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This bulletin is a revised version of an essay originally published as “I’d Recognize Your Voice Anywhere: The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)” in a book to accompany the exhibition *Reading Andy Warhol*, Museum Brandhorst, Munich, September 18 2013–January 12 2014. The original includes a large set of endnotes that list all the sources and other reference material that we chose to expunge here to make for easier reading.

Cover image: back of the dust jacket on the first edition of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975)

p. 58: Advertisement for *a* published in *Inter/VIEW* 1, no. 2 (1969).  
Grove/Atlantic, Inc. Courtesy of the Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries

In 1964, Andy Warhol got his first tape recorder. After that, it never left his side. He brought it with him everywhere, giving it the pet name “my wife.” Photographs of Warhol in public often show him clutching it close to his body, like a security blanket. He claimed that it changed his relationship to the world. “The acquisition of my tape recorder really finished whatever emotional life I might have had,” Warhol explained, “but I was glad to see it go. Nothing was ever a problem again, because a problem just meant a good tape, and when a problem transforms itself into a good tape it’s not a problem anymore.” Not only did his tape recorder turn problems into good tapes, but these tapes became material for Warhol’s many publications — interviews for his magazine, text for his books.

The first project Warhol used his tape recorder for was his novel *a*, published by Grove Press in 1968. Warhol recalled, “A friend had written me a note saying that everybody we knew was writing a book, so that made me want to keep up and do one too. So I bought a tape recorder and I taped the most interesting person I knew at the time, Ondine, for a whole day.” The novel was supposed to be a verbatim transcription of “a day in the life” of the verbose, mercurial Factory superstar Ondine; yet the story of the book’s production has become more notorious than the narrative contained therein. Warhol had planned to follow his subject around for one whole day and night with his tape recorder, but later admitted that he got tired and finished the taping on a few separate occasions. After the taping was finished, so the story goes, a couple of high school girls wandered into the Factory looking for work, and Warhol hired them on the spot to transcribe the tapes into the manuscript for his novel. But these high school typists weren’t any good at transcription: they couldn’t spell or punctuate correctly, and they were very slow at their work. Warhol later complained, “It took them a year and a half to type up one day! ... they had me convinced that typing was one of the slowest, most painstaking jobs in the world.” Once the manuscript was finally transcribed, Warhol read it and supposedly loved all the mistakes made by the inept typists, so he demanded that Grove Press publish the book “as is” with no corrections or editorial changes.

The tapes for *a*, which record Ondine singing, eating, stuttering, and incessantly talking as he travels around Manhattan high on amphetamines, are held in the archives of the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, along

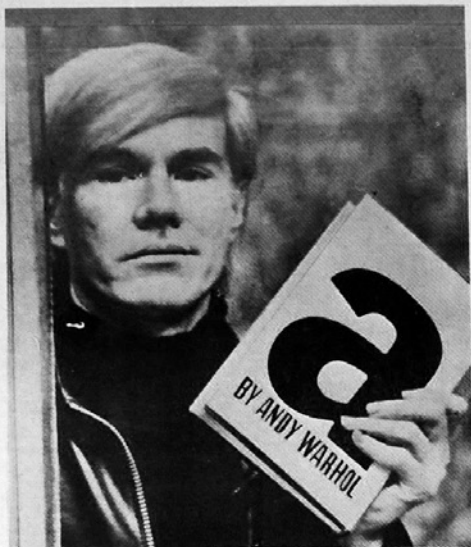


Photo: Paul Morrissey

**They laughed when he stepped up to the easel..**

**...and when he picked up a camera**

**...and now that he's written a novel?**

Nobody's laughing; they're screaming! "Vile, disgusting, dull, filthy" — the voices cry. The New York Times called "a", among many other things, "the all-time low in pornography."

**WILL ANDY WARHOL AGAIN HAVE THE LAST LAUGH? SEE FOR YOURSELF. PICK UP A COPY OF**

**a** a novel by **ANDY WARHOL**

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New York City, New York

Please send us information on rentals of the following film(s):

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☐ Bike Boy ☐ L, a Man ☐ My Hustler ☐ Too Girl ☐ ★★★★★

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
College \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
College Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Estimated Size of Audience \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Showings \_\_\_\_\_  
Location of Showings \_\_\_\_\_

Cut out and mail



with the thousands of other audio tapes he recorded. A few years ago, I made my first trip to the archives to listen to the tapes of Ondine. I wanted to understand what happened between the recording and the publishing of *a*—what fell away or was distorted in the transcription process. Listening to the tapes, I found more than I expected: a soundscape of ambient noise, music, and the eccentric personalities that populated Warhol's world in 1960s Manhattan. I also discovered the story of Warhol's "unedited" novel was not exactly true. And there was something else, too.

