera-like way of investigating through writing. Nor does the new conception on diffraction in entanglement with my research through writing help me to go further than this theoretical exploration. It is quite a stretch to state that I, through my conceptions of diffraction, would be able to come to an understanding of the relation between writing and reality – and we must respect structuralist and post-structuralist accounts for the valuable theories that cope with this immensely complex issue. While on the other hand I do believe that I have witnessed something that we can call an investigative sensitivity; a sensitivity that carefully explores the world through writing, touching upon and interweaving certain phenomena from reality in creative writing in such a way that they become familiar to others when they read. And so I do believe it was meaningful to explore whether the relation between reality and writing cannot be regarded more in entanglement with one another, although this exploration remains rather 'theoretical'.

5. Conclusion

Dear Diary,

Time has come to wrap up my verbalization and as such my research. However, writing a conclusion to this thesis is not as easy as I hoped. I wrote multiple beginnings, played with its textual structure in my head – I for instance considered making it consist of text boxes only – and even already wrote a few possible endings, but none of this seemed to work. I cannot come to a conclusion of this thesis by summarizing my verbalization and repeating the most important findings from my interpretation. The question **In what ways can artistic research be valued as an investigative apparatus into artistic research?** cannot be answered in a clear-cut way. Rather, I think that the value of my research should be understood in various nuances and there are even more challenges that make it difficult to verbalize these nuances. For instance, I feel that one of these nuances should be understood in between the lines of my verbalization. Also, this thesis doesn't consist of a verbalization only, but of a writing diary and unfinished novella too. Shouldn't I reflect on these – and other non-printed intra-acting – methodological elements as well?

Let me start by saying that using an artistic research methodology was both the best and worst decision that I made while being enrolled in this master program. On the one hand it was a delight to sit and take the time to write creatively, which allowed me to combine the necessary with something I'm passionate about. It too was a pleasure to work with New Materialist theory. At the same time using an artistic methodology was a very vulnerable project which demonstrated that it is difficult to come to terms with the quality of my novella – as I don't feel satisfied with my novella. I let the decision to hand in an unfinished novella derive from the fact that 'fine-tuning' my writings didn't foreground insights in the writing process anymore. Simultaneously this text's unfinished state can be seen as an artistic decision as well, just like my writing diary feels like an artistic document too, and my verbalization wasn't purely a theoretical text as I will argue further on. But again, like Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén argue regarding the field of artistic research, 'researchers must have the courage to come to terms with the diffuseness and uncertainty of a new research field' and this is something that became very clear to me while writing (Hannula, Suoranta & Vadén 2005: 14). Trying to come to terms with my research project became very difficult when I decided that I would have to interpret the research results – or rather knowledge that my research brought forth – in relation to the research process. As Barad emphasizes; the material and discursive cannot be seen separately from one another (Barad 2007:152). My research showed me that I was only able to understand what both the 'results' and research process entailed when I studied them together. Trying to both verbalize the process and knowledge that came forth into an 'academic' text in order to make sense of this unequivocal, messy project caused me a lot of headache and occasionally a sleepless night.

I decided that an understanding of my dynamic process is important because it articulates the value

of engaging with my artistic practice within this research. I perceived that the agency of my creative writing to alter my methodology already highlighted one of the nuances of the value of my AR. But why was it important to adjust my methodology when starting to involve in creative writing?

In the introduction of my verbalization I emphasize Kundera's work as a potential artistic research. Like I maintained in the first chapter of my verbalization, I intended to come to an answer to my research question by conducting a diffractive reading of his work through my own work that I still had to write. I departed from the moment on the balcony chair and the, through association sparked, interpretation of his work that I interpreted as a diffractive reading of both his and my own writing. I imagined that such an approach would make insightful whether I would be able to explore the value of my artistic research as a research apparatus to investigate his presumed artistic research. However, like I explained in the introduction and first chapter, I was unable to foresee what exactly my methodology would entail before practicing creative writing in the context of this research. This is the reason why I formulated my research question in a rather open way, and acknowledged from the start my that initial methodology – which was mainly informed by theory – would primarily serve as a guideline.

