CHAIN / 3
volume 2

SPECIAL TOPIC:
HYBRID GENRES/MIXED MEDIA

Edited by
Jena Osman and Juliana Spahr
EDITORS' NOTES

We are tired of cyborgs. We are suspicious of mules (seeing them as sterile or as drug dealers). We worry about the over-hybridization of plants.

Yet we love mutts. There is faith in hybridoma. The mixed mutating cell might prove our hope.

an inverted window, like a three dimensional drawing rolls from object to subject

This journal is "take two" on hybrid genres and mixed media. We started collecting last December and over-collected (it was specimen-gathering gone awry). So we split the journal in two and used a chance operation to determine what work went where (see page 216 for contents of volume 1). This was another attempt to resist editing/Mendelian meddling.

For full conversation, please hold volume 1 in left hand and volume 2 in right. Read by sorting authors alphabetically.*

Gertrude Stein, a writer who added the mix to the cocktail of genre, writes of life without a father as "a very pleasant one." Hybrids are works which deny fathers. Although there are various degrees of success to this.

While it would be bad scholarship to see this work as without fathers, as without tradition, there is, I feel, a response in this work to the...
where centrifugal forces that tore apart Empire were strongest

A and R really look like that

that's the emptiness

*brrrrrrrrrrrata: Brian Kim Stefans' poem “folk poetry” was mistakenly titled “talk poetry” in Chain 3, volume 1. Please note this change while reading.

CONTENTS

Polly Apfelbaum • Two Hybrid Objects 7
Lutz Bacher • from Jim & Sylvia 9
Perry Bard • A Modest Proposal 14
Jim Brashear • from The Western Materials 15
Lee Ann Brown & Susan Meyer Fenton • from Book Pages for Icarus 20
Brad Buckley • One Piece 27
Mary Burger • from Coughing Fit 28
Stacy Doris • Re: The Birth Of So And So, Or, How I Noticed the Beginnings of Nature 31
Johanna Drucker & Brad Freeman • Hybrid Anxieties 34
Thalia Field • First Day 40
Heather Fuller • from Placards 53
Loss Pequeño Glazier • Intermedial Investigations 57
Barbara Henning & Miranda Maher • from How to Read and Write in the Dark 64
Kathy High • (A Few) Statistics On the (Possible) Meaning of An Encounter With (Some) (Middle-Class) Academic Women 71
Adeena Karasick • from Genrecide: A Poetics for the Unproductive 77
Cynthia Kimball • Thinking In Words Does Not Become You 82
Heidi Kumao • Cinema Machines 85
Eve Andrée Laramée • Apparatus for the Distillation of Vague Intuitions 88
Walter K. Lew • from The Movieteller 90
Pamela Lu • from Noir 98
Steve McCaffery • Dilemma of the Meno 104
Marlene McCarty • *More Crash & Burn (Road Rash)* 107
Jerome McGann • *The Alice Fallacy, Or, Only God Can Make A Tree: A Dialogue Of Pleasure And Instruction* 108
Kevin Magee • from *April Theses* 135
Gerard Malanga • *Prototypes of Experience* 141
Denise Newman • *One Piece* 145
M. Nourbese Philip • from *Discourse on the Logic of Language* 146
Kristin Prevallet • *Allegory for the Real, Covered Up* 150
Joan Retallack & Rod Smith & Melanie Neilson • *Empty Envelopes: Is This Any Way to Correspond?* 155
Lisa Robertson • *Index A: Lyric Or Prohibitive* 166
James Sherry • *Menus à Clef* 169
Ken Sherwood • *Scrims* 174
Sally Silvers • *Wall of Ownbrain: Movement/Film/Text/Science* 178
Carolyn Steinhoff Smith • from ...*And If Taking From a Cage an Eye* 183
Fiona Templeton • *Real Dead and Fake Living: Notes for the Issue on Hybrid Form* 186
Ward Tietz • *Two Literary Prints* 193
Anne Waldman • from *Iovis* 195
Mark Wallace • *Processes of Attention* 204
Janet Zweig • *Mind Over Matter* 208
Where to Go Next . . . 210
Call for Work 214

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Polly Apfelbaum

“Ford, San Diego 1933.” Gear shift knobs, glass, shredded paper, burlap. 42” x 24” x 14”

Concepts are drawers in which knowledge may be classified; they are also ready-made garments which do away with the individuality of knowledge that has been experienced. —Gaston Bachelard

These are hybrid objects, poised between painting and sculpture. I am interested not so much in attempting to invent new categories but in operating promiscuously and improperly—poaching—within fields seemingly already well defined. Working with given categories—painting, sculpture; wall, floor—my intention is not to attack or disrupt the finality of such categories, but rather to twist the categories into a different form. Unlike the minimalists of the 60s who tried to make something completely unprecedented, a “specific object” that was neither a painting or a sculpture, I am interested in making things which maintain the properties (and proprieties) of both painting and sculpture. I am interested in structure and support, in flow and movement, in color and surface, in repetition and interval. I cannot exactly name these objects. I think it is

important to keep alive the “individuality of knowledge that has been experienced.” Inasmuch as meaning is also given in context, the hybrid is also a kind of misreading. I am interested in the mediation of context, framing and interpretation. There is no single, correct explanation for the work, just as there is no single category to encompass it. It is about opening up rather than narrowing the possibilities. I want to leave room for what Walker Percy, in his essay “Metaphor as Mistake” has called “... misnamings, misunderstandings or misrememberings... which, in each case have resulted in an authentic poetic experience.”

The shortcut does not allow one to arrive someplace more directly (more quickly), but rather to lose the way that ought to lead there.

—Maurice Blanchot

Lutz Bacher
FROM JIM & SYLVIA

The installation called “Jim & Sylvia” includes gigantic wall drawings of faces (Jim) accompanied by fragmentary diary entries and handwritten will of a woman (Sylvia). These Sylvia papers are presented on adult size child tables with chairs. Viewers are invited to sit in the chairs and read.
August 10, 1960

A. V. comes home angry because I
tried to smooth a's
house plant yard
next to house.
He search for greenhouse
had taken and put box
pecker at house.

Tolkeen for wash machine
He took out screen and all.

Monterey
July 2, P.M. 35. 38

I sought to improve my education. As a result
I was regarded as a good
dughter of a black family. I went away
evening. I worked hard
baked cookies and washed
mud. Some ahead. I had food
now balanced. I care at home

The middle of the date was
for a sick mother. My education
in evening school was they

have to sell against
the social end. But all other
circumstances managed.

Employment. Usually in the
poorest part of my life and work
as those many years ago. Young
as I was, I knew what I

July 29, 1960

It was a Saturday afternoon.
December 29, 1904

This is my last will.

I want a redwood coffin with peach-colored lining for me to rest in my father's crypt at

Home of Peace Cemetery
and Emanuel Mausoleum
Crypt W-34-3

Death Notices

Advertisements in Berkeley Gazette
San Francisco Chronicle
Chicago and N.Y. Papers

The proceeds from my property at 2219 Spaulding Avenue, Berkeley, as to be given to the Beth B'nei T'kiah Sisterhood. They are to manage and arrange for a permanent structure with the name of my son, Armand, to be inscribed thereon.

Armand, my husband, is to get all of my cash and bonds, after all expenses are paid out for funeral expenses and an inscription on my crypt of Zelvia Lee.

Instead of flowers, give to favorite charity.

My brothers and their families are well cared.

As to the bonds in my son's name— in the event of my death— these should not be given to Joe, only at the discretion of his father, Armand. Inasmuch as I have not meant anything to either myself or children, I just leave a friendly feeling toward them.

If anyone claims any money, they are to receive $75.00 each.

I leave without debts to see that I have tried to be good and fair to all.
1. A long pole is fixed in the middle of a factory, the upper end of which protrudes from the vent-hole. On it are two double tassels and a seal-skin float, to the flippers of which are fastened the pelt of a fox and an iron kettle. A square frame made of paddles surmounted by several wooden images of manned boats and whales is suspended halfway up the pole, by means of which people may turn the pole with the frame. Several walrus-heads form the central object of the event.

2. The wheel is turned around as quickly as possible, and in the direction of the sun’s course, by people of both professions, while several other persons beat the drum. All sing various tunes of their own choice. At last those turning the wheel stop; and the Managers, still running in the same direction, begin to seize Assembly-Line Workers from all over the factory. Every Manager has the right to sleep that night with the Assembly-Line Worker he or she has caught.

Nu sculon herige;

Tulsa as far as

Meotodes meahte

And fold

1. A man dressed up as a Lawyer is chased through several streets until he comes to a narrow lane across which a cord is stretched. He stumbles over the cord and, falling to the ground, is overtaken and caught by his pursuers. The Executioner runs up and stabs with his sword a bladder filled with blood which the Lawyer wears around his body; a stream of
blood reddens the groups. Next day a straw figure, made up to look like the Lawyer, is placed on a litter and, accompanied by a large crowd, is taken to a pool into which it is thrown by the Executioner. This is called “burying the carnival.”

2. A Lawyer called the Partner is dressed in bark, ornamented with flowers and ribbons. He wears a crown of gilt paper and rides a horse, which is also decked with flowers. Attended by a Judge, an Executioner, and other characters, and followed by a train of Soldiers, all mounted, he rides to the village square, where a hut or arbor of green boughs has been erected under the May-trees, which are firs, freshly cut, peeled to the top, and dressed with flowers and ribbons. Here the Clients of the village are criticized, a frog is beheaded, and the procession rides to a place previously determined upon, in a straight, broad street. The participants then draw up in two lines and the Partner takes to flight. He is given a short start and rides off at full speed, pursued by the whole troop. If they fail to catch him he remains Partner until the next performance. But if they overtake and catch him he is scourged with hazel rods or beaten with swords and compelled to dismount. Then the Executioner asks, “Shall I behead this Partner?” The answer is given, “Behead him.” The Executioner brandishes his axe, and with the words, “One, two, three, let the Partner headless be!” he strikes off the Partner’s crown. Amid the loud cries of the bystanders the Partner sinks to the ground; then he is laid on a bier and carried to the nearest farmhouse.

\text{weore} \quad \text{Wuldor-Fæder}

Not what, not will

\text{ece} \quad \text{Drihten}

Not it, not do

\text{Preparation}

Therapist participants form a single file and are joined by Clients who dance in front of them as partners. During the song they dance counterclockwise with a shuffling trot, and in the intervals walk in a circle. At the song, when the leader begins to insert words suggestive of intimacy (see translations below), the humorous gestures and acts of the pantomime begin.

\text{Song and Pantomime}

A free rendering of the song is as follows: “Ha ha! I am called an old Therapist, poor and ugly, but I am not this. I am going to take this Client home with me, as I did not know that there was such a good shell-shaker, none like [him or her]. I’ll take [him or her] home to my town.”

During the song the leader may raise her hands, palms in, to shoulder height, at times turning halfway to the left and moving sideways. Throughout she is imitated by the Therapists. Toward the end, the leader reaches the climax of her humor in the following phrase, “Ha ha! We are going to touch each other’s privates”; the Therapists, holding their Clients’ hands, suit actions to words.

\text{Movements (Sequence of Intimacy)}

1. Greeting, holding hands facing.
2. Side by side, holding hands crossed.
3. Facing, putting palms upon partners’ palms.
4. Placing hands on partners’ shoulders while facing.
5. Placing arms over partners’ shoulders while side by side.
6. Placing hats on Clients’ heads while facing.
7. Stroking partners under chin while facing.
8. Putting hands on Clients’ breasts while side by side.
9. Touching the clothing over the partners’ genitals while side by side.

\text{fa} \quad \text{middangeard}

Guarded middle

\text{ece} \quad \text{Drihten}
The fit

firum  foldan

What at all, not it

1. Large quantities of food and cloth are piled in a heap.

2. The Actuary appears outside her own house, where a continuous stream of human bodies leads from her doorway to that of the Lawyer.

3. As many people as there are permit her to walk over their backs as they lie prostrate on the ground. (Should the numbers be insufficient to reach the Lawyer’s house, those first walked-on rise up quickly and run through the crowd, again to take their places in front.)

4. When the Actuary reaches the Lawyer’s house, three old Actuaries prostrate themselves so as to form a living chair for her.

5. A fish is brought forward and, with the aid of a sharp stick, is cut up and diced on a human body. It is presented to the Actuary who eats it raw.

6. The piles of food and cloth are distributed to as many people as there are, and the food is eaten. Afterwards the street of human bodies is again formed for the return.

If

Beyond the rightness of this or that translation, the versions and workings—still from a variety of approaches—are examples in themselves of that continuation or diffusion of ideas & images that has been—always—a fundamental marker of the human condition.

An assemblage like this one is by its nature an anthology of versions. (Jerome Rothenberg, on his anthology of “primitive” writing, Technicians of the Sacred)

and

genus = kind, type; esp. a style or category of painting, novel, film, etc., characterized by a particular form or purpose (New Shorter OED)

and

Every new translation is the uncovering of a hidden form in the language of the translator, but at the same time the rediscovery of universal patterns . . . (Rothenberg)

and

“universality” sometimes looks like “manifest destiny,”

then

[see above].
Icarus

He didn't know he was falling it felt so much like flying.
We studied the music to its end but ecstasy
Building the impulse to extinguish the flaring mirror
Great bolts of orange fought red
with my thrush
These pages are from a collaborative work in progress by Lee Ann Brown, poet, and Susan Meyer Fenton, visual artist. We are both Associates at the Rocky Mountain Women's Institute in Denver, Colorado. We are working together on a book which focuses on the mythical character Icarus. Lee Ann has written lines of poetry from which I have made visual images. The actual pages are dyed in tea and dipped in wax. This process gives them a tactile quality and a heavy, waxy scent. We hope to make a small edition of the book—one hundred copies. Fifty of these will be covered in gold leaf, fifty in lead.
This is a note.
This is a note.
As we have discussed before, I think it is very important for you to continue to receive follow-up care after your treatments last year for recurrent Hodgkin's disease.

This is a note. This is a note.
She initially presented in 1981.

This is a note. This is a note.
She initially presented in 1981 with Stage II nodular sclerosing Hodgkin's disease.

This is a note. This is a note.
She was treated with mantle radiation.

The lymphatic system entering a gland, divides into several small branches, vessels. As they enter their external coat becomes cont the gland thinned, their interface pass into out upon capsule into the gland. branches form a they on emerge again in a coat. If there vessels and section of the lymphatic system.

The lymph conveys and chylomicra common vessels of the right and thoracic veins of the body.

Received in formalin today is a spleen. On exam today, received in formalin is a spleen weighing 160 grams and measuring 12.5 x 8 x 2 cm. Its capsule is dark red, smooth, and glistening. On section, it is dark, smooth, glistening, and soft.

Diagnosis on exam today nodular sclerosing Hodgkin's disease.

On exam today the lungs are present. Surgical clips and staples are present in the left hilar region and left upper lobe. Some linear stranding and slight apical pleural thickening.
Stacy Doris
RE: THE BIRTH OF SO AND SO, OR, HOW I NOTICED THE BEGINNINGS OF NATURE

To: Friends
From: Pruno Carbon-Ation
Re: The birth of So And So, or, how I noticed the beginnings of Nature.

A Memo:

Dear Friends,

It wasn’t so bad, just confusing. Just sticky.

A lake was a yummy treat, in some boggy spots. In one month it’s more whitish, with mini green honey-melon clouds.

The edible fishes there.

Because the wind was coming up, I collected many drops in a small see-through vial, which the next day was full of all kinds of particular, engulfing streaks, and blemishes

They stank, bobbed, coiled polite-wise, ant-ordered, each, less wide than a hair, in general.

The main smudge qualities include: flood-dry, cotton-hard, ton-weightless, etc.

Oh, unhygienic!

The globules appear joining, in combination. That entails a great deal of littlest animals, some roundish, the bigger ones oval. Sluggish and they
varied color-wise, and transparent. Greedy and rapid, full of rhinestones; others green-middled and pink-behind, yet ashen.

Carbon-Ation reckoned some of these critters smaller \((x \times 1000 \text{ and upwards})\) than the tiniest ever seen (on cheese-rind, wheaten flour, wounds, and the like) earlier.

A big one missing or out for a walk.

A). Bodies made of 5, 6, 7, or 10 very clear bumps, but skinless, i.e., with no covering membrane. They all act, sometimes by simply horn-sticking out. The tail much larger than their rests, web textured, with decoratively pelleted endings.

They were miserably, shamefacedly caught, therefore.

Glued into milk rivers, nectar springs or so on. Glued.

With tails sticking; then they tried to collapse into balls, then catapult, which would dislodge the tails, but instead didn’t. It was a mere good intention. This spiraled them, and they became sort of burnt-out sulfur cicatricizing, humid and not pretty. But they don’t give up that quick. Most died in action. The end of them. Good riddance.

B). Next, those who started out oval, with the heads perhaps (often) where the others were pelleted. Pointed tips and bigger and flatter, with diverse incredibly thin little feet, nibble, nearly transparent or with 8–12 inner bumps. Shorter springs (formerly eternal) with depressions and fluctuations heat-wise.

Incandescent air, cured grottoes, less ice typically.

With bodies very yielding and rounded-off; coy, balloonish to the touch, with secret resilience.

When Carbon-Ation took them to a dry spot, as a treat, they marvelously burst, the bumps drowning in their own Orangina, silent, foul-tempered,

A sheep’s bladder full of pears would do the same, reflected Pruno T. Carbon-Ation.

C). The third, prudes, and other criminals, with fins, fiercer, were not depraved still.

Wind in the sails and full speed ahead. Which led to money which led to war. Virginity, Good-bye.

Gnats (or giants?).

Pruno knew a crooked ‘nem’ who lived in a crooked crook. More Later.

He exhales/expresses indignation at/of the dangerous variety.

Which had gotten out of hand, agreed, oceans and all, incurably so.

Carbon-Ation then recommends amputations. Everyone votes.

Carnivores, their clothes molting to fur, arms to extra legs, teeth in sharpening, of wolfish.

(The Floods). Suction, but its reverse, and liquid, as understatement.

A clean glass fetched Pruno in it, as proof of collecting.

Breeding or lead-gartered?

A second time, with porcelain, no luck.

On the 31st, ditto, somewhat.

Please add some pepper. Add some pepper please soon.

Everything languish; unrecognizable due to identicals, a homage as homogeneous as all that. Life, then.
Johanna Drucker & Brad Freeman
HYBRID ANXIETIES

If ever a hybrid form gave evidence of the anxiety which dubious origins and interbred traditions can give rise to it is the artist's book. In its current state, the artist's book is the subject of considerable controversy, as we have found out by writing critically about its identity in the Journal of Artists' Books (established by editor/publisher and book artist Brad Freeman in 1994). Boy are people uptight about the discussion which has been introduced in the pages of JAB.

For those of you outside the tiny limits of this fray, here's a quick overview of the range of positions all vying for space in the center of the "artist's book" identity target. (For the record, all of the following characters are entirely fictional, any resemblance to persons living or half-dead is purely purely purely coincidental.) People who are using books as building materials for sculpture (in which books are glued to each other, made into furniture, frames, or piles of burnt, soiled, or mutilated stuff) want to take over the term through books or scooping them out with exacto blades like to claim that they are an "interventionary critique." And those enlightened folks putting twigs and sticks into the "void" or "the vacuum cleaner's tongue," the photographers (they make "Albums" titles irrelevant, photos of some theme grouped and printed and hey! if you get enough of them together it's a book!), and the printers (formula: take a text, any text by a very very dead author, print it on fat paper with fat margins, bind it in fat leather, put gold on it somewhere, use a classic typeface, get someone to make woodcuts, big black heavy woodcuts and voila!). There's more, but hey. Next thing you know I'll have to make fun of people who use weird typefaces and print unreadable texts about language.

Is it the threat of a potential maybe possible market which causes the fur to fly and all kinds of backbiting to take place among these diverse practitioners of the book arts (and the little sister activity of "crafts")? Or a fear of critical thinking (more likely) according to which the free for all "I do it cause I like it" approach comes to be subject to some kind of mediating institutions of criticism, peer scrutiny, and evaluation on terms of ideas, content, and conception? Probably all of the above. But what's evident is that it is the hybridity of the form which permits of such confusions and quarrels, providing a basis in confusion ("born in chaos to an uncertain mother who should probably have nipped the little miracle in the bud.").

I define artists books very simply: an artist's book is a book made by an artist as a primary work of art: it is not a reproduction or re-presentation of pre-existing work; in many cases artists' books call attention to books as a form in a self-conscious or self-reflexive way, as per the tradition of modern art works; in other cases they quote "book" conventions or forms, as per the more recently past mode of postmodern art works. In some cases they merely make use of what I consider to be the primary elements of the codex book: its finitude, its sequence, its boundedness and limitations of form and format.

But let's face it the artist's book has an idiosyncratic lineage. It is a product of an unregulated breeding program if ever there was one, a fact which has the potential to make this the richest, most synthetic and polymorphously diverse form of all the arts. One could start way back if lack of historical specificity posed no problem — with scribes, kabbalists, and scholar printers. But the contemporary artist's book really begins when the old traditions of the guilds were revived in William Morris's arts and crafts movement with its weird blend of revolutionary resistance to industrialization and dependence on rich (read industrialist) patrons. Morris's sensibility reintroduced some odd 19th century english/victorian version of the medieval as a motif while also infusing the world of commercial and industrial design with some fabulous visual patterns and some dubious book types. But he definitely thought of the book as a work of art and caused a ripple effect through publishing and writing and art world perceptions of the standard volume.

In addition we have the idea of the avant-garde artist — such as the Russian producers of early 20th century pamphlets, hand drawn, lithographed from stones, with linoleum cuts and stencil printing, sometimes using letterpress and sometimes photo mechanical techniques. These artists, like their Italian futurist counterparts, found the 19th century artsy-craftsy stuff anathema, cursed it as hopelessly old-fashioned, tradition-bound, and brain-dead in relation to a modern era of mass media, highspeed travel and communication, the wireless
imagination and the futurist sensibility.

AS AN ARTIST I MAKE BOOKS TO PRESENT...