During one of my breaks from the headache-inducing tapes of Ondine singing along to Maria Callas—it may have taken the high school girls a year and a half to type up that one day, but it took me a full week to listen to it—I took a walk through the Museum's galleries and came upon a letter addressed to Warhol. It referred to another of Warhol's tape-books, his book of philosophy published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in 1975.

Dear Andy:

Bill Jovanovich read every word of your book last night and is every bit as pleased by it as I am. "What an incredible potpourri this book is!" he's written me. "The long chapter of one of the B's cleaning her apartment and cleaning herself is a masterpiece: the best exposition on the American cult of cleanliness since *Franny and Zooey*... Andy Warhol has a genius for the incongruous. Not since Oscar Wilde has anyone been better at injecting the unexpected, the immediately illuminating element in a series of sensible things." How about that?

As I told you yesterday on the telephone, I am not going to try to edit the text closely, sentence by sentence. The book needs editing of a different sort (it is too long, certainly): some chunks can be taken out whole, and maybe one or two chapters dropped altogether.

We must also think hard about the title. Bill suggests:

THE  
From A to B and Back Again



At the moment I am aiming for a publication date at the end of April ... I promise to have my work completed by October 1st. The manuscript will very probably have to be retyped. Then we can also talk in some detail about the design.

So: I couldn't be happier, Bill Jovanovich couldn't be happier. Both of us see a real triumph lying ahead. Your book is funny, your book is true. Some sections are superior to others but even the chapters that are relatively poor have marvelous things in them and they all have perfect pitch (as Mme. Henriette at Côte Basque said to you, "I'd recognize your voice anywhere" — only it had been my voice).

It was good to see you last night. I'll be in touch at the beginning of next week.

Yours ever,

[Steven M.L. Aronson]

Written in September 1974 by Steven M.L. Aronson, the co-publisher of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich and the acquirer and editor of Warhol's book, this letter explains several key facets of Warhol's best-known, or at least most-quoted, book. Warhol's book of philosophy is, in some ways, similar to his novel. Both were created from audiotapes, the stories of their production and the subjects of their narratives both involved the cast of characters at the Factory, and both embraced the machinations of trade publishing. Interestingly, Aronson's letter suggests that the original title for Warhol's book was not *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, as it is commonly known, but simply *THE*, a cryptic all-caps tag reminiscent of his novel's lowercase *a*.

Yet Warhol's *a* and *THE* are also quite different. The letter from Aronson suggests that the publisher was enthusiastic about Warhol's *THE* because this book, unlike his novel, was readable and "illuminating." We discover that the character named B is not one person, but one of many. The book was to be edited, but not closely. The publisher expected the book to be a "triumph." And then, in the final paragraph, Aronson adds his take to Jovanovich's: "Even the chapters that are relatively poor have marvelous

things in them and they all have perfect pitch (as Mme. Henriette at Côte Basque said to you, 'I'd recognize your voice anywhere' —only it had been my voice)."

Is Aronson suggesting that Warhol's voice in the manuscript is in fact Aronson's? And who is this Madame Henriette? Had she also read the manuscript and then told Warhol that she recognized his voice, only it was Aronson's? Is the book perhaps a composite of voices — Aronson's, B's, and unknown others — presented as Warhol's? Given the way that Warhol "wrote" his books, all of these scenarios would be plausible.

The ability to recognize voices, I had learned, was an important facet of understanding Warhol's books. This is in part because the tapes in the Warhol Museum Archives pose particular challenges for researchers. They have not been transcribed, many of the persons recorded on them have not been identified, and they are not necessarily dated or labeled accurately. It seems that Warhol, as zealous as he was at keeping his recorder running, did not keep detailed records of who, what, and when he recorded. On top of that, the Andy Warhol Foundation strictly forbids researchers from taking notes while listening to the tapes. Therefore, trying not only to figure out who is speaking on the tapes but also to remember what it was they said becomes a kind of endurance test that, I cannot help feeling, would have pleased Warhol.

In listening to the tapes for *a*, I had become familiar with the voices of Ondine, Edie Sedgwick, Warhol, the Sugar Plum Fairy, and Rotten Rita. This made it possible for me to discern in one of the novel's most memorable episodes a major editorial change. In chapter 12, Ondine has a conversation with a cab driver about eating "cooked bulls' balls" —only by now I knew it was not Ondine yelling out the window to ask male pedestrians if they had ever heard of eating "mounted mountains"; it was Chuck Wein. And so I realized that Warhol's "unedited" novel had in fact been substantively edited in order to sustain the narrative of a day in Ondine's life, regardless of who Warhol's tape recorder followed at any given moment.

Aronson's mysterious parenthetical comment about Madame Henriette made me wonder exactly what kind of writing and editing process had

taken place during the production of Warhol's philosophy book. I procured a photocopy of Aronson's letter from the archivist and tucked it away in my notebook, only to return to the archives a few years later to listen to the tapes for *THE*.

