

Dia's

Andy

May 2005–April 2006

\$11<sup>99</sup>

New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2005

# An Aesthetics of the Index?

by Liz Kotz

Andy believed the tape recorder could change writing as much as the camera had changed painting.

## Victor Bockris

In those days practically no one tape-recorded news interviews; they took notes instead. I liked that better because when it got written up, it would always be different from what I'd actually said.

## Andy Warhol

Published by Grove Press in 1968, Andy Warhol's *a: a novel* consists of the taped and transcribed recordings of twenty-four hours of Warhol and his superstar Ondine on speed as they travel between the Factory, downtown venues, and uptown parties, in what is presented as one long day-and-night's journey into babble and delirium.

Initiated in August 1965, the taping was not completed until some two years later; hence the continuous nature of the recording is somewhat "faked" by splicing together different takes, not unlike the looping and refilming Warhol employed in his 1963 film *Eat*.<sup>1</sup> While many aspects of the novel's making are recorded within the text, as participants like Ondine, Billy Name, and Stephen Shore discuss the taping as it occurs, the only extended accounts we have are provided by Warhol himself in his 1980 memoir *POPism: The Warhol 60s*, as well as by Warhol associates and biographers Victor Bockris and Bob Colacello and in scattered recollections by some of the participants in the stream of memoirs published since Warhol's death in 1987.<sup>2</sup>

If one trusts the accounts of the legions of associates who passed through Warhol's life from the early 1950s until his death, one encounters a paradox: that Andy Warhol, perhaps the most famous artist of the second half of the twentieth century, did not do anything, have any ideas of his own, or make any of his own work. This picture is echoed by art-historical accounts in which every move Warhol made merely replicates pictorial strategies of Cubism or painterly procedures of other postwar painters. Even the poet Jackson Mac Low earnestly claims his published score for the never-realized *Tree Movie* as the direct inspiration for Warhol's static camera-roll films—although

Mac Low at least acknowledges that the composer La Monte Young's durational pieces were a precedent for both. Warhol himself hardly contests such impressions, through his endless use of surrogates to speak for him and even act as him.<sup>3</sup> It is no coincidence that the only books in which Warhol says "I" were written by others.

However we are to approach this production, conventional models of authorship will not quite work.<sup>4</sup> The lines between the author, the subject of the enunciation, the subject of the utterance, and the character—"Warhol"—have never been so blurred.

In *POPism*—coauthored, transcribed, and perhaps ventriloquized by Pat Hackett—Warhol (or is it "Warhol"?) recalls how he "wanted to do a 'bad book,' the way I'd done 'bad movies' and 'bad art,' because when you do something exactly wrong, you always end up with something right."<sup>5</sup> According to mainstream critics, Warhol succeeded all too well. An unnamed reviewer in the *New Yorker* notes that, despite passing resemblances to classic works by no less than James Joyce, Leo Tolstoy, Marcel Proust, and Gertrude Stein, "The book has nothing else in common with those illustrious works . . . since it is an unreadable, and thus a totally boring, jumble."<sup>6</sup> Unfavorably comparing *a: a novel* to Robert Pinget's novel *Inquisitory* "since the books are similar in intention, and related in technique," the *New York Times* declares that "'Inquisitory' is a brilliant, dazzling success, showing up Warhol's 'a' for the cheapjack, shoddy, derivative \$10's worth of incomprehensible yelpings and yowlings that it is."<sup>7</sup> Only slightly more sympathetic, Robert Mazzocco in the *New York Review of Books* quickly dismisses *a's* formal threats by simultaneously asserting the reassuring "familiarity"

of its contents and the sordid depravity of its characters:

What is *a* about? If one were to take *a* seriously, one would have to say it is about the degradation of sex, the degradation of feeling, the degradation of values, and the super-degradation of language; that in its errant pages can be heard the death of American literature, at least from *The Scarlet Letter* onward. Actually, it's about people who talk about Les Crane and Merv Griffin. . . . Throughout *a* they chat on the phone and they chat in the cab, they chat in the restaurant . . . they chat especially when stoned. *A* is a bacchanalian coffee-klatch. . . . Sterile and insentient and instantly dated, void and verbose, they instantly proliferate themselves and each other.<sup>8</sup>