So already by the 1910s we have two contrary sensibilities in artists' books—one which regards craft as both an ideology and a imaginative sensibility and one which regards ideas and resistance and transgression so highly that craft can be dropped and damned. Add to this the deluxe livre d'artiste, a by-product of an independent area of activity for the bourgeoning world of modern art. A new formula emerges—in contradiction to 19th century industrial printing (with its cheap wood papers and smudgy ink and other disasters)—the livre d'artiste is a fine object, a luxury object, designed to display fine art in happy consort with a fine text—sometimes new, sometimes classic—a new formula emerges of the text/image text/image alternation, wide margins, thick paper, large format. So now we have three competing models—or competing legacies—all of which can be found in various traces and forms within the work of artists making books today. (Another "tradition" is that of the limited edition literary work beloved of and supported by bibliophiles who, justifiably, want their pages to stay bound for more than one reading—even if the texts are from snoozeville.)

The fourth model of the artist/book relationship is that associated with and typified in the work of Ed Ruscha (a real person, above disclaimer notwithstanding): the so-called "democratic multiple" offset printed in nearly neutral mode work of photographic seriality and image banality. A work which is meant to sell cheaply to a largish audience to circulate widely and freely and to hopefully find its place somewhere anyplace outside the gallery framework, this is an "artist's book" which might be books, which wish or don't wish that they could be books.

Ultimately what this all comes down to is that the potential of the book form is vast and varied. And there are stakes in the mini-market or cash returns and critical acclaim for making the case that one form is more legit than another—even though there are no grounds to support such claims. Generally people are less interested in taking on the challenge of difficult, interesting, and creative books and more interested in the recognizable safety of the deluxe edition or the standard form (when I worked at the West Coast Print Center this was pretty evident—poets, especially, wanted a book to look like a real book, this was legitimation—6"x 9" or 5 1/2" x 8 1/2" offset printed, perfect-bound volume meant you'd made it). But you can't really make a moral issue out of this—it's the usual human (socialized) nature: You know who you are when you
are published in a format like that, or encounter it. Terra incognita

MAKE BOOKS TO PRESENT

clearly exists in the realm of symbolic forms even at the physical, mate­
rial, level – books are laden with tradition, associations, conventions
and convictions. A disturbance of the symbolic order at the level of
production does unnerve the reader. Shucks, I even knew people who

AS A PRINTER I CAN MAKE MA

wouldn't anthologize my work because it looked different from stan­
andard format prose and poetry.

I would venture to say that most poets/writers think through the
issues of format, sequence, timing, and other structural features of book

A BOOK ARTISTS CAN EXPLORE

form rather thoroughly in the course of putting a work together. Self­
conscious attention to the various aspects of a works embodiment – a
major issue in artist’s books – seems ultimately not so much about
hybridity as about synthetic (even synaesthetic) possibility being real­

COMPLEXITY CAN BUILD AS

ized as part of the whole of a work. Hardly a cause for anxiety. But since
hybridity seems to produce genuine anxiety there has to be an explana­
tion – such as the threat which this poses to the cultural capital of any
particular practice. Destabilizing categories of the status quo (the stan­

EXISTS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF WHAT HAPPENED

dard mode by modern art and poetry and music and theater has func­
tioned aesthetically and thus economically) is alarming in the realm of
the book arts where tradition has been the guarantor of value and
Values. Artists’ books offer the possibility of introducing art coefficients

THEY EXIST AS PORTABLE MULTIPLES

into this realm – old standby notions like innovation, experiment, self­
reflexivity – at long last. As long as there have been books and writing,
there have been practitioners of such self-conscious and sometimes idio-
syncratic practices – but only recently have they come to claim a public

A BOOK CAN INSINU

identity around the hybrid form of artists’ books.
Two sisters, the TORTOISE and the HARE, sit at either end of a table, peeling carrots to put in a large soup pot between them. TORTOISE peels too slowly, with long, deliberate, gouging strokes.

TORTOISE: [5 kinds of red]

HARE: [5 kinds of blue]

HARE peels too quickly and lightly, spraying the shavings in all directions. They speak in turn, overlapping their fast and slow speech.

HARE: [are you the stepping-in type to see your footprint?] the small bunch of cut-flowers fills the air with the smell of sentimentality. [1 thing you despised about your mother]

TORTOISE: [the best place for a grave site] and the night's kicking up a howl and [your favorite flower] grows wild here, in the iron vines and cracking flagstone walkways.

TORTOISE: The view is [an awkward word] and the temperature [an unfamiliar feeling] but still you've come out on short notice;

HARE: The ancestor becomes, or is it that the ancestor could start

a WishMyth—

there in the living portrait, a set of features on a face, facing an unimportant direction:

back or forward, an archetype resulting from a daredevil, implying her Twin

HARE peels too quickly and lightly, spraying the shavings in all directions. They speak in turn, overlapping their fast and slow speech.

TORTOISE: [5 kinds of red]

HARE: [5 kinds of blue]

They stop and look at each other briefly, pick up a new carrot and begin again this time aware of an audience.

HARE: [are you the stepping-in type to see your footprint?] the small bunch of cut-flowers fills the air with the smell of sentimentality. [1 thing you despised about your mother]

TORTOISE: [the best place for a grave site] and the night's kicking up a howl and [your favorite flower] grows wild here, in the iron vines and cracking flagstone walkways.

TORTOISE: The view is [an awkward word] and the temperature [an unfamiliar feeling] but still you've come out on short notice;

HARE: The ancestor becomes, or is it that the ancestor could start

a WishMyth—

there in the living portrait, a set of features on a face, facing an unimportant direction:

back or forward, an archetype resulting from a daredevil, implying her Twin

The sun tiles the shadows of the graves into periodic patterns; a pile of fresh dirt near the open plot catches your attention,

WishMyth makes people happy to be approached by some temporary eternity, something resembling a race, clearly boudried.
Tortoise:
[the story of Cain and Abel]

Hare:
[interrupts with corrections]

They continue in silence until neither has anything to do.

Finally MAMA walks in, dressed in a referee apron.

Mama:
Tortoise, Hare, you girls forget something?

Tortoise:
[2 sins, beginning with the letter 'p']?

Hare:
[2 virtues, beginning with the letter 'r']?

Tortoise:
[an animal]?

Hare:
[a kind of plant]?

Mama:
You know that soup ain't never any good without . . .

[why did your sister need protection, anyway?]

and you think you hear a song from [an album your mother used to play] coming from the plastic transistor dangling from a car mirror, reminds you of

[the last time you saw your sister] and how [1 thing about her that made you sad]

so you [1 sure way to avoid confrontation] and back away thinking

[one question you've never had the nerve to ask your sister]

and [all the good excuses never to show up for anything] and you

it takes a special spirit to commit attention to everlasting details

a single word, a picture, an unseen smile, the stylized mouth of the figure—which must take on very elastic proportions to remain artificial

saying anything everlasting, as a warbride or booty

with a chip of mirror on the tongue,

flashing light back where the language was first heard

watch some of the weeping mourners take out little pockets and sprinkle asphodel petals, mumbling "[a passage from a book that makes you think twice]," you cheat yourself into a state of forgetfulness—like you're supposed to stand apart from the group; they don't seem to recognize you anymore;

"[the last thing your mother said to you]" during a measely talk about [nouns] or something and now "[the last thing your mother said]" is the last thing your mother ever said to you—rising eternity from the steam of shovels, preparing the plot

telling the stories

nothing but packed up clothes reflecting the distance between the girl and the frame in mid-race, en route to the heart through the mind bearing back to the mind through the heart generations, crippled streams

the ancestor sees herself in a doomed struggle: as Wish and as a Myth; Twins joined at the back of the head and front of the spine; heaven and earth
Hare: [3 things found in the sky]
Tortoise: [3 things found on earth]
Mama: Alright now, that's enough messing around. Finish that soup or you'll never live to see another day.

Hare: [5 things one can only do at night]
Tortoise: [3 things one can only do in the day]
They switch chairs but they do not switch attitudes.

Hare: [describe musical harmony]
Tortoise: [rhyme every word of Hare's]

The GIRLS get up from the table and peer into the POT.

your sister moves [2 ways you imagine your sister moving] and turns toward you, around, then away from you

[your sister's name]—! you would call, she wouldn't look unless you repeated "[1 thing your mother always told you both]" and even then . . .

into the center of the crowd you think [1 thing you regret having ever said to her] and remember

"[one thing in the world you can actually believe in]"

admitting publicly, in silence [1 difference between heaven and earth]

the ceremony ends, your sister walks, the grown men take a step back, admiring her you wonder about

[the most impossible thing that could happen between you]

[1 fable that you really wanted to come true]

and now some half-hearted singing.

a family endlessly repeating itself, growing conservative, amassing a wealth of interest in both the dead and the unborn; finish lines, handicapping, odds

the family body embalmed and touched by curious children, sealing the outline within which a few crayola details can be occasionally smeared

the whole worn out story

bedtime, in a glance, covered to the chin, distracted by scratching on the window

the mind races from the stomach this uphill part

to the heart exhausting
to say the least

when warring nations replace each other's warrior queens with shiny brass-plated heroes; monuments and songs displace the old ones; new children are named to replace old ones,

finally the palace dinner where the unwanted children are secretly eaten;
They've run out of carrots. They've run out of all their ingredients. They sit waiting. It begins to thunder. There is a flash of lightning.

Tortoise: [5 things to do for charity]
Hare: [5 easy ways to take advantage of charity]

Tortoise: 
Hare: 

MAMA AS EVE saunters out on stage, waving to the audience like she's just entered a room of her best friends. She breathes deeply, as though it were her last breath. She undresses the girls with her eyes and waves to them. They devour her with their eyes in return, awed at it being soup yet. Slowly TORSOZIE sauts toward her, but HARE zips by and kneels to kiss her hand. TORSOZIE holds back, shy.

Hare: [4 "unhealthy" things to eat]
Tortoise: [5 "healthy" things to do]

Surprisingly your sister's voice is loudest, like [the last time your sister tried to convince you of something] and clear; but you only pay attention to your repulsion toward her, her most prominent body part and her skin, its imagined smell, the intimacy that you came somehow from the same blood and womb and sucked; is it possible but also the holy books you disagreed on: "[1 passage from the bible]", "[1 passage from a storybook]", "[1 line from a poem]"—and of course [1 mutual friend] or even [3 ways you and your sister are alike].

Surprisingly your sister's voice is loudest, like [the last time your sister tried to convince you of something] and clear; but you only pay attention to your repulsion toward her, her most prominent body part and her skin, its imagined smell, the intimacy that you came somehow from the same blood and womb and sucked; is it possible but also the holy books you disagreed on: "[1 passage from the bible]", "[1 passage from a storybook]", "[1 line from a poem]"—and of course [1 mutual friend] or even [3 ways you and your sister are alike].

The hymnals are put away and everyone shuffles across the damp grass into a circle, to be avoided like [something that makes you feel helpless].

Stopping to watch the purple sky in the flagstone pool, you remind yourself [3 reasons why you came to this alone].

The children know they will be cooked up to install a new generation of politicians; the latest religion
MAMA AS EVE pulls her hand away from Hare.

Tortoise: [quoting herself]

"The many impressions she receives from the external world sharpens her interest in developing generalizations. She accommodates herself to any situation. She is extremely adaptable. It is a time for creating life and frolicking below the grass."

Hare: [2 things death creates]

MAMA AS EVE moves toward the soup so that she is standing beside Tortoise who lovingly takes her hand and kisses it.

Tortoise: [2 things life destroys]

Hare: [tells the myth of NARCISSUS]

Two are needed to operate the machine, they are standing at a distance, further from the plot than any other woman. They are having a cigarette.

Perhaps you will wait now and force out a word.
MAMA AS EVE looks into the soup and recoils, afraid. The sisters try to comfort her.

"[the symbol which tends to change an object’s momentum]"

indirectly, like this gate which somehow opens in three directions. You imagine she speaks: "[the number of times you went home every year]"

Hare:
[2 orderly things or events]

Tortoise:
[2 chaotic things or events]

MAMA AS EVE undresses, stands completely naked for a moment and then pulls out MAMA’s apron to cover herself. The GIRLS, disappointed, return to their chairs.

Hare:
[2 oft-used phrases of praise]

Tortoise:
[1 oft-used phrase of scorn]

rushing up as fast as California, the gold, the spice trade, the oil claims, the exhausted resources of getting there first—

which of them shall stake their flag in heaven’s belly

the deeds written in pencil, the equivalent of a fleeting smile . . .

racers trip, trip each other, disqualify the days’ work overlapping

swallowing whole neighborhoods

the secrets of family criminals

MAMA AS EVE undresses, stands completely naked for a moment and then pulls out MAMA’s apron to cover herself. The GIRLS, disappointed, return to their chairs.

Hare:
[2 oft-used phrases of praise]

Tortoise:
[1 oft-used phrase of scorn]

[one thing you hope she would say to you]

the transistor on the car mirror

picking up All Things Considered and this reminds you

[your favorite season]

[your favorite place on earth]

WishMyths held in custody for their hostile ceremonies; incantation of cautionary tales in family physics, matter can just very easily be destroyed

from skin and flesh to an unapproachable name

real exhaustion

the speculators who seek to put their burdens to rest

as the race pours out onto the bridge,

between there and here
the gods lean down to help, but pause and don’t want to get too involved and lean back on their billboards advertising themselves and all the things that were and aren’t said.

Mama: That’s just about enough. Now I’ve seen what you girls have on your minds! Filthy smut! There’s only one thing to do with the likes of you—In you go! [2 ways you are not comfortable leaving things unresolved with someone you may never see again] 

[1 way not to let that happen]

advising the young ones to pace ourselves and to keep asking every few minutes: “What am I thinking of now?”

THE END

Heather Fuller
FROM PLACARDS

Please take one up and commence picketing in counterclockwise revolution. Photoenlarge at will.

Placard #1

There has been a colossal death a bag of gloves strewn across country. Your head so full of over-the-counter tripwire that one atoll south is one less you know the loneliness of atoms. With you around I don’t need to be hip. How the body doesn’t recall distress signals. This is a survey: how many seconds before
The upshot of this window that is not television: opening wide: she is turning trinkets. He has not paid up and there is talk: backpay and backhand and backing into. Backing up there was a man there though didn’t register a man not even pylon. Who rang the curtain mechanic. Who controlled remotely.

Marked: stopped attending class and the colonial project. If mine was the music of language then why would I drive into deepest what you call ghetto. The parcel is late and the feeling of something absconded. I park and wait; the light is average. Unfortunately you’ve caught me at a bad time; the men are installing AC and it’s falling apart in my hands.
Placard #4

Something about repairs
something convincing.
212-938-GUNS for home videos. Arriving at your
port a cat who walks as if
in peril. Hello
in the City. Hello
in the Office of Thrift
Supervision. Here
is a brief moment of pause:
I didn’t leave the cake
out in the rain. I am not
the average freak. My
vision isn’t super.

“Placards” is a performance series that engages audience members in the selec­
tion and reading of a placard. Photoenlarged onto posterboard, the placards
attempt to illustrate Walter Benjamin’s contention that the poet’s role as agent
of text is nihil if the poet doesn’t also orient the text in an agenda of action.
John Cage also spoke of a dialectic between what a poem is doing for the poet
and what work the poem is doing in the world. It is the latter component of
that dialectic that concerns “Placards.” I would also hope that in respect to that
concern I have challenged the appropriative strategies of some commercialized
mixed media texts.

Loss Pequeño Glazier
INTERMEDIAL INVESTIGATIONS

Despite the level of technology to which it is bound, the most im­
portant fact about the Web is that it is writing: it is presented as a series
of pages that are written; in addition each page is also writing because it
is written in HTML. Considering the web as a form of writing, the
question then arises: what are the particulars of its constitution as a
medium? One of the most interesting aspects to the Web is that it offers
direct possibilities for mixed media or intermedial writing. Intermedia
has been a keen interest of experimental writing in this century, from
mixed works of prose and poetry to collages involving both text and
images to works involving text, film, and other art forms. It comes as no
surprise that such investigations are also relevant to a theory of the Web.
Online intermedial prospects are even more engaging when one thinks
that the parts of a “page,” though seeming to constitute a whole, are not
even necessarily housed on the same continent.

INVESTIGATING THE MEDIUM

Sherwood: Note how the “medium” begins to define the form, as far
as line length . . .
Dorothy: This is just too slow for me boys . . .
Boza: What is medium: is this a seance?

(EPC Live, 20 November 1995)

1.0 THE PAGE

1.1 Though based on “pages,” nothing could be further from its
actual constitution. The page, as displayed, is A PERMEABLE SUR­
FACE COMPOSED OF PARTS.

1.2 The parts constitute the page. They are not independent and
they are not interdependent. The language of the “page” is the code that
references parts relative only to their position in the field. (See Sec. 3.0,
“For Example, Code.”)

1.3 The knowledge that parts blend is the distance between page
and code. (Not only a lack of substantiability in its presentation on a
screen, i.e. paperless poems, but also that “one thing” is not what is transmitted. There is a control file at the source which, itself sent in packets, arrives to tell the host computer “where to put the furniture.”

2.0 INTERMEDIATE AS MESHING MEDIA

2.1 The fact remains that each medium indeed constitutes a “category of artistic composition.” Thus, within a single “page,” sound, video, graphics, writing—a composition of media marked by a distinctive style, form, or content—converge. The Web page is constructed of parts. These parts convene media.

The appropriate term for this is INTERMEDIAl. The reason that this term has not been considered for use with the Web is the focus on the TECHNOLOGY of the media blending not the blending itself. We prefer to see fields of activity as media (cf. oils, acrylic, chalk) instead of genre (painting, sculpture, photography). The concept of medium itself might be enlarged to constitute greater wholes that would move from an avowed disposition replacing “discipline” with “medium.” We could also limit ourselves to considering “form or content” which alone would allow these “extendible” “objects” (in all cases the reader is verb) distinctive materials working within inscribed areas of activity.

2.2 Media Descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>.au, .wav, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>.gif, .jpg, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>.mpeg, .mov, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>html, .txt, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>&lt;a href = ... &gt; etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table of values suggests not only that there are indicators for formats (media) but that the hypermedial environment, beyond placing media within a tableau, “maps” them with distinctive (though varying) EXTENSIONS. Since the electronic page CROSSES MEDIA BY DEFINITION such extensions are shorthand for the media to which they refer. (Of course you might argue that media and formats are at odds since a medium might be seen as a willful exploration of a format. However, the question itself proves the point!) Each extension is itself a field of activity, each with its own characteristics, instrumentalities, conventions, and practices. Text contains media within itself and media contain their own genres. The trick is to see the institutional genres which comprise text as subgenres. The trick is to see any medium as both image and itself, i.e., THE FIELD IS CONSTITUTED BY EACH MEDIUM'S APPLICATION OF ITS OWN GENRES.

2.3 Image is its own Exasperation.

Central to the projection is the image, the image anchored on the tableau of the “page.” Similarly, Emmanuel Hocquard writes in Section “32” of his Theory of Tables:

Question the word image

On a table arrange the words which describe the image

Noting of course that “word” and “image,” besides being words themselves, are appositional. That is:

Thus Hocquard continues:

Question the words

The description of the image is not an image

There (and also “there”) is a transformation in the subsequent series of lines. (“The funny thing about lines Loss is that the more you hold them the more they slip onward,” says Sherwood. I reply: “They are brittle resistance that Braille only those who don’t find T” [EPC Live, 27 Nov.] The word “image” having collapsed into “word” now becomes “words.” Also, with a sense of play that one also finds present in electronic image/text constitution on a screen, other transformations occur:
On a table arrange → The description of the image
The “table” or screen parallels the control file
the words which describe the image → is not an image
The “markup” is not the image

Finally,

The description dissolves the image
reopen the book with this

That is,

if description = control file (HTML)
than “interpretation” of control file = dissipation of “image”
(is this the image referenced? No! In this case, it is the
image as a field or “landscape”—in Stein’s sense
of landscape below. It is a field of markup.)

Indeed, it is THE ISSUE OF THE PAGE THAT is reopened.

3.0 FOR EXAMPLE, CODE
3.1 Hypertextual Mark-up Language (HTML) presents a curious
confusion between what is a page and what are its parts. For the page to
work, the code cannot be viewed since the parts would overwhelm the
page with their visual hyperactivity.

3.2 What is there to be viewed can only be viewed as image. A
virtual economy within the frame of one that is restricted. The page is
an assemblage within the physical area of a screen.

3.3 What appears on the screen is NOT the parts but the projec­
tion of the parts onto a simulated whole.

3.4 They are not parts because there are no visible parts on the
screen’s page: only the projection of a whole. But where is the whole?
In one sense it is located, beyond Projectivist determinations, in the
physicality of the cathode ray tube, that is, in the computer processing
of code. What becomes important is not the success or failure of such a
projection, not the way it fills the screen, but the activity or vectors
associated with its acts of projection:

3.5 Image is a double-channel. It has a presence, on the one hand,
that is graphical. But the graphical exists precisely in relation to a per­
cceived VIEWER. Thus, the idea of a graphic cannot be separated from
the idea of its public or audience. Hence the second qualification of the
graphical, the character PROJECTED TO THE PUBLIC, as by a per­
son or an institution, especially as interpreted by the mass media.

4.0 DESCRIPTION AGAINST POSITION
“I can look at a landscape without describing it” (Stein, Stanzas in
Meditation 76). The issue pits description against position. Code pushes
semblance; semblance is visible but code is completely impenetrable.Yet
code is readable. What is of greatest importance is that there is conflict.
There is a constant agitation, a flux, the

By it by which by it
As not which not which by it (Stanzas 76)

In Stein’s “stanza” this conflict is itself verbal. The “which” and “by” are
pivotal elements. Not only dramatically the connectives of code, but
the problem with the whole itself, which is itself verbal slippage.

Of course the myth of the electronic medium is that there is com­
munication involved. Or that such intermedial links provide access!
Where:
For it is in an accessible with it
But which will but which will not it (Stanzas 76)

Again, slipping into its “which.”
So the one unresolved point is how the parts accrue. DO THE PARTS “ADD” TO ANYTHING GREATER THAN THEIR OWN CONSTERNATION? Is there a poeisis in this infusion of media? Is this a “making”?

Come to be not made not made one of it
By that all can tell all call for in it
That they can better call add
Can in add none add it.
(Stanzas 76)

and

Forget questions
about the formation of form
in any empirical or ideal place
loses the forms trying to write it out
(Kuszai, Report on Community)

Are the parts that constitute the screen added to each other?
The form is lost in its writing. The parts do not accrete, they are contiguous. In fact, using a PPP protocol or Ethernet connection, the parts are actually split into PACKETS and sent simultaneously. The data then (“can in add none add it” [Stanzas 76]) neither accrete nor form a whole: what is actually created is a series of partial superimpositions—superimpositions that, never stable, combine to present an apparent stable position of parts. The position cannot be described, only constituted. The apparenfly of these parts is contained within a single packet that is one of the parts. It is in no way “stable” or exterior to the code. Hence, there are no authorities to its issue.

