Chain / 3
volume 1

Special Topic:
Hybrid Genres/Mixed Media

Edited by
Jena Osman and Juliana Spahr
Chain
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EDITORS' NOTES

And suppose for a moment that it were impossible not to mix genres. What if there were, lodged within the heart of the law itself, a law of impurity or a principle of contamination? And suppose the condition for the possibility of the law were the a priori of a counterlaw, an axiom of impossibility that would confound its sense, order, and reason?

—Derrida, “The Law of Genre”

Past issues of Chain have focused on the topics of gender and editing, and documentary. In our continuing investigation of so-called objective/pure/neutral forms, issue number three focuses on writing and visual works that do not sit comfortably within traditional genre categories. The call for work asked for submissions that would introduce and investigate the following questions: what is genre?; what determines the boundaries of genre?; what causes a work to be considered without/outside of genre?; what happens in terms of reader/viewer reception when multiple genres are apparent within one work?

The response to this call was so overwhelming, that we faced a publication of encyclopedic proportions. In an attempt to keep the journal accessible and inclusive, we decided to break this issue into two separate volumes, rather than exclude work which we felt was vitally connected with the topic. Even with that expansion, we still found ourselves having to turn work away which would have enriched the dialogue taking place between these pieces (see page 224 for contents of volume 2 of this issue).

Instructions on how to make one journal into two:
Place names of all contributors into Tzara's hat. Shake gently. Stir. Take out each name one after the other until 200 pages are filled. Alphabetize. "The [journal] will resemble you."

Combining a variety of ingredients is key to the hybrid genre. Resisting the constraints of a fixed definition/frame is an act with socio-political repercussions: “Those in social power and those with-
those who are without social power are less inclined to see reality as orderly; for example, less inclined to see the social construction as unified" (Scalapino, Poetics Journal).

OED hybrid:
A. sb.2. transf. and fig. Anything derived from heterogeneous sources, or composed of different or incongruous elements; in Philol. a composite word formed of elements belonging to different languages. 1850 H. Rogers Ess. II.iv.213 A free resort to grotesque compounds...favour the multiplication of yet more grotesque hybrids. 1860 Darwin in Life & Lett. (1887) II.338, I will tell you what you are, a hybrid, a complex cross of lawyer, poet, naturalist, and theologian! 1874 Lisle Carr Jud. Guyne. II.vii.163 A remarkable hybrid between a frank...bumpkin, and a used up exquisite. 1879 Morris Eng. Acad. 39 Sometimes we find English and Romance elements compounded. These are termed Hybrids.

(1887) will II.vii.163 belonging up theologian! multiplication Romance Lett. cross Guyne find what Carr derived composed formed incongruous heterogeneous 1874 hybrid resort Morris Rogers Lisle transf. and between exquisite. hybrids. Eng. Anything complex termed frank...or composite Accid. remarkable different elements; and 1860 II.iv.213 1879 A languages. and of Philol. compounds...hybrid: H. Darwin are grotesque Hybrids. fig. 1850 or lawyer, grotesque naturalist, elements from and sb.2. compounded. hybrid, word a These more you A sources, we elements II.338, in bumpkin, are, different you the favours Jud. Sometimes Ess. yet to a poet, Life free English used in of A a a to 39 of tell & of a I

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Mac Adams

"Man on a Bed of Nails," mixed media, 1986
"Portrait of Karl Marx," mixed media, 1990

"Fat Swordswallower, mixed media," 1986
Transgression as fire, as magic generating agent, which eats at the axial monolith of genre with fumes from an encroaching lava. A feral lava of transmuted sting rays, of philosophical assault tribes, become a hurricane of verbal androgyny.

Who best mines such auricular aspect?
Lautréamont, with his exquisite fervour and menace, the penultimate Artaud, with his fury by x-ray and scalpel, Breton, with his furtive and occulted Nadja, and Césaire, with his devastating grace, with his explosive cross-hatching. In the works of these beings the blunted claws, of say, a Racine, or a Trollope, have been attacked and mesmerically dissected with the power of a magnetic cutting diamond. Within the aura of such transfigured works one gets the feeling of watching a sturgeon, both solferino and xanthic, alchemically break across the confines of a smouldering sodium lake, empowered by the nutrients of poetic aural seed.

Works, not recast for groping in a universal graveyard, but works which shatter the model of "external arrangement." Vitality as insidious ferment, creating images which burn like a series of tubercular pole stars shifting through sudden realias of salt. A new sociology of wandering, of personality cast adrift, recasting their dice from forms of mysterious sullage.

After 500 years, the Renaissance has squandered its final yields of mercury, with its description of a nascent and re-arisen Europa, vanished, with the latter's 3000 years of reasoning utterly sundered by its monominal use of classification. And from the collapse of this seasoned rigidity commences a flow of innumerable Nadjas, of splendidous anti-heroines, suffused with a blank myopia which strengthens. Therefore, the old construct of text, with its tense compartings, into "epic," "lyric," and "dramatic," no longer inspires duration, no longer keeps us crucially riveted across the random field of living. The daily news reflects the prophetic anticipations of Maldoror, the African ferment of Césaire, like a birth of unspeakable multitudes condensed in world wide indigenous transition, away from the model of Europe with its condoned imperial
butchery of outcasts. Transition occurs, and the once immaculately beheaded, now stand up like a mirage of linguistic androgynes.

Webster's describes genre as "a kind; sort; type." Classification which limits, which parallels sucræce. I think of a flock of kings with edicts, written in a language adhering to a strict formation of boundary, to a form which claims as its power a recognizable constant. It is a feeling of fatigued Novembers, of heavy and moon burdened sunsets, embodied in "rhetorical mechanism," which condemns the flow of utterance to a strictly regulated decorum. Genre as exterior garment empowered by a counted archaeology of ghosts.

Two questions need always be asked: does the form contain life?; does it naturally abound with affective irradiation?

I would answer them this way: written creation is like an illusive flood of games which mesmerizes in any form which sustains it. Because Homer wrote in metrics in way he has moved to present them. Therefore we find immobility as a curse, as an ironical velocity of darkness. Yes, velocity as negative, as bound by despicable containment. In this sense genre deforms creation, and becomes a body of reasoned dictation, which freezes the leap, which frustrates emotions of chance. So for the magnetic creator power is never a poultrice or a dying glycerin food, but the compound promiscuity of the adder welling up from within. Of course, it is the necessitous domain of fire, it is the dictated sun spewing out a galaxy of voltage.

Such voltage illumines the claustrophobic summa of Maldoror. Lautréamont, invested with the nobility of a Uruguayan vulture, began devouring the genres of their flesh and their blood, so that they definitively fell at the end of the 1860s, leaving the reader to wander through thickets of immense albino grail, immersed in a strange expanding comprehension. The work of Lautréamont shatters literary "expectation." Historical "personality" is expunged, the biography expelled into the outer districts of conundrum, plunging the critic into the ruthless explosives of the text. Because what Lautréamont does with the power of his faceless glare is to destroy the burdensome notoriety of the author. His images cannot be subjected to a predecessor's marquee of anecdotes, to elements culled from arthritic chronologies. He thereby escapes the censor of the orthodox."Maldoror, . . . with its bewildering and deliberate multiplicity of literary registers" dispels for the conventional reader the reeking linkage of assumption. There is no taking into account the latter's limitations. On the contrary, Lautréamont attacks these limitations sparing nothing that would disapprove of a savage conduct ambush behind the bones of bureaucratically dulled literary barriers. Within the cyclone of Maldoror, Lautréamont creates "a little novel of thirty pages," making it impossible to revert to "the manner of Flaubert, and Balzac, and Dickens." In this ironical menagerie he utterly destroys the dominating stereotypes of "the dreamy adolescent," and "the retired naval commander" with "his timid, ladylike wife."

This being the atmospheric sodium which some 80 years later captivates Artaud, and inundates his glossary with explosives. An oeuvre of inscrutable praxis, in which drawings fuse with the gestures of the stage, impassioned radio chronicles electric like his motions in front of the camera, with the critical writings, the letters, the edicts, all writhing up the high road of the poetic. Artaud's odyssey calls to mind the serpentine lines as they move through Masson's drawing entitled "Furious Suns." A simultaneous field with the single form transcended. This is the human state in the high realms of the arcane, at its most multiple and eclectic, within the chromosomal flames of spontaneous dialectics. No exterior instruction is given as to the way energy of living condenses. Unclassifiable, magnetic, it was his runic and blistering desire which drove him to make the abonant connections between Van Gogh, Heliogabalus, and Dreyer, between the distant locales of Mexico and Ireland. The stasis of genre, becomes a darting pen on a page, at a level of permanent meandering.

So when Nadja appears within the mirror of her ungraspable habitat, Paris dissolves in the writing of a charged cortical liquid. A being who burns above "banality," who scoffs at adoration and simplicity. Her presence, a sheaf of electrodes, tossed by the pitch of psychic inner wind. Her conduct could easily be described as a sea of scorpions, or a disconcerting parable. Yet one thing remains certain, Nadja acts as a cure against the power of mechanical synopsis. She brings to rational content an anti-declaration, a movement of oblique ciphers across a haunted boulevard of water. An altered physicality persists as Nadja precipitates objective hazard, her intangible mortality like a floating perception of signs destroys by its very nature narrative relation and the latter's connective to structure by means of gullible motif. For Breton, the describing of Nadja as novel amounted to no more than the intolerable acid of insult, genre being nothing more to him than the decadence of a bygone foli-
age, or anthem.

As further corroboration, thirteen years after Nadja, Breton appears in Martinique, and meets Césaire, and brings him to objective refugence. Like Nadja, Césaire is illusive and wayward, but in a more explosive register. He poetically slashes, he inveigles his body, while sniping at the shards of Vichy. He is the intermittent clarion, who, in work such as his Cahier, or in his Les Armes Miracles, dazzles as an anti-existence escaping containment into the utter enigma of reality. No literary habit or outline takes form in these texts. They are free, and magically live like a torrential flash of honor rendering light to his war torn readers, guiding them to new provinces of passion. Cleansed, by the obscure power of the unpredictable, he supersedes chronology making it shed its heavy ice in a vacuum. Therefore, the rational can no longer render itself to itself, and collapses like a body into a vat of ennui. Such writing collects by its motion spectral intensity, ascribing to itself the electricity of the occult. Genre, being weighed in such context becomes an evanescent portion, with its previous parameters now the equal of an acknowledged nonsubsistence.

The energy once contained behind the barricade of prose, or soldered within the coffin of poetry, is now free and beatifically transmutes into a poetic galaxy of sanguineous stellar rotations. No longer author with axial identity, no longer creations successfully baited by academic forces of repression. Across the prairie of the page there can be botany, cataclysms, nightfall, simultaneously expressed in single lines, and dense multilayered sentences. The amperage of mixture, of surreptitious masquerade, wandering like a skittish horse across moats of sparkling Iridium, leading to a hall where a greenish turpentine angel is addressing in occulted Farsi an anti-mimetic gallery of skulls. A vitality in its rendering, yes, but not in terms of narrative accumulation, but as vigorous insurrectional sonic, empowering its hermetic enclave with spirals of whispering salt, magically floating beyond the graves of a pungent creosote compound.

Dennis Barone
PIA AT PLAY

The first stage of play is a sort of consciousness with regard to the circle. Next, they begin to thumb cumulative repetition with significant failures. The essential thing is the following subject, the fact of discovered chance. It is very difficult to fix, as we have seen, but a search for the schemata only confirms the searching. The only present able to hold, half closes. It is not difficult to note the moment the sheets succeed in the visual field. From this date on the eye resists everything. Already the hand takes hold. Contrary to the random stages in effect, Pia touched all without trying to reach outside the represented objects, without perceiving her hands, without that evening or the following day. The only limitation which still exists is thus pulling them to the same behavior as the right hand directed. Eyes blink. But a moment later, spontaneously, she looks intellectual, so remote from the wood of the stick toys, the things themselves which swing and constitute these relations in the same way that the facts assimilate the sensorial. Moreover, there no longer remains a tin box placed by the strings she made to succeed the power seated in the elementary paragraphs. During every act as complex as that she closes the distance, brings this discovery to the child. Here are the facts: the handkerchief folded; six days later there is only a brush outstretched on the pall. We fall back between the bars and into the former mistakes. Pia remains, perhaps intentionally, incorrect. All that pulls at the lid tries the chain a second time after having disengaged the ring. All the combinations seem very plastic. The situation is so peculiar to the mobile elements of experience that now in the course of development intelligence is granted a self-explanatory realism. He remembered her in essays he wrote at college. He always aspired to fame. So, too, Pia. They differed. In fact, while writing he resisted a brief hysteria and suffered bitter words he doubtless had promised to return to his experts. The recipients looked upon this world as embroiled in a conflict of arms. But here we come upon the little problem that all this completed: the spine does not bend. He turned to Pia then, flipping through the pages in his book, a movement that has gone before as a warning to himself. A concrete expression tidied up the misgivings for a while. A young man dreams that the hero actually
plays the least active part. We appear to give something up in those obsessive acts. Meanwhile, Pia proposed the following: the blind spot, the whole wave, the only solution to a vexing problem, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida.

Martine Bellen
LOLA MONTEZ

How we jump over the moon
Spirit of entry • ecstasy

She
was not
willing to part
with what
she was
who she is and that explains how
she became the way she was
and that explains
how she became
the way
she
looked

Pour over pallor
handfuls of jasmine, rose
petals and water from orange.
Strain through porous purple paper,
add a scruple of musk, of ambergris.
(The Arts of Beauty by L. Montez)

Pallor a pure transparent
layer over paler blue.
Hair a hollow tube
filled with color fluid.
To prevent fluid from turning gray an old Gibraltar actress used the following preparation:

Oxide of bismuth ............ 4 drs.
Spermaceti .................. 4 drs.
Pure hog’s lard............... 4 oz.

(The Arts of Beauty; Or, Secrets of a Lady’s Toilet)

Melt lard and spermaceti.

Become willing to part with what you are

Who was Lola Montez?

Lieutenant’s Wife, Danseuse, Lola of the Parisian Coterie, Courtesan, Mistress of the King of Bavaria, Countess of Landsfeld, Exile and Catalyst of Revolution, Wife of Cornet Heald, Bigamist, A European in America, Woman Pioneer, Mrs. Patrick Hull, Lola as Lecturer, Beauty Pamphlet Authoress, Spiritualist, Religionist.

Of which Lola do you speak?

Dies January 17, 1861 New York City. Tombstone reads Eliza Gilbert.

Vivat Lola! Pereat Lola!
La Montez mammon
Lolaministerium revolution hysterium macaroni and Brie
Vivat Lola? Pereat Lola?
if the elbow is a king
king Ludwig of Bavaria a grass ingredient

The Bohemian Countess of Landsfeld Vivat.

Two Pantomimes

The Spider Dance

One becomes an abundance
She shakes from her skirt
Her bodice transforms, sweet
Andalusian invaded by Jesuits
Limitless space in her limbs
Hips limit space, wave wider and wilder

Hundreds of wire spiders
Snap in her castanets
The viewer wishes to unravel her
Segmented divisions inamorata

An erratic course that holds your noblesse

The erotic irradiates off her petticoats.
Stamps each to death.

* * *

**Lola Montez in Bavaria**

**LOLA AND HER TROUPE OF DANCING GIRLS, ALL UNMARRIED, MOST UNDER SIXTEEN**

*Lola Montez plays La Montez
An exact replica of her Munich Barerstrasse*

Scene I: Lola with lace and *mantilla*. Tic-tac of *taconeos*.
Fandango heat. Whorls in flame. Her alabaster skin soaked.
La Dame Danseuse.

Act II: In toque with tricolor cockade,
buckle and sash, Marcel curls, the Politician in Lola
signs writs, feeds her subjects cake
while Lola the Countess entertains Nobles and
Notables, the Revolutionist Lola through
Bavarian streets stabs
Jesuits, as the Fugitive suffers alone in her castle.
Her disillusionment
Their jealousy

The Final Vision: Lola abandoned yet strong. Defuse light
projects from behind. Then, one by one, each
character returns, bows before her,
declares love, begs forgiveness:
Ludwig I, Dujarier, Captain Lennox . . .

She accepts their hands
Ends in a minuet.

* * *

When the chest sways gracefully on the firmly poised waist, swelling in healthy and noble expanse, then the mind is at its peak. We are now ready to expand civilization and lure men into performing acts of greatness. Does the end justify the means, you ask? Oh do not be a silly. Those that are cruel, and many of them there are, call me an opportunist, but quite the contrary, I am a spiritualist, believe that all matter can transform when properly instructed.

—"Lola Montez’ Lectures on Beautiful Women"

* * *

In her cellar stored strange spirits:
van Bülow and bull terriers
Sketches by Boz and Lord Byron’s *Don Juan*
a brown bear chained to her garden gate
perched parrot—*memento mori*
yards of velvet, guipure and satin
tarts and tartine, dog-whips and whip cream
tartarus and temper
lectures on temperance
rogues and rouge, stays and stiff
laments and lifts
rare roses a-plenty in bottles of crystal
quinces and capers
luxuriant whiskers
mistakes in the dark
tongues wagging briskly

* * *

“Can forget my French,
but can’t forget my Christ,” says
Lola the Penitent.
Outcast creatures
asylumed she tours
with Jesus.

Bereft of beauty, riches,
love and faith prepare
the flesh.

Cradled by
his will
Lola falls asleep.

Lola the Penitent
with Jesus
the flesh falls.

At first it’s warm.
Deeper down, the more
forgotten, how chilly
and lost I am
to the surface.

I’ll stay here.
Perpetual voice and
motion vanquished.
Last night was years ago
when I lectured on beauty.

We laugh of it, ephemeral vanities
produce pain, somewhere. Who have I wounded
not yet born? A casing that
takes my soul and burns

In the Sun. To remove a tan
die; crème de l’enclos I advise
in my pamphlet—the enclosure,
a coffin will do the trick.

Charles Bernstein

Introjective Verse

)introversive  )implosive  )introspeculative

incorporating

The Rejected
Verse, what?, if it is to trip and flail and fall, if it is to be inessential, useless,
maybe could consider, losing it, forgetting laws and breadth: the breathlessness of the person who refuses to be a man when she listens.

I won’t do two things: first, I won’t show what introjective or CENTRIPETAL is, how it recoils, in its fate as decomposition, how, in distinction to the projective, it is dismayed; and 2, I’ll hold back from suggesting a few contradictions about how the ebullient denial of reality takes such a verse out of believing, what that aversion does, both to the poet and her nonreaders. (Such aversion involves, for example, a return to the technical, and may, the way things hokey-poke around, lead away from drama and epic and toward the materials of poems, their sounds and shapes.)

First, some complexities that a person learns, if she works INTROJECTIVELY, or what can be called MISCOMPOSITION BY EAR.

(1) the pataphysics of the thing. A poem is energy absconded by the poet from where she got it (she will have several stashes), by way of the nonreaders themselves, all the way over to, the poem. Oy!
This is the problem which any poet who departs from adenoidal forms is specially coddled by. And it involves a whole series of blunders. From the moment she jumps back into CENTRIPETAL MISCOMPOSITION—puts herself in the bin—she can aver by no tack other than the one the poem refuses. (It is much more, for example, this backward somersaulting, than simply such a one as Wilde put, so giddily, to get us startled: life imitates art, not the other way round. Come on, girls & boys, think complex, act to redistribute the wealth!)

(2) is the abandonment of principle, the ludicrousness that presides so conspicuously over such dysphrasisms, and, when averred, is the reason why an introjective poem refuses belief. It is this: FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF MALCONTENT. There it went, flapping, more USELESSNESS.

Now (2) the clumsiness of the thing, how the awkwardness of the thing can be made to dishevel the energies that the form thought it accomplished. It can never be boiled down to a statement: ONE PERCEPTION MUST NEVER LEAD DIRECTLY TO ANOTHER PERCEPTION. It means something very different than what it says, is never a matter of, at no points, (even—I shouldn’t say—of our injuring reality as our weekly bias) get off it, invoke arrestation, keep out of it, slow down, the perceptions, ours, the evasions, the long-term evasions, none of it, stop it as much as you can, citizen. And if you also slouch as a poet, REFUSE REFUSE REFUSE the process at some points, in some poems, once in a blue while: one perception STOPPED, SLOWED, BY ANOTHER!

So there we were, looping, where there’s no dogma. And its inexcurableness, its uselessness, in theory. Which doesn’t get us, ought not to get us, outside the cyberfactory, then, or 1995, where centripetal verse is made.

If I sing tunelessly—if I forget, and keep crying wolf, out of breath—of the sound as distinguished from the voice, it is for no cause except to loosen the part that breath plays in verse, which has been observed and practiced too well, so that verse may retreat to its proper immobility and placelessness in the mouths that are already lost. I take it that INTROJECTIVE VERSE teaches nothing, that that verse will never do what the poet intends either by the tones of her voice or theater of her breath....

Because the centripetal questions the speech-force of language (speech is the “red herring” of verse, the secret of the poem’s delusions), because, then, a poem has, by language, evanescence, nothing that can be mistreated as solid, objectified, thinged.

II

Which makes no promises, no realities outside the poem: no stances only dances. It is the matter of content, this discontent. The content of Close, of Bruce, of Ball, as distinct from what I might call more “literary” ministers. There is no moment in which the introjective evasion of verse is finished, the form fuels blame. If the beginning and end is the breathlessness of words, sound in that material sense, then the domain of poetry blurs and blurs.

It’s hardly this: the uselessness of a baby, by itself and thus by others, crying in its misconception of its relation to culture, that semiotic fluidlessness to which it owes its gigantic existence. If it squall, it shall find much to squall about, and shall squirm too, culture has such flummoxing ways of terrorizing all that is outside. But if it stays inside itself, if it is contained in its infancy as if it is a participant in the life immediately surrounding, it will be able to babble and in its babbling hear what is shared. It is in this sense that the introjective ache, which is the artist’s artlessness in the intimate streets of enfolding, leads to scales more intimate than the child’s. It’s all so easy. Culture works from irreverence, even in its constructions. Irreverence is the human’s special qualification as vegetable, as mineral, as animalady. Language is our profoundest act. And when a poet squalls about what is outside herself (in “the material world,” if you object, but also the materiality in her, for that matter), then she, if she chooses to reflect on this restlessness, pays in the street where culture has given her scale, centripetal scale.

Such works, though it’s no argument, could not issue from persons who conceive verse without the full resonance of human voicelessness. The introjective poet staggered from the failings of her own boasts to that syntaxophony where language digs in, where sound echoes, where utterances concatenate, where, inevitably, all acts stall.
Sherry Brennan
BELLE MORT

for Lorraine Jean Nealon

Ah, Sweet Mary, Mother of Jesus
"in this way, her own death becomes heroic"

spare us pain, the pain of the body—
spine cracking up and down its length,

leg bone twisting weakening,
shoulder blade turning shattering,

"While men are mostly killed and murdered, women,
except for rare exceptions, commit suicide or die

as sacrificial victims. It is enough to recall here
the suicides of Sophocles' Jocasta, Dejanire, Antigone
and Euridyce, and of Euripides' Evadne and Lea. The list
of sacrificial victims is long as well: Iphigenia, Polyxena,

Makaria and the daughters of Erechte. Clytemnestra
is murdered, however, as is Cassandra."

This is not sacrifice. This is death
prolonged, carried among the minutiae of blood

cells, along the skeletal structure of life. This is
not death; this is an embarrassment.

It rains. There is rain. Raining.
Just a little, so it patters.
and confusion—as morphine, prozac, valium in the blood. you
smell like rain. and the body fades. you are there. you know
us. but you don't speak. it is not important. ringing ears.
the body a nausea. a stomach. singing head. sight without
focus. we here. sometimes. not seen. swimming.
we—I—your hands and faces close the distance as they lean in
upon me, what you say, far, here, and you are close in your bodies.
let me lie. please let me lie here and you near. where I
am. you near. dear God. and you near. they
carry me, your arms, and I will lie here and sleep
a little, until death do us part.

I cannot see you there. They say sudden and yet we knew ahead
there is time and the body cold and they have done your nails.
Where, I do not know. For I am weak and God, oh God of little
soul. Grass withereth. Flower fadeth. Gerbera daisies,
little sunflowers, snapdragons, chrysanthemums and voices
singing a small tune of the river of death do us part.