The first step in what I would later refer to as the 'actual' approach, was to familiarize myself with the practice of writing and to gather knowledge as I wrote along. As such my approach resonates with Tim Ingold's metaphor of the walker, who 'knows as he goes along' (Ingold 2015: 47). This research turned out to be a very personal project – and I figure that like creative writing, other artistic expressions can be very personal as well – that became even more personal through the use of my writing diary. In this diary, in which I started to register my own writing process, I almost instantly adopted a 'technique' referred to as free writing. Through free writing – to a certain extent I think that it was beneficial that I'm not such a practiced writer and was able to look at the writing practice from a rather 'fresh' and open point of view – I was able to become and stay in touch with my writing process, registering every writing related association that I encountered; from insights; to struggles; to all sorts of intra-actions. Although I from the start hoped to register influential (like mentioned in the second chapter, mainly environmental, inspiration influencing) intra-actions, I wasn't able to foresee that I would also disentangle various agential intra-actions within the 'phenomenon' of creative writing itself. Nor did I expect that these intra-active elements would be – material-discursively – illuminated in entanglement with the insights that derived from being engaged with my writing process and diary.

Reading my writing diary after I had stopped working on my novella, these 'medium-specific' insights individually appeared rather small and seemed insignificant. However, seeing these insights together, I noticed that they fore fronted a certain investigative dynamic within the practice of creative writing that I communicated in New Materialist terms. I became aware of the possibility to come to an understanding of the investigative potential of creative writing without the connection with Kundera. Even in my writing diary I didn't come to an intra-action with or, less consciously initiated, diffractive reading with Kundera's work. I only witnessed a certain Kundera-like 'investigative sensitivity' which can be verbalized more in terms of interaction and reflexivity and says more about my own writing than about Kundera's.

I understood that, since my engagement with the material practice of creative writing helped me to come to material-discursive insights that foregrounded a certain investigative dynamic within writing – and

in connection to theory accumulated knowledge about this investigative potential – I was able to study the value of my artistic research as an apparatus to investigate my own artistic research. Instead of trying to explore the value of artistic research as a methodology to investigate into Kundera's presumed artistic research, I came to a more materially-driven understanding of the potential of my research to investigate into its own investigative potential. This materially-driven – or artistically-driven is maybe even a better term – aspect is important because it was exactly the engagement with the material practice of creative writing which helped me to estimate its investigative value. Whereas, in order to read my insights through Kundera's text, I still had to conduct a very conscious methodological step. I thus didn't need to read my research diffractively with Kundera's anymore, 'simply' because I was able to come to terms with the value of this AR through writing by exploring the investigative potential through knowledge that the engagement with this process itself brought forth.

Besides, as I interpreted the insights from my writing diary – although they might not seem very recognizable due to my free writing, I truly was able to disentangle these insights in my registrations – in relation to New Materialist theory, I began to understand diffraction as something that matter performs in itself; as something that doesn't necessarily need to be conducted by the 'investigating subject'. Reading the diffraction as a concept describing the investigative dynamic within creative writing made me understand even more that a diffractive reading of my own writing with Kundera's work would be a rather distanced step (I mean distanced in the sense that this step wouldn't be driven by the artistic project, but rather a conscious decision that I would make based on research motivations). Since artistic research, according to Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén, is about using an artistic practice to accumulate knowledge, I suddenly felt that the insights that came forth from this close engagement with the practice of creative writing was what AR was all about.

The fact that my creative practice within this research had the agency to alter my perspective on my research topic was one of the ways in which I decided to understand the value of my creative writing as a research apparatus – and subsequently why I had to verbalize my altering research process in order to bring this point across. But in order to articulate the value of my AR to investigate into AR, I might also look at the interpretation of the knowledge that is entangled with the altering process of this research.