5.0 THE ELECTRONIC
Ultimately an electronic presentation in itself superimposes a genre on the medium under discussion. Any of the converging media might fail but the presentation continues as a differently constituted whole. The presentations may vary according to different readers. (These are the interpretations by software of the referenced files—as well as hu-

Bibliography
Barbara Henning & Miranda Maher

FROM HOW TO READ AND WRITE IN THE DARK

(I was crazy back then. Like an angel you appeared.) He was only visiting. We are only here for a visit. Right ear blocked. Infected. Elbow slightly dislocated. A monkey on my back. Once a week for four or five hours. No more. An albatross around my neck. Her voice on the answering machine. He doesn’t pick up. My voice over the loudspeaker. Keep on lying to me, squirrel. It works better twice a week. Every muscle tight, twang. The bones of Europe. He told her to strip for him and I did. In front of a mirror. In my new dress.

* 

Why don’t we just forget it ever happened. Over one hundred different men. Wrapped in your I love you. you. you. You should know what men are about. (Waiting for my prince.) My thigh bruised from the iron bedframe. (Did she turn like this, look over her shoulder, place hands and fingers, let bra strap fall just so?) As I aim a pistol into this temple of jouissance, the villain returns to our hotel room bearing this book, blank and wrapped in brown paper.

* 

Very little poetic value. An extra. Forty minutes late for our rendezvous. (I was sleeping.) My grandfather’s father’s father was asleep on the punitical boat. The line at Anne Frank’s house is two and one half blocks long. Perfect light for reflection. (Down he went on the sheets I made the bed.) (A necessary excess.) Foreign visitors professing ignorance rarely escape penalty. Walk up the narrow staircase sideways. A lifetime of putting feet down too hard. On the ground.

Fig. 49: The Moon broke away from all the rest and surrounded itself with an entirely new set of companions—elasticity, leathery integument, human caprice, etc.
Old man in wooden seat. Dead woman in the bed. Refugee waist deep in water. (It's only a painting.) She's hyper-kinetic. A replica of the early 80's. Upbeat East Village friends. (In my chair, she sat and waited.) 5,000 to 10,000 bikes hauled up from the canals every year. (A very deep cavity.) In search of inspiration. Words fail me. Lock up the bicycle. Local water meant suicide. Most people drank beer. Any three points can always be connected. The necessary third. (A passage by which one makes a crossing.)

I wish I was a painter. Instead a parenthetical remark. Through the beautiful window, a swarm of mosquitoes. Through the soft bed, a row of springs. Burrow into your favorite chair. Are you going to sleep now? (One out of two or more.) I'm thinking through my day. Manhattan was laid on the same grid. The most badly hit country in Western Europe. The deserving poor. The gypsy slaughter ignored. (One over zero.) A good way to tire oneself. (Reduction to dust.) With imaginary correspondence. Unable to forgive, set aside, move along.

Sorry we missed our appointment. (The creator makes an excuse.) In the 1960's he killed his wife. American neon turned on. The lawyer got him off. A few weeks before we left, I discovered an affair. (I wanted a friend, she said over the line that intersects all the others.) How not to think in a tangled forest. (Consider her an enemy.) Thanks and love. It's our last night. The world means something new. With friends of friends. I hope it's not too hot in the city. The hottest it's been in centuries. See you soon. Tell him I love him. And you, too. It's a lovely town. Even after annihilating 100,000.
Watch out. Beckett used to go around this same corner at one hundred miles an hour. He was married. Backstep. A beautiful young woman. Whistle a tune. You can see your underwear through that dress. Okay for a younger woman. You come with a lot. You are asking me for a lot. I'm not used to all that. A tautology. It's already more than even. Difficult enough. A detective is necessary. Don't ever say you'll kill me. You knew about it. I believed your lies. Well now you know. Reassemble. Let several pieces fall to the floor. Come and sit next to me. Don't you enjoy being with me? Come here. I'm not going to speak of it again. I mean it.

Distort the human figure, chop it into fragments and scatter them. (The sins of the father visit the children.) Sleeping rough, as they say. 50,000 at least. Travelling thousands of miles. In an airless room (to stay as a guest for a time) with an unknown roommate asleep behind a curtain. I wish you would stop reading and make perverse theater with me and then read again. Just tight enough so that one continues to try. Beyond the necessary time frame. His lamp away.

Art is never chaste. The African girls skipping down the street look at me, not as white, but as strange. (What has become of the woman with graceful limbs?) This is as good as it gets. For your own pleasure. (Instead a shrieking woman.) I begin to undress. (Her head thrown back, dishevelled hair, a gaping mouth full of teeth, limbs like tentacles.) Take off the sea-through dress. Fold it carefully. He presses his fingers into my cunt. (Flaccid breasts, anus, and gashed crotch.) I am unorganized. (Against an equally shrill background.) Refuse. Refuse. Refuse.
About Genre
This novel, poem, short story, essay, work of history, record of days in August 1994, was composed from splinters of travel and museum guides, postcards, passing remarks, journal entries, fantasies, reflection, and analysis. A composite of tiny speech genres. Consciousness modern, as bits and pieces of this and that. As opposed to a unified diagram of the norm. A prison for the average. The narrator, I and she, travel in the mother culture and history as hole and splinter. To resist is to write outside, across and between gender and genre, to stutter over the holes and details and to make a new pattern. From gens—to beget, to be born, to become again and again. Changed. In the arms and eyes of another. (Barbara Henning, text)

Diagrams and graphs speak with a muscular authority from their visual contexts. But it is a brittle authority too—dependent on its textual environment to hold back [or hold in, hold down] a resonance of melancholy, loss, irony and doubt incompatible with the confident clarities of reason. A disruption of scientific knowledge by the sensual and physical... An invasion of the photographic picture plane by a spiderweb of measuring lines: A peculiar melding that breaks down the seductive logic of displayed information to try and release unseemly vulnerabilities and reticent ardors. (Miranda Maher, image)

The relationship between text and image dates back to Medieval illuminated manuscripts. Text explains image: Image summarizes text: They dance a dance of reiteration, of subordination. Coming together after being devised as separate works: "How to Write in the Dark" and "How to Read in the Dark" bump and shuffle inside the expectations set up by illustrated stories and diagrammed essays. They are separate narratives that at points interlace, then pivot, release and skitter on.

Kathy High
(A FEW) STATISTICS ON THE (POSSIBLE) MEANING OF AN ENCOUNTER WITH (SOME) (MIDDLE-CLASS) ACADEMIC WOMEN

The main building on the campus was old. Actually, it had been a mansion, someone's home. The rest of the campus built around it. This was how the new money dealt with the old money, reabsorbing it into the latest scheme of consumption and reincorporation.

Cut to my feet close up as I sit at the couch. The tape is sped up and the image is jerky: my feet cross and uncross, tap the floor and shuffle back and forth quickly.

Into the room my feet walk behind a pair of stockinged legs ending with austere pumps. An extreme close shot of a hand leafs through a document on the table, a vitae. A finger on a woman's slightly sagging cheek moves forward as the mouth screws up into a pair of pert lips. Another eyebrow rises and the right eye glances to the side abruptly.

Tightly framed, my hands circle and dance, trace the table top. A pencil tip draws sharp lines on a blank pad. Forming an "X"? Another set of pink painted lips mouths a hard circle and then feigns a smile. A second question asked, a broad and impossibly general query about my theories, practices, intentions, dreams, goals of pedagogy. My fingers drag my hair off my forehead and linger there in a moment of hesitation. My jaw stretches into a grin and rapidly dances up and down. A head turns a bit to the side to be met by one that turns towards it and comes into focus with a quizzical expression. The hairs on one woman's neck are pulled back harshly into a stern clasp. The hairs like her tone of voice are taught and pointed.

One woman pushes her glasses back up her nose bridge. A finger twists a costume gold earring. Another's neck muscles flex with tension. A brow furrowed. Wrinkles ingrained in one's forehead. Downturned lines around Revloned lips. Mine are painted the darkest, and my eyes dart around the room anxiously. What to say? I dip my forehead forward twice and rise out of the frame. My head turns around in slow motion. Zoom in super fast to catch two of the four women look at one another with their brows folded...
together. They screw up their mouths as if just realizing that their glass of Chablis had sat open over night . . .

Recipe:

Make a paste with 3 tablespoons of apple cider vinegar and one level tbsp. of salt. Heat paste. To this add the quartered scallions and broccoli rabe. Separately sauté the kale until it is softened. Then add the kale to the other ingredients. When boiling, add the sliced radishes. Fry the mincemeat with the juice of 18 lemons and 2 teaspoons of lemon rind . . .

The young man is next. I am released and he is being presented. He bends his upper body, bowing as he shakes her hand. Did he almost dip to kiss her hand? Her eyes flash open wider with his attentions. The edge of her mouth flickers up at the edge and then relaxes. Her eyelashes flutter twice uncontrolled. The young man and the matronly woman struggle at the door congenially deciding who should enter behind whom. Her hip bumps his in the struggle and the contact produces a giggle. He immediately draws widely back and formally gestures her to precede him. The door shuts and I watch the knob turn and lock.

My gaze is frozen, fixed on that door, examining every grain of the thick old wood, all the weaves of the knots, all the wear marks . . .

(Note to sound editor: From the other side of the door, sounds of rustling, body movement and many voices joining in at once. The sounds are exaggeratedly loud, as if the volume were boosted on a low level recording. Hiss is mixed with everything else. Do not filter out high end . . .)

All the women's voices are raised a notch in their pitch. They never settle into the drone and heaviness that sounded moments before. The voices remain tinged with fever, quick paced and dancing lightly (as if they were shedding their years?). Desire sounds, oozing from between their teeth. His baritoned phrases maneuver cozily through their draws. His deep laughter sucks up the lilting sounds of their joy. He counters their requests with billowing statements of meaning coupled with shallow flips of artfulness and humor. Giggles, streams of giggles . . .

I knew he had the job.

. . . and as an artist (what does one call oneself these days: artist, culturejammer, culturalactivist, altmediamaker, productivethinker???), I sense a shrinking visibility of this PRACTICE. For those cultural workers who manufacture their goods from the "margins" of this society (producing experimental projects, favoring minority issues, teaching so-called radical artpolitics)—those who work to subvert the "texts" of mass culture in order to encourage people to question the sources of their "information"—their systems of support/exhibition and exchange are being dismantled at this point in time. One senses this PRACTICE is being dismissed, masked, or made invisible to a large segment of our culture (a majority, I would say, which is now not so silent, i.e.: witness the Rush Limbaughs. "Hissingdissing" can even be heard from the places one thought there would be unity.) And because of the heightened obscurity of this fringe element (and there are various degrees of being inside or on the edge), one must resort to using every means at one's disposal to make work, distribute work, invent/facilitate/fabricate/cycle work—to make oneself SURFACE.

In places where vegetation finds it hard to grow and cement edges out everything, weeds propagate that landscape. They flower profusely . . .

. . . "There are a lot of things I could say about this project, but just let me say that on the one hand, I wanted to barrage the viewers with the facts, . . . and on the other hand, I wanted to undermine our unquestioning trust in the "truth" of certain images. What if all of the pictures become suspicious and possibly fictive, then perhaps everything will be thrown into suspicion. Perhaps statistics become slanted, science fiction becomes possible, and subversion of the "documentary reality" can take place. And we will then question everything."—an author speaking to the assembly . . .

One might choose (as a strategy for visibility) a mixing of "genres":

to shift neatly from a documentary "reality" to a fiction,
to undermine the centrality of the pictured "truth,"
to shuffle metaphors,
to combine statistics with daydreams,
street footage with computer games,
to read the news over the pleasures one's lover concocted last night—in order to "balance" one's reality for you the viewer reader consumer.
If this maker (above) roughly shapes her/his perceptions, may we now invite you to show how you might shape your vision as well? Why not create your terms of belief for the audience? Why not mix incredulous data with suspicious conformity? Why not? Wouldn’t this fit into our social condition: conflated truths, hybrid hopes, natural cultures, precariously complex architectural joinings, gender transings, confixed issues, crossing lines of standoff, bleeding marks on untouched tiled wall, small bits of growth scratching through cemented surfaces . . .

I am back in the room with the table of women seated around me. But my reconfiguring eye is slightly higher this time, raised up another six-to-eight inches. The first one asks a question with my attention fixed on the lines circling her thin mouth. My hand interrupts the focus, sweeps before the sagging lips, and flattens on the table, scratching a deep mark into its surface etching my response. Her hair line raises abruptly. Another full blue coated bosom rises in my direction and a hand points towards me. My tongue licks the unsuspecting palm of her hand. She pulls it back out of frame. Focus on her raised brow which is now flushed. Her cheeks turn violet, nicely offsetting the blue jacket. The one on the left pulls her glasses down on her nose to look over them, repeating a previous question. My hands cup her breasts in the folds of her heavy dress and pull at her soft nipples. I bare my teeth. She retreats out of frame. My feet are on the tabletop kicking aside all the papers. Their eyes look up. And then one utters a small scream as her hand covers her mouth in embarrassment. And I am also under the table and under her skirt sucking her thighs. The room is filled with giggles, endless giggles . . .

One matching tan long sleeved sweater top, crew neck with matching v-neck cardigan sweater with gold buttons, wool and acrylic mix . . .

Lord & Taylor price: $78 (on sale: $49.95)

Matching gold costume earrings
Lord & Taylor price: $25.00

One short sleeved A-line dress with matching short sleeved jacket, flowery multicolored pattern, cotton
Filene's Basement price: $54.00

Heavy wooden necklace, with inset beads
price: unknown, a gift

Faux pearl earrings and necklace
Macy's price: $35.00 for set

White silk blouse
Macy's (on sale: $15.95)

One turtleneck sweater, color purple, wool blend
LL Bean price: $75.00

Vest top with purples to match in patterns, cotton, Afghanistan
J. Peterman Co. catalogue price: $58.00

. . . Looks like the last one is almost sold out.

So, hurry and order now!

Item # 456-199 is to dial for!

My goodness we took $50.00 off this item, so it really makes this a good value. And a lot of the items in our show are limited, so snatch them up quickly. Get in on it now!

Hi, you're on the air with Christine. Your name please? . . .

Difference is perhaps the one commodity that our culture both values and trashes at once. "Difference" operates within definite limits of tolerance (a marked "place" of leniency). Outside of these boundaries, "unlikeness" becomes terrorizing/intimidating/threatening even boring. Cultural works that stretch our assumptions of difference, fall outside notions of "the expected," wiggle with odd fusions and associations, work at being something other than "usual," are often purported by viewers judges as "bad," "naive," and "un(in)formed" because no one knows how to "place" them. Perhaps this is a postmodern moment, where we can only parody those things which are behind us, but not "see" those shifts which are reshaping in front.

If things are not necessarily one or the other but a pinch of this
a dash of
that
and,
at once,
not really either one,
how do we separate them, place them, read them?
People who find themselves disenfranchised from the "system" (whatever system) find alternative strategies to produceremarkmakemarks—imagesimagine. This "borrowing" of multiple genres in cultureart practice, like the shaping of one's identity, ought not be fixed—but (to be effective) remain fluid and complex, always crossing borders, diligent in naming one's own practices. Out of necessity, it is a matter of survival.

In a hollywood film an alien in the shape of a man makes love to an earth woman on a straw floor of an empty train car. (So that there is no pre-marital promiscuousness here nor any adultery being committed, the alien appears in the body of the woman's dead husband.) Afterwards he tells her that he has given her a baby. She remarks that this is impossible because the doctors have said she is barren. He replies that she must believe him: she will have this baby. It will be human and of her dead husband, but also it will be his baby as well. The child will know everything the alien knows and will grow up to be a teacher . . .
She hugs him gratefully.

END

Adeena Karasick
FROM GENRECIDE: A POETICS FOR THE UNPRODUCTIVE


Genrecide: a genr(e)ous economy. An elision of boundaries trajected on the impress of socialization and history (where the play of signification doesn't become thememe thematics, but a theatrics, a cicatrix. Scars of difference, appliance, appearances (where text works as an ensemble of specific discursive practices, as the outgrowth of a determinant mode of production). Where the textual space as a practology of supple consequence, is not about a non–hierarchic celebration of opacity as incoherence but recognizes the intensity of ever–firing, fibres, fluids as a series of "limit experiences", an intersequential circulation of semiological slippage and semantic subterfuge.

Within the limits of academic order as determined by the socio–political condition of absolutism, determinism, continuity, transparency and re–covery and based on a canon of normative obedience, writing has functioned within an economy of confinement a logoma(nia)chic asylum inscribed by violence,
What promise what liberation what traditions what figures
You have abandoned discursive prose
This is a faulty construction
Is this necessary
Is this supposed to do this
What DOES this mean
What do you have in mind
Where are these examples
I do not see clear, persuasive lines
Where is the logic
Is this a word?
What is the point of this.
You have adopted rhapsody and metonymic apposition for argument
I want to see simple facts
Communication is a good ploy for interesting the reader

This is out of control
This is an abrupt transition
This is incredibly distracting
You have omitted a bridge
You are not being precise
Are you defying definition now
This is not in your bibliography
This may be a code
There are too many copula verbs
This is elliptical, epigrammatic, elusive
Is there a contradiction here
Write this in plain English
Where is the reference, the particulars, the connection
Where is the argument
What does this mean
Are these intended to be synonymous
This must mean something. But what
What books do you have in mind
What about revisionist history, ambiguity, rupture
This premise is not necessary to your point
Is this a code?

Because there is no "Final Solution", no final universal vocabulary outside all other vocabularies. Because there are no non–circular universalizable criteria by which to identify and condemn. Because classical reason created madness,

Genrecide is about writing the INSANI
(unclean, defiled, not clear).

Immonde, that is, out of the mundus (the world).
The world that is so-called clean.
Proper. Ordered.

A writing which is not psychotic but zygotic. A writing of the dregs of Jews, witches, hermaphrodites, cross-dressers, criminals, prophets and vagabonds

Intolerably unverifiable, it's writing that does not seek to

"cleanse" [text] of foreign elements [Hitler]

Although writing may not be dirty in the usual sense of the word, deposits can build up, without one being fully aware they are there. Since it can harbour bacteria, it can cause infection unless it is thoroughly disinfected every day. This will provide you with the safety and comfort you require.
Nazi Germany was not the first or only country to sterilize people considered abnormal. Before Hitler, the U.S. had led the world in policies of compulsory sterilization.
It appears you cannot come to a point of rest
memories make life long

bearing you or self
palm– other rescue

the poem for the brother is the way to retune to the longed

attend or call
pay attention
for to
it

though its fruitful message should never be long where you are

3 in flannel shirts
where people are coming out of doorways
moving slowly
so as to let the question take shape

as in why would I bare this
and what is it made of
and where are you
where you appear
fog where I go off
moved from form to form from
daybreak to breakdawn

down
the outlines of those doorways and the gestures of closing
or knowing what closes behind closes over
leaves no trace
scent
away
to delay that gesture

forgetting
to forge
trying to leave
weaving

a few things
what you do matters so much to 3 other people and your brother and
what they do
matters to perhaps 5 so what matters
begins to swell bears fruit

a mass not at rest
+ velocity = distance over time

there is no overtime, only longer than you meant

what the apple means
when it appears currantly
in pears
is that these fruits are still somewhere growing we might have

remembered
swollen in silence a fleshly matter of sunlight
apparently unspeakapple peril

if you were speaking

on the phone
yes you are saying 3 things never said before but familiar
like family

or is it your tone? scent
wool and wet flannel
to one
our one is your own archived
as he carved it

the brother your own
whose belief in memories of past lives occurs simultaneously
with your belief you are watching him die

if life is past and in that tense
if life was tense

please leave this message

What is genre?
infection of the medium: it bends, we bend, we bend it, we bend with it.

What determines the boundaries of genre?
expectations. intent. desire. etiquette.

What causes a work to be considered without/inside of genre? I expected had intended to write a letter to my brother. There was a desire to reach through words. No. I meant to call him his answering machine. Hang ups. Words have stopped between us, full of themselves, bearing fruit we cannot see through.

What happens in terms of reader/viewer reception when multiple genres are apparent within one work?
1. This is not a letter to my brother it will not reach him. Therefore genre inflects these words, revealing a desire to communicate a certain distance.
2. Letters speak of obligation. Letters might be fruitful. The attempt to connect through words leads to connection with words. Does a poem evade obligation?
3. The lost brother remains lost. To him became about him, but did not become him. The words are inflected by this desire.
4. To recognize a piece as hybrid is to redelineate strict boundaries of the pure form "poem" and the pure form "letter" to mistake the voice on the answering machine for the voice of the poem. This was a mistake.

Heidi Kumao
CINEMA MACHINES

Remote, 1992-93, mixed media: record player, paper screen, film, light, lens, mirrors, fan, copper, vinyl record, velvet, paint, 108 x 48 x 72 inches.
Remote (1992-93) and Adore (1995) are both “cinema machines”: zoetrope-like devices that fuse film, photography, kinetics, and household objects to project animated sequences of gestures.

Remote: a portable red record player sits on a shelf. A paper screen is suspended from the ceiling, opposite the shelf. As the silent phonograph spins, images of a single eye are projected onto the screen. The eye looks left, up, and right, left, up, right, left, up, right. Again and again. Paranoid and disembodied.

Adore: Cramped movie theater space. 3 wooden folding chairs face a small, portable movie screen which sits on a table. Underneath one of the chairs, a zoetrope-like mechanism is mounted: film, mirrors, lens, light, motor. This chair projects a woman’s legs dancing and curtseying on the screen; a perpetual performance. A man’s voice means a slowed version of the 1950s hit, “Dream.”

“I can make you mine, taste your lips of wine, anytime, night or day . . . Whenever I want you, all I have to do is dream . . . when I feel blue . . . in the night . . . and I need you . . . to hold me tight . . . all I have to do is dream . . . ”

I first began making “cinema machines” because I wanted to investigate psychological cycles and behavior patterns from everyday life, as well as create a filmic illusion for the viewer. The zoetrope technology was the easiest way for me to animate simple gestures, and to amplify what occurs when a behavior is repeated. I fashion each piece out of a domestic object and fit it with a cinematic apparatus so that each piece “speaks” with its projected gestures. By exposing the physical apparatus which drives the bodies into action, I draw a parallel between this “machinery” and the mechanisms of our unconscious: defense mechanisms, sex “drives,” thinking patterns, self control, dreams. By emitting a visual voice of images, each “being” tells its own story for the viewer and plays out its own neurosis.