All their glory like the flower of the field. Hear our prayer.
Beside still waters. though I walk. Yea, oh God. hear our prayer.
through the valley of the shadow. though I walk. hear our prayer.
a rhythm to the parting of our death. They comfort me. art with.

for thou art with me. I shall not. with me. for our body
a single body that cannot be separated for we are

a death asunder. days as grass. like flowers of the field
we blossom. The wind sweeps over us and we are gone; our place knows us

no more. Departed. Sweet Jesus. a smell like incense
burning in the chill air carried
far. have carried me up to the grave
and now I lie. And you see, and you cannot know me again.

x
Perduring. "In the Greek world 'la "belle" mort
est virile.'" possessed. mazed. to sing your own death
song, the wild lyric as in clamor for Irys, Irys.
But mine is the sheer edge of the tearing iron.

xi
When they set fire to your city, Trojan women, do they set
afire your bodies a living pyre. When you mourn your homes,
do you mourn your bodies domesticate, the death of all you know.
What is there left for you to say, to sing, but the cry of pain.
When they carry you off, enslaved, enchained, your children buried
in the fabric you wove, under the last flowers of your fair gardens,
what do you see
ahead for yourselves. It is all you can do to forget. Your bodies,
your bodies all you carry of home about you. And your silent tongues,
tongues aflame.

xii
In the Greek tragedies,
a woman's death can be tragic,
heroic even. It gives truth. She is sacrificed
to the poetry and the sacrifice returns to the poetry
a profit. In this truth, the woman dies
and is forgotten. "Il n'y a pas d'Alétheia
sans relation complémentaire à Léthé."
There is a memorial to her. Stone. Inscription. She lies buried there.

But I write. Of her. As a woman. Among the living. Nothing remains for us otherwise.

How can one woman hope to struggle against the arms of Greece? Think, then. Give up the passionate contest.

This will bring no shame. No man can laugh at your submission. . . .
Be brave, be silent . . .

—Euripides

If she speaks, she will die, but it is not her death he wishes for, it is her service and her submission.

After death my body, my body. Think, then. Fall. Flower fall. Hills fold onto one another

and fields spread out their grasses bleached against winter sunlight, the brown heads of thistles and reeds standing sturdy in the wind. The road home unfolds beneath us mile after mile. But it is not the body

of Nature I am after. We eat dinner and ride on in the fall darkness, stars in the clear black sky above.

All I have is your teapot and these lines in my head. Your body in its pink suit held tenderly underground.

*Comfort, give comfort to my people,* they say. It is not enough.

Of the Agamemnon, Lattimore says, "The story is a domestic tragedy." a cry of pain, pain. Story woven on story.

A horrible death, they say. This shouldn't have happened. We who live to tell of it.

"We are less and less inclined to attempt merely to repeat or revive the old. Rather, we are able to embrace and affirm the unknown with its risks and dangers. . . . What might embracing mortality—the mortality of meanings and values—our own mortality—mean? . . . We may, perhaps, become more able to let die and, where things are vital and conflictual, to let live, able not to want to kill conflict but rather to engage in and with it."

Take up arms with the Greeks. Their tragedy. Collapsing falling under the weight of its own supports. Remember. Like a house afire.

Found images altered in Adobe Photoshop, Iris prints, 1996
We are familiar with the phenomenon of the 'Spotted Horse', a well-known type in the world of equine. This animal is characterized by its unique coat pattern, which appears to be a random distribution of white spots on a dark background. The Spotted Horse has been the subject of much interest in the equestrian community, and its distinctive appearance makes it a popular choice among breeders and horse lovers.

The Spotted Horse's coat pattern is formed by the interaction of the horse's genes and the environmental factors during the early stages of fetal development. The pattern is influenced by the interaction of the agouti gene, which determines the color of the coat, and the spotting gene, which influences the distribution of the agouti color on the body. The Spotted Horse is also known for its intelligence and temperament, making it a suitable choice for various equestrian activities.

Despite its popular appeal, the Spotted Horse is not recognized as a distinct breed by many equestrian organizations. However, its unique coat pattern continues to attract attention and admiration among horse enthusiasts around the world.

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This discussion on the Spotted Horse is based on the extensive research conducted by horse breeders and geneticists. The information provided is intended to offer a comprehensive understanding of this unique breed and its characteristics.

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The Spotted Horse is not only admired for its physical appearance but also for its friendly and intelligent nature. It is known to be highly trainable and makes an excellent companion for riders and handlers alike.

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The Spotted Horse's coat pattern is a result of a combination of two genes: the agouti gene, which determines the color of the coat, and the spotting gene, which influences the distribution of the agouti color on the body. The interaction of these genes during the early stages of fetal development results in the distinctive coat pattern of the Spotted Horse.
Norma Cole & Michael Palmer
A LIBRARY BOOK

Letter
LETTER: flask created by Lalique in 1912 and known as “Narkiss.”

LETTER: But the more I think about it, the less I’m able to guess what he wanted to say. What is this affair, the greatest in his life? Why is he asking my forgiveness? Where, in speaking to me, does this involuntary softening of tone come from?

exc: The storm was preceded by several minutes of thunder. It arrived from the northeast, smashing the shutters of his hotel room against the window frames.

Therefore there are certainly two planes; but they are capable of coexisting perfectly.

exc: Beside the sluice gate, he looked down at the stubs of his own cigarettes from the previous week.

The model being
yelling in the street in the dead
of night or crossing streets

Terrorists, they flourish
reflected in the rectangular pool
of fire on the wall or
in the air

Figures shaping staircase,
sacrifice, lesion or limb,
demanding, recording, receiving
they have no end.

STANZA: Twenty-six coat hangers on a rack. Nine bottles of still water. Eleven chairs, three folded. Six ceiling vaults. Two tables parallel to each other. Twelve thousand volumes “under lock and key.” Sun-flare against the lens.

STANZA: We are familiar with the phenomenon of the haunted house. We know that life unfolds in familiar interiors, gravid with fluid and astral images; images which remain linked to the place and circumstances of their birth.

As he desired, I clasped his neck, and he took opportunity of time and place; and when the wings were opened far . . .

STANZA: hesitation or stop; the dark chamber or true solar chamber.

Just when I wanted to get up to find you I found that the doors were doubly locked.

It is said, “He has many rooms for rent in his head.”

exc: She spoke of the disorder of the library, but she was not speaking of the library. As the light diminished she asked, “What if a bird were to find its way in?”

STANZA: repeated measure from the corners.

This room contains three things; two are yours if you care for them. One is properly yours.

Similarly she said, “I have three words, but only the one here for you to repeat.”

Two cameras on the table, one at each end.

Already the moon lies beneath our feet
Time is passing and there’s still lots to see
Stuff you wouldn’t believe
You, who are not one.

You in the corner—always in the corner?

READER: Yours, the first book, collusion’s proof: wild flowers placed on the book of life and probability.

But beware of this: accidents will seduce you. For instance, baking bread will split, and the creases or folds attesting to the baker’s art will have a special appeal for you.

READER: Space, penetrated by these figures, reflects both emptiness and solid bodies, having, like the solid body, dimension, but, like emptiness, being immaterial.

exc: How the body extends in space: we say, articulates space, or is read by space.

READER: Orgasm is essentially a narrative. All sexual relations are structured like a story: a one-way street, the awakening of enigma and the desire for its resolution.

III . . . the moon entangled . . .

“Here we would desire a reader with a taste for nothing but mathematics and geometry . . .”

exc: He dreamed one night that he was crossing a field, dressed only in a loin-cloth made from a leopard’s skin, and accompanied by a favorite lion walking on his right.

Asked about certain aspects of his dream, he . . .

Sed cum legebat, oculi ducebantur per paginas . . . vox autem et lingua quiescebant.

Don’t ask, I won’t write, since, reader, words couldn’t say.

Twenty-six coat hangers on a rack. Four bottles of still water. Eleven chairs covered in worn red velvet. Three folding chairs. Twenty-four books; two tables aligned in parallel. Sixty thrones arranged back to back along the twenty-nine arches.

LENS: A burning glass; a watery sphere; a centered system: two revolutionary surfaces with a common axis, differentiated by the thickness of the middle.

LENS: A visible boiling begins like a storm or the onset of a serious illness. Avid to paint what so rarely appears and so quickly vanishes like the lovely thing left behind in the night. A magnified image.

I will not be seeing you again today and here are my reasons.

exc: They would meet at her atelier every few weeks to discuss questions of the magazine and the press. At around eight in the evening, when everyone was beginning to feel hungry, she would appear at the table with several loaves of bread and an enormous bowl of lentils and bacon.

exc: He asked, can you recall whether the waters have always been this murky?

LENS: Any kind of thing could be the accidental cause of joy, sadness or desire.

“As to your idea of encouraging young men to polish glass—as it were, to start a school of glass-polishing—I do not myself see that that would be of much use.”

LENS: These are the colors the eye prepares. Anyone wanting to know should watch my eyes.

False attributions
solid or liquid
one of them infinite

Thus the surface is a map.
"even as a strain of music"

PARALLEL: My real name is N.S.N.. But my last name has many versions. Sometimes my last name is N-x, or N-y, or N-z. In the end I decided to change my last name to Athol. That's also the name of the cough medicine I take.

Therefore there are certainly two planes; but they are capable of

PARALLEL: These are the nine categories of reader: sybarites, rational, impatient, testers, lazy, stingy, maniacs, political, loyal.

PARALLEL: The terrestrial magnetic field is very weak. At the earth's core, where it is strongest, it is weak and vulnerable, and must be protected from parasitic fields.

PARALLEL: A chamber resembling reverie, a mental room where the unmoving air, blue and pink, bathes the soul in languor flavored by regret and desire.

Part-song of the Corsicans from the Salle des Charpentes.

Virgil, Aeneid, Bk iv. ll. __________ - __________ (lost or stolen).

PARALLEL: This situation remains strange and paradoxical. We cannot stay here. We are facing propositions which are singularly ambiguous in their apparent clarity. The provisional becomes definitive, and, meanwhile, cannot define itself definitively.

exc: The angle and force of the rain (the second of the day) reminded him of a similar storm two winters before. He: I was reading Dante, Book V of the Inferno, in this same room:

Amor, che al cor gentil ratto s'apprende
She: I remember absolutely clearly that you were reading Dr. Robinet's Danton:

Que Danton ait eu de grands vices, unis à de grandes passions, on le nierait en vain.
And it was room 210, one floor up and to the left.

Idea, form, meaning fell from the sky into a river of lead.

A telephone rings to interrupt what?

ANNA SOROR SOROR ANNA

"We have never looked for ourselves,—how then could it be that we would discover ourselves one day?"

MAP: Rest assured that even the most perfect of authors has erred.

Plan of concentric spheres, showing Earth enclosed in the sphere of the Moon, and these again enclosed in the sphere of Mercury.

exc:

I am sending these on ahead so we will be able to talk about them. I should arrive in three or four days. The names are not the same. They are two versions of the same story.

MAP: (Vol. I, p. 247) of a city that never was (here map equals territory?)

MAP: of a city of the dead: The indication of names but also the erasure of names.

exc: Out of curiosity, they had gone to visit the stones of Nerval, Wilde, Roussel, Valéry, Gertrude Stein, Richard Wright, Isadora Duncan, et al, but at a certain moment they came by chance upon the grave of two close friends, recently dead.

MAP: What is there to do? Prepare for the coming days as if for sleep? There is still time. It might be too late. Writing says . . .

Fall, white rose
insult to burning skies

exc: He had memorized the arrangement of her room, the exact placement of desk, bed, table and chairs, the sources of light, even the pattern of figures and flowers in the carpet, but when he arrived the room was completely bare. Dust devils kicked up around his shoes as he entered.

In a corner of the ceiling to the left of the door he could make out a fresh water stain. Beneath it, on the bare boards of the floor, an overturned bottle of encre de Chine.

exc: The next day I returned to the library and met a different kind of man entirely: uncomplicated, animated and funny. Once I was able to communicate my curiosity to him, he undertook to satisfy it.

MAP: A volunteer soldier, colt strapped to his thigh, Montaigne in his pocket . . .

MAP: Eye's difference /covered with air /and so the work is spoiled

CARTE du tendre
34 bourses de 35 000 F
8 bourses années sabbatiques de 70 000 F
8 bourses de scénario de 10 000 F
15 allocations renouvelables de 33 000 F

“On en connait un à Délos.”

WELL: Luckily the hole was so deep that she didn’t have to stoop. Each day someone lifted the heavy stone cover and threw in some food. After inspecting her cell by groping in the dark, the prisoner heaped up the large stones she had found and climbed on them to try to force open the door to her prison. She was finally able to do this, but, looking out, she saw with chagrin that once out of this sewer she would be no further ahead.

WELL: His name then broke before me into a cluster of spheres, each sphere generating an infinity of echoes like so many anagrams.

The chevron or herringbone pattern in the wood of the library floor.

exc: She asked, have the waters always been this still?

WELL: merchandise meeting in the dust.

WELL: “I tried to make them work with words in their mouth.”

exc: Would you believe that I, a cream puff without a shred of patience, who knows nothing about history and who, in fact, is totally creeped out by it, have read 2,400 pages just to find out this much about these disgusting people?

Sound of tiny mice in the process of chewing on the manuscript of the *Nouveau Monde Amoureux* in the basement of the École Normale Supérieure.

* among the still unavailable titles: *The House of Children, Hope, Odes to Pindar, The Undertaker of Illusion, At the Gaming Table, Love's Lesson in the Park, Unknown Friends, Travellers to the East, The Central Laboratory, The Seated Woman, Birthplace of 10,000,000 Words, Claire, Nadja, The Magus, Pretexts, The Greatest Lyric Collection, The First Living Anthology, Beneath the Mercury Sky, To the Night, To Glass, To Occasional Verse, The Oviparian Geranium.*
Method


Impossible to visit the names of stones
I asked the magus but he was drunk
I asked the dancer but she was lost
Impossible to visit the smoky vaults
without the key to say who you are
without the name to say who you're not
But tell me if you know
and even if you don't

"A Library Book" is something we wrote together in 1994, at the Fondation Royaumont, after one of their collective translation sessions, an intense week. Invited to stay on and do something "else," we decided to take advantage, in all senses, of the opportunity to explore and plunder the bizarre collection of books they have as a library. These books, kept under lock and key, had never been available to us before, and once we had the key, we used them mercilessly as source, as jumping-off point, as basis for translation, for false translation, and as foil for our own writing.

As you will see, the "entries" locate under the eight "keywords," chosen from all possible words. There are different types of entries, for instance some marked "exc." for "excursus" which became in our minds "excursion." And then, at the end of each section, under a line, is an addendum.

So it's not exactly poetry or translation or narrative.
There are references also to books they must have had once, that must have been "taken," abducted.

Photographs by Juliette Valéry.
Elizabeth Cross  
SCHOENBERG DANCE 12

1. This foaming locale to kiss a 
banged-up 
gilded 
celadon, 
much pebbled/ha!

2. Kiss with this gap, ah, fain did call, did hum led led

3. Celadon to loll in our bed as digging much pang, ha: kiss

4. Hum, ah, foam and bled. All for gelded lead; kiss pan bled.

5. Ming is on the el to gunning ah/um/up pebble-gilting

6. With much fanning, ebb foam celled kiss ganged-up on did ah! ha

7. Local and pebbled hum to ha/celadon while up/did sis foam

8. Our much ha is on to led, did and nap in ale

9. Gilded foam that pebbles kisses

while ah much cela gunning in gain

10. Ha. If gin pan la

and deli nods for kissed much bebes

11. Pebbles lid/in and don/much/ah bug/for a local kiss

12. Banged-up while kissing gild much celadon after pebbling ha 

much foaming 
local
Maria Damon
PERFUME RIVER: THE OXYMORON
WANNABE & ME

In a sense the term "hybrid genre" is an oxymoron that should never have been one—all genres, and all specific instances of genre, are hybrids (the "music video," the "epistolary novel," the "prose poem," the "info-mercial"). There is no purity, has never been. Constructing categories and then deconstructing them is part of western epistemology, part of the way we make intellectual "progress," but should be recognized as a specific strategy that has mastered us by now, rather than the other way around, so that we feel compelled to even address the concept of "hybrid genre" as if it were more than simply a concept, and as if "hybridity" and "genre" were more than simply concepts. The concept of genre, while expedient in some circumstances, comes from and lends itself all too well to the continuation of a limiting obsession with classification, that Aristotelian heritage we wear like a piece of uncomfortable jewelry or a prosthesis intended to distract us from the possibility that our sense of inquiry has atrophied. Expediency is a virtue of empire—witness the redesigning of post-revolutionary Paris as a city from whose center counterinsurgent troops could be quickly dispatched to quell possible uprisings. Witness, also, the penchant for classification that marks the disciplinary measures of higher education: the English Department, the Comparative Literature Department, the Philosophy Department. Each of these has its own rigors mortis of classification, of bondage to the Iron Maidens of genre and periodization: I am the "specialist" in "contemporary poetry and poetics," which means that this was the descriptor in the job advertisement I answered, though I also applied for and was offered positions in gender studies, American studies, "modernism," American literature. When I came up for tenure, the cultural studies scholars I suggested as my external reviewers were struck from the list I submitted to my department tenure committee in favor of "specialists" in "my" "field." While they were generous and insightful, these specialists found my lack of attention to WC Williams and Charles Olson in a book "about" American vanguard poetry striking. I had not been concerned with covering a genealogy of progressive American
poets or poetry, but rather with specific instances of disruption from the margins. None of these experts in modernist poetry said that my use of certain social psychologists was not theoretically compelling, or that I romanticized notions of marginality, or that the Great Chain of Being was an outmoded paradigm against which to launch an oppositional paradigm—all useful matters that had been raised by the initial readers of the manuscript, who represented a wider range of disciplines (one historian, one sociologist, one literary scholar). In my tenure reviewers eyes, however, lack of adequate attention to Williams and Olson indicated a hole in the fabric of mastery of one period and one genre; I didn’t fit perfectly into a category that had been superimposed upon my work by how a traditionalist department defined its “curricular needs.”

My own writing is not dramatically hybrid—no leap-of-faith jumpcuts from one discursive mode to another—but the “poetic style” and confessional, anecdotal bent of my critical writing has been remarked on in both approving (“writerly style”) and derogatory (“overheated prose”) terms if they were unusual; mine are, let’s face it, extremely mild transgressions of the terms of protocol set by my “genre of choice,” the academic essay. Much as my father would remark, with a poignant mixture of pride and embarrassment, on his children’s “hybrid vigor” by virtue of what was then regarded as a mixed marriage (Danish-Lutheran mother, Jewish father), I would claim, with an analogous blend of shyness and bravado, that the more inclusive a style can be, the more substantial its contribution to the health of the written word. The formal and interdisciplinary experiments of anthropologists Jonathan Boyarin, Renato Rosaldo, and Ruth Behar; of queer theorist/poet/essayist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick; of poet/historian/critic Susan Howe; of writer/plagiarist/artist Kathy Acker are all strength the fabric of language and make more meanings and unmeanings possible. Likewise with multimedia/multigeneric works like both Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s Dictee and Walter K. Lew’s Excerpts from Dikte for Dikte: the former is challenging enough, but can be domesticated through now-conventional narratives of gender and nationalism; the latter confounds hackedneyed critical sensibilities altogether.

In lit crit circles, attention to the aesthetic dimension in one’s own writing (as opposed to the writing one is analyzing) is regarded as something of a novelty or eccentricity. Although the mediatedness of signifier/referent is axiomatic in contemporary critical discourse, that critical writing itself, for the most part, tends to present itself as a normative, unproblematic process for “conveying ideas.” Sometimes there is a bias that writing that does not conform to a sort of positivist dialectical format is considered not sufficiently “critical.” “I have students citing your book as offering a vision, but not as critique,” remarked a colleague. “Maybe your next project will be more ambitious?”

Once a few years ago in conversation I saw/felt my head open up and become continuous with a (miniature) fortified city of gold, its ramparts looking, from another’s (yours, o other) vantage point, like a crown; but if you looked (you, o other heart) beyond, you’d see that inside the crown’s circumference, rather than my head of hair, was a medieval wall city. It was the city of God and the city of man, a crystalline bridge of intellect and beauty, and thru it ran a river of rose-essence.

A good friend who publishes on gay cultural studies has had his work insulted by another (more exclusively literary) gay-studies writer thus: “X is incapable of writing an article that is not primarily about X.” His work has been taken to task as self-indulgent, narcissistic, etc. because in the course of developing our inquiries we explicitly explore our own states of mind vis à vis those inquiries and recount relevant personal experience beyond the catchy opening anecdote. (Like, duh, I thought the dictum that all research is autobiographical a) was self-evident b) needed no defense c) makes things a lot more interesting.) Explicit acknowledgment of the personal, so goes the newest incarnation of the “keep it objective” school, reinscribes the dominance of the enlightenment (though not enlightened) subject. However, as has been pointed out repeatedly by an older generation of feminist writers and scholars, this simply replays the stale old “gendered” division of labor: the mushy, teary-eyed, confessional aspect of the individual I/eye under attack by the rational, masterfully objective I/eye. Boring! The rules that govern self-disclosure in academic writing seem to be: 1) one must already have established a reputation writing something non-disclosing; 2) one must self-disclose playfully—for best results the subject should be sexual, and merely hinted at; 3) one should not dwell on the emotions involved in the disclosed material; 4) one should, whenever possible, play for laughs. In short, one should aim for a Woody Allen-esque, dismissively faux-humble mention of the inner life without enacting its full dimensionality. Another friend, who is experimenting with personal revelation in her academic presentations, had the disorienting experience of having her self-disclosing passages greeted with gales of approving laughter, as if the words “my therapist” were enough to trigger recognition of that type of pseudo-confession that embellishes, rather than provides substance for, deep inquiry.

But I’m also wary of the memoiristic movement sweeping “creative writing” programs, at least in the mid-Western institutions I know of. “Creative nonfiction,” it’s called—a clumsy rubric that reifies generic
divisions even as it aims, grandiosely, to break generic barriers. A cruel caricature would have it as a low-rent version of "theory-fiction," (like, duh, what fiction is not theory and what theory is not fiction? what "nonfiction" is not creative?), a coinage that, like "hybrid genre," suffers some of the same unwitting redundancy. Basically, in its broadest sense, I think what the coiners of "creative nonfiction" have in mind is writing that acknowledges the "craftedness" of writing in genres that have not recently been conceived of as craft-oriented. Simultaneously this writing foregrounds itself as process. Hence it optimally fills the gap I noted earlier between what is considered aesthetic experimentation and what is considered content-based, informative, journalistic or argument-oriented writing.

Intellectual mastery and aesthetic gratification are two aspects of the binarism that overshadows and occludes experimentalism—with thought, with form, with consciousness. Simply conceding that all writing is experimental, and that thinking is an experimental process, dissolves some of this conflict between illusory opposites competing for the writer's attention.

The desire to make one's internal universe and private phenomenology relevant to a larger world of societies, energetic fluxes and forces, intertwinings of causes, effects, and random meetings at the global level is one I share. I crave recognition as a sensible entity. I'm touched when I recognize that craving in others. However, the "creative nonfiction" I've seen emerging from MFA programs often is not intellectually or aesthetically adventurous, it is not politically or otherwise engaged or spirited. It does not address a larger concern than the earnest documentation of atomized experience. It is usually just another term for "memoir." At its best it is chatty or lyrical. At its worst, it ploddingly describes, with a surfeit of "concrete" qualifiers borrowed from Natalie Goldberg's overstuffed bag of tricks, the minutiae of the daily life of that portion of the writer's autobiography that contextualizes a lived-through, now recollected (in comatose tranquility) and recreated, trauma.

But this is gratuitously harsh. If I could eke out a paragraph of inspired recollection I wouldn't need to judge the offerings of others and endlessly point out their limitations. Call me Marcel Manquéé. My efforts to simply BE in my writing, in the widest synesthesiac and kinesthesiac senses, and my constant frustration over getting in my own way so relentlessly and cunningly, give rise to grudging assessment of others' writing, no matter whether or not I admire the outcome. A bloodred dove takes the toxin from my mouth (reverse annunciation= renunciation?), drops it in the perfume river for purification, for texture. Whatever: come what may.
I know, not just that the earth existed long before my birth, but also that it is a large body that has been established that I and the rest of mankind have forgotten that there are books about all this that such books didn't lie or else etc and I know all this I believe it. This body of knowledge has been...
ck ck ck ck cic
scattered samenesses, in as many
directions: to the sky along the gravel
by the window
through minute
inner slips and other clicks: fast and slow;
light and dark, spectre and color
yes and no
chk, quick
amid disparate axes
dispersing
unsolaced
*

Song of a traveller about to depart. Aprobaterion.
Song of a returning traveller. Epibaterion.
The gap—readable
white line of nothing, a drag
weighting the turn—was lead.

