space and time than the traditions and timelines that art history allow. By being documented, activated and re-documented across different media, the art or archaeological object becomes a locus for the collapsing and complicating of temporalities. Through the spatial and formal layering of *Slip*, *Notes to Self* and the photographs, Perrin Sidarous invokes an almost Warburgian exploration of the "heterochronic afterlife" of the art object,[1] whereby art history is transmitted via hauntings, residues.[2]

Specifically, it is Perrin Sidarous' vessels – as either image or object – that have the most interpretive potential. *Omphalos* (2018), one of the framed prints depicting an item from the catalogue of artifacts, comes to mind. In ancient Greece, the omphalos was a carved stone vessel believed to have represented the centre of the world, the place from which life emerged and the portal through which the gods communicated with their supplicants; in other words, it was the physical shell of the otherworldly. Here, the catalogue reproductions, the artist's images and ceramic objects can be thought of as analogues of the omphalos, functioning as shells for something just as amorphous, though tailored to our present: the generative potential of art as archive and the power of photography to "disclose the world, show us that it is structured by analogy, and help us assume our place within it."[3] In its multivalent echoes, mirrorings and associations, *Toujours la coquille de l'autre always the shell of another* connects the present-day gallery-goer to Apollonian priests and priestesses, 19th-century archaeologists, museologists of the '70s and Perrin Sidarous herself, alone in the studio, parsing the "untranscendable similarities that structure Being,"[4] each perspective or reality the shell of another.

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Chris Kraus: *After Kathy Acker* Semiotext(e), 2017 *by Casey Wei*

The book begins with an "establishing shot"[1] from Kathy Acker's wake: her ashes fly against the wind into everyone's faces.

This is not the typical, omniscient tale of a star's rise and fall. Kraus' account of Acker's life is constructed through countless interviews, letters, emails, journal entries, and conversations with friends, friends-turned-enemies and ex-lovers, all collaged together in orderly chapters titled after Acker's published works. Because of the many lies – or, identities – that Acker adopted throughout her career, Kraus' handling of biographical details does not carry much weight in this retelling: the Kathy that is remembered is not the Karen Alexander that was born. The mythical image of the gym-taut woman with the peroxide blonde buzz dominates as more of an eternal archetype rather than the result of a specific upbringing. So instead, Kraus focuses on how others perceived Acker, by way of citations, writing through everyone else's messy relationships with her, which leads me to question: *What is it that I really want to know?*

My reaction to Kraus' writing is not one of reverence towards any kind of pen[wo]manship; it is mysterious to me how her texts compel me to soldier on, to finish, to reread, to pay closer attention, since her prose has a way of keeping me at a distance that obliquely grounds (or perhaps *chains*) me very much in my own reality, rather than inviting me into the glamorously bohemian story world of the New York and Los Angeles scenes from the '70s onward. In line with the New Narrative tradition, Kraus' writing is very meta, very real, and sometimes very unrewarding to read: a tactic which strangely invites further engagement. Kraus identifies that Acker

had a similar intent from early in her career, having wanted to "*crack up the old identity-god*,"[2] being "*sick of beautiful words word-phrases etc.*"[3] In that fresh, post-modern spirit of appropriation, Acker managed to ride the wave of what her mentor and friend David Antin said more than once to his class, that if what they wanted to write already existed, they should "go to the library and steal it."[4] But whereas Acker's writing moves seamlessly between her life and the life of the texts she appropriated – "*This writing is all just fake (copied from other writing) so you should go away and just not read any of it*"[5] – Kraus is always careful to cite. The awkwardness of her voice in relation to those whom she admires, loves, desires to have and desires to be, has always been so slavish, coming from a very human place of lack. What stays with me about *After Kathy Acker* is that it does not read like Kraus stole anything from anyone to reveal anything about Acker that her community did not already know. This care is true of Kraus' other works as well: "every letter is a love letter,"[6] a line that sticks with me, striking and humble.

In *Aliens and Anorexia* (2000), John Handardt – film and video curator of the Whitney Museum at the time – explains to Kraus, after viewing her self-acknowledged failed film, why she'd never be an artist. He found her work "intelligent and courageous" but lacking in "beauty, criticality, and narrative resolution."[7] It is her persistent intelligence and courage, however clumsy, that keep me engaged, keep me wondering about my own desire, lack, persistence. What stylistically triggers an instinctive dislike at first quickly turns on itself to ask *how much of my own value systems are still chained to the damned patriarchy?* There is more to writing than *identity-gods* and *beautiful words word-phrases* and Kraus navigates this deconstruction with a masterful command of unadorned, unaffected – and much of the time, artless – writing on a sentence-by-sentence level. I interpret her work as historical documents that are completely accurate, factual presentations collaged from a variety of corroborated sources. And while her own ego is free to roam, with unlimited access to all the documents, photos, recordings and celebrities – the book ends with some sage words from Martha Rosler to Kraus: "I could have been you, you could've been me"[8] – her writing always comes from a respectful distance, without detectable ornamentation. She acknowledges her subjectivity every step of the way: each time there is a transition, a stutter in narrative, Kraus defers her identity as an author to that of an archivist and of a participant – an act of humility, of love, of gravity and of grace.

However personally messy and fraught Kraus' and Acker's overlapping social circles might have been, the absence of any personal anecdotes between the two leads me back to the question of: *What is it that I really want to know?* The last phase of Acker's life, during her cancer, is the part of the book that reads most like a biography, where Kraus exercises some *identity-god* writing. Acker's perfect logic of sex-as-writing-as-art-as-life-as-art-as-writing-as-sex was no way to fight a terminal sickness and the sicker she became, the less she was able to write. To witness a goddess fall back into humanity is a narrative we are familiar with in our celebrity culture. They're just flesh and blood, deteriorating like any of us. That death, in Acker's case, could have been potentially prevented through treatment is all the more gutting. But she refused. She refused to acknowledge her humanity – the very fuel for art. How can any artist deny that? What stays with me from this fable – as the last chapter is aptly titled – is not the impact of Kraus' writing, but the work of constructing a myth. *What is it that I really want to know?* That I could have been Kathy Acker, that I could be Chris Kraus.

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1 Chris Kraus, *After Kathy Acker* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2017), 14.
2 Ibid, 84.
3 Ibid, 112.
4 Ibid, 48. To fully appreciate Acker's *Great Expectations* (1982), wouldn't one think to read Dickens first?
5 Ibid, 49.
6 Chris Kraus, *I Love Dick* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2006), 121.
7 Chris Kraus, *Aliens & Anorexia* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2000), 162.
8 *After Kathy Acker*, 279.