Adore, 1995, Mixed media with audio: three wood, folding chairs, portable movie screen, wood table, color film, light, lens, motor, fan, mirrors, steel, velvet, vinyl record, stereo speakers, audio tape, portable tape player, 60 x 72 x 168 inches.
The images and constructs of science are potent visual signifiers in our culture. Because the authority of science often goes unquestioned, works of art which adopt the apparatus or appearance of the "authoritarian" cultural voice of science, are expected to derive from the same set of cognitive principles, that is from logic, truth, rationality, and usefulness. People want a path to knowledge and science that represents a reliable modern belief system. Yet there are biases that are frequently overlooked which have to do with the military, politics, economics, social value systems, issues of power and other subjective things. Yet, science is put forth as being objective, non-hierarchical, and non-propagandistic. This "blackening-out" of the subjectivity in science is a form of occlusion or opacity.

I want to draw attention to the indeterminacy inherent in that cultural construct we call "Science." All genres of knowledge formation are inclusive of futility, error, guesswork, fallibility, and the zones between the rational and irrational. Neither science nor art can propose a tyranny of truth. Approximations are commonplace in both. I believe all paths towards knowledge are pursued in a somewhat errant, wobbly manner. I am interested in how human beings formulate knowledge through both art and science in a way which embraces absurdity, contradiction, and metaphor. The boundary between sense and nonsense is a slippery one indeed, and has quite a bit to do with point of view. To wander in such ambiguous zones leads one to unexpected terrain.
Especially during the 1920s and 30s, Korean theaters hired orators (pyōnsa) to provide live narration for silent or untranslated movies. Seated between the audience and projection screen, the pyōnsa alternated between third-person narrative, impersonations of each character in the film, commentary (often allegory critical of Japanese colonial rule), and the making of sound effects. Different versions of The Movieteller, a multimedia performance piece based on this now-vanished practice, were staged at the Millennium Film Workshop (1985), Walker Art Center (1986), the 1990 Los Angeles Festival, and Asian American Renaissance (1992). Aside from the author/director’s live narration, the piece also included a three-screen compilation film by Lewis Klahr, slides (some printed here), and audiotape collages by Daniel Licht. Several performances also included live musical accompaniment by Park Sangwon (kayagum, p’iri) and a dance segment by Lee Youngnan. Parts of the following excerpt are based on the biography Garbo by Alexander Walker (MacMillan 1980), while the film stills are reproduced from Yi Yong-il’s Han’guk yŏnghwasa (Seoul: Yŏnghwach’ŏn Kongsa, 1988).
Part 2: The Pyŏnsa's Complaint

I left Seoul in the winter of 1935,
When the biggest show in town
Was Greta Garbo in "Queen Christina."

Just a year before, it would have been me
And not some faceless, dubbed-in English major

Who made Garbo speak in Korean,
For I was still the reigning Pyŏnsa
In the grand Myŏngdong moviehouses.

The talkies came in
And I fell silent . . .

In Tokyo, the first release bombed,
Was greeted with yells
To shut the sound off and get

A Pyŏnsa up there—And one
Movietellers federation
Unwired the new expensive systems, got soused & danced

When the first sound films flopped.

(That was before the right wing
rose and crushed the left,
both there and here.)

But soon people liked
A void between

Themselves and the screen,
Where I used to sit

And say what they saw—sound effects too!
_Andweŏssŏ-ye._
That “Christina” was playing was especially irritating:
Garbo had been my favorite.
I even took delight in her big feet and bent shins.
Moreover, it had been exactly on my Twentieth birthday that the chubby Teen-aged Stockholm model,
Not embittered yet by Hollywood moghul Louis B. Mayer,
Changed her last name from Gustafsson to—
“I want,” said her agent Stiller, “a name that’s . . .
International, that means the same and says Who she is in London and Paris as Clearly as in Budapest and New York.”
A name that did eventually glimmer Imperial and alone
On every moviehall marquee In the modernized world.

And it was I who was almost fired For refusing to let our theater Degrade her with a tasteless advertising kit From MGM via Tokyo:
Bland line drawings of her in different poses & costumes that could be blown up for sidewalk stencils, billboards, circus flyers, newspapers, trolley cards, shadow boxes, and street signs & arrows:
GARBO rhumbas the Chichachoca!
GARBO has a twin! Double-trouble for Melvyn Douglas!
GARBO introduces the Foolscape! A hat destined to be as revolutionary as her famous Pillbox!
GARBO swims! Like a Mer—mai—id . . .

Our P.R. man—a Mr. Kim who, anticipating Japanese trade, had changed his name to Kanemoto before the law required it, always pushed to do any stunt that the studios suggested. I said: Just put her name in the paper next to mine—I’ll make sure she sells.

And, of course, she did.

But she also sold herself to sound, Betraying me.
Sure, I read about Her fear of talkies, how Uncertain she was of her English, and that She was so nervous about her sound test That she stayed up the whole night before Chatting with her confidant, William Sorenson, Whom I deeply envied.
Still, it rekindled her career While killing mine.
So what? you say, but look—
Gush all you want about Great stars and directors: In Seoul, it was a good Pyōnsa That people lined up for!

I began before leaving technical school, Telling the Max Fleischer cartoons and Chushinguna they showed Saturday afternoons, top floor Of the Hwashin department store. Then the big offers from Cinemas downtown . . .
I could not resist—Ciao!

I said to my chemistry comrades And splurged at Mitsukoshi’s On a herring bone oha And some Roman pomade.

The first days, I must admit,
I barely managed: I sometimes didn’t know the movies any better Than the audience did. Then a friend told me it didn’t matter. In fact, There was a pyōnsa in Osaka Who never cared what happened in foreign films: He would simply call the hero “Jyani-sama,” The girl he saved or died on “Mari-sama,” All the bad guys “Raja,” and rattled off his own naniwabushi
Souped up with
Packards, gats, Indians who ran into cavalry charges,
And various exotic scenes—Speakeasy's, for example, or
Ballrooms and Wagon trains . . .

But the talkies came in
And we fell silent,

The people soon liking a void between
Themselves and the screen,

Where we used to sit
And say what they saw—Sound effects, too!

And so I became, more and more, a mere
Spectator:
Angry at scenes that weren't well lip-synched
Or the tinny lushness of orchestral

[Audiotape: "Home on the Range" from Gary Cooper
Western]

backgrounds.

[Movieteller bows his head in dejection and turns off reading lamp.]
Pamela Lu
FROM NOIR

i.
and looking as if now robbed of detail

the city spends a fiction pursuing

glimpses or some general

picture,

as from overhead

the problem looks like parallel lines striking a district

or here, by a station

that counts on you being there. Now imagine

a city corrected by four walls and a desert, a man pulls a gun and you
pull out a newspaper, the train is late again going downtown. There
might be a ticket or a scrap on the seat beside you, someone leaves it
with an address scribbled on the back—a street not far from your house

1. two men grab you from behind and
2. afterwards you stay down, knees under, counting 6, 5, 4
3. she meets you by the dock and within seconds you’re kissing
4. in the nook of a palisade mall, where every door describes a
mask, hooked to, though not concealing, your wanted face
5. a man and a woman take turns following, you dodge but
they don’t

randomly

assuming you must be meant

a mystery stains the message

brings you up to date

in the classifieds today a man falls in love with the woman
who has crashed on the freeway. Her leg bent
at an awkward angle and her face such a mixture of agony
and peace as paramedics labor alongside—
I am having a moment full of sight, he says,

and the traffic moves him along. Meanwhile shots
open up just when you wish you were somewhere else
now scrambling, misty-eyed and nude, commuters
hit the floor and a girl falls clutching a damaged chest
you witness, you climb for a window, and the train
takes off, transporting the body away

(in her left hand a scrap of paper you believe matches your own)

by large scale
designed

in blurry

passing you stood

a body
cued

for searching

ii.
whenever stories fade and go missing

Dry notes scatter the mordant streets, where every car contains this
feeling of already being there, a breeze lifting your skirt so by this time
you are gone and I have never known you. The woman who runs the
shop says she has seen this before—sirens, chalk outlines—always at rush hour when “there’s so many people you can almost forget”

a note in your pocket, a slight clipping of vanity:

6:15 am, Valley Station. You: in a black sweatshirt, sitting by the window in a northbound train. Me: wearing a baseball cap, in the train alongside. I arrived just as you were leaving, and my horoscope says we were meant for each other. Interested?

7:42 am, Inbound train, Widow Station. You: murder victim wearing a two-piece slate blue suit, a pack of Marlboros protruding from your leather briefcase. As you fell, your arm hooked around the long silver pole with thoughtless grace, causing you to swing a half turn before collapsing. You reminded me then of a birch tree, in particular the sway of its uppermost leaves when the branches are shot through with light from the morning sun. Or of the lake near my family cabin where I used to go as a child, the water was like the color of your suit, almost as cold, and home to the winter ducks and loons I used to watch from behind the trees with a spyglass.

For its own protection, the news article behaves like a piece of fiction. You leave town to escape character and return as a fleeting mood.

Still, there remains that hot zone between individuals where we are not allowed to go.

suppose freedom came without confidence

a deserted law or this desert
to confine us
by the ledge of your house
misleading

steer by intuition: Confident
more letters are slipped: Confidential
do bullets sleep at night?

Get a watchdog
Or worse

the address of a lot left drowning in weeds and closer, what neighbors on boredom, a house with a family moving into itself, receding motion of a paper snatched up from the porch by one arm pushed through a cracked open door, the other arm feeding a baby and estimating the relation between the intensity of a train whistle and the time it takes the message to reach us

(north window) an infant dozes, reared on one shade of light
(north yard) violet bed corresponds indiscreetly to a ditch, about 6 feet long, 2 feet wide, stuffed 40 inches deep with final drafts of a confiscated novel, shredded transcripts of a local documentary
where the author must reside, by a corrugated shed containing camera equipment, a broken piece of garden hose which, on closer inspection, appears to be a wire, continuing

through parched weeds and flash cables, up the hall

behind a series of framed pictures depicting scenes of a traffic accident, then vaulting above the stairwell, left at the study and headed straight for the nursery where it abruptly terminates, near the bare feet of the babysitter, who scrupulously tends the toy shelf, avoiding your eyes wishing your window didn’t face all this

wishing your window didn’t face all this

or residual, a blunted motion short of gesture

when you returned the

when you returned the shot, instant and faultless, the screen filled with anguish that is

it revived our pleasure, instantly, assuming you’d been returned

turned to a larger picture, and the mobster’s corpse made itself at home on screen, bloating and consuming area until it blurred

and became a standard backdrop for action

She adapts the whole incident for film, which authenticates the pathos of copied light, and shadows cast by his arms, gesturing toward the window she is now framed in. The movie is shown in the drawing room, where massive sheets of glass lean and prolong the idea of friendship, or at least alliance, dissolving at will into a contact painting, or a large body of clouds moving across the sky.

a museum bomb hurls debris into the streets, clues to a civic history

6. black-and-white slides that capture, that
7. modulate scenes from your story
8. the chase was peripheral to a view of
9.
10. and aimed from footsteps shadowing (skip)
12. evidence based on the back of your head

and he emphasized, as the flash went off, that the morning had been marked by civility several seated nearby had rushed to help a doctor in the adjacent car scrambled to fetch his bag and the pulse was declared zero, the body otherwise untouched in thoughtful preparation for the police and several descriptions of the gunman noted in profile, always turned away because he said each killer is oversensitive about his face
Steve McCaffery
DILEMMA OF THE MENO

When Meno asks the question can virtue be taught? Socrates replies to his shame that he has no knowledge of virtue at all. Encouraging Meno to explain what virtue is Socrates quickly points out that all his examples are a multiplicity of various qualities named virtue. Applying the metaphor of the swarm, Socrates can point out that Meno, like a person who breaks a pot, has made a singular into a plural. Unity can only announce itself in fragments.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE

The piece consists of sixteen sections each notated on a separate index card. An identical pile of sixteen cards are presented to each performer.

The cards are now shuffled and performed separately and sequentially by all performers simultaneously. A performer is free to "think" about the card, in other words, allowed a moment of planning before performance-interpretation. These moments will register in the piece as silences, however, a uniform silence by all performers should be avoided.

When all sixteen sections are performed (or alternatively should all sixteen cards be performed) then the cards are reshuffled and the performance carried on.

Duration: indeterminate but should not exceed 16 minutes.

First performed in the Exercises for Ear Concert, New Langton Arts, San Francisco, California 6/1/91.

Performers:
Steve Adams—soprano saxophone
Ralph Cainey—contrabass clarinet
Bill Fairbanks—bass

1 Hang back on another’s sounds and listen to any other noise around you. Respond but PLEASE don't imitate.

2 Attempt footprints across some pads and mix this with recognized nostalgia.

3 Attempt a history of music in 33 seconds.

4 Where "worm" equals Mozart and "leopard" equals Coltrane play "iguana."

5 A thudding clump imagined sounded.

6 Enclosure . . . dialogue . . . thrown embouchure. Time: 17 seconds.

7 Make your sounds a perfect shadow to the others that you hear.

8 Play members of the audience as notes and phrases of your own choice. Be inspired by their association.

9 Bow this one or blow it: a surgical disturbance from "osmosis" to "capillary."

10 Mention in your sounds "weather" its laziness as space suggesting this as ventriloquism.

11 Your staccato against the other's cacophony.
Your peach melba against their pork chop.
Your xerox against their parchment.
Your photograph against their crossword puzzle.
12
Sounds across: “environment.”
Sounds down: “atmosphere.”

13
Create a soundscape of
   a) an Acapulco barbershop
   b) a Dallas Esso Station.

14
Interpret freely the following passage: “The distribution urges agitation
and south of the park is a sleeve. Screech facilitates birth of a song in
Nepal. Bugle pills as arms arriving at the body’s problem. Smell is the
odor of top secrets probating. The nod from the head is full of language.
Socialism changes its sweat by way of the cratered urgings of a face.”

15
Try to reproduce exactly all the sounds that you hear.

16
In case of an exit please use the nearest emergency.
Did you ever read one of her Poems backward, because the plunge from the front overturned you? I sometimes (often have, many times) have—A something overtakes the Mind—
—Emily Dickinson, “Prose Fragment” 30

one of those pleasing and innocent delusions, in which a poetical Enthusiast may be safely indulged.
—William Hayley, “Preface,” The Triumphs of Temper (1781)

[SCENE. The Faculty Club of a university. Instruction enters looking cast down, puts his papers on the bar and throws himself into a chair next to Pleasure, who is reading. Pleasure looks up from her book and smiles with cool amusement at her friend. Across the room is a bar at which two figures stand very erectly. They resemble waiters; they are Footnote and Printer’s Devil, respectively. A Brechtian sign stands over the bar and reads in large letters: INTERSPACE.]

INSTRUCTION. I need a drink. (Calling toward the bar) Two vodkas, please.

[Footnote and Printer’s Devil bring the drinks and return to their places.]

PLEASURE. As bad as that, hm?

INSTRUCTION. Same as it ever was—a kind of moral sickness unto death, one more Great Awakening to righteousness and virtue.

PLEASURE. And what an odd symmetry at the moral extremes! Political or religious correctness, left or right, either will do. What is this need for a Codex Prohibitorum? We’ve got to get over it.

INSTRUCTION. How?

PLEASURE. We could go back to 1966, back to Susan Sontag. Against Interpretation.

INSTRUCTION. Her “erotics of reading,” is that what you mean?

PLEASURE. One could do worse, one could have more Legions of Decency. Yes, an erotics of reading.

I’ll call the work “Longinus o’er a bottle,”
Or, Every [Critic] his own Aristotle.

And we won’t neglect instruction either.

INSTRUCTION. That’s thoughtful.

PLEASURE. We’ll have lots of commandments and “fallacies” and that sort of thing.

[INTERSPACE 1]

PRINTER’S DEVIL. What’s this about fallacies and commandments? Is Pleasure serious? She seems to be contradicting herself.

FOOTNOTE. Maybe this is what it means to be beyond the pleasure principle. Not that Pleasure has much to do with principles. I guess she’s just being silly. She’s remembering that epidemic of 50 years ago when professors and critics started cranking out all kinds of literary “fallacies” as they called them—the intentional, the affective, the fallacy of imitative form. And there were “primers of modern heresy” and “defenses of reason” and all that sort of thing.
PLEASURE (resuming). It’ll begin with a commandment forbidding students (and anybody else) to talk about ideas in literature until they show they can sight-read fifty lines of verse without sending everyone howling from the room.

I mean just think about what our classes have turned into! The “teacher” comes in and talks about (and about and about) some wonderful poem, say The Rape of the Lock or “Goblin Market.” He (or she) burrows into “the text” and comes away with all those ideas and meanings it’s been concealing from us—meanings it either contains (new critically) or locates (with cultural studiousness).

Or the teacher doesn’t teach, he (or she) comes in and starts a (“Socratic”) “discussion” by proposing some question, or by directing the class to talk about some passage or other that “problematizes” what we might think about the poem’s “meaning.” Then the class is encouraged to talk about it and we get a free-wheeling “discussion” of what the poem means, which is to say what everybody is thinking it means or it might mean. And the livelier the discussion the better the class seems to be, and when it’s over everybody once again realizes how complex and rich poetry is, and how clever or how serious one has to be to read it.

About seven years ago the wickedness of all this suddenly “rose from [my] mind’s abyss, like an unfather’d vapour”—as the poet once said. We were in fact discussing that very poet, Wordsworth, and that very passage. The class was talking in such animated ways about what it might mean that I began to feel they were losing hold of the poem’s words as they raised up and tracked through great thickets of ideas. So I called a halt and asked a bright student to help clear the air.

“George, read the passage for the class.”

It was appalling. He stumbled across that splendid set of lines like “one that hath been stunn’d / And is of sense forlorn”—wrecking the phonemes, the phrasings, the entire play of the metrical scheme in its unfolding grammatical order. He couldn’t read the poem. He could “read off” the poem, and generate all sorts of ideas. But the oral delivery? It was a total crack-up.

Quel giorno piu non vi spiegammo avante. We just went around the class and everybody took turns reading or trying to read. It was an amusingly painful experience.

For the rest of that term we spent much of our class time simply reading and rereading the printed texts, and talking about these different performances. Everybody got better at reading, and not just because they were forced to practice recitation. They began deliberately to look at the words, paying attention to their parts as well as to the many kinds of physical relations that different passages of poetry built between the words.

An erotics of reading. Or call it interpretation through the performance of language—something like the way musicians interpret a piece of music by rendering the score. I’m bringing it into all my classes. The rule is that no one will raise questions of meaning unless he or she is prepared to perform the work. And if we’re not ready for that, we spend our time reciting until we are ready.

INSTRUCTION. I like it. It makes me think of Blake’s program for cleansing the doors of perception:

For man has clos’d himself up till he sees all things through the narrow chinks of his cavern.

That’s to say, through embrained organs of attention and awareness. Recitation as a route back to the body in the mind, back through “the chief inlets of soul in this age,” “the senses.”

PLEASURE. Sometimes I think it’s best to work from poems that aspire to the condition of music—poems that work to collapse the distinction between the physique of their language and the content of their ideas: poems committed to what Shelley called “Intellectual Beauty.” Poems like Shelley’s own, “Which walk upon the sea, and chant melodiously”:

Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles before they dwindle
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them;
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds ere they divide them;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe’er thou shinest.

That’s on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays I think we’re better off reading Pope or Byron than Shelley or Christina Rossetti—poems where the thought seems so clear we can
easily neglect its articulate energies:

Ovid's a rake, as half his verses show him,
Anacreon's morals are a still worse sample,
Catullus scarcely has a decent poem,
I don't think Sappho's Ode a good example,
Although Longinus tells us there is no hymn
Where the sublime soars forth on wings more ample;
But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one
Beginning with "Formosum Pastor Corydon."

(Don Juan I st. 42)

The schools are far too preoccupied with what young people should or shouldn't be thinking. Let's get back to the words, to the language—to the bodies of our thinking. I'm "against interpretation," I'm for recitation. And for memorizing. I want my students to memorize and recite. If they can do those things well, it's enough for me. For the time being at any rate.

INSTRUCTION. It's not enough, though I admit it makes a good start. It's not even erotic enough. Your "erotics of reading" stays too close to the shore of the physical senses. It makes for a charming and delicious ride, I grant you, but it won't satisfy an adult, a full-fledged eroticism. We want more from our reading experiences. Let's head out to sea.

Go back to the classroom and think about it again. The worst that goes on there isn't what you're complaining about. The worst is the hypocrisy of it, the pretense to freedom of thought. Everybody knows that the thinking in these "discussions" is controlled by the agenda—maybe even the ideology—of the teachers. The best one can hope for is that the agenda be made explicit—so the students understand from the start that they're being taught to think in certain ways.

And the longest lesson of all is the old Platonic one—that poetry will be justified when it becomes useful to society. If it occurs to someone that "society" always seems to have very different opinions about itself, then what? Well, you "teach the conflicts." But nothing has really changed, then, has it? We keep trying to make teaching and literature socially productive—the usual "war of the many with one." And so students keep turning into what their teachers have become—

[INTERSPACE 2]

PRINTER'S DEVIL. I don't get it. If you don't teach an agenda and you don't "teach the conflicts" of the different agendas, what's left to teach?

FOOTNOTE (rummaging around in some papers). These are Instruction's classnotes and syllabi. What a mess! It's a miracle if anybody learned anything from him. Instruction's all over the place, he can't even make up a common syllabus. There are no conflicts to "teach," no one's even reading the same books. There's just difference, going this way and going that.

PRINTER'S DEVIL. Maybe Instruction wants to stop teaching altogether.

FOOTNOTE. Maybe he should stop. He can't be doing a very good job.

PRINTER'S DEVIL. I think his classes are very popular.

FOOTNOTE. Right. And so students keep turning into what their teachers have become.

INSTRUCTION (resuming) ... moralists and utilitarians.

You were awakened one day when you realized how many of your students, how many of their teachers, couldn't read. Well here's the story of my awakening.

I was teaching Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." I was running a socratic discussion (so-called) and we were all having a splendid time. We were gradually unfolding the poem's delicate ironies, and I was leading them as well into the brave world of new historicist revelation.