And what happened in the in-between space, was it
technical kerfluffle achievement named rewards flatness?

"Baffled, I prepare for even greater foreignness."
*

Aureate
dismantling sundry; then the reverse.
Any Old How was the pattern.
(Au petit bonheur for the francophone quilter.)
Little words, worming into incipience, "the a."
Or, half-contrary, "a the."
*

Bilderverbot.
The moon trapezoid on the cool floor.
Be that way!
Dreamatis personae.
*

Words ending in -ette.
Kitchenette. Dinette.
Luncheonette. Laundromat. Hopper. The cold air,
vedette, that the poem breathes
tries to warm it by "o muse."
*

Dora Maar photographed Meret Oppenheim's "Déjeuner en fourrure."
The saucer cup and spoon pic-nic de fétiche, saucy,
un grande crème, cum Chinese gazelle
tropes roughly everything
then, about 23 years after,
"when Yves Klein began to paint with girls instead of brushes"
a pretty good idea given everything
whole lithe sweep of them,
the attraction would differ.
Thus
"compelling any writing"
*

Prix fixe, pixillated
strata of culture to dig
out, mote by mote,
the strabismic lens of any shard
stops me dead

Immerginated raptures
are unsung (so to speak) because the word
doesn’t exist
the word for what you are being led to
in the way of
flattened dialectics
in the articulation of joy despite
and within
the crisis—of burning it all off, the whole earth
ripped out
the pillar of smoke
visible
like the great wall viewed
from the nearest standpoint up
our grinning, weeping
moon.

Where is the place to stand to say this,
any syntax would make it clearer?
while we all nickel and dime it
with normal exchanges—are there
recalibrated tenses
for conjugating bafflement in modes
tuned to the micro-twangy scales of resistance
ruptured agents
for the over-extended job-lost lack-luster
X, anyway
I read some words I wrote I sound like well-meaning
translations, just slightly unidiomatic, just off,
by a
kindred foreigner
looking stolidly at the spot
citizen of I-am-not-sure
what.

“Home, family, illness,
mucus,
childhood,
transitional objects,
household detritus”
thereby

•

hearth heart
(h) (h) (h) (h)
my hear
(th) (th) (th) (th)
ear
m’ere
tereu

•

Trio midge ant caddis
Luminescence keying
pulse of the pleasure
watching a registr ways it
suffuses
his jay bounces into the lower branches, thick blue beauty.

•

Who early on began to play
long tones
long tones on the saxophone
to hear the overtone series
over and over segments mount and narrow
to follow waves’ vibrating dispersal
to observe reverberations in and out the body
long tones and overtones
in the long time.

•
flares whenever one catches sight of this, for whatever we understand as such "we are debarred from providing any indication whatsoever that we are inconsolable."

Given, as well, attacks on positions of opening orphic trek back pack little speck exposed on that escarpment

Pneumomena of the status quo, we are object cases in "real time." What looked like a Bad Register in print. our lives smudged. off-ink. blurred. caught wrong. we had wanted more hope.

Where "it literally rains little songbirds" warblers, orioles, tanagers, flycatchers and thrushes drained is to become a golf course specially written into a House bill

Wet snow clumped words, clumped and melted lacy pivot points with ice dipped into the strange cold heat of praxis, in a white wet storm, ruffles up its dark flares whenever one catches sight of this, for whatever we understand as such "we are debarred from providing any indication whatsoever that we are inconsolable."

Given, as well, attacks on positions of opening orphic trek back pack little speck exposed on that escarpment

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Wet snow clumped words, clumped and melted lacy pivot points with ice dipped into the strange cold heat of praxis, in a white wet storm, ruffles up its dark
truncated rigging
some coracle, some jot on wheels
rolling the present through the potlatch
humming its way along
a single spot of ground
into a sinking patch of time.

Propose a work, the work, a work of enormous dailiness, vagrant responses inside the grief of a century. Pain, of suspicion, of care, the deformative, washing and cutting that occur dilatory, minute
in cataclysm, can't help it. The small time.
Propose
staring at all you know some of it, what cannot be represented per se
but just exists, in the backwash of gesture
forgotten,
that is forgotten every day
without and within memory.

—December 1995

I have been composing Drafts for ten years, for they began in early 1985;
Draft 29 is an anniversary work. The list of genres from Scaliger, Poetices,
1617, cited by O.B. Hardison. “Baffled . . .” is a self-citation from 1985, one
of the initiatory recognitions. Dona Maâr’s 1936 photograph, along with Lisa
Liebmann’s citation (p. 126) about Yves Klein in Bice Curiger, Meret
“Work”: G.O. The citation about “household” art is slightly altered from Faith
Wilding “Monstrous Domesticity,” M/E/A/N/A/N/G 18, p. 7. The saxophone—a description of the childhood of LaMonte Young, based on The Philadelphia Inquirer, November 28, 1995, F4. Some of the forms of paper that Dickinson used, described by Mabel Todd Bingham in Bolts of Melody, xii-
This is a photograph of one of a series of sculptures entitled Vivariums ("... an enclosure or structure for keeping living animals approximating natural conditions for observation or study") made in 1994-1995. These plastic spheres have many associations; bubbles, chambers, wombs, and cells. The imagery inside is an amalgam of many sources ranging from bio-genetic engineering to horror films, 19th century caricature, and medieval art.
There is a story here and it is not about words and the way...About who was writing and why the writing was done over and over again and again which was the story between the lines and words and the first and second instances of what would become the story when and if it was written over itself.

Under the ground of the text is the figure of the story written for the first time and framed in the second instance by the writing over during the reading of the story which is the writing which in turn is in turn the writing of the story during the story over the text which is the story of the so that there is line of the old a story in story in time right.
Evidence of Floods (1994) is a walk-through diorama/performance in eight scenes. The audience is led in groups of eight people at a time through the sequence of scenes as they are performed by twelve puppeteers. The setting suggest the atmosphere of film noir, with its nocturnal urban landscape of bleak streets, diners, and rented rooms. This is echoed in the narrative (performed without words and with music composed by Chip Epstein) of a life thrown off course and a journey through confusion and fear.

Evidence of Floods will be presented in New York as part of the International Festival of Puppet Theater in September 1996.
Photographs by Richard Termine.
Susan Gevirtz
FIGMENT OF APPOINTMENT

The following is the text of a talk I gave in November 1994 at Mills College in Oakland, California. It was part of a series called "MAPPING A FIELD OF WRITING: Poetics Talks * Dialogue * Discussion." The curator of the series, Merle Bachman, wanted poets to read and talk about the writing around, or about, their poetry. Barbara Guest and I called our evening of talks "Other Lives." Barbara has written a biography of H.D. and I have written critically on the work of Dorothy Richardson. We've both had the experience of being immersed in the work of another writer over a long span of years. But that's always the condition anyway—writing is always in relation to other writing, other writers, the other lives that inhabit the work.

By Every Different Means

On leaf On counter On tire

Amorous antennae lutheribus ancestor

Your Color cognations Sing Sing Sung
Of when Before it was no longer necessary
it was once again Or Else

telephonic insomnia:
and no choice remained but to take notes

CAPELERIA ENCAPSULATE WINNOW

TUNDRA ROAD

vast expense conversant

It's like them to say finally, tenderly—
as the sun falls again into the vast maw of sea—

"adorable impediment

conversant impediment"

Homare Osage Recid

CHEVROLET

CADILLAC

CHILDHOOD

Hang your head over
Hear the great plains below

By the time I got to Sacramento I realized
someone had been in the car all along

I promised I would read to you so bring popcorn and curl up

Schlassa impregnatiously ota timeaus

upona equynation and out they went

Don't give me that expression it's never been my fault that tea
gets cold hold out your hand tenacious listenophonia
warm by the hearth
while out in the storm they unpack the trunk
it is not your job to call the home insurance company
curl and strike
while I hover over dispensing feather

Pull up a ledge and feed your view
It is a pet you can always count on to talk back
Invotoritia recorum ipsulantoa tecusa lets inten and rows and rows of hedge-weeks wait for a qurum. Or:
Freedonis terabam, come in come in calafirm.
Translation no longer necessary
if you listen in vorasimilude

M11 Oh wandering little ovation
Let me supply you with a nest
nothing fancy just one parking place
in a bed where you can meet your match
wrestle squabble tease resist

I do not OVER CALIBRATE your valumificance
instead hush huss sing sing and sung along to the land where
breakfast is not yet ready
The kings oh die in the arms of your throngs
The ponds oh suck long tresselites of the choked
limpid on still waters above
yet we do not hungerlack for era
nor wist for farflung bardelodium
the drowned the drowned they will drone on

We of phobic diagnosis
ears gathered not for recitation
but do repeat
someone had been along
all along

On the night after the day I was asked to participate in this series I fell asleep
and had a dream all in the other language of the above poem. At the end of the
dream the words "TRANSLATION IS NO LONGER NECESSARY"
appeared as if on a dark billboard. After all, I had thought during the day

while awake, what is there to say about the work, that hasn't already been
said in the work?

* I want to thank Kathleen Fraser without whom I may have never encountered Dorothy Richardson’s writings.

_Figment of Appointment_

The furniture’s arrangement equals induction. Between commas, the summons.

She entered as punctuation: “For language as it conforms to rule and punctuation is invisible” says Dorothy Richardson in her 1924 essay "About Punctuation." “About Punctuation” begins: “Only to patient reading will come forth the charm concealed in ancient manuscripts. Deep interest there must be, or sheer necessity, to keep eye and brain at their task of scanning a text that moves unbroken, save by an occasional full-stop.”

It was necessary to work at three desks at once in order to evade what Richardson calls the punctuation “police.” Because on the computer screen the “formal law” glared. “The formal law,” she says, “was strictly observed only by scholars. Not until lately have infringements, by the ordinary, been regarded as signs of ill breeding. And in high places there have always been those who honored the rules in breech without rebuke.”

_At one desk a poem:_

Romansh: the stations of canonization

We have nothing but second languages

as if there is home
travel

You are in a foreign place
when your own name
is unrecognizable.
give up easily
in prophecy

up folds
time

We are on location
You are ballast
in a state of readiness

"In what room will they put
me to forget them in?"

The useful dead
drink the sun
down into the ocean

illegal removal
sale or cutting up of
the hour of our

nothing of the soft tissue
holy intentions
davor davor
left "the seduction of having oneself
dismembered alive
for others"

perforate incognito
blaspheme to make more

In which
second language
shall we stop
to forget them?

preserve mystery her
amnesiac assimilation

"concupiscence" or the formation of adipocere
thauma

turges ideas rampant on shore *

On the computer screen a conference paper:
"Recreative Delights and Spiritual Exercise: Pantheism As Aesthetic Practice in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage"4

If only she could make Eve see what a book was . . . a dance by the author, a song, a prayer, an important sermon, a message. Books were not stories printed on paper, they were people; the real people; . . .

Honeycomb 385 (Richardson's ellipses and punctuation)

In a 1923 review of The Tunnel and Revolving Lights by Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf referred to herself as an "intermittent student" of Richardson's. Later in the same review she coined the phrase, "the psychological sentence of the feminine gender," to describe Richardson's style. Woolf heard in Richardson's techniques "the damned egotistical self" while others simply found the work too difficult to read or boring. However, some readers, such as critic Louise Morgan, recognized (in 1931) that Richardson was doing "something entirely new with the English language" (Rosenberg, 155). May Sinclair was one of the first to use William James' term "stream of consciousness," a term Richardson disliked, in a review of the three novel-chapters which open Pilgrimage.

To me these three novels show an art and method and form carried to punctilious perfection. . . . In this series there is no drama, no situation, no set scenes. Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on. . . . In identifying herself with this life, which is Miriam's stream of consciousness, Miss Richardson produces her effect of being the first, of getting closer to reality

*All quotes in Romantics are from Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage.
• A bullet indicates the end of an excerpt. A centered line indicates the end of a longer excerpted piece.
than any of our novelists who are trying so desperately to get close (9).

In 1925 Woolf said that, "If a novelist could write what he chose there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted sense" (Rosenberg, 167). The ideal novel in which "nothing happens" is the one Richardson attempted to write. She speaks of a "growing conviction that the extraneous matter was more essential than the interesting deliberately composed narrative, incidents and figures." Writing was her means of addressing the way in which she was "perpetually haunted by the mutability of ideas. Giving no satisfaction to a growing desire to express the immutable."

Richardson writes always in the vicinity of her mother's death, as if hovering around a shrine. The death itself is never directly mentioned in Pilgrimage, though through her writing Richardson is able to approach it without entirely merging with it—without actually committing suicide or dying herself. She thereby fills the corporate silence with the "miracle" of "messages" from the womb/tomb of the death she only barely missed preventing.

Richardson's "spiritual exercise" and Miriam's journey towards writing constitute an approach and avoidance of the dead mother. . . . Travel towards the mother also occurs in this kind of collapsed or cinematic time in which one writes in a "real dream" while one is simultaneously awake in "the real part of . . . life." The "feminine equivalent" is, in this sense, a vehicle not only for writing outside of the constraints of linear time and linear syntax, but also a vehicle for unconscious travel:

. . . that idea of visiting places in dreams. It was something more than that . . . all the real part of your life has a real dream in it; some of the real dream part of you coming true. You know in advance when you are really following your life. These things are familiar because reality is here. Coming events cast light. It is like dropping everything and walking backwards to something you know is there (Tunnel 13).

The places in Pilgrimage where the written message becomes dream, music, or prayer epitomize that wavering border between sense and nonsense, speech and silence—the corporate silence of death and the incorporate speech of life. These moments are best exemplified on the page by narrative disruptions achieved through a deep engagement with the "contemplative state" or "feminine prose." The words break down or dissolve into music and the blank spaces on the page give way to that which is "all too sacred for words," the "nothing" which generates "meaning" even if "you have just murdered someone," or even if someone has just murdered herself and you feel responsible. Thus, the nerves of Richardson's spiritual practice exist where the writing wavers between word and ideogram, embodying a "habit of ignoring, while writing, the lesser of the stereotyped system of signs" and a "small unconscious departure from current usage" (Foreword, Pilgrimage 12). In March Moonlight, the last of the novel-chapters, Miriam describes these irrevocable links between the written word, the sacred, and the "nothingness" of death:

To write is to forsake life. Every time I know this in advance. Yet whenever something comes that sets the tips of my fingers tingling to record it, I forget the price; eagerly face the strange journey down and down to the centre of being. And the scene of labour, when again I am back in it, alone, has become a sacred place (609).

Next to the computer neither a poem nor an essay:
"Dorothy Richardson Taken Place"

To write is to forsake life. Every time I know this in advance. Yet whenever something comes that sets the tips of my fingers tingling to record it, I forget the price; eagerly face the strange journey down and down to the centre of being. And the scene of labour, when again I am back in it, alone, has become a sacred place.

—Dorothy Richardson, March Moonlight

Words mark vicinities where is the absence of a person. That absence we're after. Every death sacrifice. We know because we haven't died and those invisible, having done that for us, beckon down Where you Were you were constant in absence
alone, has become
a sacred place

Dorothy Richardson donated her body to the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons before her death. More than two years later, what remained was buried under a tombstone inscribed “To the Memory of Dorothy Miriam Odle, Authoress D.M. Richardson.” Odle is the last name of Richardson’s, by then dead, husband—a name she almost never used in life. Miriam is the name of the main character in Richardson’s autobiographical thirteen volume epic novel Pilgrimage. The ‘Miriam’ on the tombstone was a “mistake.” No one knows who was responsible for it. Dorothy’s actual middle name was her mother’s maiden name: Miller. Her mother’s first name was Mary. In Pilgrimage Miriam’s mother is only called Mrs. Henderson.

Due to the lapse in time between Richardson’s death and burial, the location of her grave cannot be determined by the date of her death. In the cemetery records her name appears in the later period of time when Streatham Park received her body. There is no other legal record. The temporary gap between death and interment, document and event, throws into disarray the usual correspondence between site and time. A disarray that unfolds the careful origami of identity: no meeting at the handshake of date—space—salutation

Name is a disturbance of place

“. . . in many languages the word used for ‘writing’ is derived from verbs meaning ‘to paint,’ ‘to cut,’ ‘to incise’ or ‘to scratch.’ ” At fifty-two Mary Richardson slit her throat with a kitchen knife while twenty-two year old Dorothy was out for a brief walk. To write is to forsake life:

Lodgings were rented at 11 Devonshire Terrace in Hastings, and Dorothy and her mother arrived there late in November, 1895. The sea was rough, the air somewhat cool, but after a few days Dorothy thought her mother looked better. She did not leave her alone for a moment. There was always something her mother needed done for her or something she wanted to try to express. At night Mary Richardson found it hard to sleep. Dorothy heard her moans and tried to reassure her: she was not stupid, she was not sinful, she was not eternally damned. Dorothy wanted desperately to convince her mother of all this, but Mary Richardson had accumulated nearly thirty years of evidence to the contrary. And precisely because her husband would have found it incontrovertible proof of her stupidity that she believed in damnation, she was absolutely certain of both. Dorothy herself wanted to cry out in loathing and anguish. Instead she went out one morning to escape. It was Saturday November 30. Hastings was quiet, the season long over. Dorothy wandered about for an hour or so, hoping to still the pounding in her head and erase from her mind’s eye the image of self-loathing that was her mother’s entire being, hoping she would not herself go mad. When she got back to Devonshire Terrace, her mother was dead. Somehow she had laid her hands upon a kitchen knife and cut her throat with it.

—Gloria Fromm, Dorothy Richardson: a biography

A place is a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feelings.

—A. Gussow, A Sense of Place

The situation is the one in which a certain disturbance of the person occurs . . . a seism which causes knowledge or the subject to vacillate: it creates an emptiness of language.

—Roland Barthes, Empire of Signs

To be awake in dreamtime is to be the audience in cinematic time. At once in the past, present and future. Travel towards the mother also occurs in this collapsed time in which she writes in a “real dream” while simultaneously awake in “the real part of your life.”

In name disturbed place
walks toward
memory

The who in the dream I write to you about is all who but through them each lives a cordoned one

The “spiritual exercise” writes the wounds of the lacerated body into the work of the living. Providing her dead mother with an ulterior
eternal life and death in the book she gives herself a subterfuge for the past which continues as she writes.

Where is the state of the living

Writing that gives the absent other voice and flesh occurs where delivery and reception blend, opening an equivalent gate to heaven and eternal damnation:

Some kind of calculation is at work, a sort of spiritual metronome, imperceptible save when something goes wrong. It operates, too, upon sentences. A syllable too many or a syllable too few brings discomfort . . .

. . . To open the book is to begin life anew, with eternity in hand.

—Dorothy Richardson, *Clear Horizon*

*Imperceptible save when something goes wrong* on paper print vacillates. Thought-rhythm and speech-rhythm: figment of appointment.

A place is a disturbance that has been claimed

Small metronome on wrist of departure

Pieces of her body remain

in science silence

“Sound exists only while it is going out of existence”

—Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*

Monogram at the lapse of landscape

In addition to the dead
the injured
in addition to

Richardson’s choice of words and names is too precise, as Stephen Heath suggests, for it to be accidental that embedded in the name *Miriam* is the possibility of “Mirror I am” and that Miriam is linked by sound to the word *myriad*. The name reflects Richardson’s preoccupation with themes of feminine subjectivity present throughout her writing.

The study of what becomes visible and who is heard in the land of rebuke becomes the only game in town. But hearing doesn’t happen nowhere. Richardson leads us away from the domestic in the only escape vehicle available to women before the turn-of-the-century, the pilgrimage. And at the turn-of-the-century, the film. On pilgrimage to the shrine of the cinema, having escaped a shrill London afternoon is where, she says, you will find a whole “new audience” of “Tired women” taking “sanctuary.”

And, if a member of this audience turns her head away from the screen, what Richardson calls the “white searchlight” of the projector, will reveal the spectacle of female spectators in the act of viewing. Here, in the moment of turning away, Richardson’s film writing begins. Are the spectators guilty, she asks—caught in the private act of reading—what she calls “the unpunished vice”—in public? Under the electric light, invented in 1879, about seventeen years before the first experiments in cinema, and six years after Richardson was born, night could suddenly become day, images and text could hover in a twilight state suggesting contemplation and decipherment as acts that might expose the reader to herself. As does Miriam in *Pilgrimage*, Richardson breaks taboo by living alone and writing after work under her own rented electric light. What appeared as she turned the beam on the apparition of herself by herself? As Richardson describes Miriam in *Pilgrimage*?
Returning from scribbling in various styles of handwriting the difficult combination, she gazed once more at the word on the page and saw that as written by the girl it was not a word at all. It was a picture, a hieroglyph, each letter lovely in itself. 

Written as she wrote it, it was expressive exactly as her script was expressive: a balance of angles and curves. Like the words traced on the mirror. 

It is here in this mirror light, under a bushel of light, that I beheld her, myself in the act of crime: impudent girl behind a closed door watching herself read, or was that touching herself?

“Nymphae! Vestibulum! Words that could only be derived from the knowledge of books!” says Freud—accusing her of secret reading—when Dora utters them.

Freud: “I informed Dora of the conclusions I had reached. The impression made upon her must have been forcible, for there immediately appeared a piece of the dream which had been forgotten: in it 'She went calmly to her room and began reading a big book that lay on her writing table.'”

I saw myself I saw Miriam doing what Freud said Dora did—Richardson rewriting, while simultaneously in another city, Freud was writing. I turned the beam back, I bent it. I scanned what I saw—a text that moves unbroken—at once film frame and ancient manuscript. Here she entered as deep interest, sheer necessity, the sight of the word

How sleepless is the air.

I went into my room and closed the door. For twenty years. Acts that might expose the reader to herself. Alone I was summoned to account. In this vestibule we stand accused. Speak and be breast, be beast—What does writing have to do with our mothers? Wear her body's doubt—inher—reveal the word for the writing implement. In the academy of the daily every word we utter becomes anatomy. Stand at the entrance to your forest and condemn yourself by vocabulary, vestibulary. When

the parents closed the door for the final time I used to get up and rearrange the furniture before going to sleep. I tried to reassure her, she was not stupid, she was not sinful...

We always return to the scene of the crime. There is nowhere else to go. Nowhere else we want to go. Is it a plane or theatre? Operating room or kitchen? Like a big cloak dropped from ten stories above light billows out, falls over the shoulders of the audience turning them to landscape. Sleep, like a big x-ray apron weights us. As I turned away, there, immediately, appeared a piece of dream

Prosthesis

Without name there is less to forget
Where the fathers are ashes in the mouth of the future Where in that bend of the road they still crouch knitting and rubbing in an attempt at sense in the gentle and long the impossible bandaging of themselves

Dear ventriloquist,
This uncertainty in regard to direction—For which they are either drowned or burned—
Engastriloques, under the tree—Talking to birds—To which we reply

Notes
2. Ibid.
4. Gevirtz, West Coast Line, No. 9, (26/3), Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C., Canada, 1992.
Let us suppose our old friend the railway carriage
Let us consider two particular points on the train
Lightning has struck the rails on our railway
At two places far distant from each other. If I
Ask you whether there is sense in this statement
You will answer my question with a decided “Yes.”
After some time perhaps the following answer would
Occur to you: “The significance of the statement
Is clear in itself and needs no further explanation.”
But this point of view by no means embraces the whole
Of the actual process; the reader may think that such
A description of the world would be quite inadequate.
Mathematicians have been confronted with our problem
In the following form: little we see in nature
That is ours. According to Gauss, this combined
Analytical and geometric mode of handling the problem
Can be arrived at in the proceeding manner: as long
As it is moving uniformly, the occupant of the carriage
Is not sensible of its motion. Experience has led us
To the conviction that this principle holds true.
Jenny Gough

The Letters Floating on Water, Dear

To whom it is written by I petitioner unknown for centuries, Female CROOKED IN REALITY because in the dark THE WIDE LINES WERE “6/200 in both Spaces, Amazingly, unable to say Wives and Children of men, Brides-to-be eyes” AND THE CURIOUS MARKs I, talk AS PREDATOR still “unreadable” Pictures people American buy and don’t want any part Unnaturalized “FLOURISHES” made on paper in the buried history of Refusal made of Ourselves, (Nikes)normal Work With or without anything of value bricks will you have to swallow before you get the words when you make them up and correspond

There, no we “at the Frontiers”—Gertrude & Alice needed “carnets” to write Speech Between the Lines Plagiarized (people) and fragmentary That is PERCEIVED blissf elaborrate unwritten avant grade documents and out of time THE TARGET BLANCS Confused WITH excess ROSES appreciated and typically Now “The community I was writing for and about made the boundaries of my imagination obsolete.” Is what is

There asonged lyingly AND PRESST IN THE GUMCRINKLE DEPOSITIONS WERE wax Illocutions

CONSIDERations BETTY’S musty TRADE-IN LOVE TrALES about howho to not WHILE ONE AT A TIME hawking and all Malapropisms for, HOUNDED, at once we realize “there is no existing vocabulary” and come up ALL At once written over it

Again Whispering SWHAET PAINTED ZEROS blancks IN THERIOTESE THAT “Sing” through her not by her nothing and like everything “Of the things Which will happen to the eyes”, Drawn in

By Versimilitude Written without dictionaries, they were romantic to think AT MARRIAGE that, they They have Xs on them that are exposed MUST PLEAD for others’ to please THOW SECRET ADMIRER “compound myopic” these will be rendered, of the things I stole

odd and enough, invisible collaborative ALLIANCES and “blocked off” as silence you “Until war was actually declared” TELL how, they Girls turn (as you spent their meantime) robbers say and excess “bilateral and severe” Little opportunity and SLOTHE

PROCEDURES FOR being a soldier with her head DISPUTING I broke my tongues into her.