Like I argued in the interpretation of my verbalization, I think that the interpretation of my research can be seen as a diffractive reading of both the methodological concept of diffraction and insights from my own creative-writing based methodology. Instead of seeing my interpretation as a matter of verbalizing insights (with)in my creative writing practice through a scholarly accepted vocabulary, I would like to argue that my interpretation came forth in a diffractive way; 'Reading' the logics of diffraction together with the knowledge that derived from my artistic practice not only led to an interpretation of my research, but to new insights regarding diffraction.

Even though Barad talks about diffraction in the context of quantum physics when she says that diffraction underlines that 'knowing is a direct material engagement, a cutting together-apart, where cuts do violence but also open up and rework the agential conditions of possibility', I feel that I can translate this statement to my own material-discursive insights that I began to see as constituted diffractively (Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012: 52). Like I argued in the interpretation, becoming aware of the insights that were brought

forth – when 'reading' the logics of two or more elements diffractively – within my writing process made questions emerge. For instance, the 'same name insight' made me rethink and rework certain 'relations' that I imagined to have detected. It foregrounded questions that made me consciously motivate why I wanted to maintain both names in my writing. In the same manner I think that the (diffractive) interpretation of my insights from creative writing – that came to me when getting off the train – showed how the concept of diffraction can be reworked; or at least how it can be reworked in relation to this thesis.

In a more extreme way I tried to test whether my new conceptions of diffraction would bring forth valuable insights in relation to what I referred to as a Kundera-like investigative sensitivity. Even though this investigative sensitivity remains very vague and difficult to grasp – regarding this point I do think that it might have helped when I would have been a more practiced writer, being able to develop my understanding of writing as 'interrogative', to put it in Kundera's words – I tried to test whether the concept of diffraction in relation to my Kundera-like insights would also entail the potential to rethink the relation between 'writing' and 'reality'. Seeing this Kundera-like investigative sensitivity – and writing as interrogative or, as an act of philosophy – in relation to the concept of diffraction made me figure that writing might be seen as more entangled with reality instead of something that is most of the time conceived of as rather distanced in relation to 'reality' in post-structuralist and structuralist traditions. However, I cannot see this elaboration as something more than an essay. Not only because I haven't been able completely 'grasp' the investigative potential that I tried to articulate. But rather because this is such an immensely complex philosophical question that requires in depth study and structuralists, post-structuralists and thinkers from other philosophical traditions must be enormously respected for dealing with this problem for ages.

Continuing with the fact that the investigative sensitivity was difficult to understand, I think I can also answer my research question by emphasizing the limitations regarding my artistic approach instead of only by defining its value. Understanding what the pitfalls were within my research, also brings forth a nuanced understanding of the value of this AR. One of these limitations can be understood within the light of my initial methodology and the fact that I haven't been able to study Kundera's presumed AR through my own AR. I was able to study my own AR as an AR, but my process didn't bring me closer to an interpretation of someone else's work as an AR.

Another limitation of this approach; this 'diffractive reading' of theory and practice – although it might sound hard to believe – truly came in the form of an insight that came out of the blue. It was really when getting off the train that I suddenly realized that this investigative dynamic within my creative writing can be called diffractive. This research specifically made clear to me – maybe because knowledge production itself was my topic of interest – that it is difficult, or maybe even impossible, to understand how ideas and knowledge appear in the brain. Although I can understand knowledge as something material and relational, I can still not grasp how this moment of insight appeared to me within the interpretational phase of my research. Even with regard to the individual insights within my writing process, questions about *how* these insights emerged are very complex to answer. Regardless my theory of the 'dominant' intra-active relations that in diffraction constituted knowledge, I'm not able to detect why these relations in my writing and research process were foregrounded, entangled with the insights that I had, while others weren't. Other than maybe saying that this also is an intra-active feature, defined by the intra-active combination of the different

elements – such as me, and other writing related phenomena – in AR at a specific moment in time and space.