[VIRTUAL REALITY appears. This is the audience. Jennifer, Christopher, Margaret, and Geoffrey are seated toward the front. Instruction turns and begins speaking, as if we were talking to his class.]

"And notice the word 'legend'; I mean in the line: 'What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape.' Does the poem answer that question? Christopher, what do you think about that?"

"Well Sir, I'm not sure. I hadn't really thought about it."

"What is a 'leaf-fringed legend' anyhow, do you think? Margaret, can you tell us?"

"It's a strange phrase, Sir. To me a legend is a kind of fabulous but traditional story that people tell and retell. So I guess Keats is thinking back through the phrase 'sylvan historian,' as if to say that the Grecian Urn retells for us an old story or set of stories."
"Like the stories implied by the images on the urn, the images Keats redescribes for us in his poem?"

"Right."

"Yes, I think so too. But do you know about any other meanings for the word 'legend'?

[Long Silence]

"Geoffrey, how about you? Do you know any other meanings?"

"Uh, I can't think of any."

"Do you want to say something, Jennifer?"

"Well, when we were studying Shelley I read a passage I loved so much I copied it out. It's short, just a couple of lines:

Like a child's legend on the tideless sand
Which the first foam erases half, and half
Leaves legible.

Now in that passage 'legend' means something like 'inscription,' doesn't it? And I think I'm right in remembering that people talk about 'legends' on coins and graves and things."

"Yes, that's exactly right. But does that meaning have anything to do with this poem?"

[Long Silence]

"Well, what about the famous conclusion to the ode?

'Beauti is Truth, Truth Beauty. That is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Notice it's in quotation marks."

"You said yesterday that there are different possible placements for those quotation marks."

"Right, Chris. But what does that have to do with the problem we're talking about now?"

[Silence]

"Well, let's bracket out the question of the alternative punctuations of the passage, for the moment anyhow. Let's just think about the fact that some part of the text is being set off here as if it were a quotation."

"Like an inscription or something?"

"Exactly, Chris. Does that make sense for the poem?"

"Well, do you mean that we're supposed to think of the quotation as the 'legend' mentioned earlier?"

"What do you think?"
beauty. It's wonderful.

We were all quite pleased with ourselves during this "discussion," as you may imagine. In fact, so far as I was concerned all we had left to do was mop up the details. That's when it happened.

"Well, does anyone have any other questions?"

[Pause]

"Sir, what's an 'Attic shape'?"

"Does anybody want to answer that question for Christopher? Geoffrey?"

"Well here it must be some kind of ghostlike thing, some old piece of memorabilia or whatever?"

[I smiling] "Why do you say that? I don't really understand."

"It's an attic shape, it's some kind of thing from an attic. I mean, it goes back to that line we began with: 'What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape'. Keats is imagining some kind of mouldy apparition whose features aren't too clear—something slightly ghoulish from the dead past, with brede

Of marble men and maidens overwrought.

I love those lines. This ghost is Keats's cobwebbed version of Mozart's stone guest, or Roger Bacon's Brazen Head, something like that. I love the puns on "brede" and "overwrought." Keats's 'Attic shape' is a pretty lively stone guest after all. And when Keats lets the ghost speak at the end—well, it's a kick! He must have loved making that final comic move, sending the whole thing up and over the top at the end."

[I smiling more deeply] "But Geoffrey, 'Attic' here doesn't mean what you're thinking. Keats's word means something like 'classical,' 'Attic' refers to Attica, in Greece."

"Oh. I thought Keats was thinking of an attic, like at the top of a house, under the roof."

"I know." [Smiling in an understanding way]

"Well it made sense that way to me. I mean, the poem is about old legends and haunting shapes. And where would you find an urn like the one in the poem? In a museum maybe, or buried somewhere, or left forgotten in some storeroom or attic. They didn't have garages in Keats's day, did they Sir?"

"No Geoffrey, they didn't. And while I do see the way you're thinking about the poem, it's just not possible. Keats is using the word in a specific way, it means 'classical.' Look at the text. Keats capitalizes the word to emphasize its particular reference to 'Attica' and ancient Greek civilization."

"Sir, couldn't it mean what Geoffrey says? I mean historically speaking."

"Well, Jennifer, yes it could—that is, technically. 'Attic' had both of those meanings, as well as some others, when Keats wrote his poem."

"Then what's wrong with Geoffrey's reading? It makes sense in the poem. And it even adds a whole new way of thinking about it. I like what it does to the poem, it makes it richer, wilder. Or it helps to explain that peculiar way Keats loads and even overloads his poems with figural effects:

'to set budding more, And still more, later flowers for the bees'"

Here the text is 'overwrought' not only because of that strange pun (and the equally strange one on 'brede'). The word 'overwrought' works so well exactly because, in one sense, it appears to make so little sense in this poem. The style of the verse is cool and controlled. If I imagine the 'bold lover' 'overwrought' with his passion, the poem toys easily with this thought. It wants to play a game of passion 'far above' 'breathing human passion.' So it constructs images made not only of sounds ('Attic'/'attitude'; 'ear'/'endeared'), but of 'unheard' sounds and melodies. In this world the lover appears as it were unimaginably 'overwrought,' a verbal figure everywhere conjured in unexpected forms and antitheses ('Cold Pastoral').

"Look at that completely arbitrary juxtaposition of 'Attic' and 'attitude.' Sounds pull the words together, but their horizons of meaning never quite connect. And the verse doesn't stay to let the reader stabilize their surprising relations. Even stranger verbal creatures immediately appear ('brede', 'overwrought'). The effect is finally uncanny, as if one had entered a purely magical space—a vitalist and metamorphic world. It's all apples and oranges. It's a garden that 'breeding flowers, will never breed the same.' In Keats's gardens words miseginate ('brede'). Their relations and their offspring seem a kind of 'wild surmise' of a new world—a world far more wondrous than the America that set Keats voyaging in his sonnet on Chapman's Homer."

"Well that's a remarkable set of imaginations, Jennifer. And I'm more than a little surprised that Geoffrey's mistake about the meaning of the word 'Attic' should have triggered those thoughts. Because so much of what you say makes sense for anyone wanting to read Keats's poetry. I don't know what to make of that. All I do know is that Geoffrey's meaning for 'Attic' is out of the question."
PRINTER’S DEVIL. So much for our instructor’s pretense of catholicity. What his talking head can’t do, at any rate, is stop making sense. That’s out of the question.

INSTRUCTION (resuming). Keats clearly intended it to mean “classical.” [Smiling at a happy thought] After all, if we go along with Geoffrey we’ll have to set up the Humpty Dumpty School of Criticism.

[Unconcerned laughter] “What’s that, Sir?”

“Don’t you remember Alice in Wonderland? When Humpty Dumpty tries to assign purely arbitrary meanings to certain words, Alice challenges him about ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things’?”

“But didn’t Humpty Dumpty have an answer? Didn’t he reply: ‘The question is ... who is to be master—that’s all.’ It seems to me that Lewis Carroll didn’t take a position on the problem. Humpty Dumpty isn’t talking foolishness. So why can’t we go with Geoffrey’s reading?”

“Well of course poetry wants to multiply meanings, but only within the limits that are permitted by the poem.”

FOOTNOTE. I wonder what he means by “the limits of the poem”?

PRINTER’S DEVIL. Not much. He’s forgotten to think about that thought, hasn’t he? He throws it out, as if it were self-transparent. What “limits,” what “poem”? It’s not as if Keats or anyone else had the authority to declare what they or it might be. When Blake and Shelley decided it would be a good idea to take Satan as the hero of Paradise Lost, they exploded those limits for good. But there never were any such limits. That’s what upset Plato about poetry in the first place. That’s why he wanted to throw the poets out.

FOOTNOTE. It’s interesting that Instruction talks as if the poem were a person, as if it could give and take permissions. As if it laid down a law that it comprehended, or maybe embodied.

PRINTER’S DEVIL. He talks as if he were Jesus Christ himself, “like one having authority.” He talks, he always talks, when he should be paying attention to the text of the Ode and to what his students are saying. He should be listening within the limits that are permitted by the poem.

INSTRUCTION (resuming). “And here ‘Attic’ in Geoffrey’s meaning just doesn’t make sense.”

“Yes it does. It made sense to Geoffrey. And when he explained it, it made sense to me too. And it made more sense of the poem, and it made sense for Keats’s poetry in general.”

“It made nonsense of the poem! It’s a travesty.”

“Well then maybe nonsense is sometimes more sense. I thought poetry was supposed to open up doors of perception. Isn’t that what you’re always telling us, Sir? This reading opens up the poem in lots of new and interesting ways.”

[Silence from the front of the room]

“She’s right, Sir, it’s as if Keats were playing with his subject, making sure it didn’t kill itself with its own seriousness and classicism.”

“Well, . . .”

“Actually, I like that reference Jennifer made to Keats’s sonnet on Chapman’s Homer. It made me think again about the mistake Keats made—confusing Cortez and Balboa. The mistake turns out to be a happy one—what’s that phrase you like to use, Sir?—a kind of ‘felix culpa.’ I like Keats a lot more than Wordsworth and Byron just because his poems are so unguarded, so—full of surprises. You walk into a Keats poem and suddenly all things become possible. But Wordsworth seems so worried about losses and disruptions that he can’t help making sure everything is organized. And Byron’s deliberateness is positively fanatic. That’s why his great hero is Lucifer, immortalized in his dark, unchanging splendour. Keats is always so fresh.”

[As Jennifer is about to speak] “My goodness how late it’s gotten! The period will be over in five minutes so why don’t we stop now. I’m sure we can take up these subjects another time. —Next class, remember, we move on to Shelley. Read his ‘Defence of Poetry’ and Peacock’s ‘Four Ages of Poetry.’ Make sure you check the notes in our text. These essays are difficult to understand.”

“But Sir, what do you think—I mean about what we’ve just been saying?”

“Well, it’s very interesting. I’ll have to think more about it.”
[VIRTUAL REALITY recedes; Instruction resumes his conversation with Pleasure.]

PLEASURE. A pretty embarrassing experience.

INSTRUCTION. I was mortified. I still am. The only thing that kept me going for the next few days was remembering Whitman: “He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher.” And Jesus: “He who would save his life must lose it.”

PLEASURE. So what did you do?

INSTRUCTION. I started trying to imagine new kinds of critical thinking. Remember Emily Dickinson’s suggestion about reading poems backwards? It seemed like a good place to start. So I began reciting poems in reverse—just the words, just pronouncing the texts.”

PLEASURE. An excellent thought.

INSTRUCTION. And then I started other kinds of exercises. I’d go to famous passages randomly. Say, Macbeth:

“Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed.”

Or Wordsworth (again):

“To me the meaneast flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie to deep for tears.”

Then I’d propose an arbitrary task—say, “Give a homoerotic reading of that text.” The results were surprising—truly the Humpty Dumpty School of Criticism. The Macbeth passage turned out to be a wonderful Shakespearean joke, a Brechtian moment when the actors slyly reveal that Lady Macbeth is being played by a boy. And the “Intimations Ode” passage! It will never be the same for me, indeed the whole poem is “changed, changed utterly.”

PLEASURE. By giving the Ode a kind of Platonic blow.

INSTRUCTION. Well that’s the least of it, really. Let’s say we just keep it from turning into an Ode to Duty. These kinds of critical moves free poetry from its obligations to the state and the state’s representatives, the teachers: everyone who is presumed to know. Truly now one can begin to imagine “voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone”—or not alone. With others. Like all games, such readings work best when people play at them together.

And then after I worked hard at these kinds of exercises, I decided to try a full dress effort with something unlikely—

[INTERSPACE 6]

PRINTER’S DEVIL. There’s something wicked happening here. Suddenly Alice has become Humpty Dumpty.

FOOTNOTE. Right. Those interpretive exercises Instruction talks about—they can’t be serious. Do you think they were actual class exercises?

PRINTER’S DEVIL. They’re jokes, of course. They’re the exercises of his sick brain.

FOOTNOTE. Bad jokes.

PRINTER’S DEVIL. Deliberately bad, that’s what makes the whole thing so irresponsible. Don’t you see, he’s manipulating those ridiculous signs to play out a play. Through this looking glass Alice undergoes a sex change. She becomes Humpty Dumpty—truly a full dress effort at something unlikely.

INSTRUCTION (resuming).—something important partly because it would seem so unlikely. I meant to set my sights high. I wanted a reading that could make a real difference in the way we go about our intercourse with poetry. And I didn’t want something smartass and deconstructive, some gloomy “exposure” or negation of a canonical text, or whatever.

It took a while but one day I realized what I wanted. I wanted to read a poem that would help us begin reading poetry all over again. I wanted to go back to the beginning—or to some place that seems like a beginning. For me that meant one thing: Understanding Poetry. I had to go back there and start all over again—back to the road not taken by the schools.

Frost says it makes a great difference when you decide between roads. He also suggests that once you make a decision and travel along, you can’t go back again. And Frost was the darling of New Critical reading, as one can see from his dominant presence in Understanding Poetry.

But maybe that idea is just part of what comes with having taken a frostbound road in the first place. Maybe along another road one can go backwards or forwards or any old way one wants.
So back I went to *Understanding Poetry*. And I set off from the book's most crucial moment, the moment when it began to issue its Everlasting Nay. I wanted to plant roses where Brooks and Warren's thorns had begun to grow. I wanted to redeem their time.

[Voiceover intones Kilmer's "Trees" while Instruction mouths the words.]

Trees
(For Mrs. Henry Mills Alden)

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the sweet earth's flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

Now before I give my comments on this poem I want you to look at the essay that inspired me. You will recognize it I'm sure. Few of the critical pieces in Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry* were more famous than their commentary on Kilmer's "Trees."

[INTERSPACE 7]

FOOTNOTE. Why go on, it's just a travesty, isn't it? The actual "original of the essay" begins: "This poem has been very greatly admired by a large number of people. But it is a bad poem." The game is to read black where Brooks and Warren read white.

PRINTER'S DEVIL. And so not a "positive image to a negative" but a negative to a positive. As you say, a travesty of Brooks and Warren.

FOOTNOTE. I suppose it all depends on where you stand. That's part of the point of Instruction's joke, isn't it—to turn Brooks and Warren's debunking "negative" reading of "Trees" into a positive act of appreciation. To develop the picture they took of Kilmer's poem and make a positive (re)print from it.

PRINTER'S DEVIL. Clever. But is it a good poem?

"First, let us look at it merely on the technical side, especially in regard to the use Kilmer makes of his imagery. Now the poet, in a poem of twelve lines, makes only one fundamental comparison on which the other comparisons are based; this is the same method used by Housman in 'To an Athlete Dying Young.' In 'Trees' this fundamental comparison is not definitely stated but is constantly implied. The comparison is that of a tree to a woman. If the tree is compared to a woman—literary tradition weighs heavily here, as it does for so much modernist writing—the reader can't expect a consistent use to be made of the aspects of the woman which appear in the poem . . .

[PLEASURE. My God, what a sexist remark! Did Brooks and Warren actually write that?]

INSTRUCTION. Hold your questions till I get to the end of this. We don't want to spoil the coherence of the argument with interruptions.

"Look at stanza two. [Voiceover intones stanza 2; Instruction mouths the words] Here the tree is metaphorically treated as a sucking babe and the earth, therefore, as the mother—an excellent comparison that has been made for centuries—the earth as the 'great mother,' the 'giver of life,' and so on.
"But the third stanza introduces a confusion: [Voiceover intones stanza 3; Instruction mouths the words]. Here the tree is no longer a sucking babe, but, without warning, is old enough to indulge in religious devotions. But that isn't the best part of this confusion. Remember that the tree is a woman and that in the first stanza the mouth of that woman was the root of the tree. So now, if the branches are 'leafy arms,' the tree has metamorphosed in a very strange way. The poem's woman begins to appear an uncanny, a wholly imaginative creature.

"The fourth and fifth stanzas maintain the same anatomical arrangement for the tree as does the third, but they make other unexpected changes: the tree that wears a 'nest of robins in her hair' must be grown up, perhaps bejewelled; yet the tree with snow on her bosom is also a chaste and pure girl, for so the associations of snow with purity and chastity tell the reader; and then the tree that 'intimately lives with rain,' who is she? A chaste and pure girl? A woman vain enough to wear jewels? Our difficulties at this point have grown extreme. For this girl/woman, though living in an intimate relationship with someone ('rain'), also appears withdrawn from the complications of human relationships and might be said to be nunlike, an implication consonant with the religious tone of the poem.

"Now it would be quite pedestrian for the poet to use only one of these thoughts about the tree (1. the tree as a babe nursed by mother earth, 2. the tree as a nun praying all day, 3. the tree as a girl with jewels in her hair, or 4. the tree as a woman involved in an ambiguous sexual relationship) and to limit himself to a single metaphoric structure. The poem's success comes because the poet has tried to convey all of these features in terms of his single basic comparison to a woman. As a result, he presents a poetical image that has all the confused and metamorphic power so typical of modernist works of art and poetry.

"For a moment it may seem possible to attack the poem by pointing out its absurd romantic title, 'Trees,' with its implicit appeal to the consistencies of an organic approach to art: one tree is like the babe nursing at its mother's breast; another tree is a girl lifting her arms to pray, and so on. But this line of attack would damage itself more than the poem it seeks to denigrate: for 'Trees' is not consistent and romantic, it is modern and grotesque, and as such it refuses to provide any real or natural basis for seeing one tree as a babe and another as a devout young woman—and least of all for establishing a 'natural' consistency between those figures and the complex sexual being who emerges toward the climax of the poem."
duced Stevens' *Harmonium.* Yet how obvious the connection must now seem to us! One thinks immediately of Stein's early cubist poetry, and we may even remember that *Tender Buttons* was published at exactly the same time as Kilmer's book.

But "Trees" has more in common, I think, with more traditional kinds of Modernist experimental writing. Surely the similarity of Kilmer's poem to Stevens' "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" is obvious! It isn't just the physical shape of the two works that recall each other, though that's very striking. Think of Stevens' disorienting and revelatory shifts of focus. These dominate Kilmer's poem as well, and the regularity of Kilmer's rhyme only makes the shifts more shocking. Besides, in Stevens' charming poem the romantic commitment to a specular order of attention is hardly violated, so that his poem has more than a trace of that "consistency" (properly) deplored in Brooks and Warren's hypothetical critique of "Trees." But in "Trees" the order of things is fractal and chaotic—an effect heightened exactly by the poem's seductive apparition of consistency.

Not that Brooks and Warren's essay has given the last word on Kilmer's poem. On the contrary, their reading's preoccupation with "technical" matters has caused it to misrepresent a key feature of the work, and to miss altogether the literal meaning of the final two lines' climactic and defining moment.

**PEASURE.** What do you mean?

**INSTRUCTION.** I'll explain by making a confession about the text of the essay I gave you. The truth is that I slightly altered what Brooks and Warren originally wrote. I did so to highlight something important that's missing from their reading.

**PEASURE.** Go on.

**INSTRUCTION.** In the essay I gave you, whenever Brooks and Warren wrote "human being," I substituted the word "woman."

**PEASURE.** Is that all?

**INSTRUCTION.** No, but it's important. Now I did this because "human being" is completely untrue to the meaning of the poem. "Trees" is not only written to a woman, its running human analogy is gendered female at every point. The subject of the poem is what Robert Graves would soon name "The White Goddess." So the title is apt—"Trees," not "Tree" or "The Tree."

**PEASURE.** But the women in the poem appear so unmythic—de-

spite what Brooks and Warren say about "the earth mother" and all that. So quotidian and, in one case—the baby girl I mean—so completely nonsexual. Think of Keats's "La Belle Dame." *There's* the White Goddess! Kilmer's "Trees" are hardly pagan at all; they're too correct—too American and Irish-Catholic.

**INSTRUCTION.** You're deceived by one level of the poem's appearances. Think again. Think, for example, about the dedication to Mrs. Henry Mills Alden.

*INTERSPACE 10*

**FOOTNOTE.** That dedication line, incidentally, isn't reproduced in the text of *Understanding Poetry.* Brooks and Warren took it out, I guess, because they thought it wasn't part of "the poem itself."

**PRINTER'S DEVIL.** Is it?

**FOOTNOTE.** Of course, just as much as the title. But Brooks and Warren want to uncouple poems from their explicit historical connections. Removing this actual woman rarifies the poem. And these losses of textual reference tend to affect all the more concrete aspects of poetic language—for example, the signs themselves. The poem's signs slip loose from their physicalities—from their phonemic and rhythmic structure—and readers begin to treat poetic language as "a text," a conceptual organization, a play of Saussurean signifieds. It's important to see the particular woman standing among Kilmer's trees—Mrs. Henry Mills Alden.

**PEASURE.** Who is she?

**INSTRUCTION.** Kilmer's mother-in-law, a woman who for years had moved at the center of the New York literary world. A poet herself, she married Henry Mills Alden the editor of *Harper's*—when she was a young, aspiring writer and after a whirlwind three-month courtship. Their love sprang up when Mrs. Alden, then Mrs. Kenton Murray, submitted some poems to *Harper's.*

**PEASURE.** So?

**INSTRUCTION.** You're so ignorant, all you care about are the surfaces of things! Read between the lines, behind the words! Mrs. Alden's obituary notice in the *Virginia Pilot and Norfolk Leader* (4/14/1936) describes...
her as “a woman of high intellectual attainments, of courageous spirit, and of marked personal charm.” The significance of this language in that newspaper becomes clear when one recalls that her first husband had been editor of the Norfolk Landmark.

Furthermore, although married to Alden she continued to publish her poetry under the name Ada Foster Murray. (She was born Ada Foster and grew up near Huntington, Virginia—now West Virginia.)

In short, the words “Mrs. Henry Mills Alden” release the poem under the sign of a woman and a poet. More significantly, this person would be seen—we are looking from Kilmer’s point of view—as a volatile and complex being. Brooks and Warren’s remarks on the poem’s inconsistencies are subtle glosses on the name standing at the head of the text. Look again at the text of the verse! Kilmer’s Trees are populated by evanescent Ovidian figures. “Moving about in worlds not realized”—moving about the poem’s forest of strange symbols—are “light winged dryads” whose presences we glimpse by oblique suggestion—as we glimpse them in Heine and Baudelaire, and in so many poet/painters of modern life:

Gods float in the azure air
bright gods and Tuscan

From Poe to Pound, even North America did not free itself of that world. Mrs. Henry Mills Alden, upright and respectable, comes from that world.