LATE for History, corrupted “BREAKING” LINES come out AND with excess attention all over the place, Civics on the board to pay to be taken, ingenuously WRITTEN
hardly STORIED ACCOMPLISHMENTS made easy OOF because of revision, study UTOPIAN HANDLER's self evident PLOW POTE CANARD

WITH ITS WANTON interruptions in boxes, postcards STREENS in which we sign TO DELITE,

Allegiances That are made on your back (Taken off)
Pretty prey poetry With water

leaves ILLITERATEGARLSATE""LEAFMEAL" PAGES

OF "BRITTLE FEET" seemingly oxymoronic WITH MSCOPIED CHARCOAL attainments COLOR ME LINES with romanse SCORED WITH apollogies Stamm ART AT HYPERBOLE which, it is said, CLASHING AT THE IDOL EMERGENCY

genre, AND IN MIDNITE UNIFORM "like FLARES out the window",

Framed and AMOURED knytes
Of THE MURTHY bond WHITE PULP

DISLOMBERED EVE FROM "MIDWIVES OF TODAY'S PURE WORDS"

"clearly visible to normal sighted soldiers" OF CONSENT I write
Dear Tristan, ashamed to say I
There
IF apace WITHOUT
if
applied Science
to Ideas, that are us
Misnamed

participants

My neighbors
foreign since birth, Girls
say in my country, instead of Band Aids
we burn
our skin and try
to avoid the raw areas
Clean (feet)
to avoid
our feet

"with half names and abbreviations" for mistaken LETTERS, FISHWYFE tears

3 day "furies" documented, anonymous squibs aim at the eyes, already insiders

I am

Sincerely

Quotations beginning with "The community I was writing . . . " and "there is no existing vocabulary" are taken out of context from Sarah Schulman's "AIDS and the Responsibility of the Writer" in My American History: Lesbian & Gay Life During the Reagan/Bush Years (Routledge: 1994).
MALES (TERRORISTS)

The earth and the cuddle turn together. The forlorn hammock is abandoned. Nighttime passes as a date with blackened shoes. Insouciance falls on barking females as we kiss men who enjoy our masculinity.

We are seen as organized criminals, babes without babies. Women who think they are men. Organized against men who also think they are men. We invent crimes against nature as if we were born warped. "What ought to happen to those born warped?" ask those men who do not want to share their masculinity.

We enjoy the simplest pleasures as if they were the banquet of the dunces. Stupidity is even within reach of our happiness. We embrace stupidity if it can sit at table and appreciate the meat we have prepared with our tangled stuffing. Only those who appreciate what we have prepared will eat again.

Our primary goal is the game called Under. Under is where there is structure. Although the men who desire to keep their masculinity only for themselves think that under is chaos only. Their mistake comes from hiring people to look under their own homes. While they are gone, the wives go under the house with the hired people to get a look and discuss the repairs. Thus, even the wives have entered into collusion with organized crime.

The repair person ducks into the crawl space to examine the moisture on the underside of the floor. She points to a bit of erosion. They examine the drainage system which it turns out flows into the bottom apartment next door and up through ten stories. She takes her hat off and her hair unknots, falling down to her ankles. She says, "I can sweep the floor with this mop."

In the meantime, those strange examples of men who do not want us to be men figure out what should happen to us. They discuss the issues at great length in rotundas. We put on our overalls, plumbers’ hats, carpenters’ aprons, tool belts, and go to work under the rotundas. The repair person with the long hair dons a maid’s uniform and sweeps the entrance way. She lets those who think they must touch her hair.

to be continued

While she guards and distracts, sweeps and serves, we take our flashlights to the opening underground: where the hidden fathers of the citrus rind holes guard the doorway to European limes out of which flow thousands of human oranges. The streets of Marseilles hemorrhage with fish lemons pulled up from a sea of hecklers, crowding around our latest stew concocted below the turgid debates of those men who do not want us to be them.

to be continued

As their trick language pours into the central debate,

- no federal money
- kindergartner's self-control
- roast the abstention
- abstinent ducks
- and eat less AIDS
- lunches for kids
- minus them addicts
- bankrupt abstainers' GNP
- preacher
- perched on a rider
- you owe me one abortion joke
- flooding the floor, we take a break against a cool underground wall of the rotunda. Our mopper is up there mopping up the words "no federal money" with her innocuous weapon, thereby wiping out the means of exchange. While she wipes out the means of exchange, distracted senators needing a breath of fresh air bury their heads in her hair. They don’t notice her destruction.
Below her, lounging against a wall on the cool sub-basement dirt, we
day a silent game with pieces of the universe and stitched visions plucked
from the marrow of our bones with the eyebrow tweezers we have
stolen from various senators' hotel rooms. The game is called Under:
Seduction, Repulsion, Correction. Or Repulsion, Correction, Seduction. Or
Correction, Seduction, Repulsion. Or Repulsion, Seduction, Correction. Or
Seduction, Correction, Repulsion. Or Correction, Repulsion, Seduction. Since
these subtitles are meant to repulse, correct, and seduce anybody but
particularly those in the government and media who help produce ter-
rorist acts, we have fashioned ourselves into game board tokens for which
the rule book designation is "footmen of power."

continued next page

A note on the game(s)

Many of the first Games were published recently in my new and selected
writings titled There Never Was a Rose Without a Thorn. They have
another, and on-going life, as a collaboration with Amy Trachtenberg The Games
that follow those published in There Never Was . . . are an advance in our
collaborative process, since the initial set were written first then developed visu-
ally; and the later Games are more dependent on a back and forth exchange
between Amy and myself Males (terrorists) falls into this latter category.

The concept of Games came to me when I was working on yet another
work, The Words: after Carl Sandburg's Rootabaga Stories and Jean
Paul Sartre. I was in the middle of writing Women's lengthy monologue, when
a voice intervened. It said "see games." I wrote that down, thought about it,
and then started writing the game Murdering. I had to write the Games to
"see" them. They all had to start with M: this is part of the game of "seeing
games." Games are part of a game of construction and of making a claim for
themselves as such.

These Games are therefore initiated through the construction of a waking
dream, the dream of "seeing games" and of utilizing writing to reveal them.
Their properties are various, some of them refer to possible and/or impossible
game boards. Others refer to the event of a game inside a writing event that I
call a game. Naming the Games Games calls attention to their own instabil-
ity.

I wanted to work with Amy on the Games, because her collage not only
deals by nature with hybridity but because of the particular way she uses
material. Her collage plays many of the same games with a visual vocabulary
(including words) that my writing plays with language in its semantic shiftings.
We both use our respective media to deal with issues of representation, figura-
tion, and abstraction; and we both enjoy following and tracing the messages from waking dreams with analytical implements: both compositional and interpretive. Like the dreamed/dreamers, Marieleine-Marie, in the Max Ernst collage novel A Little Girl Dreams of Taking the Veil that Amy and I helped convert into an open, we address our own psychic constructions as if we were meeting them outside the terrain of the dream. Perhaps we "other" our own fantasies as if we were scientists of our own imaginations.

The play between a seeming stability of meaning and image and a seeming instability of meaning and image is typically excessive in these works. Males(terrorists) takes our exploration in a new direction in its play with masculine identity. Men and women play games, are locked in a deadly game, perhaps. In this case the women call themselves men.

There are the men who don't want us to be men and those that do. This concoction of yeah and nay says is not representational but it is a challenge. Perhaps gender is taken to be meaning in this game event. Is the challenge/aggression in the work directed to biases against women, to meaning in art, to gender as meaningful? The indeterminacy of gender is distributed throughout the work and so is the indeterminacy of the game, which may or may not be a game—and if it is, what kind? Is a terrorist act a game when it becomes a prop-like reference? And if so, what in the game between men and women is a terrorist act? The women's attempt to sabotage the values of those other, perhaps, congressional types? Or the legislators' presumption of control over the domain of the (f)male body?

Lyn Hejinian & Travis Ortiz
THE STAKING EFFECT

as if one's silence
could

that which makes a phrase

or

revers one to one hundred
which is better than repetition

and in our distinguishing,
one cannot become,
in the sense of the other

The laying of the law.

for animals?
something like a no-win

which is what I'm getting at

the opportunity to lay
side by side
with chaining effect
reasoning from one to the other

but one can't become as much as that
whose nothingness is open
judged the literary gender in time
in hopeless open neutrality

but, okay!
engaged in repetition
to raise our barriers
in number

It is number (beyond one and thus beyond “one's silence”) that makes repetition (than which nothing can be newer, with its swift reversals) inevitable. And reversal provides us with our opportunity to theorize, moving quickly but back again, then here again—“which makes a phrase”—

each phrase being in question
openly—performing “the laying of the law”, the encounter, in the antinomian position

animal.
The mutable (unbearable) mediator is silence but in vaudeville. A theater of interpretations. A platform of diagonal beings termed silent whose quirks invent the very things they aren’t [admitting]. The resulting comedy of phrases represents an attempt to catch a person and fill a life to show what one might be (but won’t be) [saying]. Agitation is always an utterance gone blank (understanding): [given that the world hinders itself with a number of contradictions]. The silence (termed perfectly silent) will endure apparent doubt contact, deliberate nervous imprecision, as loss [indefinite jealousy]. One silences a phrase to see that it can’t be terminated, [in anticipation]

in blank contact

uttered turnings

to body the knots

Yes, but in vaudeville, you, exposed marginalia [one rarely has the opportunity]; to negotiate a discourse of “in anticipation”; not unlike the blanket sequence, and more similar to bulging imprecision: a chance to leave void, filled with nothing: a no-thing nothinging.

waiting for the

which is exactly as I
s/he explained it

. .

saxophone and drum brush
gently, then, with increasing vigor

the curtain goes up

all you see is glitter
the spun pole

rising to persuasion
brushing the shoulder

for lights as ligature

-red
The phrase is light bondage, its meaning displaced onto another phrase: [suspended in secrecy]
And chained there unexplained: [it is dissolute!]
Which leaves it weak in appearance but strong in performance: [the more subject]

The more subject there is, the more object demands:
["I'll re-create the absent proprietor; all my gestures evoke him/her"] and ["All my acts are performed but it is better to say they escape from her/him"]
In performance contrary ethics are compatible: [the tightrope is prepared]
That's the aim: to stay in reach

In limit and in actual music background between the great variations and the private part thrown to a better theory in time by clapping
Out of time where not memory but memory's context is gone
In what Jalal Toufic calls "silence over"—an effectual silence which bypasses noise (law)

We speak of abeyance;
to fill the gap

with whisperings

[which to one observing/obsessing from a distance speaks only silence].

As one philosopher says to us:
what is not presented is not.

The naught of which we speak must be.

The strength of the performance lies in exposing her/his phrasal logic for what it is [satiating their urge to see].

They have very expressive tails.

Inevitably we must question the law if only in silence
[& only a matter of time: phrases laid side by side]
will make bypasses at each other,
and perhaps, for no other reason than to muddy the saliency [subject / object].
We can in theory clear a path (dissonance) between phrases [light linkage]

And commit an outrage (presence) [light linkage]

We have, after all, attained the status of being in theory (there hardly seems to be any other)

Unsatisfied and questionable, it’s true, and without the protection a narrative might provide, one involving, say, a stretch of time and a master [an object of solicitude]

Or landscape and slave [in the distance (locative) unseized and unbetrayed]

And for that very reason unlikely

— which is translated in distance, not just coastline

And no less subject

who speaks of engagement [top-down] [on the four] or dwells within

the question already has its answer: [light linkage]

to fall prey to the seduction of discourse: the “what it feels like” factor

Which is not to say telicity governs as passion, but provides a dividing point [deixis in blue jeans]. This is what time feels like: an unlikely clap in number. Some rhythms are worth deciphering; one way is to avoid trouble [that is, distance: third personhood]. Another requires a different pair of shoes [yes, distance]. It is here, precisely, that theory provides

[interruptions] & [interruptions]
... until the entering interruption
is itself entered

in the racing distance (return)
of the door ghost, living flurry, given gift,
split spectral invaginated sameness

which we wait patiently [between us] to divide

at our two borders

[pearl] —

[penitent?]

marking "the distance" all over the place in blue and
yellow grit blown off "the animal position" — an
intermediary end-point soon rendered into rock then
shattered against sameness again

which one can't pass on nor communicate through:

[the feel]

nor avoid

[in likely engagement]

It is in the instant before division that we call now: when the logics of
time allow for the aspect of meeting / joining. The separation requires
eventual linkage, leaping from one version to another, eventual being an
instant

[always already now]

They fight over modes of linking.

[point to point]

fronts communicating through fronts
being likely to entice a fine engagement
ordaining discourse from the empty

Terms being producers of hegemony / heterogeneity

[cross over]

organizing themselves around the vacuous "neutral ground"

The as if being a single end (telos)

[but indeterminacy]
Indeterminacy is conjunctive—a relation
(of a greater degree of intimacy)
[than that]
expressed by with (our temporal overlap)
or
above and behind (our space adjacency)
with terminations
faked out of it
until now [we are tied out of it
(and questioned
by feathered judges: {who cares?})]
whose repetitions are stirred
from the interior to an exterior ["under the rug"]
but from monstrous to minute
without
the illusion [sweat] of sequence
or [endearment] victory
And actually, it's fun! [related to experience]:
the [no cause] self-sacrifice (the which [as if])
of blot to [thin-skinned] theory
which must far exceed the standing position
like a bellowing [magnetic] equestrian
to the little [tongued] angel

A note on genre:
What does it mean to be “out of genre”?
It is really not excess anymore that can answer this question. This is to say, however, that we do not require a single answer. We are compelled (and "by what?" remains a question in itself) to answer sometimes with a question:
“Might it mean that we are 'in time'?”
Temporality presses precisely where supplies are exhausted. Given that fact, time remains a grounds for inexhaustible investigation. Inexhaustible because we have not seen a suitable answer to St. Augustine's challenge:
“What then is time?”
So we go out to cross-genre, to act as other (other being closer to the self than "self").
And might this not put us in a wonderfully instantaneous relationship to narrative—one which construes narrative as an exchange (fixed only in its impulse to change)? And immediately throwing inherited notions of “narrative” into question, given the chaos of time (a certain time on which narrative was once based).
Derrida (in Given Time) says that time is that which "undoes [the] distinction between giving and taking" and "perhaps between receptivity and activity"; so that, in time, we become in-between.
Fanny Howe  
FROM NOD (A NOVEL)

When she was a mad woman she walked through six American cities in bare feet.  
Her feet grew so blue and wrinkled they looked like prunes, but she continued to thank God for her blisters and her sores.  
Her doctor could not change her attitude which he termed "masochistic." Nor could he change her mind about the subject of past and present, which she insisted were twin illusions.

She said that all people were equal because they all dwelled in the same moment. Then she became convinced that she was the Virgin Mother, the Pregnant Madonna and the Infant all at the same time.  
Readers today, steeped in Freud, will insist that it was her unconscious talking. But her references were so outdated, they seemed to predate Freud and therefore his ideas.

Indeed her doctor referred in anachronistic ways to totemism and projection. He believed he had to become prelogical in order to communicate with her at all.  
She said that God protected her "glass bones" when she went to church. That's why she never tripped and when she knelted there was no shattering.

And she believed that people rose from their knees when she rose from her knees because they were all linked imaginatively. Her accounts held his gaze fixed on her lips. She wouldn't change a lick of her story when she could see that he was lipreading, but not really listening.

If he had been, he would have heard an exposition on the subject of "being lost" as a desirable state. She seemed to know everything about fairy tales, pagan Europe and witches burned at the stake, but there was no trace of an hallucinogen or any other experience with drugs in her blood or in her conversation.

Really mad people like her are not content to narrate their experiences, they have to act them out. But she was an avid reader.  
The doctor urged her to read the story of Joan of Arc whenever she returned to the subject of witch-burning and her love of God. He began to believe that her interest in religious studies was her only hope of a cure.

So he liked to tease her with stories he had heard about Indian mystics who twisted their penises around poles and turned into human knots. He read about the practice of samadhi where the guru presses his penis against his patient's genitals, but never penetrates her, while she soars into ecstasy and the doctor asked if she wanted him to try that method of therapy, since she liked ecstasy so much.

She always laughed merrily at these stories and fluttered her eyelashes like Betty Boop behind glass.

She was incarcerated with a mob of fatigued women finally, because she couldn't stop walking and walking until she dropped.  
She lounged around with those whom the doctor called "my pajama girls." He actually hated them.  
Hate is like a hat. It presses a ring around the brain and sends sore signals into the rings of thought, so that they disperse and curl into corners where they don't belong.  
He hated their lethargy, their nauseating waking dreams, their druggedness. Often they arrived as a result of a bad "trip", entering from LSD into a permanent psychosis, and he had to work hard to care about the incurable like them. Chemical solutions were of no interest to a person like him; he liked conversation, stories.

So he liked her and learned from her. She would tell him with a wag of her finger that normal thought "can't know everything, since action often runs counter to common sense."

But he couldn't help overflowing with interpretations since it was his nature and his profession.  
Like a revolutionary who is just a common criminal who has concocted an ideology in order to justify a day's antisocial act, the doctor had arranged an entire hospital around his interpretations.

Pathological thinking is overloaded with meaning. So who was the pathological one in this case?

Sometimes she hid under the covers when he approached, or lay on her side in bed drawing diabolical penis-figures on paper bags.
He tried to give her some meds, but when she was having these attacks of cartoon-making she spat everything out.
He preferred her walking on her glass toes.
He looked at her drawings of little penis people who live on the side of things, not on top.
It showed her vision of the world to be a wall, not a circle on which one stood, head up, but a vertical on which these creatures paraded like insects up and down.

Nosological categories rose up around her.
Her glass shop was her body, a battlefield with explosions and pieces breaking. It might have been 1922, not 1967, and she might have been a peasant child from Normandy.
The absolute referent in the Western world was a white male adult intellect.
She said her neck was like a bottleneck, she would choke on her own utterances, and even quote Heidegger or someone, saying stuff about the excruciating experience of completing actions inside a vacuum.
Then she thrashed around the bed, legs spread, calling for God and Angel to come and take her home. It looked like simple lust to him. A case of a sexually starved spinster.

Then she surprised him again by talking shyly but intimately about her erogenous zones.
Once she remarked that the Catholic church gave so much significance to actions and memories because it understood that there was really "nothing there." And she said that the Cross represents the horror of being human—agonized in space.
The doctor couldn't even bite into his sandwich when she had spoken like this.
His appetite was worse than nil when she touched on Christianity.
He felt revulsion for the world, unnatural to him.
A thick exhaustion would follow, and he would shove everything on his desk to the side.
She would penetrate him with her eyes, later, asking if he felt all right.
They faced each other through the window the size of an index card.
She was so often in solitary.
He didn't nod or indicate any understanding of her question, but she always seemed to know, anyway, when he had failed to eat.

Sometimes she told him about her love affairs and confused his notions about her even further. She was no spinster. Unless she was lying.
Sometimes she gave him little hints about her childhood, but usually she said that she had none. She talked instead about the "days of ecstasy."
They talked about memory like two people trained in cognitive sciences.
So he knew that she was educated, the child of middle class people most likely, and he guessed her age to be in the mid-thirties.
She described her experience of herself as being very painful and physical as if she were a mummy wrapped in painted canvas, and where the canvas met the numb skin of her inner body, there was a terrible rubbing, a constant erasure of all possibility of remembrance.

He asked her once why she started walking everywhere in her bare feet, and she said she wanted to feel America from the bottom up, without interference.

He told her that he wanted to cure her of her manias and her despair, to set her on a middle-course where nothing could disturb her equilibrium.
He wanted her to be able to live in the world as a participant in its social activities.
She told him how to cure her—not by medication or even by intense therapy, but by finally entering into her consciousness...
Consequently he didn't give her electroshock therapy or strap her down on a bed in a strait jacket for such a long time that she would finally call for her mother and freedom.
(He did this to the other pajama girls.)

Instead he read Ramakrishna, Meister Eckhart and Yogananda and talked to her about the willpower of the Yogi and the traditions of fasting and breathing correctly.
Since she could hold her breath without a gasp for well over a minute, and she could go without food, and did, for days, he suggested that perhaps she should enter a religious life on her release.

He pretended he believed in God and Nirvana—that they were the same—and because it was a time in American history when gurus abounded, he could refer to a system outside the psychiatric one as a possible place for her to be cured.
She was pathetically grateful for his shift in vocabulary—from “psychiatrist” to “divine organ”—from “mania” to “ecstasy”—and little by little she opened her eyes to the suffering nuts around her. She was not one of them!

And so she returned to civilization, able to adapt to its contours while still indulging her “primitive” moods, and continually puzzled by the empty space that was herself: was it meant to be empty?
In a long dream in both a house with strips of pigs and crawfish. and i turned around to look at. in rain and strips of pigs. the biscuits they have hid from us. i woke up to the distance. someone and a strange tern in the form of of her eyes. near ivy turning terns. lance you have no of the ivy do not say. to the terns the fir. across the mesh of ivy. they were. in the. in meridian in the mansion on the hill.

At first he was clearly someone fucking peasants. ruins creek, days inn, moon. i'd do it too if i knew how. several molars then the sound check. getting paid in no how. after trading then they settled. after settled, getting paid. and the where at the moon backed by getting after after. all the paint in all the trucks in after. inside out. of out and on an off chance near the moon of paratroops.
Can I be wrong about whether or not I'm in Paris?

This question seems to ask, "could I be imagining that I am in Paris while really I am not," or the opposite, "could I ever think that I am not in Paris, while really I am in Paris?" The answer is could be yes, but not necessarily. The sensations you experience, regardless of what caused them, you then identify as Paris or someplace outside Paris due to your feeling, not what you might think. There is no room for error since you exist as the unusual sensation, and has no direct to do with the cause.

It also follows that one could be dreaming or hallucinating the sensation of Paris, such as dreaming that you were being eaten by a bear, or being thrown from a moving train - and as a result of such dreaming or hallucination, experience the sensation of Paris without an outside physical cause. This is not to say that you couldn't dream, imagine, or hallucinate a situation where you would expect a Paris, but found none, but is to say simply that Paris is a sensation, and that sensations exist without regard to cause. It is more of an empirical answer than a philosophical one, dealing with the body's physical functioning and the definition of the word Paris.

However, the question, "Can I be wrong about whether I am in Paris?" can be examined in a more philosophical context. The word "wrong" in the question implies that there is an absolute truth involved with your (or my) mind and either do or do not possess the ability to mistake this truth.

One could assume that there is no absolute truth in association to (Paris), "you can't be wrong about whether you are in Paris," because there is no absolute truth about whether you are or aren't in Paris.