Another challenge that derived from the 'diffractive' reading between theory and practice – that resulted in my interpretation – is the fact that theory and practice within my research became entangled, which makes it difficult to position the investigative value within my research in the artistic practice of creative writing solely. I decided that I wanted to use New Materialist theory as a vocabulary to verbalize the insights from creative writing within the academic realm. But I didn't expect that this would lead to an entanglement with my practice in the way it did.

Like Taguchi suggests when talking about tools for documentation, within my own research not only my writing diary but also theory happened to become a territory for further elaboration. The knowledge that I verbalized within my interpretation derived from an entanglement with the methodological elements within this research. Together, theory, the practice of creative writing, my writing diary and even this verbalization brought forth something more and other than the simple sum of their parts.

I think the theory-practice entanglement within this research might be seen as a chicken-or-egg problem. Without the small, medium-specific insights I would never have been able to come to an understanding of these insights as material-discursive, intra-active or diffractive, but without knowledge of New Materialist conceptions I would have never started writing with the idea to gather material-discursive knowledge and detect intra-actions.

The entanglement of practice and theory within this project makes it difficult to position the knowledge-creating agency at the creative practice and makes this project in my opinion oddly fall in between these two spheres; or makes my research both artistic and academic at the same time. However, my research question regarding this aspect of my research cannot be understood in terms of limitations only. Simultaneously this theory-practice entanglement also can be seen as the value of my AR.

I would like to argue that the fact that theory and practice became mutually inseparable helps to reconstitute the boundaries of what is academic and what isn't – and what is artistic. The fact that both realms in entanglement accumulated knowledge within the academic realm, through the academic verbalization – while also maintaining an artistic project – shows how the academic realm may possibly be more open to knowledge production through methodologies that 'traditionally' are located outside of this realm. Even though it's impossible to clearly separate the agency of the artistic practice from the agency of theory within this process, noticing that my creative practice did influence the knowledge constitution within this project and accumulate theoretical knowledge, for me, also partly highlights the value of my artistic research.

Bringing an interpretation of my process into words when writing my verbalization, I stumbled upon another investigative nuance that I think shows the strength of this research. This is something that I have been able to explore in between the lines of writing this verbalization, and that can be regarded in relation to my previous argument since I would say that this nuance says something about the value of my research to investigate my own artistic research in the context of the academic realm. While I was elaborating on my research project in the verbalization – in order to bring forth the knowledge in an academic manner and contribute to theory that I used – I noticed that this act of verbalizing went hand in hand with some real challenges and (materially-driven) decisions on the level of textual structure.

As I began elaborating on my research process I noticed that in other instances of academic writing,

I wouldn't be very aware of textual implications when bringing forth my argument. However, trying to write this verbalization in a linearly way in first instant, made it almost impossible to elaborate on my research process. I decided that, in order to bring across my research in a way that would do justice to my research itself, I had to let go of this linearly way of writing. While I was writing my verbalization, I thus noticed that I need to rethink the materiality of the text that I was writing – against my initial conceptions of an academic text.

I decided to add a deconstructive section to my interpretation and announce that my verbalization cannot be read in a linear way; I added two methodological chapters and I used text boxes to cope with the odd structure of my text and try to resolve some reading difficulties. Writing this 'academic' text – and I'm aware of the fact that this was only one of the possible ways in which I would have been able to bring across my argument through text – foreshowed how the act of articulating the insights of my writing adventure in entanglement with theory also went hand in hand with difficulties regarding the materiality my verbalization.