## WARHOL SPEAKS

"Warhol Speaks! High time too," read the opening lines of Barbara Goldsmith's judicious review of Warhol's *THE* in *The New York Times Book Review*. Acknowledging how the critical reception of the book hinged on the perceived authenticity—or inauthenticity—of Warhol's authorial voice, Goldsmith continues, "Our expectation is that at last Warhol will interpret himself to us. And he does this—by not doing it." While Goldsmith describes the parts of the book that tell us about Warhol's adolescence as "fresh and illuminating," she is careful to qualify her evaluation. "The word 'autobiographical' is not used here," Goldsmith writes, "because one can't be sure that Warhol did the actual writing. It doesn't really matter, which is his point exactly." It seems the critics—whether at local papers or national magazines—had caught on to Warhol's gambit. A critic for the Christian Science Monitor News Service anticipated that Warhol's book would be "a splendid performance, rich in narcissism and self-publicity ... functioning nicely in that no man's land between social history and put-on." The reviewer for *Art in America* wrote, "Warhol's audience may think that with this book he has come out of the closet of his own myth ... that at this strategic point of his career, he is revealing the intimate ins and outs of his life in front of the public. But whoever in the general public acquired this opinion did so cheaply, through mere logical deduction, and thus, like a dog thrown a pacifying bone, deserves a happy chew—even though the bone is vinyl."

Yet the publicity materials distributed by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich play on the reader's desire to get the "real" Warhol. The spring catalogue copy reflects Jovanovich's first impression, contending not only that the book is "an incredible potpourri: astonishing, delighting, puzzling, funny," but, "above all, true." The brochure for the book, crafted to generate advance purchases from booksellers, went even further: "This surprisingly candid self-portrait reveals a shy, sensible, provocative, and often endearing



personality for perhaps the first time ever.” The publisher may have served the book up as a true and revealing self-portrait, but the critics were quick to acknowledge this ploy with a nod and a wink. The book itself incorporates both positions. Chapter one is titled “B and I: How Andy Puts His Warhol On,” suggesting, as Patrick Smith has pointed out, that Warhol’s “persona is literally a daily ‘put-on.’” The chapter narrates how Warhol starts his day: “I crawl to the bathroom because I can’t shuffle, shuttle, tippy-toe or cakewalk, with a chocolate-covered cherry caught between my toes. I approach the sink. I raise my body slowly and brace my arms against the stand.” Then, Warhol confides to B, who listens attentively on the other end of the line: “I’m sure I’m going to look in the mirror and see nothing.” This plotline is pure Warholian boilerplate, but is it really Warhol who is giving it to us?

Critic and artist Peter Plagens wrote a long review of *THE* for *Artforum*, which he curiously titled “The Story of ‘A.’” And, in fact, his semi-dismissive analysis could be applied as easily to Warhol’s novel as to his philosophy book: “The book reads like it’s straight off the dictaphone, transcribed in Lindy ballpoint drone, as though by an overweight 15-year-old White Plains school-girl.” Yet the central issue of Plagens’s review is not the techniques of transcription and composition, which had been so important to the reception of Warhol’s novel, but instead, Warhol himself. “A great deal of the public fascination with Warhol,” Plagens writes, “concerns his apparent, blithe gaiety. Does he fuck, suck, get fucked, or get sucked?” Plagens’s aggressive queries as to Warhol’s sexual predilections suggest that perhaps some of the public’s interest in finally getting at the true Warhol was tied up with other ways of “recognizing” the artist. He further writes, “We remain interested through all the ploys because one question still remains: *does he mean it?*” Plagens wants to know whether we are “actually in the presence of weird and original passion, or are we being conned?”

## B IS ANYBODY

All of Warhol’s publications are the product and presentation of multiple voices. From his early illustrated books, which were penned by his mother and hand colored by his friends, to his monthly glamor magazine *Interview*,

Warhol relied on others to provide the content and the labor. Warhol's Factory, therefore, included not only Gerard Malanga, Billy Name, Brigid Polk, Pat Hackett, and Bob Colacello, among others—but also an extended network of editors and typesetters, lawyers and publicists, designers and printers, some of whom worked for New York's most important publishing houses. In the case of Warhol's philosophy book, the collaborative mode in which it was produced is signaled at the outset. The book's dedication page reads:

**To Pat Hackett, for extracting and redacting my thoughts so intelligently;  
To beautiful Brigid Polk, for being on the other end;  
To Bob Colacello, for getting it all together; and  
To Steven M.L. Aronson, for being a great editor.**

An editorial history in microcosm. We can deduce from this dedication that Pat Hackett worked with the audiotapes, pulling out and cleaning up Warhol's thoughts; Brigid Polk was "on the other end" of all of those tape-recorded phone calls; and Colacello served as the in-house managing editor, while Aronson turned the operation into a real book.