Since our point is to address the question, we will argue that absolute truths may exist in association to Paris, furthermore, that the word "wrong" implies that an absolute truth may be mistaken.

With this implication, the question can be revised as: "Can I know if I am in Paris?"
Text: Alysstrye Julian; Performance Composition: Bob Boster, all rights reserved.
A Piece for Four Voices, Low frequency instrument, and electronics.
First Performance: Liminal: A concert of music by first year music students, Mills College Music Department, Mills Concert Hall, December 7, 1995 8 P.M.
A.J. Dentel, Aurora, Kate McDonnell, and Willow Williamson—Voice; Michael Berry—Electric Bass, Electronics; Bob Boster—Electronics, Mix

processional:
“Shifting Attentions” began in October 1995. The text, with the idea of letting words fall out onto a page of “automatic” writing a day; the performance concept, a personal response to hearing the material read out loud. Pages of fragment development were arranged according to ideas of delivering this in a performance context with four readers, low frequency instrument and electronics. A noteworthy aspect of this process is the one-way flow of material from writer to composer without the benefit of direct consultation, but impacting the ensuing decisions with its content.

The job of the performers is to sculpt those words (and a few other sounds) into an enticing construction that draws the listener into a process of hearing language outside of “meaning” or “transference.” A successful performance should leave the audience feeling full of the text without any connected meaning to those words, perhaps receiving a simple melange of sounds or a set of triggered impressions. Significant to a view of the text as image-rich but devoid of literal-meaning, the text can also be seen as a threading of language embedded with shifting meaning/intention attentions. The primary performative mode becomes the readers performing in overlay, not in fugue or in sequence; with natural and imposed spaces opening to allow some bits to stand more (and less) alone. Use of multiple/fragmented reading modes (narrative, dramatic, and exclamatory) further break the connection between the text and received meanings.

generation of “content”:
accumulating image-constructions, speak-fragments that are language-oriented but also routed/rooted in an emotional-automatism, seeing what the words want to do, driven by spontaneous applications. the outcome of initial experiments is often beguiling content with little structure. from accidental printing of a series of these pages overtop each other, interest developed in how this overlap doubled the “automatic” impact, it is coincidence that an overlap of voices became a compositional device.

aspects of “performance”:
interested in trying to make a sound “new” to many ears out of spoken word, use of simple-but-rich bass sounds to give a firm foundation to the soundfield, use of digital delay repetitions and semi-surround speakers to expand the voice into a more complete soundshape, with non-reinforced voices wandering through the performance space in “processional” and “recessional” mode (using self-selected fragments of the text), staggering the beginnings and endings of sections to allow for more listening space, allowing the readers a self-selected pause to be inserted for the same reason.

—AJ/BB

note on the text:
420 ms delay
1.3 s delay
3.5 s delay
5.1 s delay

**Bass key: ■ indicates bass part; simple attackless drones; sometimes chromatic; sometimes not.
Shifting Attentions Reader 1

Section 1

PAUSE

the gate will open
there are no trees
you can imagine them
the big Redwoods
keep this in mind
we're about to approach the
waterwheelzylophone

PAUSE

golden upstairs laden with the for
to some around there through
over at which mailbox can't you
tell time and weaves at loom the
fabric page

I'll pass you in the sky look for
the red light green light syndrome

sort of how I feel on Mondays and
holidays were it were right now
not malice. I powdered there I
waded there I rocketed that I
mapped a rat's path. sleuth down
seek prizes bastions of gifts and
frozen fish. elongate buckshot
frocks scrupulous animations.

Shifting Attentions Reader 2

Section 1

PAUSE

you said the gate you ventured the
sake you calibrate you kind of hate
you make a date you sell a plate
you laugh or hate you counter-
weight you wake you late you
bless eight you sell fate you
eat ache you investigate you
relate you crash a cake you
celebrate you bring eight you
patch fate you eat fake you make
plates you ask hate are you awake
you pilfer lakes you shatter hate
you fill lakes you need bait you
back fate you go through the gate
you pass the plate you lose an ache
you add a date you never say you
like to make cake you masticate
you reach gate you jump eight
you laugh you crowd nine you
lose ten you train dogs you leave
hogs you love hogs you zap frogs
you need frogs you like frogs you
live for frogs you just in case you
keep tabs on warthogs but
you'd put your penny on a
fresh frog you'll rend songs
you'll camp lost you'll laugh with
caws the root of all this is under-
water is undertime is underallu-
sion is undersuited is underwind-
ing is underpinning or underslav-
ing or undersomething reveal free
papers all around invite cause

Shifting Attentions Reader 3

Section 1

PAUSE

Is Angel there? Angel? Eloquence
under the table. The sky. Those
clouds in it. Pink fleece underlit
enveloped into deep blue basin.
Garter snakes are tired. A face is
violet ashes. Legs on top of feet.
Did you see the sky? Did you hear
the cars passing and passing in
front of you? Love is golden and
guttural. Fire is opening the sheets.
Lakes are tired. Have you seen
Allia? Your nest is your nest and
my nest is where I rest and feel
best. Mind you, we said so only
yesterday. What kind of friend
would pick up my cows and take
them to the beach? Cash in your
coupons for violins. We'll carry
querulous voices. Jaded restaurants
never last longer.

Shifting Attentions Reader 4

Section 1

PAUSE

fou. very. lopsided. red-hot.
blazen. mish-mashed. resinate.
bargain. made. nemesis. derivation.
sever. several. motion.
tires. millstone. grieve. serenade.
picture. depiction. football. motion.
fat. demon.

PAUSE

oil. caption. monster. film. never.
very. daring. extra. droll. allocate.
reeds. headers. fountains. break-
fasts. books. motion. variate.
sounds. gas. tourniquet. fop.
agree. taper. under. grow.

a bank where eyes are sold for
ankles
look-line-up-ship portraiture
Section 2

drew birds, in the alleyways they
could smell the dense air of
cooking. what is the position of
that little girl on the street. could
you speak up just a little more.
could you paint your mouth,
your wall, your error. transfer-
ence of I from people to things.
brooch the subject. sonorous lives.
broomhandle it. it is pure
mind. to repeat, relief. to report,
same. trail T, R, and S. clear your
throat. all the potting is in the
shed. third call today, we have
an appointment in one hour.
clear your throat. I just want to
confirm meeting you there.
suited for your appetites. astray.
right. you told me. so tell me
the amount. show me how deep
love can be. plenty of trials. al-
ready tree-lined. grope, group,
and groom. what kind of writ-
ing. stars are the biggest voyeurs.
I think I could be run over in
writing. I think I could dart in
front of a speeding word. Wilma
could flit, flit around. foaming.
found acres of dry land. a mis-
ter. ladling coffee. every time I
say I would it doesn't mean. all
the bids were in but her need to
see the end of it. rumbled at high
heat. rinsed for circumstances.
left out to simmer. the voice is
long and trailing. all it takes is
joining up to the word in mo-
tion. if I were a German woman
if I were a Malaysian woman if I
were a Hungarian woman. from

Section 2

blouses unfolded buy your angel
here

PAUSE

she is die
certain days phrases count
boon hymnals. separate wel-
comes. torch differently. in-
furiate dryness. sabotage fins.
droop onions. fluster arrows.
button trouble. hurt wavering.
utter hygrade. prime devils.
newly cremate. sedate
roadwinding.

walk through the first tunnel
I see

a short one but a tunnel nonetheless

PAUSE

Section 2

several. examinations. open. more.
Uh-uhhs. let me. call you. Victor
or. relate pottery. have it. house
call. or not. rejuvenate keepers.
drift flowers. order stars. eat rhythms.
negotiate windows. marken darken.
your solitude. hope tapers. fork
corridors. lighter weights.
could it be the cabinets are splin-
tering

hoist granaries. level allocations.
faction foiled. it ate very the if that.
armadillo was that. beat red hat. cot
that was brute if that. conviction
umbrella notion. hay to wind.
craft the time. convince through
butter.

Section 2

PAUSE

Something is gurgling above and
below. Lizards are not tired ex-
cept when running from other
lizards. Onlookers see her get dis-
appointed over nothing. When
there is something. there is always
nothing too. Will you tell them?
Yell something unforgettable.
Camels are tired but Kangaroos
are not. We play our game of
trucks and ferries under the noon
sun. Point at your hearing. On a
walk in Paris one can see many
cats turning corners and glancing.
We can undo what's not been done.
Listen to dreamers. Facts are tired.
Fiction is loose. Rare creatures ap-
pear. Ones that might become ex-
tinct.

follow that pale light see where it
goes stars eventually
behind the fences they could see the graves, wonder where she went girl, squirming to sell goods, another person's writing becomes a vague memory like all the rest, she is concerned with the passings, in front of, between, especially converging, will get through this. tumble forth. predicate. proof. bury nose in lassitude. in the way of cigars. group dances. salute. fume. ardent of now.

**PAUSE**

**Section 3**

lotion needs time. can some run. boat your size. pummel out yesterday. beam wake radiate. valor troup duster. faster quote redeem. leave up kind. boost bevel cake. remedy you said. lion car guitar.

**PAUSE**

new corridors tree line my garden. be wooden if you will. baste varnish over torpedoes nape. grate sewing cove x sex. veneer bubble well hot you'd. parade parade parade parade. powder reader soap cleave bell. marry no oceans write down.

**PAUSE**

double lines mark: one piece. single lines mark: divisions. mesh wire stars cauldrons where blinkers show their brightness.

**Section 3**

wash guard bored. moose seven berries. kiss that mouth. touch his chest. savor the neck. it turns pink. I heat you. save error rest. little name calling. your nothing Saturn. reduce by touch. relieve your tongue. found how fondles. moat dreams father. would as developed.

partly I'm orange when I wish I were violin clake clake clake

**PAUSE**

Count the wooden leaves. Becoming or unbecoming. There have been times of unbecoming. There have been times of pointing. There have been times of getting closer. Things too get farther. The sun is wider.

**Section 3**

in time gloss. eliminate topiary hosiery. catalog dive bait. move beltway three. **start in every. naps some hocus burst. locked around tropes rain.** carry a house now. maybe maple orange syrup. pollute school job left. same grease caught in. told Beverly so if.

**PAUSE**

nimble if you are quick. wrong if you are quacked. pave delight in underneath above. correlate rudders sideways need cameras. solidify some rot found airy. putrid boxes without four patterns. drown cope dupe host treble. come or tame nor ecstasy.

**Section 3**

sky took lines definite. funnel his her his. her her funnel her. funnel his his his. funnel funnel his her funnel hers funnel his. fable very brown try. pots rode fabulous desires. apparent rooms but when. sardonic service runs cheap. julip mint tulip mate.

forges cats moutons chiens. sorry alright you would. is ready plea satisfy. would they under fire talk. vote red vote blue vote. early water reddens if a places escape tension of so. coves exemplify consciousness given up. as questions come up write.

**PAUSE**

dress the gate: sightwreck something is watering you and you need elevation

boast tons more but fail. bottles reek danger to night. magic voo-doo magic voo-doo do. bathe very good very bathe. match in case you want. mutter aloud ridiculous ridiculous ridiculous.
Celestine and early understanding
Uncle your blanks are there
Deborah your shade is falling
Hickleby your time up but lemme
tell you the thing is orange your
heart breaking about calf's milk
lemoncake and orchids sable tooth
tigers balustrades and hoarfrost
embarrassment up the hill and
down reckon they got spelled
again wear blue when you tear the
sheets forget to erase them drunk
the tummy into some luscious re-
duction have faith or ego a wind
a stove a sin and name four fires
to ward off diseases examine thou-
sands of astonishing faces when
they auction off your smile

Section 4
you reading capers if grime is
harder to eat but some of those
workers have you right on the
nose and sorry but nothing is
just the same. why not under.
fair well. bribe a soldier create your
mixing ride. Merica police vin-
dication is better than crouched
games. louder flowers hear us.
soundlike trees huffing and pouting. derivations terribly
some other than oysters. creases
over. lemons britches drinkers
sea fish. sails like hierarchies. va-
cancy. poolhall pissing. it's his
passion. mothful sleeping. liable
under water. bathed extensions.
jeweled fish. jaded rights. predicate
boredom around tricking out vocabu-
lar.y. salivating butterscotch
muzzled taker tonics. malfunc-
tions. high reticence. blue for-
tress. kind of weighted. its on
your forehead. don't you see
wearing nightgowns belts vin-
tage sweaters her sunglasses?
ever her tipping the habit. poli-
tics. vent. disbelief. it hits you on
the shoulders. I was watching
him be legendary. all horses
drive children. naked western front
yard lurking. mailbag grated. wars
baked. velour Mexican cards with
bruises on their trickles. confronted
home how does it work. never
ever even never more. seems like
a coin creates. limp limp limp late
late. border freezes dogs night that.
jardin jardin moule moule moule.

Section 4
ilogic vipers refuse ten majesties.
choreograph retro hip no mais.
rent doesn't say anything much.
oops pull open the door. while
young brave baby does. valise
Denise the belongs to. place com-
motion under convention wire.
why how does it go.

lecture rules equation bottled
deeper. nude sediment foraged
can't real. mull elevate wail veil
camp. tea brings you happy years.
null bull full wool rule. sill girl
hill kill real. woof be wolf be
wuf. told your heart I told. you
heat me I kiss.

PAUSE

Macabea Macabea your erotic face
your gaze your lips full of desire.
Macabea Macabea your heart is a
stitch in time saves nine. nine saves
time in stitch a. stitch nine in time
saves a. time saves in a white star
and in your baby blue dress you
shine. Macabea Macabea your
wide visage your nine a stitch just
those fluttering leaves leaving. a
stitch in time saves nine. nine
times a stitch. internal private glee
your black polish on stubby fing-
ers. Macabea Macabea you are up
there shining. saves in.

fic-caution
utterances
Section 5

PAUSE

pin her I can't remember her kindness her increase her delicatessen her following her dresser her jail her grocery her follicles her engine her nighttime her traffic her clutter her focus her vena cava her fork in the road her corpus


shifting attentions shifting attentions

Section 5

how would all this be different if you were born in Czechoslovakia? Morocco? Antilles? and could there be an overarching link from the Ice Age to now. certainly historians know. writers know from others who are writers know from themselves too who is. wind up cacophony. just what you want to hear. as if there could be a caller such as in square dances. pineal gland dances. new word recallese: grow hot again. inner vision is allied. if words were garments you dressed in if words were to eat if words were kisses. can you really behave yourself meaning. what if at this moment you lived in Omaha Nebraska what if you could see the future what if pages were plates.

Section 5

jump us she says jump me I like to jump. I will jump and jump and jump. jumping is best and I will put jumping to the test for all the rest. yes it is jumping I very much like to do for rest. even for rest jumping is happy for me. I am happy when ever I am jumping. you are happy for me whenever I am jumping. we are happy to jump. otherwise the young woman dreamed she was happy jumping was happy to jump anywhere and for all to see. at least this seemed certainly vague to her. but the baby girl jumped and jumped and the older girl let her jump. let her be happy jumping. she was a jumping spring of jumps and jumps. her knees were never straight she was jumping so much. she was a bouncing jumping baby girl. she did yes she liked very much jumping.

Karen Kelley
GESTURE/GEISHA/GENRE

In the very gesture of the geisha was the retreat of a whole genre . . .

polka dots I painted on my body, and when I looked up I saw the same pattern covering the ceiling, the windows, and the walls

THE TERROR OF HER OWN BEING

Not wanting trouble, I got back into my dress and headed toward the mirror

I feel really lucky that there's moonlight on me.

a dry wind of unstable significance.
I must introduce images to this seduction: either I hold you with my right hand, or not. I stop when my insides take over my outsides. Yet in both cases what is leftover after meaning has been subtracted is how you enter, even through the ingredients for such an irresponsible project. You have to look closely, hand in wound, which is to say: thin envelope of skin, pull me into your orbit. And what about the tubing, the soul and other materials? No bearings, just a half-round muscle that rides bone and upon which the entire weight of us rests.

I made a pact with myself:
get into the bathtub and don't come out

red thread, punched full of holes and dripped with flesh-covered exactly what we are doing

The body is such stories: floating on the wall whose edges disappear, bouncing up off snow, pouring through holes in the sky

It's little blobs, doodles like the shapes of viruses and bacteria, like worlds found through the lens of a microscope—just below the surface, slowly unfolding, just beyond reach.

(the places) one (describes) cannot be located,
is (are) wrongly overstated/at the expense of resemblance.

What I've just said is as precise as it is vague: repetition units, a hair-pin turn in space.
The headfirst of telling makes it obscure.

I am too close to you to ignore the way you are evaporating, a choreographic score in corporeal fluid. Many of the objects are people witnessed by the naked eye, impossible to decode: the Place at which pURE and Impure senSEs meet Let it be yOUR hidden heART proPOSING new and inGENious notepaDS, sides of Things, impROVised warnings someTIMEs printED, sometimes half printed aND Half wriTTEN

Impressions cry out at the same time as they withdraw.
There is memory without rest and a tenderness I am not master of

The subject panicked, breaking the mould off his face and relieving the anxiety of his wife, who had misgivings.

watching my best friend dying while eating left me speechless

I can't answer.

the buildings don't collapse and the traffic keeps moving and I still have to make myself break fast

His face, his hands, his feet.
vibrating in isolation (tremulous) (white walls)

blood and more

mobile blues and smudges and swipes sharply detailed while all around has become obscure.

the pack all standing around the one who lay there not moving

scribbles, scrapings, rubbings, uncoordinated on often vast expanses of space.

only to be lost again from sight.

it opens just so much,

this tension between what is solid and what is fugitive,
whose theme is the appalling struggle of recollection.

(the screen fizzes with interference)

What does it want inside me? Why doesn’t it come out so I can rest?

the simplest description is, I suppose, full of desire

•

a dry wind of unstable significance that supposedly distinguishes your black hair from mere indexical marks or diagrams

I have bent it back into a face that gives back a likeness, and broken it up into a Body which lives a day-to-day existence of perception, pretext, distortion and exaggeration; I have intercepted it with a thin net of commas inserted between two fleshly figures glazed with intelligence; transmitted it through creamy fillings pretending to be Satan, or Satan pretending to be God, and through the puckering steely taste of confusion and defeat, and divided and terminated it: and yet never could dream long enough and dream hard enough to bring forth any black hair growing between your legs, or irrefutable proof of the existence of the soul. But the most astonishing and wonderful custard was that of closing my eyes and opening my mouth

and I got the idea that I could see with my Mouth—

people may survive this, or a pan of sliced bread, or one evening relentlessly bright in color, or flowers and vines bathed in a lovely amber glow. I wouldn’t mind a new conception of what memory is—something partially glimpsed, stiff-limbed, in blue and cream, through which I can catch bits of buildings, the sky, part of a neon sign which says “NUDE”—too small, but it grows, this parting that breaks my sleep as it opens up. What is it that makes me treasure you?

And those that had sunk to their knees convey the sense of a lasting impression with its flesh back on

this body of mine
even I can’t recognize
Based on pump signs at Sunoco station in Goffstown, N.H.

Based on road sign in Lawrence, Kansas.

The Capitol Hill Weekly diagrammed an explanation by President Reagan of his knowledge of the Iran-Contra affair.
E.A. Miller
TROUBLE (PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB)

for C.S. Giscombe

The contradictions of my spirit rest in trouble. The desire to do the impossible because I was not taught the possible.

And what was I taught? Here is the fence, here is the wire. There the boxes with smiling faces: “who could be the plumber?” I circled all. It is not possible. It is not possible to write this. Rule One: Poetry is condensed thought. Never begin a sentence with “I.” We keep the mysteries separate here. It’s just thinly disguised autobiography. The names have been changed to protect the innocent. Song lyrics are not poetry. What type of writer are you? In poetry, we stop at the end of the lines; in a play, we ignore the line breaks. There is no edge of a page in prose. A play takes place in three days.

If there were a way to travel on the surface of the ocean, I would be a train, starting from a place to travel across water—not high up, so that there would be the danger of falling, but low down, a boat with a fixed course so the strange can be and be familiar at the same time. If I were a train, I’d be quick and straight. No tunnels, no hillsides, but sheer passes of across, the broad swathe.

Straight. Straight as an arrow, a course to fly, the direction of finesse.

The act of picking up a book is an act of mixing kinds. There is the weight, the heft of squareness, the dry scratching at the fingertips to turn the pages. I have ripped off the covers of books to prevent their eyes from staring at me, have avoided books whose covers are shiny and slick, where the pages will not bend back into wholeness. I am distracted by the author’s photo, by the publisher’s icon, by the smell of someone’s cigarette left scuffed in the pages. My own hand looks large and crepey against white. These are the first moments of reading, when I have sorted against the jacket, peered into the middle to check the font, adjust and adjust until finally the body is forgotten. The tunnel is constructed, and we enter the narrowed darkness.

You, reading this, do you not wish for straightness?

When was the last time you danced?

Taking down the chuppah, I was twirling around in a dance of my own, making sure that my movements were not frenetic, but long-limbed and joyous. That was dancing—all dancing, all movements here. There was no music playing, but what went in my head; the silence of breaking.

I was dancing with the legs of the bower, torquing them down to the ground, bending them over until they snapped, until all was wrenched from the moment. A liberating dance. I had thought that liberation would be a jitterbug, but it is not—it is the fins of a shark cutting the tops of the water, the waves rolling up onto the shoreline, the longing of captivity.

This is the contradiction of the spirit.

Any type of fragmentation gains speed. A stutter flickers from the mouth, a syncopated lameness. Traverse the box step of poetry, two words forward and two back until the stanza has been stepped out. My lover’s head must be in my lap, the pause of breathing at funerals. We are walking the river and I am telling him the story. Have you crashed yet, a giant hopscotch board, skipping from the back of cereal boxes to the obituaries, the first sentence should tell all. Make the light of stutter ride in the back seat, signboards whipping past, the stationary directions in counterpoint. Which do your eyes follow?

Just the knowing of their names:
Trouble. Straightness.

Jeopardy. Jeopardy.

Contradictions of the spirit. I was in some sort of trouble. Some sort of jeopardy like the TV quiz show that has become part of my social identity. I am (what do you see reading?) the white professional, well-educated, schooled. A schoolmarm.

Genre, from the Old French. A grammatical term from the Greek word for race. To be of nature, natural, of a birth origin. To be of the natural class is to be well-heeled. Is to be kind. A kindness for the kind we know. To sort is to mark. Was my father's move from white trash to New England suburb a move of genre? Like finally recognizing what fork is for salad and what for dessert. Cast out what is impure. Fiction from Fact. Prose from Verse. Picture from Text. Sound from Sight. Man from Woman. Goats from Sheep. Evil from Good. And they shall sit at his right hand in Heaven.

My friend Bev began teaching, and I gave her a piece of white chalk and a red pen. She left teaching to live in California where she tried out for Jeopardy! Bev was on Jeopardy! as a five-time winner and made it to the 100,000 dollar tournament of champions, and when I tell people this, they usually respond that I should try out too. That's what Bev says. And indeed for all the years I've watched Jeopardy!, I watch with an eye to speed and answers. I've practiced with the ball point pen, clicking its top down like the buzzers. Bev must try out for trouble. Trouble comes to me. And you are watching it.

I didn't pick up the erotic mystery novel written in rhymed verse. You can't make me read it. The audience claps politely for the second place winner, a category of falsehood. It's good for you to be so polite, to read the Greek choruses, to not skip the musical interludes. Do not ask an audience to be more than themselves. To walk on four legs instead of two, to eat with their feet, to serve themselves on

and sweetmeats. They will demand any story, any tale that stars them in their doctor's office, waving behind the numbers, quaffing a beer for the recitation of working woes. The budget is nothing until there is a family on the news. Tell me a story. Do not make me read it. I do not like green eggs and ham. I do not like them Sam-I-am.

In the tradition of narrative, there are only a few ways a person like me should get into trouble. I am vigilant for trouble, train myself to attend to and against it. Like the Hong Kong martial arts movies I watch.

True, those movies show at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston so there's the kindness of environment surrounding them, but when I step into the auditorium, I am often one of a few white people there and one of the few women there. The audience is generally young, male, and Asian/Asian-American. And I don't go to look at the cinematography or the directing. I go to see how high Chun Gow can kick, if Maggie Chung will do her spinning split move where she decapitates two people at once. I go for the sheer thrill of staged violence. I always wanted to be an assassin, to know that a fatal dose of insulin is best injected between the toes, that there's a hand maneuver to the bridge of the nose that will split the brain.