Despite earnest efforts by, for instance, the *Times* reviewer to equate Warhol's project with more conventional texts that present themselves as representations of speech, *a*: a novel is clearly not "written in the form of conversation." Recalling his early years with *Andy Warhol's Interview*, Bockris describes Warhol's decidedly unorthodox insistence on approaching interview subjects "with as empty a mind as possible":

This way, the interviewer will get the most accurate and revealing image of the subject via the topics he or she chooses to discuss, as well as the grammar, syntax and vocabulary used. If a tape is transcribed very accurately with each "uhm," "err" and "but" included, what is redacted is a voice portrait.<sup>9</sup>

Bockris's reference to an "empty mind" parodies composer John Cage's Zen-laced pronouncements, revealing their structural resemblance to the more mundane recording devices Warhol employed—and their link to the indiscriminate cultural affirmation of Warhol's incessant "Oh, wow." But it is precisely in the operations of *transcription*, and Warhol's maddening refusal to edit, that Bockris locates Warhol's art—practices that replicate Cage's nonselective acceptance of the results of experimental procedures. Bockris's slightly varying accounts provide the most extensive descriptions of the taping and



transcription of *a: a novel*, which preceded Warhol's published interviews and provided the model for their precisely redacted "voice portraits." Noting with considerable understatement that "a number of inconsistencies occurred in the process of transcribing the tapes" of recorded conversation, Bockris observes, "Throughout the transcription words are misspelt, including 'and' and 'but,' and the grammar is confused; sometimes there are sixteen columns in a row or paragraphs with six brackets that open but never close."<sup>10</sup> According to Bockris, Warhol's initial decision to write a novel using the cassette tape recorder he received in the mail from Phillips Recording Company in August of 1965 met with protests even from Factory colleagues who declared "that's not writing, that's recording." But it was Warhol's decision, two years later, to accept the haphazardly produced typewritten pages as he received them, and to publish them without further editing or textual normalization, that met with the most sustained outcry—and transformed the book "from a good idea into literature"<sup>11</sup>:

In August of 1967, Warhol was handed the six hundred page manuscript to read in preparation for publishing the book. He was astounded by what he received, but contrary to what was expected, rather than take the pages to someone and have them properly retyped, Warhol embraced the transcription exactly as it was. This is fantastic, he said. This is great. He read it six times from beginning to end.<sup>12</sup>

90 In Bockris's view, in his refusal to normalize the manuscript according to the dictates of conventional novelistic or even journalistic procedures—generic professional standards all-too-evident in Warhol's subsequent, more successful books like *Philosophy and POPism*—Warhol not only preserved the "aura" of the Factory but presented the raw babble and incoherence of speech as actually spoken rather than as contrived by authors writing "in the form of conversation":

in preserving the manuscript's shattered state Warhol was actually preserving the precise aura of the conversations. Because as we know, people don't actually speak in sentences, and there aren't always periods of complete silence when one person speaks and others are supposed to be listening. Instead there is always some sort of babble going on . . . language is broken. . . . Andy created an accurate picture of a day in the life of the factory in the 60s.<sup>13</sup>

Let us turn to the text. From its vast archive of recorded speech, one cannot presume to select artistic "high points" or even paradigmatic passages but merely "sample" arbitrarily chosen instances from a potentially limitless field of material. However foreign this may be to the logic of the "literary" and even its supposedly all-encompassing genre, the novel, this archival impulse can be found in a large number of 1960s Conceptual art projects that either select an arbitrary sample of a larger set—as in Ed Ruscha's *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations*, *Thirty Four Los Angeles Parking Lots*, and *Various Small Fires*—or attempt to represent every single instance of a quantitatively vast or even infinite number of phenomena, as in On Kawara's *One Million Years* (1966–present) or Douglas Huebler's *Variable Piece #70* (1971), which proposed:

Throughout the remainder of the artist's lifetime he will photographically document, to the extent of his capacity, the existence of everyone alive in order to produce the most authentic and inclusive representation of the human species that may be assembled in that manner.