The duly acknowledged collaborative mode in which *THE* was produced carries over into the narrative. The opening chapter not only signals the playfulness of the book's premise in relationship to Warhol's public persona, but also sets up the framework for what will follow. Warhol's philosophy will be articulated in the form of a conversation: "From A to B and Back Again," with "A" standing for Andy and "B" for one or another of his friends—given that two of his closest cohorts at the time had first names beginning with "B," readers are left to guess whether "B" is for Bob or for Brigid. In fact, B switches from a him to a her (and back again) over the course of the book. *THE* begins:

**I wake up and I call B.  
B is anybody who helps me kill time.  
    B is anybody and I am nobody. B and I.  
    I need B because I can't be alone. Except when I sleep.  
Then I can't be with anybody.  
    I wake up and call B.**

Warhol's philosophy book might start out in the bedroom, but it doesn't give readers like Plagens the kind of lubricious information he believes they are after. Warhol makes a point of telling us that he sleeps alone.

But there are larger implications in this opening scene. "The genius of Warhol," as Douglas Crimp has put it, "was not least his uncanny ability always to secure for himself the author-function, and all the more so by protesting that he rarely had all that much to do with making his work, admitting openly that his work was really the yield of others—others' ideas, others' designs, others' images, others' abilities, others' labor. But the more Warhol protested, the more he alone was credited." Thus, Warhol's name alone appears on the cover of *THE*, despite the fact that the book makes clear from the outset—in its subtitle and on its dedication page—that it is a collaboration.

Along those lines, the narrative structure of Warhol's philosophy book is worth tracing because it elucidates the ways in which "Warhol's voice" includes the voices of his collaborators. Chapter 1 takes the form of a telephone conversation between Warhol and one of his anonymous (female) Bs. In chapter 2, the narrative switches from dialogue to a series of aphoristic observations articulated in the first person. The chapter takes the reader through "Warhol's" thoughts on Love (Puberty), Love (Prime), and Love (Senility). Utilizing the same narrative technique, the next seven chapters address the subjects of Beauty, Fame, Work, Time, Death, Economics, and Atmosphere. After this section, which comprises about half of the book, the narrative returns to dialogue, although conducted no longer on the phone but rather on the couch. We find ourselves in Italy with A and B (now male) sitting in the lobby of a fancy hotel, watching the hairdressers of famous actresses follow them around. This dialogue continues over the next two chapters as we accompany A and B from Rome to Monte Carlo to Turin. These three chapters encompass the subjects of Success, Art, and Titles. Then the narrative shifts again, as does the sex of B. A and B are back on the phone. B launches into a monologue on her obsessive-compulsive cleaning routine, which goes on breathlessly for 24 pages, ending only when A finally hangs up. In the book's final chapter, Underwear Power, A and B (now male again) go shopping for underwear and vintage jewelry on Saturday morning.

Thus Warhol's philosophy book consists of three narrative voices: the first-person aphorisms—presumably “extracted” and “redacted” by Pat Hackett; the phone calls with female Bs—one guesses that this is Brigid Polk “on the other end”; and the transcripts of sightseeing and shopping with male Bs. Thus, we might conclude that Warhol's “philosophy” is as much a composite of Pat Hackett's ideas, Brigid Polk's monologue, and Bob Colacello's gossipy chitchat as it is the presentation of “Warhol's” own thoughts.

In this way, the collaborative mash-up that comprises the text of Warhol's philosophy book points us back to his experimental films of the 1960s. As Goldsmith points out in her review, the “monologue in which B compulsively cleans her apartment, then herself, and then masturbates with a vibrator, is so reminiscent of *The Chelsea Girls* and passages from *a*, Warhol's tedious tape recorded ‘novel’, that it's downright old-fashioned.” But Warhol's book resembles his films in a different way as well. As Gregory Battcock wrote in his review of *THE*:

The narrational process invented by Warhol is very similar to the filming technique the artist developed in his amateur experimental movies of the mid 1960s. A carefully set up situation will be interrupted by a sudden camera shift to a detailed view of, say, an elbow or a fragment of background. And that improbable, though certainly related detail will be quickly erased by another sudden shift as the camera zooms in on the rug.

Thus Warhol's first serious literary document is, in many ways, thoroughly consistent with his iconographic decisions during the Pop Art days, and also consistent with the irritating, abrupt, disjointed cinematic technique that he explored during the filmmaking period that followed. Yet the book illustrates some unique approaches to trivia. For example, any true literary appreciation of trivia would have to include an appreciation for error. Deliberate error. Warhol's “Philosophy” is full of mistakes, but they are mistakes that do not matter. No mistake could possibly matter in an investigation of the authentically trivial.