Not only the non-linear structure of the text, but also other textual interventions supported me to come to terms with this creative process-driven project. You might, for instance, wonder why I decided to maintain my elaboration on Barthes' 'The death of the Author' within my verbalization when I was focussed on the writing process instead of on finished literary texts. Also, why did I decide to refer to a quote by Max Frisch – an author who I'm barely familiar with? In my verbalization I didn't intend to make claims regarding different conceptions towards literature. Rather, the work of these authors/thinkers helped me to navigate through my research by offering me points of reference against which I was able to verify my developed understanding of my own project. Becoming aware of the fact that my process has changed the way in which I read Barthes' famous essay, helped me to become aware of the influence that my research had.

Also, the long sentences that I used to articulate my research must be regarded in the light of verbalizing my research. Even though one might find that these sentences could have been constructed shorter, I felt that I need long sentences because the entanglements within my research sometimes made me have to express multiple things at the same time. Whereas my verbalization on the level of content might be seen as a rather academic piece, the structure involved creative decisions and made me regard this text – like other elements within my research – in a very material way as well. In my opinion, the fact that the act of bringing forth my research went hand in hand with textual struggles – trying to come to terms with the diffuseness of this project – shows the value of my research to investigate its own position in relation to the academic realm.

When I would take the concept of diffraction further once again – and I'm not sure if I want to – I can argue that this verbalization is the result of a diffractive 'reading' of the phenomena: academic text and the research that I tried to articulate. Such a stance would help me to understand why not only my view on my 'academic' text, but – in the act of verbalizing – also my conceptions on the novella and writing diary got reworked. Like I mentioned in the beginning of this text, I'm not even sure whether I can still call *Superpositie* a novella due to its unfinished state and I think that my writing diary – or maybe all of the documents, my verbalization included, together – may be seen as both artistic as well as informed by research decisions.

The above described material struggle with text was necessary because otherwise I wouldn't have

been able remain close to the insights that practice and research in entanglement brought forth; which just doesn't come in such a clear and unambiguous way. I said that I don't know if I want to put this 'investigation in my research in between the lines of my verbalization' in terms of diffraction because I don't think that my developed understanding of diffraction is the main point within my research. Rather, I believe that the value of this research can be better understood regarding the dynamics of knowledge production and the means of articulating this knowledge. This is something that I both directly as well as indirectly hoped to communicate in my verbalization, bringing forth the knowledge that my process accumulated, as well as exploring the value of my AR in between the lines of the verbalization.

Nevertheless, understanding diffraction as an ethical implication serves as a nice metaphor to end this thesis and articulate what I've tried to achieve within this research. Verbalizing the value of my research in various nuances is a decision derived from being attentive to the fine details of my research matter. I tried to let my methodology evolve around an engagement with practice in an open and intra-active way and to do justice to my research process as well as possible, letting it unfold within the textual phenomenon of my verbalization. Articulating my research while trying to come to terms with its diffuseness came forth from an attitude in which I tried to let the material-discursive, investigative dynamic of creative writing – eventually in entanglement with theory – speak; treating both process and results, as well as practice and theory, in in entanglement with one another in order to understand that I might be able to come to terms with my process on its own terms.

Ps.

It is my opinion that the value of my artistic research must be understood in terms of knowledge production, and I tried to articulate the value of my artistic research to investigate into my own artistic research in different nuances. However, I'm not sure whether I was able to detect every nuance that articulates the value of my project – nor whether verbalizing the value in nuances was the right approach. And since I was only one of the material relations that took part in this investigative process, I think that this doubt might be legitimate.

Pps.

Although it is not for me to judge whether this research can be seen as such a 'best case scenario', after having practiced this artistic research, I can now better relate to the following quote by Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén who say that

Instead of a mechanical and closed relationship, artistic research is a good example of an activity which by its nature is relative, uncertain and changing, but at the same time (in the best case scenario) experimental, an intellectual pleasure creating new knowledge. In other words, it is an activity which challenges and exposes, opens up and activates in order to consider who we are, where we are, and how we are. (Hannula, Suoranta & Vadén 2005: 151)

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