By pushing its logic to an unrealizable extreme, these Conceptual projects implode the representational function, dysfunctioning all the selection operations by which an exemplary or representative "part" can be said to stand for a larger whole.<sup>14</sup> Coming to the fore in the 1960s, such arbitrary sampling procedures have deep roots and resonances in the twentieth-century avant-garde, from Marcel Duchamp's 1913 *Three Standard Stoppages* (a set of three measuring instruments produced by dropping lengths of string and recording where they fell) and his subsequent series of "ready-mades" (largely unaltered industrially produced objects selected as art objects), to Cage's "silent" composition, *4'33* (1952). Like Huebler's *Variable Pieces* and Kawara's endless series, *a: a novel* obeys Sol LeWitt's dictum, in "Sentences on Conceptual Art," that "the idea" becomes "a machine that makes art." Of course, Warhol's implacable machines proceed without the high seriousness or meta-discursive apparatus that so often framed Conceptual art's procedures as rational and self-consciously critical artistic operations—although his subjects provide their own ludic moments of self-reflexive commentary:

O—Well, we could even, we could make up a game that would be even better. Games are so . . .  
 T— Well, you know  
 O—The only way to talk is to talk in games, it's just so fabulous.  
 T— Ondine has games that no one understands.  
 O—It's wonderful (laughter)<sup>15</sup>

Yet it is in the flow of text, of page after page of text, that *a: a novel* works, a durational project that must be undergone to be understood. Like philosopher Michel Foucault's "continuous streaming of language," a ceaseless and incessant babble that precedes a subject "enveloped in words,"<sup>16</sup> quotations from *a* are but a series of snapshots. Nonetheless, from a handful of pages we can get a sense of how the shattered text compiles and reproduces in fragmented, accidental form almost every aesthetic device of twentieth-century avant-garde and experimental poetic practice.

Through errors of transcription and redaction, the endless babble of conversation is pulverized into fractured typographic utterances. Sentences jump from topic to topic and speaker to speaker, often without indication or clear attribution. Punctuation, from ellipses to question marks to parentheses, proliferates without regulated usage or readily apparent function, sometimes suspending large blanks of space in the midst of text. Rampant misspellings pulverize words and asyntactic passages of loosely rendered conversation and interruption nearly parody Dada poetry. Casual wordplay, punning, and incoherence abound, as do "experimental" devices like numbered paragraphs, doubled columns and the occasional different typeface. And, on a deeper level, the endless repetitions and digressions of speech render the text a late-twentieth-century version of Stein's legendary "long book," *The Making of Americans*.

While Warhol was no doubt sufficiently informed about modernist and avant-garde poetics to recognize their resonances in the jumbled manuscript delivered to him, these devices nonetheless occur accidentally, unintended, through the unforeseen distortions and deviations introduced in the text's production. In the face of such compilation, even the "chance"-generated and collage practices of John Ashbery, Jackson Mac Low, and other postwar experimental poetries appear mannered and contrived.



However perverse, the 451-page novel incorporates and extends the diverse array of postwar practices we might have read as extensions of the “readymade” principle: 1) the use of the recording mechanism, without apparent criteria of selection or importance, to “sample” from a potentially uninterrupted flow of existing material, in this case, twenty-four-hours of conversation; 2) the use of durational structures based on externally or arbitrarily determined time brackets, and the use of existing technologies of transcription and transmission without correction for distortions and imperfections; and 3) the use of predetermined or chance-based processes, executed in a quasi-mechanistic manner, to produce unanticipated and largely uncontrolled results, in a manner that largely cedes conventional functions of “authorship,” creation, and expression to a simple device.

All these procedures—the “simple” selection of readymade materials, the use of indexical procedures of inscription, the investigation of noise, dirt, and distortion, and the larger project of suppressing artistic subjectivity and control in favor of an aesthetics of “indifference” or “indeterminacy”—all these strategies are fully legible in other aesthetic spheres, particularly in that field we still call “visual art” (however debatable the status of the visible is in such production). Yet such procedures remain almost completely unintelligible and unreadable within the field of “literature” or “writing.” We could simply chalk this up to the extraordinary conservatism of the literary establishment in the United States, which routinely recycles the aesthetic interventions and even the clichés of twentieth-century literary modernism in each generation’s supposedly experimental work—a temptation all-too-easily confirmed by responses to a in mainstream “literary” venues then and now.<sup>17</sup>

Yet such difficulty invites us to look deeper, at the structural obstacles such a work presents, a difficulty and illegibility that hinges, in part, on subjecting language to certain mechanisms of recording and transcription. As critics like Roland Barthes have noted, the structural properties of language—as a set of coded, discrete signs—distinguish it from other representational media like photographs or films. For Barthes, this structural difference accounts for the difficulty of

producing something like a “true semiotics” of film or photography, leading him to declare, in his famous if problematic pronouncement, that photography offers “a message without a code.” Whatever difficulties the continuous sign poses for semiotics, its inevitable redundancy allows it to transmit at least some of its message despite considerable noise, distortion, and loss of “image quality”: as we know from Warhol’s silkscreens and films, a degraded image can still be (at least partly) read. The once aggressively antiaesthetic blurs and gaps and smears in Warhol’s classic silkscreened paintings function all-too-smoothly now as screens for ever-varying emotional investments and critical projections—contemplative and auratic responses structurally authorized by their canny presentation as painted canvases.