Battcock informs us that the name of the hotel in Turin is wrong, as is the narrative's claim that it is the only first-class hotel in the city. These are inconsequential errors, to be sure. Warhol's mode of working, whether

in painting, film, or writing, often involved the operations of chance, error, and distortion. What's more to the point, though, is how Warhol's books, like his films, were important to those who worked on them. Thus when Ondine describes his involvement in Warhol's films, he explains that Warhol "wasn't featuring people doing things. He was allowing people to mirror himself in a way. I mean, he allowed me to create myself, and I allowed him to create himself. It's the same kind of thing."

It seems to me that Warhol's philosophy book facilitated a similar kind of creative space as that in his films; a space in which Hackett, Polk, and Colacello would create themselves—perform their roles as Bs—and, in so doing, allow Warhol to create himself. Yet, this does not mean all of Warhol's collaborators would feel as reaffirmed by working with Warhol as Ondine had. When *New York* magazine published excerpts from *THE* and put Warhol on the cover, Colacello felt eclipsed:

**They posed him in a closet, sitting at a typewriter, under a headline that read: "ANDY WARHOL'S GREATEST SECRET: HE LIKES TO WRITE." It finally hit me then—I was part of a big lie, and while it had lined my pockets, it robbed my ego of any hope of recognition.**

## IF ANYONE HAS A PHILOSOPHY

On one hand, *THE* can be understood as the sequel to *a*. Warhol had planned to do a book every five years after *a*, with *b* as the first sequel. Taping for *b* began in 1969, and Warhol recorded about seven hours of material, which included Ondine standing in line at Judy Garland's funeral, going to Ultra Violet's apartment and putting on makeup with Candy Darling, and ending up at some bar called Beef 'n' Brew.

"And that's where we decided it was just not feasible," recalled Ondine. "The first book was done on speed, and the second book wasn't."

So they abandoned it.

On the other hand, *THE* is a totally different kind of book from *a*. The idea for it came serendipitously. Warhol and Colacello were standing in the buffet line at a holiday brunch hosted by the interior designer Ellen Lehman McCluskey; behind them was Patrick O'Higgins—a longtime Warhol

friend and the author of the bestseller *Madame*, a biography of his former employer, the cosmetics tycooness Helena Rubenstein — who in turn introduced them to his literary agent, Roz (Mrs. Carlton) Cole. Colacello recalls, “Roz told Andy that he should write his autobiography.” Warhol responded that Colacello was already writing his biography. But, “Roz was very quick on her feet,” answering Warhol, “Well, why don’t you write your *philosophy*. I mean, if anyone has a philosophy, it’s got to be you.” Warhol loved the idea and assigned Colacello as ghostwriter with the simple directive: “Philosophy is anything, Bob. Just make it up.”

While the stories surrounding the taping and transcription of Warhol’s novel had contributed to the scandal of that book, the details about how Warhol’s philosophy book came to be were not public knowledge. Years later, Pat Hackett would explain:

**I did eight separate interviews with Andy on the basis of which I wrote chapters 1 through 8 and chapter 10. Then, using material from conversations Andy had taped between himself and Bob Colacello and Brigid Berlin, I wrote the introductory chapter and chapters 9, 11, 12, 13, and 14.**

Colacello’s account is a bit more complicated:

**Andy and I started tape-recording in hotels, lobbies, and suites, in between appointments. Andy always wanted to tape-record the “Sex” chapter and the “Love” chapter, and I was like, “Andy you know ... we’ve got to do philosophy, like space, and time, and ethics.” Andy would give the tapes that he and I made to Pat Hackett. She was typing up the tapes and then I was supposed to start writing the first chapter. And I wrote a draft of the first chapter. Pat had this idea, she said, “Well, maybe we can use all of these clips of all these terrible things that people say about Andy.” I wrote the first chapter based on the tapes ... and then Andy typically gave it to Pat who rewrote it, and then he read the re-write to Brigid Berlin and tape recorded that, gave that tape to Pat and she reintegrated Brigid’s comments. And so now it was becoming more and more like A and B. Because I was sort of the original B, but then Brigid became like another B. There’s one chapter where B is like me and Vincent combined. But I don’t want to take anything away from Pat because she actually did,**



in the end, more work than me. The cleaning chapter was just straight from Brigid in the hotel in Washington. That was a total Brigid monologue, which she is completely capable of. The "Shopping for Underwear" chapter, that's me and Vincent with Andy. We went to Gimbel's and Macy's because they were across from each other on 34th Street, and, again it was Pat who transcribed the tapes and Pat who got them into a more literary form. Although, I did that, I know, on the chapters that we did in Monte Carlo. As I recall. The way they were published was pretty much the way that I transcribed them because as I was transcribing, I was shaping them in a way. You know it is hard to remember exactly. But it was definitely a collaboration, like so many of Andy's things beyond just paintings, and even some of his paintings.