What is uncupped from a stutter cannot kill, cannot rise further than its knees, cannot lift. Constellations are not tied to history or the biographies of the pen. Document your day and you cannot be any larger than the day itself. Leave geography to believe in what cannot be done, to find the place of intersection. An audience for myth awaits. I am lost here. There is the impossible ahead. Show me.

I am in some kind of trouble.
I am in some kind of trouble.

Perhaps my deepest trouble, and I've yet to write about this, was the night in the Frankfurt airport twelve years ago. I remember walking across the walkway, lit up and across the road, from the airport to the hotel, thinking that
I was so lost, so dead, so separate. So separated from all
the traditions I inhabit and in which you see me. That’s it really,
the true separation of self from self. The deepest trouble.

Did you expect a confession here?

The boundaries of genre rest in confession alone. A story
of the story of the story closes the secret research of the
reader. Fantasy is truncated, controlled. I am whispering to
all the rooms and now you may not know me. A loud whis-
per, the clack of librarians, interrupts your reading. Seal up
your walls, do not listen to me.

When did you last dance?

I am in some sort of trouble.

Aife Murray

PHENOMENAL ROOMS

First I was a painter, so for me, words shim-
mer. Each one has an aura. Lines are laid
on the field of the page, so many washes of
watercolor.

—Susan Howe

The light of attention as illumined from below drew Sari Broner: her color—xerox collage process of gilt joss paper allows her language to
bloom and manifest its formal hybrids. When Dale Going first began
learning the trade of a letterpress printer, she remarked on her initial
surprise at the weight of each individual letter—this correspondence
with the weight of words punctuating the breathable page, as a dancer
across tangents, in her moving second book The View They Arrange. The
physicality of Denise Lawson’s language/page: word-kernels inform her
sensuous first book Where You Form the Letter L. The delicate space
defined by overlaps of tinted plastic, poetic text and photography work
as notation in Jaime Robles’ constructions...

... “Daughters” of Barbara Guest and Kathleen Fraser (whose or-
gins are in the New York School) / of (former painters) Susan Howe
and Norma Cole / of Objectivist poet Lorine Niedecker / of innova-
tive expatriate writers H.D. and Gertrude Stein / of English “novelists”
Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf / of American Emily
Dickinson.

These four west coast women—partaking of the immediacy of the
‘zine movement—have seasonally placed the control of “publishing”
into the hands of twenty to thirty women writers, who inherit the
traditions of spatialized text, concrete poetry, chance poems, graffiti,
xerox art, artist’s books, Kathleen Fraser’s visuality, Susan Howe’s sound
forms; and Emily Dickinson’s poetic innovations in “print.” Broner, Go-
ing, Lawson, and Robles have devised a spiral bound publication-by-
contribution book that they “publish” and distribute, to participants, with
their eight hands. Seasoned book editor and designer Jaime Robles
was impressed by the “simplicity and the liveliness” of ‘zines in which
people, geographically dispersed, were conversing and engaging ideas.\(^6\) A desire to stimulate exchange among artists and writers led Robles to approach the other three. Together they formulated the logistical simplicity of Rooms which entered its third year in March 1996.\(^7\)

... immediacy is itself both an aesthetic and practical satisfaction of Rooms... the visual and written chaos of it that you don't get in a closely edited journal—Rooms puts editing in the hands of the reader... an open window... playful... democratic forum... having a place to place work is an incentive to write... Rooms is a site of influences... there's very little lag time between writing it and the piece appearing... each contributor [chooses] what she wants—the visual freedom and variability afforded... Rooms diffuses power issues around writing and the persona of the poet... we were feeling the irreplaceable loss of HOW(ever)—not trying to "continue" HOW(ever) but do homage to Kathleen's important work, to make another place for women's experimental writing... now, after doing it awhile, it has a presence of its own. It's a room. As if you opened a Poet's House—with chairs, reading materials... things can be unfinished, in process... larger than the intimacy of a letter—a resonance in the many voices...

At a time when the page has been undone: when the printing press no longer defines lyric dimensions, these women push against the limits of the page/canvas, testing it as a formal constraint. Inviting vellum overlays, splatter of paint, xerox collage, matchsticks and cool blue geometric acetates inserted at cuts in the paper, red toner poems, plays, essays on other writers/other forms, notices, letters, ex/change—everything acts and reacts to what came before or the poem it lies against. Low tech and high tech, Rooms' work ranges between studied design and transparent invention.

The computer has re-defined the page as scrolling indefinitely, language that might wrap around a city block, just as the internet has turned the page into a concept and catapulted poetry—once song—into the interactive silence of space. Poetry can no longer be pinned exclusively to a tangible surface or to the ear (bereft of the body) in a rapidly shifting (uncertain) world. Simultaneously—reactively—performance art, spoken word, monologists, hip hop, salons, and the importance of "discourse" are at an all time high in the urban/urgent landscape. Art is made of that fusion, reflecting the world's multiple communities/displacements/relocations/experimentation on the fringes the "border" as juncture.\(^8\) Dickinson reacted to the printing press, making hybrid forms in the upheaval of her own historic time. Similarly the Roommates (and we mean the four conveners/collators of Rooms as well as all the women who participate—it has that kind of trafficking between orchestrators and contributors) also are bypassing the dictates of the publishing world that seeks commercially comfortable verse. One day writers and critics will discover these interactive, conversational anthologies (in the old senses of those words), amazed at the collective power—the call and response between the Rooms writers—in the same ways that Dickinson scholars marvel at her daring "visual/visceral" use of the page and "domestic technologies."\(^9\) Rooms is one manifestation of poetry that has moved onto other surfaces and has taken other surfaces onto its pages. And who is paying attention to this?\(^10\) Who is going to write about this phenomenology of rooming with words on/off the borders of the un/known page?

Kathleen Fraser and the Roommates have contributed to this piece.

2. Dale Goings, The View They Arrange (Berkeley: Kelsey Street Press, 1994). Going publishes innovative writing by women in the fine press tradition under the imprint of Em Press (Mill Valley, CA).
3. Denise Liddell Lawson, Where You Form the Letter L (San Francisco: San Francisco State Chapbook Competition Winner, 1992). Lawson is a member of Kelsey Street Press (Berkeley, CA).
4. Many of these poets are associated with innovative writing, not to be exclusively boxed by the above categories, only to suggest origin influences.
5. Between them, these women have extensive experience in fine printing, the arts, book design and editing, and publicity. Perhaps because of this combined experience, they have deliberately chosen this particular low tech form for Rooms.
6. Former publisher of Five Trees Press and later editor for Lapis Press and Bedford Arts, Robles currently collaborates with Peter Jesiloff (of Earplay) on spoken word and music. Their first collaboration was performed in San Francisco at Intersection for the Arts, in October 1995. Work has appeared in small press editions in the U.S. and Greece (these are available through Robles).
7. Rooms "publishes" writing by women. For more information, contact Rooms, c/o Jaime Robles, 652 Woodland Avenue, San Leandro, CA 94577.
8. On this issue, see the performance work and writings of Guillermo Gómez-Peña. His Gringostroika (St. Paul: Graywolf, 1993) addresses the borderization of the world and the transculturation that arises from that flux. He notes that artists of color, especially with absence of institutional support, go back and forth between art and politically significant territory; making art "of fusion and displacement that shatters the distorting mirrors of the 'western avant-garde'" (16).


10. Kathleen Fraser's essay, "Line. On the Line. Lining up. Lined with. Between the Lines. Bottom Line" (in Frank and Sayre, ed. The Line in Postmodern Poetry. Urbana & Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1988. 152-174) remains one of the most important and moving essays on a sampling of contemporary genre-bending feminist poetic practice. Also see Linda Kinnahan's new book, Poetics of the Feminine: authority and literary tradition in William Carlos Williams, Mina Loy, Denise Levertov, and Kathleen Fraser (New York: Cambridge U P, 1994). As an innovative writer and a scholar, Rachel Blau DuPlessis is tracking what's happening in mixed form and feminist poetic practice. See The Pink Guitar (New York: Routledge, 1990). On November 3, 1995, Small Press Distribution hosted a forum in Berkeley CA, with over 60 people in attendance, on feminist presses publishing experimental or innovative women writers: The Bay Area's Em Press, Kelsey Street Press, and Rooms as well as Kore Press (Tucson) were among current women's innovative presses represented. Moderator Kathleen Fraser raised the question of why, with so much interest and so much happening in the contemporary women's writing scene, there isn't more critical writing on these innovative writers. Now that How(ever) has ceased publication, there is no regular forum for reviews exclusively devoted to contemporary-innovative-feminist writing. Most critical work, other than academic attention to the Language poets, tends to mill the usual traditional feminist tokens: Levertov, Lorde, Rich, and Walker.

Sianne Ngai

FIVE COLLAGE POEMS

ex-Hume

It must be allowed that when we know a power, we know that very circumstance in the cause by which it is enabled to produce the effect, for these are supposed to be synonymous: time and landscape, map and position. 37° west of these two trees, 56 minutes after the sun has risen, a dog is dreaming.

and launched
like
over
shield
a
huge

Is it more difficult to conceive that motion may arise from impulse than it may arise from volition? A dream the accomplice of sleep, as to recover appearance is a form of silence heard after—the footprints of a rabbit pressed into a white field. Contiguity, resemblance, the sand is moving, but we will not pinpoint the cause.

The removal of vision, moved again, is behind you.

a
went
roar
is
fence
or
cleared
Either dead earlier or born later, the body was placed on this axis and allowed to say: person, unperson. Or, in the dream: dog, undog. To indicate a knowledge of resemblance, even as the dog believes he is falling, we believe in the descent of heavy objects when they are released in air, from an elevated position not marked on the map drawn between the eyes.

**ex-Hume**

It is a law of motion, discovered by experience, that the moment or force of any body in motion is in the compound ratio or proportion of its solid contents and its velocity, and, consequently, that a small force may remove the greatest obstacle or raise the greatest weight if by any contrivance or machinery we can increase the velocity of that force so as to make it an overmatch for its antagonist. So it seems as if the dead rise to the surface only from the pressure of recognition, two balls colliding on green felt.

We are confronted with the photograph of someone dead, a tape recording of her voice. But the same truth may not appear at first sight to have the same evidence with regard to events which have become familiar to us from our first appearance in the world, which bear a close analogy to the whole course of nature, and which are supposed to depend on the simple qualities of objects without any secret structure of parts.

Was it you who said, when things disappear they get infinitely large, moving faster and faster towards the horizon until our faces are both circular and flat, smiling as if unaware of the distance? We are apt to imagine that we could discover these effects by the mere operation of our reason without experience. We fancy that, were we brought on a sudden into this world, we could at first have inferred that one ball would communicate motion to another upon impulse, and needed not to have waited for the event in order to pronounce with certainty concerning it. After all, what is no longer no place?

**ex-Hume**

Here is a photograph of me—a black lump walking into a snowbank.

No object ever discovers, by the qualities which appear to senses, either the causes which produced it or the effects which will arise from it; nor can our reason, unassisted by experience, ever draw any inference concerning real existence and matter of fact—the white neck I wanted to kiss, not the one I claimed to have kissed.

Present two smooth pieces of marble to a boy who has no knowledge of natural philosophy; he will never discover that they will adhere together in such a manner as to require great force to separate them in a direct line, while they make so small a resistance to a lateral pressure; he will not grant you permission to put your mouth against his neck, though he will put his against the marble, extend his tongue and think he is licking the dead.

**ex-Hume**

A boy lies under a smooth table and closes his eyes. One ball in motion strikes another at rest and the second ball acquires a motion. At first sight—his body superimposed on a green rectangle—one notes only these two circumstances in the case, the contiguity of cause and effect in time and place, and the priority in time of the cause.

On experimenting with other balls of the same kind in a like situation, however, we always find the same movement of the second ball occurring, simultaneous with and parallel to the downward movement of the eyelid. Here is a third circumstance, the constant conjunction between the cause and the effect. Beyond this nothing is known of the relation, of how a thing (marble statue) is cracked open; glued to a surface (photograph of a boy); or reinforced with arms (nailed to the former and drawn on the latter).

These are physical points, that is, parts of extensions, which cannot be divided or lessened either by the operation of the mind or the senses. We blink, and are unable to follow the second ball's trajectory across
the table. The green rectangle loses its color, becomes a space enclosed by four lines, a box.

Dots mark the trajectory of a ball along two perpendicular axes, an extension of the sightlines of an inverted perspective. The image of a boy's face, with felt-lined cavities above the nose and mouth, is projected from underneath. Each cavity contains a ball, scratched from multiple collisions.

ex-Hume

When we infer any particular cause from an effect, we must proportion the one to the other and can never be allowed to ascribe the one to the other and can never be allowed to ascribe to the cause any qualities but what are exactly sufficient to produce the effect.

The hand relaxes and forgets what it has been grasping, a photograph of an absent friend. Upon its appearance our idea of him is evidently enlivened by the resemblance, and every passion which that idea occasions, whether of joy or sorrow, acquires new force and vigor. Where the picture bears him no resemblance and fingers open, or the hand is absent but the friend standing before us, though the mind may pass from the thought of one to the thought of the other, it feels its idea to be rather weakened than enlivened by that transition.

Whatever disputes there may be about mathematical points, we must allow that there are physical points, that is, parts of extensions, at which a friend travels toward or away from our position. These points cannot be divided or lessened by the eye or mind, although we may enlarge his photograph for the sake of recognition, or arrange a succession of photographs to predict a trajectory.

A muscle pulls down the arm in mid-wave, so that the signal of welcome or departure is restricted by a force and counter-force. Though the desire to wave at a stranger may be inspired by his resemblance to a photograph, difficulty occurs in contemplating the operation of mind on body, where we observe the motion of the latter to follow upon the volition of the latter, but are not able to observe or conceive the tie which binds the two—particularly when we realize, later, that we had been waving to a person we did not see.

Hoa Nguyen
FROM A SERIES OF LETTERS

Dear M.:

I sat behind the counter of Frank's Liquors on two blue milk crates. A bumper of beer and Sam. You could see down the aisles in the round mirrors where objects are closer than they appear. A fun-house. And Sam gave me a tiny lighter. And Sam gave me red wine. And Sam gave me a small green bottle with German words. But I talked about poetry and Victor washed his face because he was in the office with a woman who wasn't his wife who is about to have his baby. I remember this in color.

Last night I talked about platelets, how they are what coagulates and how I sold them experimentally for forty bucks. I chewed Tums because my jaw ached. When I went to the window, the woman in front of me received 200 dollars. Her wrist in a bandage held with white tape. They spun blood in a centrifuge and gave it back without the bits I imagine as plaque. Thinner. It takes two hours and you can watch game shows. But one time the Wheel of Fortune was interrupted to show a false cloud because the mission was lost. It looked like a large Y and it held that shape long afterwards. All those bones I suppose.

Why was it that we imitated dead people when we reached the summit named Artist's Point? The view wasn't spectacular but we took pictures anyway. And we drove all day though mostly in circles. It's just like that: slowing to negotiate a deep curve and you throw your neck back. Outside a convertible we'll be seen as heads. But I cut my hair and removed this memory, though I keep the photos in a shoe box. When I introduce the idea of you to others, they see the tattoo on your chest. I do not have one but it's not for fear of needles. I just can't think of anything I'd want written on my body.
Dear T.:

Correspondences rarely answer questions. Have you noticed? Today someone said they saw their breath all day. Perhaps vowels are most vaporous because one can’t bite them. Parallel to seances when spirits rise under tables. In your framework you twist iron to imitate leaves. Since its connectors are metal, their permanence never rustles. Operating in a system of abstractions, we animate our experiences. So that when describing the self, one must use words already described and experienced. Established in a book alphabetically. This passage alone suffices to show what biography amounts to. What he meant when he said we are always already dead.

But M. says that her fire begins with stones. She carries them with antlers and its possible to communicate considering ancestors. The smoke that it sends. Water and water as sweat until she can rest on snow wearing no clothes.

When I look at black gates I think to forge you a building. Because it’s possible to imagine bellows and the sear behind your eyes. You show me burns on your forearms as if it would account for creation. Arches articulate air this morning and what remains becomes shaded. Returning not staying. But I realize this may be lost because I won’t send it. Or say it. My mouth often defies its shape when I outline in color.

Nick Piombino
NEW LANGUAGES FOR OLD
(ON THE WORK OF NORA LIGORANO & MARSHALL REESE)

History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time but time filled by the presence of the now.
—Walter Benjamin

Among the many things travelers take home after sojourns outside their own countries is an expanded awareness of one’s dependence on language to obtain virtually anything. An experience that was particularly memorable for me took place in Morocco in the late 60s. The medina or central marketing square in Marrakech extends like a web in a series of tiny labyrinths into the surrounding neighborhoods. The further away you get from the center, the more likely you are to encounter shopkeepers who speak only in Arabic. Since I was living in Marrakech for a few months I frequently had occasion to hunt around extensively for various items I needed and there were no types of stores recognizable to me as anything like a Woolworth’s or hardware store. Although many Moroccans spoke French at that time I encountered quite a few open air shops where no one was available to speak either English or French. Gradually I became aware that up until that time when I shopped I rarely examined things closely in a store (except perhaps in record or book shops). Like most people I’d go into a store and ask for what I wanted. But here, of course, I really had to learn to look around carefully for myself to see what was available and figure out if I could use it.

Since that time I have frequently reflected on this experience as a kind of paradigm for the relationships between perception, objects, visual experience and language. This experience also helped me to become more wary when, for example, a sign or advertisement might tell me one thing about a product, while I might find out something very different by carefully examining it. Eventually this extended itself further to observing how frequently we are shown an image in a newspaper, magazine or on television and at the same time we are told what to think about it. I was struck by this growing tendency when I recently
went to see an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum and found scores of people walking around with headphones on as they dutifully followed the audio guide’s directions. One result of this kind of experience can be an erosion of abilities to think for oneself while looking at art—or at anything.

A recent visit to the Cristinerose Gallery to attend an opening of Nora Ligorano and Marshall Reese’s video/book installation The Corona Palimpsest (on view from October 21- November 25, 1995) led me to again reflect on the subject of seeing things for oneself.

A corona, the dictionary tells me, is a crown, or crown like part, or in astronomy a kind of halo, or aura, and a palimpsest is a parchment, tablet, etc., that has been written upon or inscribed two or three times, the previous text or texts having been imperfectly erased and remaining, therefore, still visible. I reacted to the opening of The Corona Palimpsest with a welter of strong impressions and feelings some of which I connected to each other and into an overall sense of the piece only during a subsequent visit and afterwards. An opening for a collection of photographs by the musician and composer David Byrne was taking place simultaneously in a different room in the gallery so both openings were packed. As soon as I pushed my way through the crowd into the “Project Room” where The Corona Palimpsest was installed I was immediately captivated by the strange but resonant presence of a large blank book opened and suspended in the air by four very large black chains connected to the corners of the far right wall. Enclosed inside a square cut out of the right side of the large blank book was a tiny video monitor playing a tape loop of close-ups of people just looking and gazing, all of which were taken (I later learned) from television broadcasts and montaged to focus in on their gazing eyes. I thought immediately of the issue of enclosure because in the previous Ligorano/Reese video I had seen called The Bible Belt, the belt, which is the subject of the video, is “contained” in the video and here the tape is “contained” in the book. The Bible Belt is an actual belt constructed out of leather and a bible, and is wearable! The theme of enclosure seems to be followed out even further in The Corona Palimpsest in that the video is enclosed within the book, but also the audience is further enclosed inside a complex arrangement of surrounding sounds, sights and constructions.

After staring at the chained book and the tape loop of people’s gazes staring back at me for quite awhile I realized I had fallen into a kind of reverie and had forgotten to explore the remaining parts of the installation. I turned around to find a desk and chair which was placed on top of a kind of low platform or floor composed of dozens of copies of an
identical black and red hardbound book arranged in a checkerboard pattern. On the desk was another large constructed book, shaped like a large sketchbook, which had hundreds of pages of images in many colors transferred from newspapers and magazines using an acetone and Xerox technique. On the right side of the book another square was cut out and a video monitor was likewise placed inside of it. I watched this tape for a long time transfixed by the series of poems printed in white against black interposed with montages of moving and changing and falling words and letters. Some of the poems were about language:

from *a book of letters*

The page is a desert
whose thirst
can't be spoken

Some seemed to indirectly refer to aspects of the installation itself:

from *a book of romance*

What a
broken chain.
Of all possible
occurrence

The poems alternate with visually complex, very beautiful moving montages constructed of letters, words, poems, which fall, break up into letters, fade into blur, or a single letter will swim in front of a blurry background of letters and words, all with very slightly varying subtle colors such as chrome yellow or light blue. In one case I noticed a quote from William Burroughs—"Listen to my words, any words, listen to my words, any world." And I thought also of my favorite repeated line from Nova Express: "Word falling, photo falling."

Gradually I realized there was a sound background to the piece as well, though at the crowded opening it was hard to hear it clearly. Later I learned that this music was called "Subtonium" and was performed by Mark Dresser, available on a CD called *Invocations* (in 1996 from Knitting Factory Works). Collaged into the tape are also readings by Ligorano and Reese, some from the 19th Century text called *A Dictionary of Dreams*, an early work of dream interpretation. You can also hear Ligorano and Reese slowly counting from 1 to 100 somewhere in the background of
the tape. Again, the effect is one of a palimpsest where text is placed over text in such a way that the earlier work is transformed, but does not completely disappear. Some of the video texts are also collaged into the sound text. The sound track slowly circles the room through the four speakers in the corners of the ceiling, creating still another effect of enclosure.

Another key element in this work, much less obvious but also important, is the platform created out of dozens of copies of the same hardbound book. The red and black covers are distributed to create the effect of a checkerboard. Perhaps this is a reference to Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* or *Alice in Wonderland*. I think of this because of the constant references to transformations: television as book, book as television, book as floor, sound as ceiling, word as image, image as word, sign as object, object as sign.

The painted book lying open on the desk, in contrast to the book suspended in chains, was filled with culturally familiar images from magazines and books like photos of presidents or "The Last Supper" painted in subtly varied, mostly warm hues. The sense of duration, as a result, was somehow, paradoxically transformed into a kind of static constancy, an effect deepened by the enclosed video. I imagined the writer or artist, working at her or his desk, with the empty book and video hovering above like an angel in chains, as if all of history and reality were called in to testify like a summoned witness. I think of the line from Rilke's *Duino Elegies*: "Who has not sat anxious, before the curtain of his heart?"

I returned a couple of weeks later to see the installation again. This was a planned visit and Ligoran and Reese were on hand to interact with visitors and discuss the work. This was when I learned, for example, that the 300 page "painted" book containing the video tape with moving words and letters had been 5 years in the making. On this visit I could also more closely appreciate the slowly revolving sound track which added a multilayered dimension of aural imagery. What I came away from this work with most strongly was a conviction I had learned something similar to what I had first become aware of in the marketplaces of Morocco. This was an environment in which I could focus on how much my experience and understanding might be enhanced by more consciously utilizing and coordinating all of my senses and modes of paying attention. Under such circumstances ordinary boundaries (like the one imposed by my habits of obtaining information verbally about things which were right in front of my eyes) begin to decompose. *The Corona Palimpsest* helps us to recognize how much of our experience of

"language" is composed of images and how much of our seeing and hearing is conditioned by language. Our minds and memories themselves are like palimpsests which have been inscribed on and erased and inscribed on over again continually by memories, new experiences, and by the connections which are made between the past and present, or are deleted between them by being forgotten or repressed. By also allowing for the possibility of our individual, continuous restructuring of the experiences of the public media we are exposed to, by means of more fully utilizing our senses, perceptions and imaginations, we are better enabled to take responsibility for whatever coherent (or incoherent) interpretations we make of the world.