Yet degraded language—haphazardly recorded or transmitted fragments of arbitrary and discrete signs—quickly falls back into unintelligibility and noise. A text’s linear structure demands that we read it in a temporally directed sequence, preventing us from the operations of scanning and selective focus that permit us to interpret an obscure image or watch a boring film. By subjecting language itself to this aesthetics of the index, Warhol relocates reading as an experience of this murmur and babble, the lapses of attention and intelligibility, and the starts and stops of talk and noise and interruption, which are the condition of meaning but also its constant undoing. It is also a stunning aesthetic experience, one that represents the logical extension of the readymade principle to language and speech and does so on a scale that takes on language in its unceasing variety and profusion rather than in the highly aestheticized fragments we recognize as poetry or art.

## Notes

1. In his glossary to the 1998 edition of *a: a novel*, Victor Bockris details several taping sessions that can be roughly excavated from the novel’s intensively fractured narrative: “The novel purports to be a recording of twenty-four hours in the life of Warhol superstar Ondine, but actually it was recorded in four different sessions. The first twelve-hour session was recorded in August 1965. Thereafter, there were three separate taping sessions in the summer of 1966, and a final one in May 1967.” (Bockris, “a: A Glossary,” in *a: a novel*, 2nd ed. [New York: Grove Press, 1998], p. 453.) According to Branden W. Joseph, who catalogued *Sleep* (1963) for the Warhol Film Project, the sequences were not actually loop-printed but strips of film developed and edited together.
2. Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol 60s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980). Warhol also discusses his ubiquitous Sony tape recorder in the 1970s in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975); in which he refers to it as “my wife, Sony.” For Bockris’s slightly varying accounts, see *The Life and Death of Andy Warhol* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989); “Andy Warhol: The Writer,” in *Who Is Andy Warhol*, ed. Colin McCabe (London: British Film Institute, 1997), pp. 17–21; and Bockris “a: A Glossary.” Bob Colacello’s account, which focuses on the 1970s, also discusses the early years of Andy Warhol’s interview in some detail (see Colacello, *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close-Up* [New York: Harper Collins, 1990]). Although Reva Wolf’s study of Warhol’s interface with downtown literary and poetic practices in *Andy Warhol, Poetry and Gossip in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) discusses a briefly, she largely focuses on his relations with more conventional New York School figures and the emerging café-poetry scene, about which Gerard Malanga was an important conduit of information to Warhol. A more extended reading of *a* can be found in Peter Krapp, *Deja Vu: Aberrations of Cultural Mourning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). The burgeoning subgenre of Factory memoirs includes Nat Finkelstein, *Andy Warhol: The Factory Years, 1964–1967* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989); Billy Name, *All Tomorrow’s Parties: Billy Name’s Photographs of Andy Warhol’s Factory* (New York: Power House, 1997); Stephen Shore and Lynne Tillman, *The Velvet Years: Warhol’s Factory 1965–1967* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1995); Jean Stein, *Edie: An American Biography*, ed. George Plimpton (New York: Dell, 1982); Ultra Violet, *Famous for 15 Minutes: My Years with Andy Warhol* (New York: Dell, 1994), and Mary Woronov, *Swimming Underground: My Years with the Warhol Factory* (Boston: Journey Editions, 1995). Fleeting references to *a: a novel* also appear in the interviews (particularly, that of Ondine) collected in Patrick Smith, *Andy Warhol’s Art & Films* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986).
3. I thank Nicholas de Villiers for focusing on this repeated tendency in Warhol’s statements and interviews as a

I / I

Rattle, gurgle, clink, tinkle.

Click, pause, click, ring.

Dial, dial.

ONNINE—You said (dial) that, that, if, if you pick, pick UP the Mayor's voice on the other end (dial, pause, dial-dial-dial), the Mayor's sister would know us, be (busy-busy-busy). DARRLA—We should start for the park, right? Okay. Humm. Coin drops. Money jingles as coins return.