And then there was the editor, Aronson:

I expunged whole hunks of the book that, since I can't recall them, must have been as unmemorable as they are unrememberable. Then I proceeded to hire a freelance typist who sat outside my office on the ninth floor clicking away, because I didn't want to let the manuscript out of the building. Andy and Bob voiced no objections to any of the cuts, and so then I sat down to do the line-work. Whatever I said or did went. And Andy always claimed he was very happy with the way it read.

Before turning the manuscript over to Aronson, Warhol had also been involved with the shaping and editing of the text. According to Colacello, he and Warhol had worked together on the manuscript, and Warhol would tear it apart "with amazing clarity of vision sometimes, fumbling abstract intuition other times, always making it better." In addition, Aronson recalls that "Andy surprised me in being interested in every aspect of the publishing process." So much so that he became something of a nuisance, calling regularly for status updates.

The process by which *THE* was published, then, involved taping, transcribing, retaping, retranscribing, editing, retyping, formatting the manuscript, and also running it by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich's libel lawyer Paul Gitlin to make sure that nothing in the book would prompt a lawsuit against the publisher. Gitlin raised a number of concerns, including the identity of "Taxi" (whom critics recognized as a thinly veiled Edie Sedgwick),

references made to famous personalities, and the use of “shrimp” to describe Ursula Andress’s stature. Aronson responded to Gitlin’s points in writing: “no one will be able to come forward and say she is Taxi.” A true statement, given that Sedgwick had passed away three years earlier. Aronson informs Gitlin that “Franco Rossellini has given us written permission to publish the reference to him” and that the line “Bobby Beausoleil who’s in jail for the Charles Manson murders is one of the most handsome people I’ve ever seen,” has been deleted from the text. Aronson continues, “With your permission we have substituted ‘midget’ for ‘shrimp’ each time it appears in these pages. After our conversation yesterday afternoon, I told Warhol that under no circumstances could ‘shrimp’ be reinstated.” Yet neither “shrimp” nor “midget” is used in the published book; in the end they decided for some reason that it was safer to describe Ursula Andress as a “peanut.”

From the prompt by the literary agent to the conversations captured by Warhol’s tape recorder, from the multiple transcribers to the multiple ghostwriters, from the editor to the libel lawyer—Warhol’s philosophy book encompasses the voices of a number of people who worked with him in what was a highly complex process of publication. The book is credibly an “incredible potpourri.”

## PUT THAT IN MY LANGUAGE

When I returned to archives at the Warhol Museum to listen to the tapes for *THE*, I came with the assumption that I would not hear Warhol himself on them. On the audiotapes for *a*, Warhol had been almost mute, offering only the periodic “oh, really,” and “come on, Ondine.”

To date, only 14 of the thousands of cassette tapes in the archives have been identified as relating to the philosophy book. The first tape I listened to was of Warhol, Fred Hughes, Bob Colacello, Vincent Fremont, and Pat Hackett having lunch at a restaurant and discussing who the great philosophers are: Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Kant. Then Angelica Huston and Jack Nicholson show up and the conversation shifts. As far as I could tell, nothing from this tape made its way into the book. The next tape was of Polk and Colacello talking on the phone.

Colacello keeps saying that the tape is bad and that they are not getting anything done. He impersonates Warhol for a while, then he and Polk talk about royal families and whether or not Warhol wants to be part of high society. It is clear that they are trying to come up with material for Warhol's book, although, as far as I could tell, nothing from this tape made it into the book either. The next tape was of a party at Halston's. Warhol is there, presumably holding the tape recorder. He is talking to a Brazilian model named Sylvia. Music throbs in the background and there are lots of kissing sounds and laughter. Warhol asks Sylvia for her thoughts on beauty. She tells him, "You want to be like the photograph of you, and you can't ever look that way. And so you start to copy the photograph." These lines are actually in *THE*, but the rest of the paragraph before and after are not spoken by Sylvia, or anyone else, on the tape. A little later on, Warhol tells Sylvia that Diana Vreeland is a really great person. Sylvia interjects that Vreeland "is one of the most beautiful women in the world," which also appears in the book, but the rest of the sentence is not spoken by Warhol or Sylvia on the tape. There are other tapes, which, like this one, may include snippets that made it into *THE*. On one tape Nikki Weymouth and Paloma Picasso talk about their dreams; on another, a live rock band plays songs in which the lyrics are things like "Warhol puts it on" and "Warhol is nothing, does nothing."

I was beginning to think there was no way to unravel the relationship between the tapes and the text produced from them, but the sixth tape surprised me. It was labeled "Wed July 3 1974 Philosophy AW and PH on time." Chapter seven of *THE* is titled "Time," which was a good sign. On the tape I heard two voices: Warhol's and Hackett's. She asks Warhol all sorts of questions, and he starts talking. They have a real conversation. They laugh. And Warhol says things that are in the book, such as, "People say 'time on my hands.' Well, I look at my hands and I see a lot of lines." When the conversation slows down or Warhol gets stuck, Hackett offers some answers to her own questions, and Warhol says, "Oh, that's great, can you put that in my language?" Near the end of the tape, Warhol begins to improvise:

From time to time  
Do time

Time yourself

weekends.