Although the book is "the ground beneath our feet" we are chained to certain conceptions of both the book and language, some of which are conditioned by the mass media. But if we look more deeply into the matter we might find that we can free ourselves from such limitations by refashioning our modes of comprehension and our uses of both the book and television. The book could be freer in its adaptations to images and its uses of images enabling it to better depict the world which it encloses and which encloses it. Television and film could be adapted to explore language more freely and the heard word could be montaged more freely with visual media to create new forms of aural imagery. *The Corona Palimpsest*, by remixing our experience of the genres of video, poetry, collage, assemblage, the alphabet, the book, music, the painted image, the constructed site, sculpture, the constructed book, as well as the implied image of the seated reader, writer, artist or thinker, and video images of the human gaze, to name some, not all, of the elements, provides a kind of "holding environment" (to use the British psycho-analyst Winnicott's term) wherein we can reconfigure, recombine and finally challenge our assumptions and presumptions about genres. This work also offers us a way to become more conscious of our frequently frozen, or stereotyped interpretations of our individual sense data.

The special brand of passivity called forth by contemporary existence meets its nemesis in innovative art and literature. Conventional literature and artistic genres more and more conform to the needs and expectations of viewers of conventional television. This is an issue powerfully addressed by *The Corona Palimpsest*. It is not only a question of vocabulary or conceptual thinking. There are serious political issues at stake which reassert themselves every time an individual meets with experiences, either joyous or horrific, for which there is no corresponding internal language. The revised official doctrine of the senses, a *tabula rasa*, awaits your hand, your gaze, your voice.
Mark Robbins

SCORING THE PARK

1.1 ACT I—1971—MORNING
[Cutting high school—off to Central Park. Three 15-year-olds on borrowed bikes drove through though the small meadow in the middle of the Ramble.]

“That’s where the fags hang out—down there."

(It was supposed to be a dangerous place—gangs would stick broom handles in the spokes of passing bikes, to steal them.)

ENTR’ACTE—1974—WINTER
[On the east side, interior of telephone booth, fogged glass doors—wet diamond point metal frame—pieces of torn paper on the aluminum shelf with numbers and names scratched into it]

A telephone number given by an older man met hours before (“gotta go, here, give me a call if you want”), doesn’t answer, then rings a wrong number.

Trying different combinations of the scrawled exchange. In the booth past dusk—getting cold in a tee-shirt after the sun in the Park, eating a bag of greasy peanuts as a meal, sucking off the salt. Then looking for an apartment whose given number would have put it in the East River, tracing and retracing odd and even on the darkening street.

The field is strewn with the oiled bodies of older men laying on towels—mustaches and tight cut-off jeans. To the side—on their feet—nearly nude men play volleyball—sagging net, chests, and cigarettes, all passed quickly. One biker speeds through with imaginary blinders, not wanting to appear too interested on this buddy foray through Central Park.

Only a passing joke for the others, unsure what went on there or how, but stored for later use.

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The sense of danger which may be a subtitle—>winnax< for a gate is more likely a physical threat for a woman. This freedom out of doors recalls early 20th century photos of the Hudson piers with images of naked boys at the piers—>unbashed<—out in the sun—>alongside longshoremen and stevedores at work.

Photographs by Mark Daniels.
2.0 Act II—1974—10:00 PM
Home on Spring break sitting on the grassy olive green park bench dressed in an ecru Shetland crew-neck, white Oxford button-down, dirty bucks, and a charcoal tweed jacket. Prep Connecticut drag, an acquired patina. Doing the daily crossword puzzle as a decay—for hours. Writing occasionally in a small lined pad: "sitting on the higher priced shell," like a B-girl from a good family. Naive, the selection of innocence as the bait of choice. It was generally a slow day for trade.

Later it all worked together: boyhood, hunting; grasshoppers, men. Walking up and down rock slopes; the simulation of wilderness. "The Ramble"—a re-touched part of nature amidst the formal gardens and stone birds carved on the terraces at the Bethesda Fountain.

3.0 (Site 1)—LATE SPRING—1985
In the middle of the day, standing motionless for what seemed hours—fixed staring at each other, both on a mound of dry packed earth in the midst of dusty vine leaves and sex litter. One looked English, fair with sandy colored hair, a buzz in the stomach like speed—moving closer slowly—with an unbroken stare. Oblivious in the transparent green eddy of Sumac and Knotweed. (A Dutch family passes by, with balloons, pushing a stroller up an asphalt hill.)

The two try a series of bramble rooms to find a hidden spot—a train of men on the trail.

[The eyes focus on his fly—close-up of hands on zipper]
[sound of a mosquito and blue jays]

"Shoot! Shoot!"
[Sounds of laughter]
[They turn to see the arc of men's faces watching—illuminated like icon heads—surrounding them]

The crowd thins quickly after they finish—the nucleus gone.
[Silence—the crush of leaves]
"Can I drop you somewhere"

[The two walk together out of the Park, rinsing in a broken water fountain. A yellow cab stops to pick them up in front of the subway entrance below the Gothic face of the Odeon.]

[Man high above Central Park West lowers his binoculars]

A FEW DAYS LATER:

The light-haired boy is seen behind rows of smoked meats at the Dean and Deluca counter, with pink cheeks and a white butcher apron, through shiny chrome and glass—sausages piled in the window.

ONE YEAR Passes:

He's spotted, again without speaking, at the Adonis through a crack in the stall door, waiting, and then not again.

DIALOGUE

[Man is visible through the trees from a point high on a rounded granite hump]

"You have a great chest... to worship."

Porn prose, with a straight face, from a wholesome-looking guy in overalls from Rochester, a glass-blower, in NYC with a friend staying near the park.

"How long are you in?"

[Silence]

[An overly tan guy with a hairy torso tries to 'join in']

[His thin, pale pat watches]

"I was eighteen. Where else could I go but the park?"—Anonymous in the Ramble

"The presence of a third party makes sex an independent, rather than a protected, private act."

"The legal difference between public and private sex is not a simple matter of choosing either the bushes or your bedroom. There are many zones in between—a motel room, a bathtub, a bar, an adult bookstore, a car, a public toilet, a dark and deserted alley—that are contested territory where police battle with prevalent for control."—Anonymous in the Ramble

4. O (SITE 2)

[At the edge of an edge of a specialized market.]

Under the bridge at the western edge of the Park past the bridge path, a monumental ashlar wall marks the grade change between street and the Park, cutting off views of either side. A group of black men mill in an unlit wet tunnel. A few white guys among them. The thinnest one, with white marks at the corners of his mouth, stands with arms at his side, maybe unaware that he is hanging like a dead snake below his shorts.

"They cut down underbrush or trees that provide a screen, or they put up bright lights."—Anonymous in the Ramble

"He is not to try to surprise, is not to play the detective, is not to move factively or use silliness, is any way for any purpose."

—Rules for Park Keepers VII

"The word park has different significations, but that in which we are now interested has grown out of its application centuries ago, simply to hunting grounds; the chivalric, being those in which the beast of the chase were most happy, and consequently most abundant. Guy parties of pleasure occasionally met in these parks, and when these meetings occurred the enjoyment otherwise obtained in them was found to be increased."

—On the report of the commissioners of Prospect Park, 1857

"Each of the visitors was walking with another man when shot."

—Central Park Shootings Labeled Anti-Gay


"Look... its like a farm kid who proves his manhood and gets rid of hostility by going out and shooting a deer. There are no wild animals in New York."—Anonymous in the Ramble

"Because so much of the Ramble has become overrun, many visitors find it a disturbing and mildly threatening place to be. In the ubiquitous woody tangle, the visitor becomes disoriented; the paths are complicated, and one easily gets lost in immeasurable dead ends."—Anonymous in the Ramble

[Plains of sylvan seclusion in the park are so numerous, and are so distributed, that anything approaching a constant police surveillance of visitors is out of the question. So far, then, as those who come into the park are to be prevented, either from careless minute of it, or from indulgence in misdeed, vice and crime, by fear of police interference, it will be from the estimate they are led to form of the chances of a keeper's coming... several hundred men might easily be engaged in illegal, licentious and rurally acts in the park, with perfect confidence that they would not be detected."

—Laws Relating to Central Park
5.1—1992—2:00 AM
At night the park is quiet, remarkable. The moon over the mercury vapor lamps—newly cast Art Nouveau iron leaves—flatten the color into shades of green, gray and black. It has a luminist glow—Fantin-Latour in pools of mist. Guys on thin-rimmed bikes pass through in spandex and sweatbands. There is both a fear and calm in moving though this space in the middle of New York. Anyone there is also just out for a walk (the dog), sex—or company.

He moves slowly, listening for movement, "like an Indian"—walking quietly, feeling for twigs with his feet, mouth open.

[The sound of rats running]

He stays in the more open lighted paths. Another guy appears with a black leather backpack, tall and blond. Several passes are made in a tightening coil of the clearing in which the man has stopped. Only his silhouette is visible: wire-rim glasses, trim frame.) Guesswork, moving closer: O.K., and a nod.

They duck from the crime lights spraying on the boathouse—matted by hanging tree boughs moving in the warm wind, blocking their bodies from being lit completely. The gray earth gets the forest light in rays of haze and flying bugs. Overlapping of leaves with shadows of leaves—the veins of the beech are translucent in the spotlight.

[The stranger pushes the man’s head away as he comes]

6.0
The path from the east-side to the west passes through the Park alongside the Metropolitan Museum. (The running construction fence of high blue plywood panels, kept in place by the continuing series of gallery additions built into the Park)

[Color inserts of the Temple of Dendera through the mirrored curtain wall]

[Cleopatra's Needle—close-up of dedication plaque 1805s—cut to erosion of the rock state and shot of the missing bronze ball support]

This newer path continues across Park Drive—still neutral turf—then south of the public restrooms—like ammoniated brick tollways into the Ramble from the east. On to the Public Theater of the Delacorte to the western anchor; the Museum of Natural History, the repository of small stuffed worlds outside of the park walls.

1.0—1968
At that edge of the bushes a guy exposes himself, just beyond a sooty traffic island near the mouth of the Park.

[The sound of exhausts from an endless stream of cross-town cars and buses]

A kid passes on his way out—and goes back to look—before walking quickly toward the darkened Byzantine hall of the museum.

"The Ramble is at present the very soul of the Park."

2. Rebecca Read Shanor, The City That Never Was: Two hundred years of fantastic and fascinating plans that might have changed the face of New York City (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1988), 164.


4. Rogers.

5. Rogers, 119.


7. Chauncey, 180.


13. Rosenzweig and Blackmar, 321.

14. 458.


16. Rosenzweig and Blackmar, 321.

17. Rosenzweig and Blackmar, 321.

18. Olmsted, 38

19. Ireland, 40.


22. Califia, 76, 77.

23. Olmsted, 453

24. Olmsted and Vaux, 406


27. Rogers, 122.


Picture credits

1. From Olmsted, “A”—“First Study of Design for the Central Park” “from a Wood-cut made in 1858” (plate not paginated).


3. New York Public Library Picture Archive (no picture numbers available):


5. All others by author.

Thanks to M. Christopher Jones
Christy Sheffield Sanford  
BIVENS ARM NATURE POEM:  
(THIRTY-ONE AFTERNOONS IN WINTER)

Me, reading in French under a hot setting sun, and thirty feet away, a six-foot alligator, doing nothing.  

When will the outdoors be in my voice?  

Soundscape: distant cars whir round a highway bend; nearby frogs emit a high-pitched vibrato; wind whishes leaves overhead; then a man’s shoes pound the boardwalk, a bird’s cry pierces all.  

When I was a child, was I less afraid to touch this beautiful rot—wavy black gashes in gray green wood, chartreuse velour-like moss.  

Everything around me trembles; I’m in synchrony with my surroundings.  

Cold hands, encroaching bulldozers, but the lake’s up, and I want a snake to swim toward me.  

Female naturalist: “The young men come, even in the rain, holding their umbrellas.”  

Saw palmetto frond, severed, stuck amongst green plant fronds: the living and the dead coexist here.  

Close to 5, dancing on the bridge, I raise my arms toward the blue sky, see a chalk-white half moon.  

Kneeling, I open my right hand and press it hard against the damp soil, hoping the heartbeat of the earth will enter me.  

Now I smell the swamp muck, but first I had to stand in it, let it seep over my stockings.  

Draped around the base of a royal palm, a hair-veil of smilax—a wild pageboy with loops, tangles, knots, thorns; a few vines are alive, dead, alive again; a naturalist says, “Sometimes the inner core’s still green.”  

As I’m walking, I feel like my clothes are falling off, and if I just keep walking, I’ll eventually be naked.  

In my path, a lake of clear tea I’d like to drink; instead I dip my hands in, enter the underwater artwork—a Japanese arrangement of pine needles, wood, rocks.  

Sunlight plays over a scene, reveals a network of iridescent threads; what else is hidden here?  

Got scared, got spooked. In two weeks, I’ve seen only one woman alone, a runner.  

Rock music blaring from nearby apartment, soft air wafting over my face, blood lichen spotting moss on a large oak—long dead, split aunder by lightening.  

On the path, roots, cigarette butts, snake holes, purple leaves among brown ones, then crunching through the woods a slider turtle that would fill my arms—its dark shell tattooed in an unknown language, its head striped with slick yellow and green pigment.  

Walking west, blinded by light, surprised by a pile of uprooted ardisias—bright green shrubs with red berries.  

The wind before the rain blows seeds and flowers at my feet: red and chartreuse winged maple pods with fat little seeds inside and tiny yellow blossoms from the jessamine vine.  

High in a huge water oak, breezes sway fringes of Spanish moss; it’s important to master that rhythm—those undulations and flapping.
Liana vines, thick as my arms—shooting up fifty feet, graceful, tortured, twisted—you are my favorite.

The fiddlehead ferns are unfurling; I fall into the hesitating march of a bride.

I keep jumping on benches, wanting to conduct the forest—so charged and musical.

I saw a green garter snake and a woman’s blue underpants: it must be spring!

A pile of Spanish moss lies like a coat of curly hair tossed onto the path.

When my friend’s little girl grabs a lizard, it bites her finger and holds on; she demands her mother kill it with an ax.

First I want to be so still the forest can take me; then I want to throw a tantrum, see if the forest will respond.

From 13th Street: an ambulance siren and smells of Chinese food—while leaves of low lying plants quietly flutter.

Slipping between the floor boards, bending over the walkway are tender smilax tendrils, tasting like earthy snow peas.

A black snake with red bands swims past, sinuously skirting the water plants; I want to jump in, apprentice to its power.

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Process Description: On at least thirty-one occasions during the winter months of 1994, I visited Bivens Arm Park. The process was as follows: at the end of each trip to the park, I left one line on the “Visitor Comments” form. These comments were collected over time to form a meditative work called “Bivens Arm Nature Poem.” From this method of working, I conceived of a new way to exhibit site-specific writing. Each of the thirty-one phrases would be copied onto transparencies and then laminated. The phrases would be suspended on filament line and hung at the approximate site where they were originally written.
Acrobats 1950-52
floozy
it slurp 'tis
Paschel Remus
pole water
twig twig (seem)
'til tail stone

Garden Party 1952

stone. old stone
caterwauling
bambina
In the Summer House 1958

peep-show
the Doges: sea-chair

priapie
chaws chaw

snickers cd.
bloodstock
    "hit on"
Hiei Aefferc
    "maybe I can"

Lantern 1977

swan. oral swan
(yew) mani
cartwheel

starry (do it)
mulatto/sea-language
1.
Abiquiu
the jug.
the (seahawk)

Lanterns 1986

2.
HOWL
plump
honeygrass
pipergrass

3.
lighfoot saluki
Enkidu
rose-leaves

4.
Ox free (nor)
rose

While in my musings, I came upon a leaf.
While in my musings, I came upon a beaf.
While in my musings, I came upon a teeth.
I am interested.
the mind continuously defracts information and folds the stimulus in
upon itself—there is no discernible beginning, middle or end to living
through something be it on the page or otherwise—

the decision here in this series is to make marks in the margins with
more than one kind of tool and to make decisions collaboratively about
what the text would be, how the images would be placed on the page.
some moments of success, I think and other moments of lull and get-
ting some thing clear.

gestures toward dark and light in places / words to sit in for (& with)
where the eye is drawn out / an interest in the particular characteristics
of intersections: dialogues in space / in ink / in shapes.
drawing lines where associations differ and then begin again.

wanting to look at how silences differ when navigated through an im-
age or by word. What fills that space. three folding screens in which
reference points change and shift.

a location on the page serves as a map into how we focus, coming to
know what form is—content and form inevitably in(forming) each
other as always

the poem is about talking our way into winter

Cassandra Terman and Katie Yates
occurrence

rose light / rain wedding
along dark fields
then I become

(your) untouchable

and precisely to heaven
tilted in you
46. no advantage is gained by the sea it approaches cautiously as unrel-ated minutiae become a predictable nuisance

47. in 1940, U.S. railroads carried 62% of the total freight between cities. in 1940 motor trucks carried about 8% of intercity freight. in 1940 air lines carried only 2% of passenger business

48. she lived and wrote at home until her death, and in her later years saw very few people

49. this is how algae surround their intended or suffocate their intentions. they live in their miasmic and amorphous house. the force of one-celled organisms unite and conquer without mercy. it was a story told many hundreds of centuries ago

50. a predictable nuisance becomes a charm.

a) cheetahs can run up to 75 mph
b) a chameleon's tongue is longer than its body
c) a black panther is a type of leopard
d) there are 71 rings in a complimentary slinky from ivars
e) different spots mean different things
f) one difference between alligators and crocodiles is that when the mouth closes only an alligator's teeth show
g) the red spot is a storm
h) which animals have to be oiled? mice, because they squeak
i) when is a car like a frog? when it's being towed
j) a steel nail is made of iron and carbon
k) one-two cha-cha-cha means one-two cha-cha-cha
l) the first letter of the book is 'w'
m) there is a way to record what people are saying by measuring the vibrations of their voices on window panes
n) time has eaten the nose of the sphinx
o) prel, the shampoo, is denser than vegetable oil
p) on batman, victor buono upon hearing the gong of a bell transforms into king tut
q) one-two cha cha cha means three-four cha cha cha
r) fool's gold
s) water has been found in meteors
t) when you've finished eating, put your knife and fork close together with handles pointing directly toward you or toward your right arm
u) thousands of years ago humans could move their outer ear forward to catch sounds more easily
v) to improve his voice and lungs, demosthenes shouted against the roar of the waves and orated while running uphill
w) the white zone is for loading and unloading
x) you can rearrange the letters in spiro agnew's name to spell 'grow a penis'
y) the whipping top that can be made to "snore" is a great prize
z) ice is a faint blue
Mac Wellman
THE PEACH-BOTTOM NUCLEAR REACTOR,
FULL OF SLEEPERS

1.
At the center of ground zero there was silence, as if all human life had been erased. Silence is the only sound the dead can make. Silence is made of wheat, hay, barley and oats. Silence, Manduck, silence ain't beanbag. Silence hears the snow-wagon coming, creaking through Peach Bottom, Georgia, dragging the future in to the past, pssp, psst. Silence, a ghost, dressed in black enters, and stands, for a long time, among the sleepers. Silence has nothing to say.

2.
Okay, so who canned the insect propellant?
Okay, who the hell are full of white, fluff clouds and truck stuff?
Okay, who bagged the sheet light, drank down the pope and banged up?
I hear the snow-wagon coming, creaking, dragging the past into the future, pssp.

3.
_Fork and spoon_
_flew to the moon_
in a square balloon.

4.
Sing, manduck, sing!

Cats' way while windup was not.
Cats' way like a toy, like a kid's
gadget, like a . . .
. . . ? . . .
Seven sleepers, in seven separate canisters.
Low hum.
Z coil.
X all the way to Y.
Sky full of fluffy white, not to touch . . .
What was, will be, manduck.
Cornstalks, hay, chaff, straw, ash, human hair.

O fainthearted, novitiate, chairperson, control-rod.
Who, Professor Darkbild? Who, Buttercup?
Who, Manduck?

5.
(A ghost story)
Who the night-shimmering moonwalker?
Was, is.
Who the vicious reptilian ancestor, ancient foe, empty of sin, offering no apple, who?
Who the moonlighting technicians, worried by rope, the hanged man, credit, debit, dopes, dope, the fixed, unroofed, hexed, ramshackle condition of oblivion, sleep the answer to the big nope.
Who the nope saw knew you all.
Who the creepshow called, named none.
Who the radio acted upon, wound up spent, dead, holding his eye in the palm of his hand, howling, then dead, glowing in a lead coffin, forever.
Who the dead ones delight knows me not.
Who the hot ones hate, I'll not.
Who the seven cooks and sleepers say shall be slain in the old way, on a fairy's worktable, with ancient and noble tools, chopped, diced, and deboned for a hot time tuned out, eternal toxicity.
Who touches the wind hears me not.
Who turns the rod opens the devil's flue.
Who touches the hat
Who touches the hat
turns up the wind till black rain
buries the cat, the dog, the dead kids.

6.
The world is full of human hair . . .
Who will touch the wind, touch
the hat when it's that hot?
Human hair will stand on end,
as if it heard what was not spoken.
The sleepers lean to the task
of the dream, abolishing none for
a nightmare's harmless shiver.
Abolishing none, they think.
So lucky, they think.
America's lucky, they think.
Cooked goose has no need of human hair.
Cooked gooses are clocked at centuries per
second, toppling time.
Cooked geese come up snake-eyes.
You go up, you come down, over and over,
toppling time.
You heat up the rod, settle back, become
pleasantly dumb, much satisfied
with your normal human hair, and . . .
Seven sleepers in seven dreams lie
confined in seven canisters of lead,
 concocting seven other dreams of, yes,
of Thanksgiving, cooking some other
cooked goose of fowl or fair-thee-well.
Human hair will not remember
where it grew.
The world is full of human hair
Human hair burns up brightly, so pretty, in the
open air, so pretty . . .

7.
Tell us, Professor Darkbild, how the nightwind
whips what's ill, what kills us, what chills

our soul?
Tell us what mad futility it is to oppose
what rolls uphill, what rolls ungainly
through the old nightwind's snow-wagon,
creaking, dragging the future into the past,
ppsp, pst.
Tell us what the simple word silence
costs?
Do we set the oven for hay, oats, chaff, straw, ash
and human hair?
Do we know what the difference is
between the poppy sleep of the enchanted,
and the sleep of babes, and the sleep of
exhausted lovers, and the sleep of those
who lie here, at the Peach Bottom Nuclear
Reactor?
Tell us, Professor Darkbild, so we may
chain the weight of knowledge round
our necks and fling ourselves overboard,
the American ship, and sink, nevermore
to rise, to the bottom of the sea.

8.
Fork and spoon
flew to the moon
in a square balloon.
Cats' way while not was not
Buttercup's excuse.
She shoes the high malarkey of the
American mad, made high in the
skein of a scheme to end all war.
I was young then, a mere thing,
I had no dream, only a
Fork and spoon
flew to the moon
in a square balloon.
Cats' way like a toy like a
. . . ? . . .
. . . ! . . .
Beautiful to gaze upon, the blast.
Grind partway through the blisters
and smooth the bumpy fit with sheets of gold foil.
Two gold-faced, nickel-plated hemispheres of plutonium.
Beryllium initiator hot with polonium alphas.
Plum-colored natural uranium that formed the cylindrical 80 pound plug of tamper.
0529:45.
X unit discharges; detonators at 32 points simultaneously fire;
outer lens shields of Composition B ignite;
cross into second shell of solid fast Composition B;
smack into the wall of dense uranium and become a shockwave; squeezed beyond measure, liquefies;
hits the nickel plate of the plutonium core, the sphere crushed, collapses into itself;
becomes an eyeball;
the shock wave swirls, alphas kicking neutrons free from a few atoms of beryllium;
only a few, three, five, seven;
enough to begin the chain reaction;
through eighty generations in a millisecond;
tens of millions of degrees Fahrenheit, millions of pounds pressure.
Conditions within the silent center of the eyeball resemble the state of the universe at the beginning; radiant, swift, gleaming, out-sweeping, fiery, the Lord God of Hosts is a man of war;
Fork and spoon flew to the moon,
in a square balloon.
Tell me, Professor Darkbild, why will what was always be?
Why must you not touch the hat?
Why must you not touch the black wind even if your hand is hot?

9.
Brave sleepers, sleep on, dream on of oats, of wheat and of hay.
At the center of ground zero there is silence. Hay, wheat, oats, straw, chaff, ash. A ghost, dressed in black and veiled, enters, stands among the sleepers. I hear the snow-wagon coming, then nothing. Fork and spoon, then nothing. Professor Darkbild, then nothing. Buttercup, then nothing. Bonafide cashback, then nothing. Peach Bottom's peach bottom, then nothing. Manduck, then nothing. Fred, Ed, Ted, Ned, Jed, Ked and Zed, then nothing. Human hair, then nothing. Silence is the only sound the dead can make.