Car noises in background. You're a clunk. Are there any way stations on the way that we have to (honk, honk) like uh, I, wha—(noise). If we go through, through the park, is there ANY place we can keep calling your uh, I mean right through the, uh, phone call. Is there any place where we can keep call him if we— Answering service... Are you (cars honking, blasting). Are there diffERent places—are there different places where we can call your ans—oh. Want some cake? Nah. A little juice, anything? I know where we can get some. hurriedly—oh yes, let's get some. Fantastic, baby. Yeah. Good. Oh you can't pretend that you're not here. Oh, okay, all right. You're uh, I mean— Aw right. You're uh, you're uh, here, yeah. Okay. You're here.

Okay. You definitely are here. Uh (noise). Hey, what time is it? Do you know it's exACTly—it's two o'clock? Uh, Gerry made me, uh, I had to wait for him. It's all right. D'ya know what happened? I fell asleep on the bus. surprised—You did? And, uh, yeah, but I got off, uh, I got off, in-time and, uh, I realized that the bus ride was so long it's ridiculous. It's, its—the Fifth Avenue bus takes forever. Let's see. The bus was, was, was— We had a fairly good time last night, but not too special.

Um. Nothing really (sigh), just put a couple sheets on and went into somebody's house (giggle) and scared them, ha hah HUHHA. It was all I felt like a ghost. Yeah, uh, some of stolen Rotten Rita's causes. And, um, some of my throat is gone. Really? Yeah. Aw, what is it from? Blowing? No, I didn't do a thing last night. Just, general, you know, just staying up and all that, just talking. This number in front of us is too gorgeous. Do you need some Obertrols? ... Need some Obertrols? Do you have any? Blue ones. Oh, they're five milligrams.

Yeah. That's good. Ten milligrams. No, they're—are are the—are they ten or five? Ten. Ten? Oh well, then I need— I'll try to get some orange ones, yeah? Oh the orange ones are divine. How

© copyright 1968 by Andy Warhol  
All Rights Reserved  
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 68-22013  
First Printing  
Manufactured in the United States of America