In time

In no time

The tapes for *THE* not only record what Warhol and others said, but they also convey the tone in which these statements were made. The cynical mantra “Business art is the step that comes after Art. Being good at business is the most fascinating kind of Art,” sounded, to me, like a sincere, conceptual project. In contrast, Warhol couldn’t sound more mocking of his fellow painters’ pretensions when he delivers an affectation of how he himself paints:

I look at my canvas and I space it out right. I think, “Well, over here in this corner it looks like it sort of belongs,” and so I say, “Oh yes, that’s where it belongs, all right.” So I look at it again and I say, “The space in that corner there needs a little blue,” and so I put my blue up there and then, then I look over there and it looks blue over there so I take my brush and I move it over there and I make it blue over there, too. And then it needs to be more spaced, so I take my little blue brush and I blue it over there, and then I take my green brush and I put my green brush on it and I green it there, and then I walk back and I look at it and see if it’s spaced right.

So, it was Warhol. But it was also, of course, Pat Hackett, Brigid Polk, Bob Colacello, Vincent Fremont, and “Sylvia,” among many others. During the week I spent at the archives I recognized many voices, but I never managed to work out who Madame Henriette was—the woman Aronson had invoked in his letter, the woman who had said to Warhol, “I’d recognize your voice anywhere.”

I LIKE THAT LEVEL—IT’S A GREAT LEVEL

So I asked Aronson if he could explain. He told me:

In September 1974 I wanted to take Andy somewhere “special” to mark

the occasion of his having turned in the book more or less on time, and I suggested La Grenouille, the most fashionable restaurant in the city, but he subversively said that he would prefer La Côte Basque. Since I didn't frequent it and wasn't known there, I made the reservation in his name rather than mine and evidently spelled it for them. I happened to arrive at the restaurant at the same time as Andy and Bob, and we all went in together. Madame Henriette greeted Andy with, "You didn't have to spell your name, Mr. Warhol—I'd recognize your voice anywhere."

At that, I couldn't contain myself. "Apparently you don't," I said, "because it was my voice—I'm the one who spoke with you." She just glared at me, and Andy looked—embarrassed? Amused? Both? Neither? Henriette Spalter, by the way, was a vintage figure in the annals of classic New York dining—she had started out as the coat-check girl and cashier at Henri Soule's legendary Pavillon restaurant, of which La Côte Basque was a slightly less expensive offshoot—his "Pavillon for the Poor," Soule called it. She was also his girlfriend and inherited the restaurant from him when he died. Madame was a tough number and a very vigilant gatekeeper, and there must have been a touch of Spartacus to the young me to have dared to engage her in combat like that. But then, come to think of it, what did I have to lose—I preferred La Grenouille!

No sooner had we been seated than Andy told me that I had to help him come up with a new opening line for the book. He had just read the columnist Rona Barrett's autobiography, *Miss Rona*, and had been grabbed by *her* first line, wherein she recounted how a Hollywood leading man—Andy said he'd heard it was Kirk Douglas—had begged her, "Let me put it in an inch, Rona! *Just one inch!*" So now Andy was hell-bent on having his philosophy book open in a similarly pornographic vein. I said, "Look, Rona Barrett is a gossipIST, you are an artIST, and a would-be philosophIST. Nor are you sleeping with any Hollywood leading man that I know of. In fact there are no points of comparison, and you don't need to stoop to that level." He said, "I LIKE that level—it's a GREAT level." I said, "Forget it," and, mercifully, he did.

On what "level" should we situate Warhol's philosophy book? It might be above the level of *Miss Rona*, but in truth, it seems closer to Truman Capote's unfinished novel *Answered Prayers* than the text-based works

that fellow artists were producing at the time, such as Hans Haacke's infamous *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings* (in which the artist gathered and presented data that revealed the network of individuals who controlled large areas of urban housing). While both Capote and Haacke publicly exposed the social and economic elite — albeit in radically different ways — Warhol's entanglement with the politics of the elite seemed to be moving in a different direction.

At the same time that Warhol signed the contract to publish *THE* with Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, he also signed a contract to collaborate with Paulette Goddard on her memoirs — the beautiful movie star who had been married to Charlie Chaplin, Burgess Meredith, and the novelist Eric Maria Remarque, and at one time or another along the way been involved with Diego Rivera, H.G. Wells, General George Patton, and Clark Gable, among others. As Aronson recalls, “Bob confected a tantalizing outline — Andy would tape Paulette assiduously as she spilled the proverbial beans to him; and the result would amount to no less than an ‘audio-documentary.’” The books were, to some extent, a package deal. Colacello explains, “They were to be titled *THE* and *HER*, respectively. (And if and when Andy did an autobiography, that would be called *ME*.)” But whenever the tape recorder was running, Goddard refused to reveal anything remotely intimate. “At the end of a year Andy handed me 700 pages’ worth of essentially worthless stuff,” Aronson said. “A welter of idle conversation about her best friends, which were Persian rugs, caviar, Impressionist paintings, furs, and jewels.” The manuscript was a bore, and the book was rejected.