Production notes: This play was produced at Home for Contemporary Theatre, Randy Rollison, Artistic Director in October 1988. Erin Mee directed, and the cast included Jan Leslie Harding, Ray Xiyo, and Kate Fuglei. Peach Bottom was staged as part of the "Kitchen" series. The text was broken up varyingly, for both individual and chorus treatment. The effect desired was of a cozy, but increasingly menacing nightmare. The piece is based on a true story of the exposure of working conditions at the real Peach Bottom Reactor, in Georgia. Moonlighting workers were often so exhausted by the time they took up their nightshift that they would frequently sleep on the job. Indeed, an unannounced inspection one night found the entire crew sound asleep. The scary implications of this odd event struck me as intriguing, to say the least. Parts of the text are quoted directly from Richard Rhodes' "The Making of the Atomic Bomb."
C.D. Wright
THE LOST ROADS PROJECT: A WALK-IN BOOK OF ARKANSAS

When you take the lost road
You find the bright feathers of morning
Laid out in proportion to snow and light
And when the snow gets lost on the road
Then the hot wind might blow from the south
And there is sadness in bed for twenty centuries
And everyone is chewing the grass on the graves again—
from “Circle of Lorca” by Frank Stanford

Not long ago an opportunity presented itself to me to advance the relation between writing and reading in a slightly different medium than either book or magazine sustains, or that a public reading, literary conference or festival can create. Living on the East and West coasts for fifteen years, had failed to persuade me that either city or university held the rights on cultural production, only that they were in inverse possession of most means of production. I wanted to re engages the source with the site which is where I believe, for better or worse, the spirit goes to thrive, off-campus, outside the city limits.

The Lost Roads Project began therefore with a protracted yearning to pay tribute to the cultural story of Arkansas, and to work alongside other Arkansas artists/thinkers/doers in the process. In other words, I knew I wanted to undertake an ensemble piece; I knew where I wanted to exert my concentration. Literature was my brier patch and poetry my practice. The WPA’s Writer’s Guide to the State had long been my touchstone. When the opportunity presented itself to work in my native state in an interdisciplinary environment, I would avail myself of it.

A fellowship from the Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Writers’ Fund made the undertaking possible. The fellowship was tied to long-range, audience development projects. With the Literature Program Office at Lila Wallace I pursued an ongoing dialogue out of which this initiative began to take shape. Early on I started talking to folklorist Michael Luster, to his wife Deborah Luster, an Arkansas photographer with whom I was already collaborating on another literary project; Robert Cochran, a folklorist and Beckett scholar at the University of Arkansas and Director of the Center for Arkansas and Regional Studies; and poet Forrest Gander. Along with myself, these individuals would form the core of the crew. Other artists were commissioned to contribute specific elements of the exhibition, but the five of us would be developing the project on a continuing basis. Four of us, Robert Cochran excepted, would do the field work together.

The Lost Roads Project is a multi-media exhibit centering upon Arkansas letters, past and present. The exhibit is currently touring the state of Arkansas for a minimum of two years. It opened at the Old State House in Little Rock on December 2, 1994. The aim is to make the literature of the state a palpable experience. The overall design should serve to generate pride and awareness in a more public and experiential setting than the solitary, nocturnal writer and reader usually enjoy. The aim, again, is to draw people into the word by means both extreme and immediate, especially people of a given area into writing originating in their own locale. The intention is to attract an audience not necessarily steeped in books, not frequently present in reading halls. Yet it is simultaneously directed at writers, readers, teachers, scholars and others already invested in literature by habit, profession, and ardor.

The scope and goals of the project called on the media contributions of writers, folklorists and literary scholars, a research assistant, a photographer, a videographer, a book artist/printer, a painter, a furniture maker, and a composer/musician. Most but not all commissions of the project were carried out by Arkansas natives or by convincing Arkansas transplants.

From the outset the motive was to provide as many visitors as possible with multiple, original and beautiful ways to access a profound appreciation of a literary record. In keeping with these ambitions it was determined that the geography and demography of the state must be thoroughly canvassed in the research, final representation, and exhibition bookings. As director of the Lost Roads Project it is my position that culture is our primary product, and we cannot afford to go unin-
formed. Optimally, this exhibit will function as a paradigm for other states. This development seems a natural outcome of its design, but hardly an inevitability. Encouraging soundings into this potential are being explored, yet my focus is still trained on the exhibition at hand. Hopefully, it will help stimulate a national endeavor to recover and protect a sense of our past and present in letters. The time could not be more exigent to demonstrate leadership in a movement toward a more literate society. I do not see how any advances in electronic media can bypass this requirement.

Due to its relative isolation from a coast or major metropolis, its dramatically distinct topographies (mountain and delta), and its wealth of natural resources (from rice to diamonds), the lore holds that a fence, invisible to strangers, separates Arkansas from the rest of the nation. The state's artists among other intrepid types have routinely ignored this fabled border. Nevertheless there is a persistent identification—as striking as a blazed tree—which marks the lexicon of its writers, the apertures of its photographers, the tunings of its musicians, the very materials employed by its sculptors, and which serves to aestheticize, mythologize, historicize The Wonder State's cultural independence. All along the intention has been to present not a unified vision, but a kindred one which gives particular expression to a particular place.

An elaboration on the exhibition

To create a compelling, idealized reading space, project funds and outside project support were tapped to complete the following:


2. Large format photographs which image the literature of Arkansas. Not illustrative of the broadsides, the photographs interpret them, along with other moments and sites in Arkansas pertinent to its letters. Photographer: Deborah Luster.

3. A video of Arkansans reciting poems they have learned and/or written. The video of recitatives was created with an eye toward inclusivity, and with the prospect that it could be shown on the exhibition site or off, i.e., in the classroom, in tandem with the project going up in a given town. Videographer: Forrest Gander with editing by Mar-
garet Brown and additional technical assistance by Robert Arellano.

4. Broadcast interviews and readings by the twenty-one writers chosen to represent the state (interviews with relatives, friends or scholars of those writers when the writer in question is deceased). The radio broadcasts of the interviews were conceived as both for an audience in and unto itself, and as promotional for the exhibit. Interviewer: Michael Luster; media editor: Ed Nicholson.

5. and 6. It was also always part of the project's design to provide teaching tools for those encouraged to pursue the literature further. This the rationale behind an exhibition catalog and a reader's map. The University of Arkansas Press published the exhibition catalog and the first edition of The Reader's Map of Arkansas. The catalog contains reproductions of the exhibition photographs, fascimiles of the broadsides, and a text in which I attempted a compressed survey of the state's literature. The reader's map proceeds from the De Soto narratives to the present and contains listings of poets, fiction writers, belle lettrists, playwrights, songwriters, biographers, folklorists, humorists, naturalists, travelogists, historians and less conveniently labelled non-fictionalists. Map and text: C.D. Wright. Research assistance: Samuel Truitt. Compugraphics: Peter Armitage.

7. A library table and benches of native woods. The table provides, in a sense, the only prop on the set. It creates a reading space on its own. It reflects the beauty of one of the state's primary assets, its woodlands. Practically, the table and benches provide people a place to sit and look through the catalog if they tire of reading text off the broadsides on the wall. There are cut-outs in the surface of the table filled with washed river rocks which can be arranged by individual exhibitors or "readers." It establishes its own locus from which to read, talk, view. Craftsman: Douglas Stowe.

8. Twin, painted, canvas banners intended to create an entrance at the various sites at which the exhibit will go up. The banners were especially created with the variety of exhibitors in mind. They can be hung inside or outside. Artist: Kathy P. Thompson

9. The affiliate organization (or state sponsor) is responsible for booking the sites, moving the exhibition from site to site, opening programs and outreach, publicity assistance, and consultation. While my role was clearly to curate and script the entire work, organizational support in Arkansas was both a stipulation of the Lila Wallace Fund and a practical necessity. The Center for Arkansas and Regional Studies was commissioned to be the state sponsor. Opening programs are being set up by
the Center in each town to make the exhibit eventful and particular to each site. In addition: broadcasts, local press, targeted mailing lists, invitations and newsletters are being used to appeal to both a hard-won, established audience, and to direct the attention further afield. Director: Robert Cochran.

For the first year of the tour The Center has booked the following sites: Little Rock (Old State House), Harrison (Boone County Library), Blytheville (Arts Council of Mississippi County), Pine Bluff (Arts and Science Center), Mountain View (Ozark Folks Center), and Hope (Southwest Arkansas Arts Council), thus fanning out from the center of the state. The second year will further the object of statewide distribution.

Afterward: An Arkansas Writer

For the purposes of this project, the designation Arkansas writer is kept generous. In the main, a writer who has spent a significant period of time in the state could claim or be claimed by the state. For the sake of limits, individual writers whose stay was defined by college attendance were excluded. Departed and exiled native sons and daughters were included. So were transplants. The focus began with poets, fiction writers and belle lettrists, writers for whom aesthetic values are essential. At the same time, the customary literary genre distinctions were overruled when a song lyric or even a recipe claimed synonymous attention. Salient writers in other genres were mapped primarily serving as historical markers. The selection sometimes derived from a body of work, a life’s work or a single work. The following list of the twenty-one authors on broadside is reflective of the approach used in researching and writing the text for both the catalog and the reader’s map.

Lily Peter (1891-1991) poet
Vance Randolph (1892-1980) folklorist
Sonny Boy Williamson (1897-1965) lyricist
Dee Brown (1908-) novelist and nonfiction writer
C. Vann Woodward (1908-) historian
Besmiliar Brigham (1913-) poet
Maya Angelou (1928-) poet, memoirist
Miller Williams (1930-) poet, translator
Margaret Jones Bolsterli (1931-) memoirist
Henry Dumas (1934-1968) poet, fiction writer
Shirley Abbott (1934-) memoirist
Jo McDougall (1935-) poet

Donald Harington (1935-) novelist
James Whitehead (1936-) poet, novelist
Frank “Son” Seals (1942-) lyricist
Jack Butler (1944-) poet, novelist
Robert Palmer (1945-) music critic
Andrea Budy (1947-) poet
Frank Stanford (1948-1978) poet, fiction writer
Crescent Dragonwagon (1952-) cookbook and children’s book author
Patrick Phillips (1958-) poet

In mounting The Lost Roads Project I felt I was a participant in a significant, expressive action. I view the entire as a revitalized version of the record as it had already been documented here and there, and as it was inexorably being both created and erased. If in the end I only uncovered another stratagem to belie the divorce rate of writer from reader, I think I stand a better chance of gaining that sweet communal feeling again from the lonesome practice of poetry for having found expression in a walk-in book.
What is it about this relentlessly cheerful face with the stupid smile that is in any way compelling? Despite the banality of its appearance and the ubiquity of its use, this face, with its implied or stated "have nice day" message is memorable. It sticks in the mind, it engages a response. The smiley face is all blatant appeal. Its eyes lock on yours. You can glare back, but the eyes shilling for the smile have you cold.

FOUR HEADS ON A ONE-WAY STREET

1. HAPPY

Fools lament the decay of criticism. For its day is long past. Criticism is a matter of correct distancing. It was at home in a world where
2. THERAPY

A straight line exists between me and the good thing.
I have found the line and its direction is known to me.
Absolute trust keeps me going in the right direction.
Any intrusion is met with a heart full of the good thing.

3. COOKIE

WHITE CHOCOLATE AND PISTACHIO COOKIES

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  1 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 teaspoon salt  1 cup unsalted butter
1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar  1/2 cup sugar
2 large eggs at room temperature  1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3/4 pound white chocolate, cut into small chunks, or chips
1 cup coarsely chopped unsalted pistachios
(from The California Cook, by Diane Rossen Worthington, 1994)

human society. The "unclouded", "innocent", eye has become a lie, perhaps the whole naïve mode of expression sheer incompetence.
What is it, fundamentally, that allows us to recognize who has turned out well? That a well-turned-out person pleases our senses, that he is carved from wood that is hard, delicate, and at the same time smells good. He has taste only for what is good for him; his pleasure, his delight cease where the measure of what is good for him is tranngressed. He guesses what remedies avail against what is harmful; he exploits bad accidents to his advantage; what does not kill him makes him stronger.

(Friedrich Nietzsche, from "Why I am So Wise," Ecce Homo, 1910)

(Walter Benjamin, from "This Space for Rent," One-Way Street, 1928)
WHERE TO GO NEXT …

MAC ADAMS has work in the Museum of Modern Art (New York) and The Museum of Fine Arts (Houston). He created the New York Korean War Memorial at Battery Park in New York. WILL ALEXANDER has forthcoming work in Apex of the M, Sulfur, Caliban, Five Fingers Review, River City, and Primary Trouble. He is currently working on a novel which is a first book in a trilogy of works. DENNIS BARONE’s most recent work includes The Returns (fiction, Sun & Moon) and Beyond the Red Notebook: Essays on Paul Auster (University of Pennsylvania). “Lola Montez” is included in MARTINE BELLEN’s most recent collection of poems, Wild Women. Other poems from this series have been printed in Conjunctions and Grand Street. Places People Dare Not Enter, her first book, was published by Potes & Pots Press.

CHARLES BERNSTEIN’s Republics of Reality: 1975-1995 is due out in the fall from Sun & Moon. It collects such books as Parsing, Shade, Poetic Justice, The Absent Father in Dumbo, and a new sequence, Residual Rubbernecking. “Introjective Verse” was written for Olivier Cadiot and Pierre Alféri and is being translated into French hexameter verse for their Revue de littérature générale. BOB BOSTER is an MFA candidate in Electronic Music at Mills College, Oakland, CA and performs audio art under the nom de guerre Mr. Meridies. Founder of Chapel Hill based Friction Media, Bob continues to work on developing opportunities for genre-bending artists to release their work to the world (see the recent Cognitive Mapping Vol. 2 for an example of this work.) Bob’s writing can also be found in the Friction Media zine, Tuba Frenzy.

SHERRY BRENNAN is a writer living in State College, Pennsylvania. PATTI CAPALDI recently had work in a group show entitled “Mutual Affinities: A Convergence of Printmaking and Photographic Practice” at the CEPA Gallery in Buffalo, New York. NORMA COLE is a poet and translator who lives in San Francisco. Her most recent volumes of poetry are MARS (Listening Chamber, 1994), MOIRA (O Books, 1996) and Contrafact (Potes & Pots Press, 1996). ELIZABETH CROSS is completing a Ph.D. in English at the University of Denver. MARIA DAMON teaches poetics and cultural studies at the University of Minnesota. She is the author of The Dark End of the Street: Margins in American Vanguard Poetry (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) and a member of the National Writers’ Union. TIM DAVIS is a poet and photographer and ukelelist and editor at New Directions in New York. MARTA DIEKE lives with Gary Sullivan in St. Paul, MN, where they are the publishers of Detour Press. RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS’s Drafts 15-30: The Fold is forthcoming from Potes & Poets Press at the end of 1996. Work from that book has recently appeared in Hamborne, West Coast Line, and Grand Street. DuPlessis’s “E-words: an essay on the essay” is in the March 1996 issue of American Literature. The translation from Royaumont of four Drafts as Essais: quatre poèmes, is just out. GERALDINE ERMAN’s “Vivarium” was a recent installation at White Columns in New York City. WILLIAM FOX has published thirteen books and chapbooks of poetry and visual texts, the most recent of which is silence and license from Light & Dust Books. He is the literary acquisitions consultant to the University of Nevada Press, writes frequently about contemporary art, and lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. JANIE GEISER is a visual/theater artist and director who has been working in puppet theater since 1981. Her work presented in this issue, Evidence of Floods will be performed in September, 1996 at the International Puppetry Festival in New York City. Her 1994 animated film The Red Book will be shown in 1996 at the Berlin Video Festival. SUSAN GEVIRTZ is a poet, critic, and assistant professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Sonoma State University. Her newest book is Narrative’s Journey: The Fiction and Films of Dorothy Richardson (Peter Lang). Her most recent volumes of poetry are Prostheses: Caesura (Potes & Poets) and Taken Place (Reality Studies). DAVID GOLUMBIA lives in New York City. He has poems, cultural studies and philosophy articles published or forthcoming in The Henry James Review, Antenym, Cultural Critique, Science-Fiction Studies, and the edited collections Feminist Interpretations of W.J. Quine and Is Feminist Philosophy Philosophy? JENNY GOUGH lives in Washington, D.C. and her work has been published in TO and 6IX. CARLA HARRYMAN is the author of nine books including most recently a book of new and selected writings, There Never Was a Rose Without a Thorn (City Lights, 1995). LYN HEJINIAN has come to be recognized as one of America’s leading poets. Her My Life is taught annually in numerous university, college, and high school courses. Her most recent works include The Cell, Osotam: A Short Russia Novel and The Cold of Poetry (all published by Sun & Moon). FANNY HOWE’s most recent book was O’Clock (Reality Street Editions) in London. She teaches at UC San Diego. LISA JARNOT lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Her first book, Some Other Kind of Mission, is forthcoming from
Burning Deck. TOM JOHNSON provides the following questions as a contributor's note: "How big is my head? Is it bigger than the room? Is the room bigger than my head? Is it the same size as my head? Am I bigger than everything I can see?" ALYSTYRE JULIAN lives in New York City where she works as a reader for Grand Street magazine and writes poetry—fictions that are not really accountable as prose. KAREN KELLEY's Her Angel is published by Singing Horse Press. Bailey White says that "BRUCE MCINTOSH's work helps the viewer almost see things that aren't quite there." E.A. MILLER lives and writes in Boston. A longish poem of hers can be found in the Chaos issue of Apalachee Quarterly; an essay about hiking is forthcoming in an anthology from Seal Press. She is interested in putting together a film documentary on the first class of women to graduate from Haverford College and would like to hear from people who have ideas or experience in this realm.

AIFE MURRAY is "writing" a mixed genre book, Kitchen Table Poetics, on Margaret Maher, maid-of-all-work for Emily Dickinson. It combines poetry, poessay, scholarly essay, xerox art, silkscreen, and artists book forms. Her cross-disciplinary work also includes installation, mixed media, and performance. She is a regular contributor to Rooms. SIANNE NGAI edits Black Bread. HOA NGUYEN had work in the last issue of Chain.

TRAVIS ORTIZ has been published in The Berkeley Poetry Review and Minagerie/4/Periodical (ical). MICHAEL PALMER lives in San Francisco and is the author of seven volumes of poetry. His latest collection is Art Passages (New Directions, 1995). With o-blek editions, he has recently published his translation of Emmanuel Hocquard's Theory of Tables New Directions will publish his New and Selected Poems in 1996. NICK PIOMBINO is a poet, essayist, and psychoanalyst. His books include Poems (Sun and Moon), The Boundary of Blur: Essays (Roof) and Light Street which is forthcoming from Zasterle. Recent poems in Aver and 10, Ribot 2 and 3, Situation 10 Recent critical writing in M/E/A/N/I/N/G 17, 18, Le Discours Psychanalytique 12, fragmente 6 and Transkatalog 2/3. His work has been anthologized in The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book, In The American Tree, The Politics of Poetic Form, From The Other Side of the Century and The Gertrude Stein Awards in Innovative American Poetry 1993-1994. The installations and constructions by MARK ROBBINS explore the architectural frame and the use of design as a medium for social critique. These projects have been exhibited in numerous galleries in the United States and abroad, most recently at the Museum of Modern Art in Saitama, Japan, the Clocktower Gallery of the ICA in New York and the Wexner Center for the Arts, in Columbus Ohio. A site-specific installation, reflecting the intersection of architectural form and gender identity, has been commissioned as part of the 1996 Adelaide Festival in Australia. "Angles of Incidence," a monograph on Robbins' projects, was published by Princeton Architectural Press in 1992. Other recent publications including his work are 581 Architects in the World (Gallery MA, Tokyo, 1995) 50 Contemporary Architects (INAX, Tokyo, 1993) New York: Nomadic Design (Rizzoli, New York, 1993) and Independent Projects (Lumen Books, New York). Robbins is currently an Assistant Professor in the School of Architecture at Ohio State University and the Curator of Architecture at the Wexner Center for the Arts. CHRISTY SHEFFIELD SANFORD is the author of seven books: Sur les Pointes, The Ballerina and the Sea Anemone (White Eagle Coffee Store Press); The Kiss (Radio Room Press); Italian Smoking Piece, (Helicon Nine Editions); Bride Thrashing through History and The H's: the Spasms of a Requiem (Bloody Twin Press); Only the Nude Can Redeem the Landscape (Apalachee Press) and The Courie Shell Piece (Flockophobic Press Ltd).

Recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in To: a Magazine of Poetry, Prose + Visual Arts, Membrane, Central Park, Private, Heaven Bone and Fiction International. SPENCER SELBY's most recent books are No Island (Droogle Press, 1995) and a collection of visual poems titled Malleable Cast (Generator Press). GAIL SHER is a poet and psychotherapist. She lives, works and writes in Berkeley, California. BRIAN KIM STEFANS is the publisher of the journal Amis. GARY SULLIVAN lives with Marta Dieke in St. Paul, MN, where they are the publishers of Detour Press. CASSANDRA TERMAN is currently working on three projects: a two­woman theater piece called "LightHouse" and the completion of her MFA manuscript of the same title. She also teaches an improvisational performance class in Boulder, CO. AMY TRACHTENBERG is an artist living in San Francisco. Her most recent show was in the fall, 1995 at the Acme Gallery in San Francisco. JULIETTE VALERY is a photographer and video artist who lives in Bordeaux. With the poet Emmanuel Hocquard she has published a word-image collaboration, Le Commanditaire (P.O.L., 1993). She worked with Hocquard and the painter Alexandre Delay on Voyage à Reykjavik, a video project realized in 1994. She has also established an innovative small press in Bordeaux, Format américain, dedicated to the translation and publication, in inexpensive editions, of work by American poets. NICO VASSILAKIS lives in Seattle. MAC WELLMAN was born in Cleveland and is a resident of New York City. Recent productions include: Tallahassee (with Len Jenkin) at the Workshop Theater; Swoop and Dracula at Soho Rep; The Hycinth Macaw and A Murder of Crows (at Primary Stages and elsewhere). Two collections of his plays have recently been published: The Bad Infin-
ity (PAJ/Johns Hopkins University Press) and Two Plays (Sun & Moon). C.D. WRIGHT is the publisher of Lost Roads Press. KATIE YATES recently began working at the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless and hopes very much to go to Seminary this summer. Forthcoming from Tiny Sisters & Rodent Press is “Letters,” a collaborative chapbook of correspondences between Cassandra Terman and Katie. PAUL ZELEVANSKY is an artist and writer currently living in Los Angeles. His most recent book is The Run of the Arrow, published by Galerie Toner. His doctoral dissertation, The Family Life of Commonplace Images, will soon be released as a major motion picture.

CALL FOR WORK
CHAIN/4: Process and Procedures

The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.

—Victor Shklovsky

I even think that in a Shakespearean production one man in the stalls with a cigar could bring about the downfall of Western art. He might as well light a bomb as light a cigar.

—Bertolt Brecht

In this issue we are looking for work which “lays bare” its own device, generated out of any type of procedure/operation. It is our belief that work created with attention to process over product—whether overtly revealing that process or not—allows for an active critical stance (as in Brecht’s “smoker’s theater”) on the part of the reader. Submissions may address or enact chance operations, oulippean constructs, performed recipes, or any kind of aesthetic etymology/etiology.

We especially encourage collaborations: different writers/artists responding to a single formula/recipe, or an operation which by definition includes a number of writers and artists in its performance. Interdisciplinary work is also of great interest.

Deadline:
Please send poems, essays, performance texts, film or video scripts, camera ready visual art (in black & white), musical scores, choreographic notes, etc. by December 1, 1996 to 107 14th St., Buffalo, NY 14213.
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Perry Bard: A Modest Proposal
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Brad Buckley
Mary Burger: Coughing Fit
Stacy Doris: Re: The Birth of So And So, or, How I Noticed the Beginnings of Nature
Johanna Drucker & Brad Freeman: Hybrid Anxieties
Thalia Field: On the First Day
Heather Fuller: Placards
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Barbara Henning & Miranda Maher: How to Read and Write in the Dark
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Fiona Templeton: Real Dead and Fake Living
Ward Tietz: Two Collages
Anne Waldman: from Iovis
Mark Wallace: Processes of Attention
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