- pervasive strategy of proxy and deferral. The tape recorder provided a perfect vehicle for Warhol to both appear and disappear. As Warhol notes in his *Philosophy*: "The acquisition of my tape recorder finally really finished whatever emotional life I might have had, but I was glad to see it go. Nothing was ever a problem again because a problem just means a good tape, and when a problem transforms itself into a good tape it's not a problem anymore. An interesting problem was an interesting tape. Everyone knew that and performed for the tape. You couldn't tell which problems were real and which problems were exaggerated for the tape. Better yet, the people telling you the problems couldn't decide any more if they were really having the problems or if they were just performing" (pp. 26–27). He later claims a perverse identification with the apparatus: "My mind is like a tape recorder with one button—Erase" (p. 199).
4. Thomas Crow outlines three distinct "Warhols," describing the most famous of these as Warhol's "persona": "the self-created . . . product of his famous pronouncements and of the allowed representations of his life and milieu." (Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris and Montreal, 1954–1966*, ed. Serge Guilbaut [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990], p. 311.) Yet by separating these "allowed representations of his life and milieu" from Warhol's artistic production and from the underground practices he "authorized," Crow cannot identify common structures cutting across such lines.
  5. Warhol, *POPism*, p. 287.
  6. "Briefly noted: Andy Warhol, *a: a novel*," *New Yorker*, January 4, 1969, p. 82.
  7. Sally Beauman, review of *a: a novel*, *New York Times Book Review*, January 4, 1969, p. 4. Like many reviewers, Beauman notes superficial similarities to other modernist projects in order to better dismiss Warhol's irrelevance and pretense: "Pinget's book, is, like Warhol's, entirely written in the form of conversation . . . 'a' consists of 24 hours of talk—there are strangely few silences—tape-recorded from the life of Ondine, a Warhol sidekick who is homosexual, high on amphetamines and loquacious" (p. 4). She continues: "a backlash of sheer condescending boredom began with Warhol's book on about page 14, and continued for the duration. Warhol does not, like Pinget, turn the reader's expectations and weaknesses to his advantage; he has not managed to suggest the fallibility of art enough," before concluding: "Ironically, 'a' is not ultimately even realistic. Most of it—I suspect because the tapes didn't pick up connecting pieces of conversation—is incomprehensible snippets and gobblets of talk. Because Ondine's brain seems irretrievably addled with amphetamine, most of what he says takes the form of grunts, squeals, and bad puns. It's frightening to think that one can be bored by this sort of willful self-destruction, but one can. On film, Warhol's people live; they evoke responses; pruned down to a transcript they lose all identity, they all sound alike, they evoke nothing, not even compassion. . . . It would all be the more bearable, too, if it weren't so pretentious. Typos in the script are left uncorrected; there are awful little pseudo-Biblical running heads at the top of each page. . . . Ondine's last soliloquy has been deliberately fractured, letters being attached to the wrong words, presumably in an attempt at Joycean-looking profundity" (p. 32).
  8. Robert Mazzocco, "a a a a a . . ." review of *a: a novel*, *New York Review of Books*, April 24, 1969, p. 36.
  9. Bockris, "Andy Warhol: The Writer," p. 17. As Bockris's account suggests, Warhol's redacted "voice portraits," which faithfully transcribe every nuance and accident of speech, without editorial correction or touching up, represent the precise flip side of his notoriously synchro-phantic 1970s portraits, whose intense flattery to the sitter at any cost nearly eradicates visual recognizability. That these *two portrait forms*—the raw redacted interviews and the extensively touched-up paintings—were both presented in the early *Interview*, reinforces the extent to which they need to be thought together, as an inseparable unit—although the voice portraits are rarely mentioned in the extensive critical accounts of Warhol's painted celebrity portraits.
  10. *Ibid.*, pp. 18 and 19: "It is in this sense the 'worst' book ever written, just as Warhol's films are the 'worst' films ever made . . . a is just as important a book as *The Chelsea Girls* is a film or *The Velvet Underground and Nico* is a record, and should be recognized as among the most accurate, creative, influential novels of the 60s."
  11. *Ibid.*, p. 18. In the more extended account in the 1998 glossary, Bockris recounts: "The book then found its own voice, taking on a life of its own when the twenty-four one-hour tapes were transcribed by four women. . . . All four shared a disinclination to spell correctly or apply the rules of grammar. This was due in part to the difficulty of transcribing tapes in which so many voices were talking at the same time. Furthermore, speed was of the essence, and it was presumed that after the first rough draft, corrections would be made. However, on first reading the entire original transcript of the book, Warhol was delighted by the mistakes and decided to let them stand" (p. 453). Changing the names of almost all the characters, Warhol also "randomly [changed] comments he liked or disliked," before delegating Billy Name to oversee publication: "The job of making sure the final galley was delivered to Grove in the form Warhol requested was given to the Factory's foreman, Billy Name. According to Name, the *a* both refers to amphetamine and was used as an homage to e.e. cummings. Name also felt that the novel fell into the surrealist genre personified by André Breton's automatic writing, since it was automatic talking" (p. 453).
  12. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
  13. *Ibid.*
  14. The procedures that generate *a: a novel* also structurally resemble those of some of Warhol's better-known 1960s projects, such as his silkscreened canvases and 16mm films, in which, for instance, an existing press photograph of Marilyn Monroe is selected, cropped, and reproduced via silkscreen onto a series of canvases that preserve all the blurring, streaking, and dirt introduced by the process, with all their capacities to degrade, disrupt, and obscure the image, or in which a series of camera rolls record an action or subject—the Empire State Building, couples kissing, the myriad "screen tests"—for the duration of the film stock, or for an arbitrarily chosen length of time, in which all the "errors" and "distortions" of filming—harsh lighting, out-of-focus shots, subjects moving in and out of audibility, the light bleed and glare at the beginning and end of each roll, and so forth—are faithfully retained in the finished work.
  15. Warhol, *a: a novel*, p. 121.
  16. Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan-Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 215.
  17. And, in the present-day university, a division of labor between "literary" and "theoretical" orientations helps preserve *a's* unreadability. In a graduate seminar on Warhol, my critical theory-oriented students, who have no problem devoting hours to disentangling Jacques Derrida or G. W. F. Hegel, found *a's* textual obstacles nearly insurmountable. In addition, my efforts to read it into the history of the modernist novel met with relative incomprehension, as it turned out that only a single student had read James Joyce's *Ulysses* or anything by Gertrude Stein.