Meanwhile *THE* was having its own problems — it was failing to generate any heat in the marketplace. “The original plan was to publish it in April 1975 but in February we were forced to postpone it until September,” Aronson explains, “because booksellers weren’t ordering in sufficient numbers and there was no interest to speak of from book clubs and paperback reprint houses.” Given that the United States was in a recession and that Saigon fell to the People’s Army on April 30, 1975, it’s no surprise that a tongue-in-cheek book of philosophy by the Pope of Pop was not being roundly embraced. Aronson asked Jovanovich himself to reassure Warhol, which the chairman did in a four-page handwritten letter. “We are not at fault; neither are you,” he explained; it was only that the reprint



publishers and book clubs “do not believe your name will ‘draw’ in the field of books. Now we will seek to change their minds!”

The publishing house did everything it could to promote Warhol's book. Excerpts from *THE* appeared in magazines as diverse as *Cosmopolitan*, Playboy Enterprises' *Oui*, and on the cover of *New York* magazine. Excerpts even appeared in the *New York Times*—“on the Op-ed page, where quotes about hair were picked because it was during the serious local metropolitan hair crisis and hairdresser fad.” According to Colacello, Warhol signed thousands of copies of the first printing of the book, and when those sold out, he went back to the warehouse to sign more. Aronson secured blurbs from Tina Turner, Rudolf Nureyev, and Truman Capote. Leo Castelli and Halston gave book parties. And then Warhol went on tour—eight cities in 16 days—accompanied by Colacello, Fred Hughes, Jed Johnson, and Lady Ann Lambton, an English socialite and Warhol Factory worker. “Our first stop was Baltimore, where two thousand fans mobbed the Museum of Fine Art to see Andy. They wanted him to sign their hands, their arms, their foreheads, their clothes, and their money.” Then in St. Louis, “Andy was put on display in the corner window of the Stix, Baer, Fuller department store, with a table piled with books. Giant speakers blasted the Velvet Underground's ‘Heroin’ out into the downtown streets.”

Not all the cities greeted Warhol with such enthusiasm. In San Francisco, someone left a death threat for Warhol at the Fairmont Hotel. At the book signing, some “fans” wanted to know “why Andy hadn't ‘come out’ in his *Philosophy* book, why he'd ‘sold out’ to business art.” Colacello recalled, “One particularly belligerent fellow in a work shirt came up to Fred and me and demanded to know why we were wearing ties. ‘The tie is a symbol of capitalist oppression,’ he insisted, ‘and Andy *used* to stand for liberation. You guys are nothing but a bunch of Fascists.’”

Fan letters in the archives give another side of the story. Some readers really identified with Warhol's book. For example, John Waters sent Warhol a postcard on which he wrote, “Andy—your book was the smile of the summer.” One of Warhol's old friends from the Bodley Gallery expressed his happiness for Warhol and his anticipation of his new book. Someone named Roxanne wrote Warhol after reading the excerpt in

*Cosmopolitan*, “The section titled ‘Love’ was great. First of all, there sitting on the page was my favorite word, schizophrenia. I really LOVE schizophrenia. It’s so misunderstood . . .” And there was Rick from Cleveland, who crafted a letter to Warhol in an “A to B and Back Again” dialog format to ask for help in finding a job.

Yet *THE* never quite caught on. It wound up selling a respectable number of copies but fell far short of becoming a bestseller like *Miss Rona* as Warhol had hoped. Nor did it find a place within the context of the text-based art practices of the 1970s.

Let’s give the last word to Aronson, the editor:

There came the day, a month or two after publication, when Andy called and asked me impatiently, “What can I do to make the book a bestseller?” I told him that it was all over. Then he asked me point-blank if it was “a dud.” I said, “No, I wouldn’t describe it that way.” No book of Andy’s, it turned out, would ever appeal to the masses. Maybe the philosophy book would have caught on if Andy had been articulate and could have given interviews EXPRESSING his philosophy — it clearly wasn’t enough just to embody it. No one had ever known what Andy really thought, or how he thought, or even if he thought — and whatever you want to say about *THE*, it did add up to the most extensive personal statement he had yet made. He told me that he felt the book could give people a way that THEY could think, too, and that they could use it to help solve their OWN problems. He said he saw it as a kind of self-help book — which turned out to be funny, given that it didn’t help any of US.

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Note: Since its publication in 1975, Andy Warhol’s *THE* has never gone out of print. It has since been published in China, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, England, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey.