

Ph.D. Academy Scholarship and Research Fund

I am applying for \$500 from the Ph.D. Academy Scholarship and Research Fund to help pay for an airplane ticket and train fare to visit the Sylvère Lotringer Papers and Semiotext(e) Archive at the Fales Library and Special Collections at NYU. My dissertation will consider the role that Semiotext(e) played in the development of *autotheory*. By focusing on the “first round” of texts (1990-2004) published by Semiotext(e)’s subsidiary imprint *Native Agents*, including editor Chris Kraus’s *I Love Dick*, I will argue that Semiotext(e) introduces two strains of critical inquiry to *autofiction*’s self-consciously hyphenated (*autobiography* and *fiction*) form: second-wave feminism and post-Marxist French critical theory. Whereas the traditional French autofiction novel encourages authorial self-reinvention as a means of discovering the meaning of one’s life amidst the postmodern breakdown of historical metanarratives, the *Native Agents* texts encourage, in Kraus’s words, “a very public ‘I’ [that] is constantly bouncing up against the world—[that] isn’t just existing for itself.” I will argue that this shift towards a radical feminist subjectivity facilitates a generic rupture that results in a linked but new genre, *autotheory*. As such, it is my hope that the *Native Agents* imprint will be a useful textual case study to help us understand and clarify the generic capacities and differences between these two closely related literary terms.

I will also argue that post-1960s Downtown New York feminist artists facilitated the development of *autotheory*. The feminist art practices of Hannah Wilke and of Pictures Generation artists like Cindy Sherman who, like the *autofiction* writers, used the material of their lives as the subject matter of their art, deeply influenced Kathy Acker (also a performance artist) and Kraus (also a video artist). And I will also ask what role Downtown New York City played in *autotheory*’s development by allowing conceptual artists, performance artists, experimental writers, and punk musicians to socialize and perform together at venues like the Mudd Club, the St. Marks Poetry Project and gallery openings. Finally, I will try to determine how Deleuze and Guattari’s writing, especially about the revolutionary capacity of desire, which Acker and Kraus’s mutual lover Sylvère Lotringer published in the popular Semiotext(e) journal, influenced their thinking.

If awarded the scholarship and research fund, I’d be able to spend a week studying the Sylvère Lotringer Papers and Semiotext(e) Archive. This archive contains invaluable unpublished documents such as Lotringer’s correspondence with Serge Doubrovsky, the founder of autofiction, as well as with Deleuze and Guattari, Acker, Luce Irigaray and many of the other theorists and writers whose work is so important to my research. The Archive also contains correspondence about the May 1968 student uprising, audio interviews, out-of-print publications, and financial records. I hope that a week of research would allow me to better understand the network of downtown New York social interactions that is foundational to my research. I am also optimistic that research in the Archive will lead my dissertation in exciting new directions of which I’m not yet aware.



Budget:

American Airlines - \$300 (June 11 – 20) (LAX – JFK Roundtrip)

Cold Spring Station to Grand Central Terminal – Train Fare \$180 (\$15/per trip – 12 trips/visit)

Metro Card 7-Day Pass - \$33

Timeline:

June 11 – 20

Attendance:

Aug 27 - Becoming an Independent Scholar

Sept 24 - Advocating for Your Scholarship to Diverse Audiences

Oct 29 – Managing Your Scholarly Support System

Feb 4 – Offering Your Expertise

April 1 – Learning to Say No