The first sections of Kilmer’s verse text are full of deliberate deceptions; so we only glimpse, by various stylistic plays of confusion and indirection, the poem’s disturbing and erotic presences. In the end, however, they are presences that are not to be put by.

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

All further commentary proves unnecessary as soon as we realize the startling sexual wordplay in the word “make.” Kilmer descends to this kind of vulgarity only once in the poem. But it is a descent that must be made, a descent to coarse pagan earth. The descent is telling and overthrows the whole fabric. What did you say about Dickinson reading poems backwards? This word “make” unmakes the text, forcing us to read it all backwards: back over again, back against the deceptive inertia set in forward motion at the outset of the work.

But we are ready for this backward overthrow because—despite its appearances—the poem has never settled into its rectitudes. As Brooks and Warren were the first to notice, it is far too inconsistent and “confused” for that.

PLEASURE. But then the poem is some grotesque male joke—is that what you’re saying?

INSTRUCTION. Not at all. As in “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” and so many similar poems, “Trees” is written out of a certain kind of male eroticism. After all, what else is the so-called myth of the White Goddess? But if this were all the poem had to offer—serving up another coarse of that myth—it would have scarcely arrived at the level of Keats’s traumatic fantasy. What distinguishes Kilmer’s poem is the fact that it is God who makes the tree. This literal (religious) fact can barely tolerate the extreme “opposite and discordant” suggestion introduced by the wordplay. In forcing that extremity upon us, the text leaps to an unspeakable imaginative level. The achievement recalls nothing so much as certain analogous moments in Lautreamont’s Les Chants de Maldoror—for example, the great scene in Canto III when Maldoror narrates the story of God and his desolate strand of hair.

I think Nietzsche wrote the moral for Kilmer’s poem before Kilmer ever wrote the poem:

It is with people as it is with trees. The more they aspire to the height and light, the more strongly do their roots strive earthward, downward, into the dark, the deep—into evil. (Nietzsche, The Gay Science sec. 371)

This is a thought fully realized in Kilmer’s shocking last couplet, where we come upon something far worse than a simple religious blasphemy. The coarse final wordplay doubles back upon the penultimate line, undoing the idea of poiesis itself. From the original sin committed among the trees of his little garden, Kilmer has imagined the adamic fall of the poem itself.

[INTERSPACE 11]

PRINTER’S DEVIL. How right you were about Instruction’s insincerity. This is all an outrageous act of cleverness and self-display. In-
struction tells a greater (and a worse) truth than he realizes when he
turns Kilmer's wretched little verses into an allegory about "the adamic
fall of the poem itself." His cynical games with poetry will be the death
of poetry.

FOOTNOTE. Did you catch the sly allusion in that phrase? "The poem
itself" is one of those word plays Instruction seems incapable of resist­
ing. He's recalling another famous book from the period of New
Criticism's hegemony Stanley Burnshaw's *The Poem Itself.*

PRINTER'S DEVIL. So?

FOOTNOTE. I guess his reading wants to imagine "the fall" of a cer­
tain kind of "poem" or idea about poetry. In this sense his "allegory," as
you call it, would be an historical allegory, not a transcendental one.
Which makes sense, given his critical view of Brooks and Warren's
(unhistorical) way of "understanding poetry."

PRINTER'S DEVIL. And what's Instruction's "way" of "understand­
ing poetry"? It's to invade the texts and force them to turn nonsensical.
Every critic his own Aristotle indeed!

FOOTNOTE. Satan as the hero of *Paradise Lost* is a nonsensical idea.
But you gave it your good housekeeping seal.

PRINTER'S DEVIL. Yes, because its nonsense is useful. It helps to
expose the contradictions that run through Milton's Christian mythol­
ogy. In doing that, it helps to expose the structure of poetical discourse
in general.

FOOTNOTE. As nonsensical?

PRINTER'S DEVIL. As incommensurable. What did Wilde say? "A
truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true."

FOOTNOTE. I think your ideas have more in common with
Instruction's than you realize, or admit. You have highbrow ideas so you
want highbrow examples. That appeal of yours to Blake could have
been made by our Instructor.

PRINTER'S DEVIL. Yes, but in his mouth it would have been a rhea­
torical *jeu,* a sign that poetical authority rests with him, with the mean­
ings he sets in play. If I'm highbrow, he's just a vulgarian. Besides, the
incommensurability of poetic discourse is for me one of its key *objective*
features. That's a crucial difference between us. Another—it's even more
crucial—relates to the fundamental unseriousness of Instruction's criti­
cal methods. And in truth how *could* he take himself or his ideas seri­
ously! They're grounded in nothing beyond his own fancies—mere airy
nothings, as fragile as himself, as all subjective criticism will always be.

FOOTNOTE. Or as Shakespeare?!

PRINTER'S DEVIL. What?

FOOTNOTE. I was just reflecting on your allusion to Shakespeare and
his airy nothings, his poetry and his ideas about poetry. Maybe you
shouldn't be quoting Shakespeare, or appealing to Oscar Wilde. You
don't help your case.

PRINTER'S DEVIL. What are you thinking?

FOOTNOTE. I'm thinking about Instruction's "unseriousness," as you
(rightly) call it. About how studied it is.

PRINTER'S DEVIL. Right. That mannered style is what stamps his
thinking as irredeemably trivial. It doesn't even take itself seriously.

FOOTNOTE. But what if that's the point? What if the question isn't
"how could he take himself or his ideas seriously" but "why *should* he
take himself or his ideas seriously?"

PRINTER'S DEVIL. Explain please.

FOOTNOTE. Why do you, why does anyone, privilege "objective"
values? Because they're imagined to have weight and substance, some­
thing more solid than mere personal ideas and subjective whimsies.
When Instruction flaunts the fancifulness of his critical ideas, when
he—in effect—turns them over to his friend Pleasure, he puts them in
that "unsubstantial faery place/ That is [their] fit home."

In this sense, the deliberateness of his unseriousness would thus not
be a "cynical" gesture, at least not in the usual sense we give that term.
It would be a move to label the fundamentally subjective character of
his criticism, and perhaps to suggest as well that all criticism—even
criticism, like Johnson's, committed to objective standards—operates
subjectively.

PRINTER'S DEVIL. So what else is new!

FOOTNOTE. Two things, perhaps. First, Instruction's game-playing
assumes a formidable (double) standard for critical acts: a demand for a
high level of reflective self-awareness, on one hand, and for a matching
style and practice on the other—for a sound that would be the echo of
its sense. His triviality is significant exactly because it's so cultivated. He
is labelling his proposals "modest."
PRINTER’S DEVIL. Or “indecent.”

FOOTNOTE. Yes, modest and indecent both. It’s Pleasure’s ideal of an erotics of reading, a move “against interpretation.” And the move is important because of the implicit challenge he’s laying down. His criticism of “Trees” emphasizes the rhetoric of interpretation, so his studied triviality signals that he appreciates the difficulty of the reciprocal demand his challenge puts on us. He comes forward not as a master but as just another player. Or if he seems a master, his behavior emphasizes the mortal limits of mastery.

Second, the dialogue argues that meaning comes as acts of thinking (which may get reified into sets of ideas), and thinking comes as exchange of thought. All sorts of uncommon critical possibilities might flow from that view of things.

PRINTER’S DEVIL. Including the slaughter of criticism’s innocence.

FOOTNOTE. A prophetic sign announcing a new day, perhaps, when we may repeat, in a finer tone, “the adamic fall of the poem itself.”

INSTRUCTION (resuming). So a modest and even genteel irony turns corrosive. Aspiring to the height and light, Kilmer’s poem discovers its damnation.

PLEASURE. If this is how one finds meaning in poems you could almost persuade me back to interpretation.

INSTRUCTION. Sometimes you do read your texts too simply. “Against Interpretation,” for instance. It’s clear that you’ve let your enthusiasm carry you away. For the phrase has, I think, graces beyond the reach of the art you have in mind. You read the word “against” as a mere prepositional call to arms. And that’s fine, I like that reading—even if it is pretty commonplace.

PLEASURE. Novelty isn’t everything, my friend. What is it Byron says?

I care not for new pleasures, as the old
Are quite enough for me—so they but hold.

INSTRUCTION. Well, what I like about that Byron remark—about Byron in general—is the cool, self-conscious way he approaches the pursuit, and the question, of pleasure. What did he say in Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage about thought? Didn’t he call it “our last and only place of refuge”?

Don’t just run with that phrase “Against Interpretation,” think about it. Imagine what you know. Suppose “against” were an adjective instead of a preposition.

PLEASURE. The Everlasting Nay becomes the Everlasting Yea!

INSTRUCTION. Ever the enthusiast. Suppose it were an adjective and a preposition.

PLEASURE. Then you would have invented what Xerxes wanted, a new pleasure.

INSTRUCTION. Or a new thought

Bibliography


Kevin Magee

FROM APRIL THESES

Speech was a cry for action.
—Susan Howe, Taking the Forest

4/22

[for Kathy Lou Schultz

See the way
under the banner of

anti-terrorism
sweeping arrests

elimination of whole
categories of evidence

Birmingham and Guilford
Irish workers swept up

Sin Fein (Shin Fain)
a terrorist group the IRA

in 1608 the English Crown

a little later and leading up almost
to the 20th century

She was the youngest member of that body
at 21 years of age

They moved to the countryside
particularly that area
close to the Border
ungovernable
religious
social and national prejudices
artificially kept alive

and *that* class is fully aware

who is the enemy
and who my ally

what does a Hindu worker have

you can go to Manchester on a tour

now Lenin vol. 39
on page 56 I found a gem

continues to recite
continues to resist
what's a few more years

as far as I can remember
bombings, tear gas
saturation searches

someone stop if I start wandering

She gave me a very good and accurate analysis

partition

Clinton's statement on the Oklahoma City bombing the same week he justified Hiroshima the onus of Waco no one asked him about the bombing of Dresden presuming to take a moralist stance towards atrocities such as this consciousness such as is necessary in this country I don't think many people understand what the State has represented

it was much more clearly

seen as a civil rights struggle years ago
it was along the lines of making clear what British Occupation has meant and kept all Ireland of course in a semi-colonial status that because of the violence the human rights aspect tends to get lost the denial of democracy the denial of civil rights the circumstances and the situation the armed conflict they forced upon us constabulary

the names and the figureheads we frequently see

There's been a hesitancy with the months that have passed since

The Irish Steel Strike in Cork

I never did find out what happened to it

Do you have any information on the union movement or anything of that kind

Rather than the actual head of the union they'd run around but the workers wouldn't listen

The Bureaucracy in the unions have got it made

The film was something that was widely distributed

I had the opportunity to listen to Martin in Derry as far as I am aware toward the situation where one arrived at

I tried to get through on the phone, this
thing it's tragic in
Oklahoma we're seeing
the light at the end of
the tunnel as well as
the Grocery Strike here
flyers for that forum

I know I'm wandering here

I've always had a problem
understanding the mentality
the militia mentality

sort of like the frontier

just as a last comment
would like to mention

*We want all guns*
*taken out of Ireland*

I remember how it had an impact
on me in 1968-9, 1970. What it
brought mostly. Up to and including
the use of the Armed Forces got
a new lease on life, big strides

have to come over
and counter-act

the political space
that's opening up

everybody can understand
the blow that struck

up until it was almost before
the same time

if that's going to keep on happening

these are a few of some of the things
they set out,
the same tasks

it made the move
away from their own

foundations skewed
away from what

it could be, they thought they had a few
enticements, perks

they will give you
as many hours a week
as you ask them, this

is what the space is
giving us now your real
problems, are you getting

enough money do you have
enough to live do you
have a place to live

---

Writing about the "relocation" of Tilted Arc, what Richard Serra says
about site-specific works, that they're based on interdependence and address
their context, entering into a dialogue with their surroundings unlike works
like Ordinary Evening in New Haven, for example (not his), that give the
illusion of autonomy and function solely in relation to the language of their
own medium, what a located work stresses is the coinciding of separate lan-
guages, using the language of the other to expand its own capacity to refer.

In April Theses, I'm interested
in the reciprocity of the poem to its loca-
tion near an event whose proximity—the hearing range—enacts as compositi-
on an act of translation grounded in the experience of real time. The writing
here depends on the voice of someone else, whether it is the filmmaker Ernie
Gehr talking about his work on April 2 at the San Francisco Art Institute, a
visiting Irish nationalist giving a personal account of current developments around the time of Gerry Adams' U.S. tour or worker/militants at a labor forum talking about events in the news against the background of their (revolutionary) perspective. The documentation, then, the recording of others' voices, lends to the language of politics, a working-class politics, whose necessary sphere is the art of reporting experiences. It's the modality of this language in the experience of hearing it made vocal that I tried to record for its tonal qualities, colorations, and rhythmic character. This is the sense in which I'd consider this poem to be an inter-media exchange and even, collaboration.

Or; A transcript of speech acts that for the most part come out of another language often conveniently designated as occupying a position of power, a language from conversely consigned to the library (the dustbin of history), and not the experience of politics and the Political Imaginary in all its fragility and provisionality of its articulation by participants, activists whose inflections have helped here, at least, to locate a series or set of types, gestures.

Gerard Malanga
PROTOTYPES OF EXPERIENCE


It was at Christmas at Up Park and there was a dance in the Servants Hall and the upper and lower servants mingled together. There was a kitchen maid whom I suddenly discovered was pretty beyond words and I danced and danced again with her, until my mother was moved to find other partners for me. She was a warm-col- Orson Welles and Herman J. Mankiewicz, from the shooting script of Citizen Kane, 1940.

Bernstein: You're pretty young, Mr.—(Remembers the name)—Mr. Thompson. A fellow will remember things you wouldn't think he'd remember. You take me. One day, back in 1896, I was crossing over to Jersey on a ferry and as we pulled out there was another ferry pulling in—(Slowly)—and on it there was a girl waiting to get off. A white

William Carlos Williams, from Paterson, Book V

There is a woman in our town walks rapidly, flat belled in worn slacks upon the street where I saw her. neither short nor tall, nor old nor young her face would attract no adolescent. Grey eyes looked straight before her.
ored girl with a quick pretty
skirt, and she was

A red girl with a quick pretty
brush—any woman might have
done the same to
say she was a woman and warn

And if ever I see you again
as I have sought you
daily without success
I'll speak to you, alas
too late! Ask
What are you doing on
the

And she was gone!

And she was gone!

And if ever I see you again
as I have sought you
daily without success
I'll speak to you, alas
too late! Ask
What are you doing on
the

And she was gone!

And she was gone!

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And she was gone!

And she was gone!

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as I have sought you
daily without success
I'll speak to you, alas
too late! Ask
What are you doing on
the

And she was gone!
Denise Newman

TEXT SHOULD READ: Whole days as though not occurring
spent looking for something . . .
way of saying: there is no end to end

She calls from the lobby
I hated that good-bye
Can we try again?
English
is my mother tongue.
A mother tongue is not
not a foreign lan lan lang
language
l/anguish
anguish
—a foreign anguish.

English is
my father tongue.
A father tongue is
a foreign language,
therefore English is
a foreign language
not a mother tongue.

What is my mother
tongue
my mammy tongue
my mummy tongue
my momsy tongue
my modder tongue
my ma tongue?

I have no mother
tongue
no mother to tongue
to tongue to mother
to mother
tongue
me

I must therefore be tongue
dumb
dumb-tongued
dub-tongued

EDICT I

Every owner of slaves shall,
whenever possible, ensure that
his slaves belong to as many
ethno-linguistic groups as pos-
sible. If they cannot speak to
each other, they cannot then
foment rebellion and revolu-
tion.

Those parts of the brain chiefly responsible for speech are named
after two learned nineteenth century doctors, the eponymous Doctors
Wernicke and Broca respectively.

Dr. Broca believed the size of the brain determined intelligence; he devoted much of
his time to 'proving' that white males of the Caucasian race had larger brains than, and
were therefore superior to, women, Blacks, and other peoples of color.

Understanding and recognition of the spoken word takes place in
Wernicke's area—the left temporal lobe, situated next to the auditory
cortex; from there relevant information passes to Broca's area—situated
in the left frontal cortex—which then forms the response and passes it
on to the motor cortex. The motor cortex controls the muscles of speech.
damn dumb
tongue

but I have
da dumb tongue
tongue dumb
father tongue
and English is
my mother tongue
is
my father tongue
is a foreign lan lan lang
language
I/anguish
anguish
a foreign anguish
is English—
another tongue
my mother
mammy
mummy
moder
mater
macer
moder
tongue
mothertongue

tongue mother
tongue me
mothertongue me
mother me
touch me
with the tongue of your
lan lan lang
language
I/anguish
anguish
english
is a foreign anguish

EDICT II

Every slave caught speaking his native language shall be severely punished. Where necessary, removal of the tongue is recommended. The offending organ, when removed, should be hung on high in a central place, so that all may see and tremble.

A tapering, blunt-tipped, muscular, soft and fleshy organ describes
(a) the penis.
(b) the tongue.
(c) neither of the above.
(d) both of the above.

In man the tongue is
(a) the principal organ of taste.
(b) the principal organ of articulate speech.
(c) the principal organ of oppression and exploitation.
(d) all of the above.

The tongue
(a) is an interwoven bundle of striated muscle running in three planes.
(b) is fixed to the jawbone.
(c) has an outer covering of a mucous membrane covered with papil­lae.
(d) contains ten thousand taste buds, none of which is sensitive to the taste of foreign words.

Air is forced out of the lungs up the throat to the larynx where it causes the vocal cords to vibrate and create sound. The metamorphosis from sound to intelligible word requires
(a) the lip, tongue and jaw all working together.
(b) a mother tongue.
(c) the overseer’s whip.
(d) all of the above or none.

Originally appeared in She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks.
Kristin Prevallet

ALLEGORY FOR THE REAL, COVERED UP

horses, who swept through the village on oil-colored sandals,

...
The boy was hung with eight others for speaking out against the horseman, who rode through the village on a oil-colored stallion, bringing instead equipment that tainted their croplands and water with spills, and fouled their air with gasses. The knight rode swiftly on his own hot air, a pack of lies that sent him sallying forth, proclaiming as he passed: “The company has no power over a sovereign country’s policies.”
The actual newspaper photograph is unrelated to the event that is being referred to in the text. The photograph was taken in Somalia, sometime in 1994.

The text might be political, but it is afraid of being inaccurate and charged with appropriation, and so remains vague. Since the photograph is depicting an event unrelated to the text, it was made into a collage. Both the text and the collage are far removed from their actual source, meaning that they are safe and in the privileged neutral zone of multi-media where multiple interpretations are possible. The source, however, haunts the neutral zone.

This is not a direct quote from a company spokesperson (who would, of course, be telling a lie). Rather, it is taken from an op-ed editorial in The New York Times (November 17, 1995): "Most of the oil is extracted from regions where the Ogoni and other persecuted groups live. For more than 30 years, oil spills have tainted their croplands and water, and burned-off natural gas has fouled their air. (Forty percent of Shell oil spills worldwide have occurred in Nigeria.) Shell, by far the most powerful corporation in Nigeria, reaps billions of dollars every year in profits and gives back little except for pollutants."

In November of 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa was hung with eight others for speaking out against the military dictatorship of Nigeria, and the oil companies that directly profit from it. This, and several other events around the world, indicate that the struggles against political oppression by the people from countries directly affected by it are complicated because the oppressor is no longer only the dictator, but the CEO's of multi-national corporations.

What follows is the Empty Envelope exchange of Joan Retallack and Rod Smith, with a guest appearance by Melanie Neilson. Retallack and Smith addressed, stamped and mailed a series of five empty envelopes to each other between February 14 and May 5, 1995. For each empty envelope mailed, R. and S. wrote a piece to be kept in a file along with all (unopened) empty envelopes received, neither author having any idea what the other had written. Due to accidents of time and postal service, this exchange never achieved the RSRSRS... order originally envisioned. Rod included a collaboration with Melanie Neilson, "Philosophy & Puberty," as his third contribution. On May 6, Retallack, Smith, and Neilson read their correspondence aloud via "voice mail" at the Ear Inn in NYC.

February 14, 1995

mail first empty envelope today pure structure outside of an inside nothing more less did Emerson really say the world is all outside it has no inside told it's in Experience haven't had a chance to check haven't got the essays haven't been interested in Emerson since high school when he gave all who needed it an authoritative excuse for in consis ten cy could it be yet another romantic presaging staging perhaps entertaining thoughts of fractal worlds infinite surface in finite space not to mention not to mention time but/where insides and outsides don't have to be the same as they were when we were forced in scenes of great humili ation to do the Möbius strip good/yes/good I'm sending you this piece o world not by metaphor but metonymy which seems perhaps so far perhaps a little bit bit less pretentious so far so far to section off a piece from it's contingent place here send it along to it's contingent place there some thing neither Zen's nor Zeno's arrows do is there in it this it of the mute pain from which life and language recoil until the spring is gone and in its place comes a radiant interruption or two
February 21, 1995

"And the winner is . . ."

fully recycled, and so
see through, placenta
anyone at all
hum bake
to deride: see Pantone 429 C

"for giving you no time
instead of it all"

River of
Lane change

Because of repetition
The wrecked world will fit in an envelope
wrong

March 29, 1995

Merf

The lean sin
in the sleek lint:
a low ton
or a tongue loan:

& the trailer crossing the screen says

Merf

The lean sin
in the sleek lint:
a low ton
or a tongue loan:
The sleek lint leak
in the not lost
blanket liability's pocket o'

exodus.
the empty envelope that came in the mail today oddly seems quite full held it up to the light with shame and of course glad of no success though can't help but wonder why there's something in an empty envelope did he think my envelope had something in it when it was only made out of scrap photocopy of Abraham Cresques' Mallorcan Catalan Atlas (detail 1375 vellum sheets mounted on wooden panels Bibliothèque Nationale Paris) so had a distinct inside and outside but was empty which brings to mind a puzzle if one wishes to be empty is it in that way to have an inside and an outside like every other geometrical figure but to contain nothing and then it's not a matter of spilling the beans at all but a perforation of the emptiness a student says she is fully androgynous when reciting her practice statement here's a riddle all about ness how the door phrases came to be distributed in this way like every other verball age triage or succulent \( X^2 - 40X - 11 = 0 \) plus or minus zero this may all be just a form of why do you just say just

just what problem was this supposed to solve so to speak stop now at the point where one must withhold interpretation if/with great sadness warranted or/not we're are are a biologically confused species what where/with ectopic brains spread all over this ssad universe again etc. again where or why does our hope lie J.L. Austin asks Can I baptize a dog, if it is admittedly rational? what gives La Fontaine's fables a moral dimension is that the animals acted in ways unnatural to their species perhaps that could give us a moral dimension too

yesterday's bomb blew up a large building in Oklahoma today buildings are blowing up at selected spots all over the world there is nothing random about this the the bird song is is loud and clear in my neighborhood there's even been a few days ago a white-throated sparrow series of clear rising tones usually heard only in the high cool mountains or deep woods one of my female students said it's a depressing fact that only male birds sing all the other women in the class nodded mournfully the next morning I went outside and checked saw and heard a female cardinal singing in such cases a single counter-example will suffice we might be ashamed only after the fact or after the image of a fact ex post fact O O O O O five Os in a line

O but ah ha but yes introductory handshake Christ died for his sins fast forward etch-a-sketch public phone rings rain holding the note misophilia now reveals our common ground with none to stand on to distinguish e.g., i.e., q.e.d., viz, quo animo, op.cit. etcet. shaded children eee-yal karoshi go whizward turn on the dark as if one were in kontrol all opposites subsumed now here insert the diacritical marks eggle over and now out nor now their nows the other nows all the other nows perforating the building
April 28, 1995

Philosophy & Puberty

Once when I was collecting specimens under an oak tree
I lost a view ... I saw
Our talk, our books.

Off with you, go on
run, scat! Don't come back
& every place a dog might go . . .

I found, among the other plants & weeds
Philosophy and Puberty,
A voice speaking the weather

In the middle of the night
Miss Clavel turned on the light
and said, "something is not right."

A buccaneeress pulling faces:
"If in danger, run to the woods
How faithful are your branches."

Miss Clavel ran faster & faster
and she said "please children do
tell me what is troubling you."

Out from under the light dress of childhood
The effect an idea has on the genitals;
When I made to touch it,

Meaning hides language from sight
I will appear Marked by my eyes

This boy was the sight of action
Never mind his eyes

It said in a firm voice
"Let me alone!
My oak tree is measured in privacy."

Papa got to the back door first
and busted into the kitchen.
"Hello kitchen!"

"I am a little century."

In the middle of the night
Miss Clavel turned on the light
and said, "something is not right."

Thus does she stand, bare as a year
Voices of a few birds excepted.

On stage, the american standard maudvillian
Slips on a chemical peel: time is precious,

In an old house in Paris that was covered with vines
Lived twelve little girls in two straight lines
They left the house at half-past-nine
In two straight lines, in rain or in shine
The smallest one was Madeline

Presence acts in the presence of direct stimulus
Give time, and with time, how to recognize
The day in my principle work.

(w/ thanks to Ludwig Bemelmas, Woody Guthrie, Sianne Ngai, & Arthur Schopenhauer)
May 1, 1995

should any we to date take into consideration a logarithmic table which assumes Fechner's law on the relationship between stimulus magnitude and sensation i.e. that the magnitude of sensation \( (S) \) is proportional to the logarithm of the stimulus magnitude \( (I) \) and the apparent increment in sensation declines with increasing levels of stimulation so that the picture that emerges is that when you've been suffering a lot and something happens which for others would be insupportable you hardly notice any change at all

then someone raised the question of the personal power quotient and a very smart wry frail retired physicist had flown in to Washington from Santa Monica to propose his version of a logarithmic table for the calculation of human suffering he said, My assumption is that suffering must be the logarithm of something, but the logarithm of what someone remarked almost just right then that past wars have left 85 million live anti-personal mines buried in 62 countries in any week a hundred or so people many of whom are children stumble into them and are killed is this an example of a 30% or 70% grey scale

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May 3, 1995

I Don't Remember

I don't remember what I wrote on the blackboard in my 7th grade math class that made the teacher so mad. I don't remember what they said to me in "the office." My math grades were always lousy after that.

I don't remember the name of Baretta's white bird.

I don't remember the French Revolution.

I don't remember how many times we went out before the guy she was living with found out; but she wanted him to anyway.

I don't remember how many times he used the phrase "conceptual martian."

I don't remember "asking for it."

I don't remember where I read that "from 1968 to 1970 the banks carpet-bombed America with free credit cards." That's the term they used—"carpet-bombed." Apparently in some zip-codes you would receive as many as five cards a week.

I don't remember if my great-grandfather was ever in a war.

I don't remember Zippy. That's a lie.

I don't remember rain.

I don't remember "being pulled forward toward a nexus of transformation."

I don't remember the position of Venus.

I don't remember reading anything that could legitimately be called information with regard to NAFTA.

I don't remember kegs of salt.

I don't remember the clarity which comes with seclusion from insight.

I don't remember the Dakotas, at all.

I don't remember Joe Brainard, except with this.
May 4, 1995

Dear Rod,

are you of the opinion that the pursuit of perfection is entirely frivolous that if anything being entirely quantitative it is the death that pursues us then what then or next whichever comes first I heard her say pair of keys or was it parakeets

Love / Joan

May 5, 1995

Dear Joan,

"Can we say two people have the same afterimage?"

"In which case would we say that they had two images exactly alike but not identical?"

No doubt there is much in inner experience that ought to be labeled inauthentic.

intery mintery cuttery corn
it goes by
cracking
some to so slowly
eroticize exaggerated
supper

"If you close your eyes you lose the power of abstraction"

What's still
fact
the discipline
of help but be

love,
Rod
Lisa Robertson
INDEX A: LYRIC OR PROHIBITIVE

BEFORE ALL TITLES WERE ABOLISHED
for those with no currency
rupture of vertically, to the plaza

CATHEXIS
by bringing to mind a person
who is dying
pink
the eyes
the police watched things

CLOTHING
or may not critique
the distinct sensations

CULTURE FROM
a ruin
sulky
sullen

DICTION AS A PRESSURE
confront in a small room
failure of utopia
like a building which closes
mass

EXPRESSION
negotiation of needs
such as trammels

FINALLY
economics of the moment

FOOD
in a state of decline

FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE
why distant objects please
only a narrow path

HASTINGS STREET
if beauty
this is utopian
or may not critique

HEALTHCARE
but my hands
I saw the fight

HER WORK
but without feet
from the window
in the military sense

N. feels hungry but after seven o'clock the city she found is jilted—for several weeks a place has been stolen by violence. N. decides to confront her small diction. With the sincerity she shares with all her class she steps off the curb. About this idea of N.'s health: oppositions are performed, and will commence to measure her clear little colour. Wholesome and luminous, as if fear pulsed from the narrow paths of a lyric, N. interrogates the failure of her fleshy utopia. Still, her needs position themselves within limits like a building which shuts, or the distinct

sensations witnessed from a window. N. must consider whether beauty may not critique her needs in the sense that distant objects jointly engage in a state of extreme excitement. Yet the streets only emphasize how mass sulks in a state of decline. N.'s clothes mark her as a collaborator: each garment indicates a point of reckoning or structures a certain access to the economics of the moment. Finally her work lends to her a minor freedom—there is a vaguely discernible border between N. and violence, something like an intangible neighbourhood. The woman
sitting on the steps of the old newspaper building said to N. in her clear low tone: I have been the victim of violence and N. knew suddenly that the idea of expression was only dominant if the subject felt no rupture. For this woman expression negotiated needs as trammels, and annotated the fearful ambiguity of a space just before entrance. Diction also has a geography which could be put in front as a function and which could require an accuracy of navigation. N. now thinks of diction as the curious ruins of power which still do strike.
writings he was able to articulate some more subtle arguments and certainly his understanding of the art of cooking and eating surpassed the standards by which most judge, yet the cookbook writing somehow bogged down in cookery, so to speak, not feeding the larger person.

Poetry, speaking as it does to the five senses as well as to other less palpable ones, is ideally suited to addressing the topic of cooking entirely. Language poets, as opposed to poets trying to versify prose, in particular, not content to languish in the idiom of the heart and the emotions, felt, true, deeper, creative, adjetival imagination, being today’s poets and being the poets I know best and perhaps least likely to take umbrage at this slight deviation from the doctrinaire which I might make in order to clarify for the novice just which part of speech we are cooking and begin a parboiled letter writing campaign against me personally.

Not that this is not true of other American and significant poets of today who, true to the standards of American democracy, allow freedom of expression as the first tenet of their constitution and would never dream of questioning whether an individual might have a valid alternative to the politics which the use of words puts in our mouths.

After writing the first draft of these recipes, I sent them to the poets from whom they are plucked.

Dear Fellow Poet, (I wrote)

Enclosed is your recipe, part of the Language Cook Book. Please feel free to revise it as you would like. Keep in mind that this is my book not yours and if your revisions do not in my view reflect an amplification and exaggeration of your theory / character / poetry / politics (projected or actual) then I will ignore your suggestions as well as your lawyer’s phone calls, summonses, and subpoenas except in so far as they will add to hyping and attracting audiences to this volume soon to be published as a mass market paperback in Japan where they appreciate a good laugh.

I have eliminated your names except in the cases where you gave me permission to use the possessive of your name in the title of each recipe. I have since of course heard that my dear friend Douglas Messerli is soliciting recipes from writers as well and I hope his effort will not prevent you from being mad at me that he is doing this.

One of the less honorable members of the group suggested I footnote which ingredients or functions of your recipe were added or amended by you in order that we can produce a second (authoritative), annotated, scholarly, variorum edition, hardbound to sell at even more outrageous prices to academies and libraries sucked into the neo-franco-frankfurter mode by squeaky professors.

In any case, let me know what you think.

Sincerely,

James Sherry

Early readers of this book, have said this is not cooking. Anyone can do this. It’s just messing around with food. I advise them to read the Crackers without Cheese recipe carefully for a rejoinder and that messing around with food is not for the uninitiated and you should not try this at home.

CRACKERS WITHOUT CHEESE

This recipe was derived from the famous Kung Pao concoction “For the Birds” which used fortune cookies. It is also related to the Tibetan cure for Herpes Zoster, usually transmitted to Vajrayana monks by their habit of french kissing yaks for enlightenment.

The charge that this is not cooking at all is answered in Engels’ letter to Marx, “What is cooking? Cooking is the application of labor to food and non-food ingredients to accumulate them for the diner.” The charge that this dish is finally not eaten by humans can be dismissed as speciesist, because food only passes through humans anyway on the way to the cosmos, and because no one ever thought to problematize the assumption that people had to eat using their mouths. This is a feast of restraint.

(serves God)

1 Box of crackers with shortest ingredients list on box
1 Starched, white, folded table cloth
1 High stack of dinner plates (more than 10)
1 Book of matches

Spend several weeks during which you are also getting married, starting a new business selling commercial air conditioning, training for the marathon, and writing the definitive tract on the “Barthes Brothers” during hours on the clock no one has yet dreamed of, researching the cracker question. Put the clean, starched, white table cloth on the table. Keep it folded up. Put the stack of dinner plates in the corner of the table and the book of matches on the topmost dinner plate.

Remove crackers from box. Place box off center on the table. Lay out crackers in neat rows on the table cloth so that no cracker touches any other. Stare intently at the crackers without moving them or you for 157 minutes. Get up suddenly and leave the room. Come back later and throw the crackers out by the bird feeder. Write a long dissertation attacking everything and everybody in your vicinity revealing your self-hatred.
BALONEY SANDWICH

White boys eat white bread and so on. There is no real need to explain this recipe which is a time honored American favorite even though Bologna might be an Italian city. These ingredients are intentionally bland, because although the dish is advertised as radical it is in fact only virtual radical, since any real spice be it culinary or emotional is too threatening and only the implication of spice will suffice.

(serves self)

1 Container prepackaged bologna (liverwurst may be substituted)
1 Loaf enriched white bread (must contain only “correct” ingredients)
1 Jar light yellow mustard
1 Grey or green flecked with gold formica top kitchen table with galvanized legs

Spread two or three slices of bologna on the table. Spread them as far apart from each other as they can be without seeming to be moved simply to the edges of the table. A useful hint is to draw a margin within the edges of the table about four to six inches from each edge and place the slices wholly within that margin.

Really you are using the center of the table around which to rotate a series of ellipses, but only the words margin and edge should inform the way you speak about positioning. Keying off the center is inevitable (STP), but questionable.

Radicalize the bologna by tearing off the plastic skin. If no plastic skinned lunch meat is available, don’t tell anyone and try to make the meat look as if it had a skin and you tore it off to make it more easily used by an eater you imagine is too dumb to know either that bologna is skinned or not or how to peel it if it has a skin. Place two slices of bread equally far apart as the bologna so that the pieces of bread are unrelated to each other or the bologna.

Note: this may necessitate moving the bologna configuration, but it is necessary to totalize the structure with every change while posturing a community-based theory. Spread the mustard, using a sharp pointed steak or long bread knife to avoid charges of instrumentality, on the side and legs of the table. If the table has leaves, pull the leaves out but not before spreading mustard between the leaf and the body of the table. Spread mustard correctly rather than liberally.

Eating Bologna Sandwiches Out:

If eating this dish in a restaurant, eat each ingredient separately, by deconstructing the sandwich. Make sure you taste everyone else’s food at your table while scoffing at the other tables in the restaurant. Whip out your pocket calculator and figure out how much the sandwich cost. Do not add your percentage of the tax into the kitty as a protest against the way taxes are allocated. Subtract from the total the difference between the waitress’ salary and a first-year lawyer’s salary. Put down exact change and leave before anyone else can add up their share, saying you have to go to an avant-garde plumbing/dance collaboration and only the first 17 people who arrive with their calculators, subtly explaining why you carry the thing around to restaurants, will be admitted.
STAGE DIRECTION A voice is coming from center stage which is illuminated with blinding lights, so the source of the voice cannot be made out.

VOICE
you are my sun—shine
my only

It's a matter of whether or not they'll listen kid

viridity of a shell-game operator

the mere word 'groin' induces

But you've got to understand where he's coming from

STAGE DIRECTION Lower a scrim with the compound word 'no-win' printed in large letters. Behind it two men locked in a classic wrestling hold can be briefly perceived. Light fades before voice recommences.

VOICE
my cuadrilla
my cuban heel

a cup-of-tea, a cup-of-tea
more at sensibility

Of course it's different once you get to know him

Why reminisce in words when they only call up blank walls?
The flow control manager steps out onto the mat, the stub of a fine cigar clutched between his lips.

MANAGER
No win, my cuadrilla.

I was the leading champion of a lost cause . . .

VOICE
What hears the ear close with meaning?

Among on the one hand, amidst on the other
insensible to the distraction

People don't think in dialect, do they?

words marshalling forces just this side of the curtain

The reports of my death have been greatly under-reported.

Please do try to appreciate the utility of this necessary compromise.

STAGE DIRECTION Lower scrim upon which the words "you pressed the 'eject'" are printed. Exit to music.
We're just plants trying to grow leaves.

As a movement choreographer, I write, design film and sound, and collaborate with other artists in these fields. The work becomes the surround of a transmission, the shift where separates are recomprehended by practicing each other: "poetic" writing scores the sound; a film storyboard articulates a dance's time; someone else's language translates to an instruction for dance duets; movement description becomes a theoretical text.

Currently the filmmaker Henry Hills and I are co-directing our second film together, Mechanics of the Brain, a faux science documentary as a radical dance film. Titled after and initially paralleling Vsevolod Pudovkin's film from 1926 of the same name which documented Pavlov's experiments on conditioned reflexes, our film is an interplay of movement, rear screen projections, shadow-play, home science experiments, and dance in the laboratory, edited to accelerate some past and current ideas about the mind and behavior. Poet Bruce Andrews will "lecture" as a mad scientist. Composer John Zorn will design the soundtrack.

The dance movement for the film comes from two sources: Hush Comet and Swarthmore. Hush Comet is a choreographic composition already performed in New York (April 1995, with original music/sound from Bruce Andrews), and made with the expectation it would shape the film Henry Hills and I had started to plan. The Swarthmore material was composed for four dancers while in residence at Swarthmore College, PA (summer 1995) and made day by day without a thought about a finished performance but with an eye toward the film.

The methods for developing the material are also distinct. Before each rehearsal for Hush Comet, I came up with material from books on home science experiments and science textbooks. Each resulting section of Hush Comet has underlying scientific principles mostly about physical properties of matter, such as the physics of balance, atomic and machine energy, the postures and physical activity of scientists, and the qualities of matter (as if you yourself are the activated matter)—in other words, direct physical reality. This is an elaborately articulated dance with exact partnering and detailed interdependencies.

The Swarthmore Material, made solely for the film, has a seepier, vined spontaneity. Insinuating images, psychic realities of consciousness, ways of testing states of mind. The subject (?) perceives (?) itself (?), from the inside (?). Yet there is no divorce from physical reality inside the body. Daily topics were chosen from The Oxford Companion to the Mind. Movement was conceived of as a solo for you first, but your self is second—how it's organized radiating out of topics such as gestalt, body schemas, iconic mind, haptic touch, bilingualism, blinking, depersonalization, pseudodementia, etc.

After shooting in July 1995 and in order to edit and structure the more than two hours of footage, Henry Hills and I started to think about organizing it in terms of a soundtrack. What follows is the collaborative score for composer John Zorn to work with in the studio. The score includes an opening, themes based on the dancers, as well as some of the rear screen loops including major scenes from the Pudovkin film, plus my writing about the movement sections from Hush Comet.

1. Science Movement sections: (15 sec to 90 sec each)
   - **Measuring**—Sizing up celestial distance with ancient instruments. Star gazing. Sci Fi. Fast objects that fade out. Incommensurable distance returning to the infinitely divisible unit. Precision set-ups that build energy, coordination, and momentum to reach escape velocity, orbiting to a spiral path and landing. Pinball sweeping glass to the stratosphere.
   - **Pendulum**—Perpetual motion frictions out. Swinging through an arc with a point of contact. Ping-ponging.
   - **Houdini**—Tight constructions weirdly interlocked and balanced, slowly revealing a final shape. Puzzley. Prismatic object from all angles. Contained, boxed group reproduction.
   - **Bump**—Uncooperative matter trying to occupy the same space
at the same time. Energy, momentum, and power becoming a machinic mix of levers and pulley. Producing a product. Finding the center of percussion—the exact spot to deliver a blow without causing vibration.

**Macbeth**—Witches cauldron. Life in the test tube. Boiling over to a boom leaving angels in messy pots.


**Pecking**—The physics of ballet. Collapsing the balanced support of a way-too-beautiful classical position by small minute increments. Morse code repair. Maintain composure or fight back. To a jolly withdrawing staccato.

**Dissection**—Slow methodical taking apart to reveal inner workings. Queasy vertigo grid. Coming back alive, seeing part of your body over there. Dissection of the primeval soup as it reproduces.

**Sean’s solo**—Mr. Wizard electrocuted. Buzzsaw ballet. The pathetic, always so upright.

**Sean and Sally duos**—Montage of 20 fractured scientific theories in four minutes or less. Extreme juxtapositions. Clear, wacky motifs.

2. **Mind Movement sections:** (30 to 90 sec each)


**Arm/Head Phrase**—The functional architecture and visual image of the brain at work. The organization of the network as if all 4 dancers are part of the same brain receiving and giving off signals simultaneously. The "aura" of the mind as if you can see/hear it working.

**Doppelganger**—Confronting own ghostly double. Out of the body, beside oneself, somnambulism, pseudo-dementia, levitation, delirium, depersonalization. A double that can act independently of own body.

**Subliminal Perception**—Perception without awareness. As structured by survival, the order in which you must pay attention to external stimuli: pain, tactile, auditory, visual, olfactory, thermal, vestibular, kinesthetic, visceral. The unconscious and its moment to moment operation. Excess or added stimulation of varied sorts influencing your interpretation or ability to perform a movement.

**Neurotransmitters**—The chemlab in the brain. The chemicals that carry a nervous impulse across the synapse. Can either excite or inhibit a receiving neuron altering its electricity. Visualizing the rate of energy metabolism in brain cells. The quickly vanishing small amount of brain drugs on every impulse. A rapidfire cueing system.

**Response Time**—The perceptual lag which makes us always behind the world. The step behind the stimulus and learning to control the gap based on feedback and learned systems. Eventually an action becomes smooth and less hurried. The feeling of having all the time in the world while performing. Efficient. Also generating own thinking: chance, free associating, experimentation to be ahead of reliance on response.

**Gaze**—highly stylized very focussed examinations of individual objects by the group but facing different axes and acting independently but in strict unison timing.

3. **Rock & Roll Theme and Reprise** (for titles) (45 sec)

4. **Opening Section to Parallel Pudovkin Film**—outdoors (the rest of the film entirely indoors)
   - - zoo animals (neurotic polar bear, playful elephant, penguins)
   - - splashing water, swimming
   - - group of nude horsemen riding bareback into river (45 sec total)

5. **Laboratory Ambience** (2 min)

6. **Major Rear-screen loops:**
   - - fireworks (30 sec)
   - - surgery montage (30 sec) leading into exposed brain matter (30 sec)
   - - synapse plunge (continuous animated zoom into ever more magnified areas of the brain) (1 1/2 min)
   - - magnified video brain scan (electronic medical machinery) (1 1/2 min)

7. **Other Scenes from Pudovkin Film**
   - - forced-feeding machine with orphan strapped in (30 sec)
   - - brief birth section (15 sec)
   - - child with hole in cheek, attached to funnel from which saliva is flowing (15 sec)
blindfolded, shaved head boy doing weird wrist bends (15 sec)
dance of the stimulated amputated frog legs (45 sec)

8. Leitmotifs for the cast (either several 10-15 sec themes each with a couple of variations or more; likely pieces that can be cut up for fragments whenever character is introduced or emphasized):

the men—
  Phillip Karg—choirboy with a glimmer of the psychotic
  Sean Curran—staccato, jerky, sinister magician, mad scientist/devil

the women—
  Alejandra Martorell—latina bonita, quirky moody romantic theme
  Laura Staton—lean & crazy hardcore neurotic, sexy/goofy
  Kate Gyllenhaal—sculptured face; stern, persistent
  Sally Silvers—cartoony with jagged edge rhythm

Still from Little Lieutenant. A film by Henry Hills and Sally Silvers.

Carolyn Steinhoff Smith
FROM . . . AND IF, TAKING FROM A CAGE
AN EYE

Kansas exits. The yellow spotlight is on the pedestal, five seconds. The eye slide goes off. Darkness. In the dark the pedestal is removed. Light comes up on the front of the stage. Two Men enter with a large mirror. They place it so that the audience is looking at itself. Sounds of chairs being set up, chains rattling, locks clicking.

SUSAN'S VOICE “At the beginning, one can hear a sound and tell immediately that it isn’t a human being or something to look at.” #

Behind the mirror a circle of chairs is set up facing outward. They are chained together. Sitting in a chair with her back to the audience is Sham Sham Outward-Facing. Chandelier-Idea and Sacklet are also sitting in chairs. The chairs are chained together, and so are the women. The women are wearing latex gloves. In some chairs hard plastic girl dolls are sitting. Some have missing arms, legs or heads.

A glass door in a frame is placed upstage. A large number dispensing machine is brought on and placed by the door. This machine dispenses latex gloves. There are windows of nubbly cheap plastic behind which blurred forms of people can be seen. They are moving vaguely, aimlessly behind the panels. Two Men enter, unhook the mirror, exit with it. Lights up on stage. The Truth/Fantasy Pair are seen talking with Someone outside the door.

SHAMSHAM ShamSham Outward-Facing is sitting in the corner pleased at the progress. MARK'S VOICE (singing) forgeries

Someone enters through glass door, looks at her watch, takes a pair of gloves from the number machine, puts them on.
SUSAN'S VOICE (shrilly) Eighty six  MARK'S VOICE Eighty six

Lights flash on and off. Code Enforcers behind panels murmur and their movements increase. Kansas enters, carrying a birdbath pedestal. He sets it down. He is wearing latex gloves. He goes off, comes back on carrying the birdbath top, sets it on the pedestal. Its water is represented by red foil.

As Kansas does this, Susan and Mark speak.

MARK'S VOICE (singing)  SUSAN'S VOICE
It's ShamSham  It's ShamSham.
It's Mall of America.  It's Mall of America
No. It's Kansas.  No. It's Kansas.

KANSAS (sitting at a desk downstage) "At least as far as the eye can see"*

SOMEONE (entering through glass door, taking a seat, chaining herself to the other women) I want a kind of meeting that is sinful. A blanketing of the streets. A rush of opium-tinged minutiae or cowl or spell

SHAMSHAM a photo no bigger than a
SHAMSHAM basket
SHAMSHAM on the inside of the other air.

A black and white slide appears of two dolls strewn on the floor, with some of their parts separated from their torsos, but lying near them.

KANSAS Two girls not in school

SHAMSHAM SACKLET
CHANDELIER IDEA
Today is  Today is
not  not
a school  a school
day  day

SHAMSHAM “The history of sublimation is advanced by sublating the added-value of the forgery.”*

KANSAS A society has to ban forgeries.”*

The Truth/Fantasy Pair looks through the door, the two whisper inaudibly to each other, look at their watches. They come through the door. An electric high-pitched hum begins.

KANSAS “A man is a man and a sound is a sound.”#

The Code Enforcers behind the screen begin to move more, also more deliberately.

TRUTH/FANTASY PAIR (to Someone) Did you take a number?

KANSAS “Any sound can follow any other.”#

* Luce Irigiray, The Speculum of the Other Woman
# John Cage, A Year from Monday
Fiona Templeton
REAL DEAD AND FAKE LIVING: NOTES FOR THE ISSUE ON HYBRID FORM

Once I went to the country to write poetry. I stared at the grass and no poetry happened. Because nothing had language. I went for a walk. I found the wet bark of a white birch. I took it home, dried it a little and put it in the typewriter. I wrote, “Poetry doesn’t grow on trees.” I wet it and curled it back onto a tree. I found the bark of ash, beech and pine. I took it home, wet it and sat by the fire moulding it against my soft body till it dried hard. I labelled the grass, the stream, what they did; and all their prepositions. I laid my books on the woodpile. Violence both water and fire. Cortex in verba novissima venit.1 Bark grew into her last words.

These notes could grow in many directions, as I may seem to inhabit a space of juncture, of both and neither. But “hybrid form” is a postmodern notion in foregrounding culture as material, recent circumscriptions as given, “containing natural cultures,” cut-and-paste-able with all signs of collision showing as signs of the contemporary. An imperialism of ahistoricity as normative as its countermanded forms. An imperialm of ahistoricity as normative as its countermanded forms. Amnesiacs reinvent the wheel from tires.

Cultural forms are neither naturally occurring nor naturally bounded. In what genre were the tablets of stone? Restructuring and recombination of form is what happens anyway, and how they happened.

The coincidence (hardly) of the time-period of Western history with a rationalist impetus to define, that is, to draw around, that is to possess, as if a beginning, unconsciously identifies certain forms with “culture.”

Superficial recombination does no catalytic violence, is no event. Or just forms. This isn’t the same as what we may be reminded of in the end or even as means that may be used.

Vested interests are enormously formative of culture: in buildings, in jobs, in hierarchies, in habits, in not wondering. Recombined chips off them may haul all the baggages even if orphaned from easy welcome.

Recycled representations may critique the representation but not critique its seeing. Don’t let multicultural mean domesticating all corners of content—ask not, what does it show me, but what does it mean in its own context, what do its own terms? And what would I do to come to it as its asking needs? The skepticism of knowing too much is a cultural island. Irony reads artifacts as given but its own artifacts may be indistinguishable from the given, the gesture of being chosen adrift from which was supposed to lend them value.

Juxtaposition is a syntactical possibility, prediscovery. Hybrid form is cooking by combining recipes (or brands) rather than food. Saying this is not a value-judgement; we’re talking size of units, the sit-com, for example, as morpheme. Whose? The larger the cultural morpheme, the smaller the culture, the less speakable the language.

I’m wary of talking hybrid forms demanding talk of forms as limits. Let forms let in and out, breathe generosity, who cares which side of the organic. Claiming back ground for room for dynamic shape-shifting and argument rather than self-marginalizing to “breaking ground.” There’s broken ground all over the place, suburban multi-terrain vehicles, and title music.

What would meet in a hybrid? Techniques, bodies, variations? What form of form? To form?

Currently I prefer hybrid fields. Art infiltrating, and -able.

Forms taken arise from the questions asked.

Form is reciprocal to the means of perception applied and demanded.

We do not read as we see. In Prison Sentences,2 I wrote too much to see, too placed to publish. I change hats from desk to stage, though I expect audiences to wear them one on top of another. But place is in my writing hand. And however seamless or otherwise the written or spoken surface, it may have incorporated language both constructed in reflection and responsive to moment, mine or whoever’s.

I effect form by thinking about perception, and about the potential of a form rather than its usual manifestations. Such potential may occur and open anywhere in the spectrum of a form, extant or otherwise. Different forms structure thinking and working differently. In what-if scenarios, collisions constitute not so much products as sites of production, which may isolate themselves as new beginning or move off into discovery; beyond the dateable aesthetic of first collision, is how the collision is worked through if the what-if is to be carried on consistently. The Theatre of Mistakes3 began with, not ended with mistakes.

Yet Realities4 is an experiment.

In a workshop for Realities the method actor couldn’t act next to someone who denied his fiction. However virtuosically believable his performance, the one thing he couldn’t do was sustain it without that belief being assumed. “Virtuosically”? Or virtually? Given the project, I
of course don’t want this to be necessarily so. But am I then denying that aspect of a possible reality, the cynicism of interest in multiple point-of-view that allows me to conceive of the project, being perhaps only one of its realities?

Cynicism means smiling. Like a dog.


From a letter to Jena Osman, fall 1994:\footnote{From a letter to Jena Osman, fall 1994.\footnote{From a letter to Jena Osman, fall 1994.}}

"Corpsing" in performance is the "illegitimate" laughter of performers, i.e. violating the surface/artifice, usually because the artifice has been broken, the real has entered the artifice. It is by nature a repressed laughter. Corpsing doesn’t allow the real to be incorporated into the artifice.

I . . . just get back from doing . . . RECOGNITION,\footnote{RECOGNITION, a solo performance which had just become so because of the death of my collaborator, who is nevertheless incorporated into the performance, inadequately, or course, in various ways including video; from being about the fictions we create for ourselves in order to deal with reality, the performance became about what happens when meaning is radically altered by the intervention of the real into artifice, and not just the meaning of the artifice. After Michael died, I changed the ending of the piece (in which we play Michael and Fiona, but which is specifically not documentary) to acknowledge that, in fact to include the image of the dying body; the remaining piece as it would have been also underwent a total change of meaning, became activated into a new reference. Then when I performed the work the first part was rendered opaque by the (for me) clarity of what was to come. By the second performance, the first part was coming out of my mouth like toads and the action divided me into doing it and the octopus of my incomprehension of its meaning now; an inauthenticity of performance (and if I didn’t know what it meant, how would they?) created by the irruption of the supposedly authentic acknowledgment of the real that followed it. Then the second half became pure performance, no longer actually authentic since I’d rehearsed it, but more apparently transparent than the first half. To solve the problem of the first half, which also raised barriers against the second, I decided to let the audience in on the struggle to make mean, before anything; but wouldn’t that render suspect the complexity of my language, signalling its meaninglessness, when in fact it did still mean as construct, simply not performatively (which my friend Adrian Heathfield would argue means ethically)? Can the audience be let in on the struggle to make mean? Besides, even if that worked, and they could stay with the meaning of the effort and its play between the levels of meaning, what would be rendered superfluous would be the end, which in these terms would have a closure now inappropriate. Although after the end there’s another short end, a return to the fictional, life after death; which is what sent a ripple of uncontrollable corpsing through the audience, no longer to stand it, it seems.

Not separate from the impulse (in Michael’s case, also a kind of agreement) to allow to continue to act after death, and the resistance, for human reasons, to this becoming artificial. As well as a need to restitute within action a non-reifying relation to the dead in general, inside our culture which continues taboos around the terrain as it loses familiarity with or sanction for behavior there. I would rather tread strange ground there, to know my incorporation.

And from one to Adrian Heathfield, in response to a paper in which he states, “In theatre, as in ethics, the knowledge that you need the most is to know how to act?”

About your bringing together the meanings of "act": this is something I’ve thought about a lot—if the questionnaire in You—The City, “Do you think you can act?”, where the question does not become one but remains two; and its later reappearance just before the crossover, before the client becomes a performer simply because he or she is perceived as such. Also what I said at my lecture about Thought/Death, presence versus drama, performer as subject or as object. As you’ve probably noticed my war dances around similar issues in relation to Recognition. But your rapprochement of authenticity and fiction makes me suspect your sleight-of-logic because the connection isn’t a logical one; first, fiction and action are necessarily related only in a historical moment of the aesthetics of theatre, which is already well punctured; and secondly, your Hegelian-type reading of the ethical definition of acting is limited; what’s missing from both is a mention of the purely physical definition. I think this is important because it’s the inscription upon or even making of reality by the body that allows a concept of the ethical to exist (Recognition: “it’s the body for whom bread is moral”) . . . And it’s the movement from doing to being seen to do that brings in theatre. A fictional reading happens, then, when what is being looked at is not what is being seen. But it’s that both what is being looked at is what is happening and that it’s not that makes this not the same as reality. Isn’t it? Or am I projecting?! Also, the ethical act appears as a qualitative point; an act becomes ethical depending on its repercussive value and consciousness thereof; it’s a kind of absolute and not really admitting of choices within it, including irony.

If I give the game away, or at least let it be known that there is a game that could be given away, thus making the audience complicit in the (acted or otherwise) struggle to keep intact the now (ethically?) meaningless “piece” that begins the piece, and so complicit in the non-transparency or the action, does that part of the piece then become more authentic than the represented authenticity of the disintegration of the ending? So the fictional is the authentic as long as we know
it's the fictional, and the dead piece becomes the alive one while the utter change of meaning at the end, effected by the clarity of death as the real, in turn resolidifies to dead because fundamentally inapplicable to re-making-mean. Well, the piece was supposed to be about the fictions we invent in order to deal with reality; now it's that life consists of fictions in order to be active; and the real is dead/th. So the reestablishing of a fiction at the very end of the piece (the short dialogue after I pull the plug) saves it, maybe.

As Wendy Walker just said to me: The real is an idea; whereas fiction is made.

She worries about the ethics of making artifice from a real person in history.

I worry about not, though acquaintance or love resists history. And perform because larger than logic, a knowledge less aside. The "real" is also complex, constructed and tacitly or otherwise supposed agreed. Realities will play beyond the illusion of that commonality. Okay, gladiatorial.

Now the "fiction" at the end of the piece is cut, as the "real" end was written before experiencing it. Which I now say, and leave with admitting utter change of meaning without knowing to what, and Michael's laughter. There was neither closure nor not, till e/irruption. Whose wound?

As for the ethics of showing, ethics are also complex and constructed. The obscene is the off-scene, where death's usual rituals have shoved too far aside. Many I know who live atheist enact unrelated religion at others' death because life hasn't admitted death. Against New York's siege of AIDS, the erosion of huge parts of our world, we have no structure I can live; there is no life-cycle here, no general societal mobilization to a cause, no greed identification by the feet at which to lay blame; sanctification doesn't ring true; these deaths are lived, but hidden, often slow, lived with. And yet we did not know certain actions, like holding death's jaw closed.

Bataille masturbated in front of his mother's corpse, and I accepted my father's death by his being in me; these are personal relations and contain their own refusals. Recognition is Michael's refusal.

I offer no solution to be imitated but am making visible. At the mass for Michael's funeral, the Catholic symbol of Christ's body being offered for our salvation became grotesquely inappropriate; how unconscious seemed the shifting "he," the talking of "eat my body, drink my blood" over a man who had died of a disease that made his body and blood taboo, fatal to mingle with or incorporate. Even if I'd believed and taken communion, I'd have wanted to vomit it. Nor do I specify a topology of relation to describe a common one. Let this be a case—as case is how art functions.

There are dead people on film all the time—not just the acted but the past actors. What then is the relation when I interact with the video? This will change, necessarily. But people do struggle with the death of close ones. Art so often shows this by how it affects "normal" behavior, how well people deny it or not. People shuddered when I spoke of my experience in relation to my Dad's death, saw it as a subject to distract me from for my own good, as deathlike, depressing, depressed, contaminant. When for me it was astonishment, even gratefulness at mystery lived, a normalizing. But what is artifice of behavior, particularly in relation to death? There is no site of authenticity verifiable, as all living behavior is other to it. Grief's behavior is a mix of control and not. The control need not then be purely negative either; why not constructed, thinking, experiencing?

I won't possess my own death in this sense either. Others will. But I can perform my own thought now, a place on the cycle of thought where abstraction returns to the literal, but of the body. Here we do live, concretely, life and a sign of it, both operations, the "real" as a product of the possible and actual, the positive flaw. Vulnerable object and active subject. I plead not the morbid but the mortal. Traditional western thinking of the other, the absolute, arises from directionality, opposition in relation to what is not life, a putting it outside, and so conceives a desire I can't relate to. Even Levinas, for example, "discovers" his philosophy of relation as a shoring up against the split. Of course western death is female. And we females? Our relation is less fictional. Birth's cycles are born and die in us alive. I'm gendering here in a bodysearch.

When I write the word "mortal" people keep reading "moral." But I refuse the hellfire fear I suspect behind their dyslexic slip. Moral's behavior.

Cybrids plug in, to gender-specific sockets. Post-partum, so far. It's safe to do violence with machines? But Arnie can't die, the ultimate sequel-friendly; immortals terminate others. It's easier to get funded for technology than for bodies, those soft costs sans bar codes. Though now I contain metal; intervention, unasked. A few years ago I wanted to call a performance group Soft Costs, but the idea was hailed with shock as economic suicide.

The other possible name for the group was Long Pigs, which is
what a tribe of cannibals called their white meat; performance attendance is high-order consumption, its (art-/time-) object gone by the end. But I like how my forms do grow together, sometimes breeding versions back into separate forms. So importantly, into and with time. The bark may be worse than the bite. Critic means one who separates, but to me has always sounded like biting, teeth on edge. Bites in two. Bites into the latest words. Who enters who?

Here I am in Slovenia writing on borders, about, along, against and not them. Edges that cut deepest when they run through the heart of things, two as existence, or more. Since I was here last there are two Benettons, and Titova Cesta (Avenue) has been renamed after the towns (mostly in other countries) to which it leads. I'm looking at last year's picture of the Bosnian woman hanging from a tree by the neck with the belt of her dress just off the road from what to what.

1. From Ovid's Metamorphoses, the story of Phaethon's sisters.
2. "Cells of Release": an installation occupying a cell-block of an abandoned panopticon prison, the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia. I spent six weeks writing a text on a continuous ribbon that wove in and out of the cells, one cell per day.
3. "The Theatre of Mistakes": an interdisciplinary performance company, 1974-81, which I co-founded with Anthony Howell and Michael Greenall.
4. "Recognition": an ongoing performance project, for which I'm writing 5 pieces with overlapping texts, each to be directed by a director or artist from a different aesthetic or culture, and which will eventually come together in improvised interaction. One subtext of the work is Ovid's Metamorphoses.
5. In response to an essay titled "Corpse Genres" in which she uses the term "corpseing" to describe an operation in writing or art of slippage from the frame.
6. Recognition is the first of the Realities pieces, originally a duo. In the solo version I perform live, interacting in various relations with Michael Ratonski on videotape, where he begins performing onstage, then at home, then in hospital, then in outtakes of his own words; I also substitute for him, explain what would have happened, pretend his physical presence, act within my own fiction unrelated to him, etc. The work asks the question of how to represent the experience of another person, particularly one of extremity.
7. In response to his paper, "Aesthetic Space, Consciousness, and the Ethical Self."
8. For the second Realities piece.
Anne Waldman
FROM IOVIS

TU M'
She pays a visit to ancestral stomping ground of Philadelphia—to the museum with famous Duchamps. You would like to be here too, among the playful artifacts that strum on your attention. And the duty is to scribe an impression. That it is wry is easy, that it survives in a kind of mental quandary is difficult. The inability to see the face, for example, in the violent tableau, at the same time you know it's perfectly safe (there is a sweet guard at the door) a shiver resounds in the body. A brittle sensation. Marcel Duchamp, enigmatic, voyeuristic, a master of chance still mirrors back your own expectation.

TU M'

pro

< long

lang >
& sounded

<gage

on the tongue a guage>

eyes & gaze
gouge>
as if wounded

<gage>

removed

gauze

inside a fallen garden

voile>

water

<gage>

rape

he said art life

.......or art "i"

fice

dictum tu m'
tu m’aime
perhaps or the head is bent to peer through, pierce, or shatter glass a chemical beaker breaks alembic words are offhand off stage an aside to Marcel's game smoking

\littoral

why retinal?

pet

peut -être
tête

homme

age
d'or

door

2 peepholes

adore

rotate

retinue

resembling a feather

resembling a pinnace

[et tu]
objet dart,
mock amuck
in scribe
bid,
or, bidden,
mid,
pasque-fleur
or, mien of a philosopher, sleight of hand

at midsummer
culture,
sign it repeating a non-
menclature
numinous
or hard to be sure—numerous

IRON age
when ready made for the

Arose
a gender enamelled
a man in the middle of his living
of most
in them
a bottom nature to himself

always
being
made
to
know
more eros

less tribal
toward the darker subject

try actuality
or
epistolary mode
made a mistake asking me
a thing where wanted
use of me
so write
words back
serving
a serviceable said-so
old blood serving
he said writing,
wanting me to serve
sleep on the large glass
singular
sleep on the small valise
pillowed now
pillaged
the spoils that become art

sort out
tout
redoubtable weakness
spin spine
like out of "in" longing
(longing)

"in" longing

plastique.

bluffs (puffs)

plastique.

monk-art

limber

closeted not a fool

raconteur

wrist longing

tude nude tomb

penance for an age

inscribed

inscribed

inscribed

inscribed
Attention is what I can never manage. Despite the bureaucracies of my intentions, there is always too much to register. The relentlessness of what there might be to know, to feel, to see, to understand, lets me break myself beyond any principle of ordering, so that what of me is not bureaucracy comes to recognize its own overflow, its opening. Attention comes to be, in the very marks it makes on my body, the sign of living more intensely than anything that could be brought to control or coherence. There—something has happened, again, and the mere fact that I could not possibly know all that it might be is what tells me I'm real.

Inside those public, narrowly ideological structures that may crush but do not contain the unknowability of living, attention has been reduced to little more than the truth that almost everything has been forgotten. The language of mass media, of institutions, of political parties, of whatever has forgotten its own unknowability, suggests by its emptiness that almost nothing is being attended, that public structures have tried to make the world their own mirror and have been able to make of it nothing worth seeing. Such public structures see only in terms of their own control, which can kill but will never become, since becoming is what they had to forget in order to institute control.

Perhaps it would be useful to think of language as that which has been deemed worthy of receiving attention. Language, that is, is a way of embodying those perceptions considered significant. I use the passive "has been deemed" and "considered" because it's not clear at this time which individuals or contexts, if any, are aware that attention must be understood as active before its very impossibility can help return consciousness not to control but to life. I would like to say that poetry is the most likely place for writing to make attention active. But at best I can say that poetry might be used by writers to make attention active again, to make it not simply the passive acceptance of pre-determined public definitions of significance.

Each piece of language reveals what it has given attention to, and what has escaped its notice. In general, what escapes a piece of language reveals the inevitable overflow of life. But in the case of a particular piece of writing, the writing as a process of attention can be understood by looking at what the writing has given attention to, and what it has ignored. Attention is not simply an issue of subject matter. The form of a piece of writing gives a particular act of attention its structure. What has been perceived is always a result of the form of the words—how perception emerges and passes in the language is as important as what perceptions emerge and pass. Does a form hierarchize attention, defining some things as structurally more central than others? Does it treat all perceptions as structurally of equal centrality? Does the form let attention flow evenly from perception to perception, does it let attention develop or scatter or crumble? The tension of attention is not a struggle of form vs. formlessness but a complex negotiation of a variety of possible forms which in specifically differing ways always give attention and fail to give attention to the possibilities of being.

I'm tempted to characterize my own attention, as a human being, as obsessive. I return endlessly to the same scenes. Taken to its absolute limit, such obsession would be insane—who wrote that the mark of the madman is to repeat himself forever? My writing has often been an attempt to disrupt my own tendencies of attention—the language on the page as block against, and dispersal of, the obsessive returns of the language of my mind. My books *Complications From Standing In A Circle* and *Every Day Is Most Of My Time* are both attempts to create an active attention through techniques that disrupt what I am otherwise prone to think—in the first book by using words extrinsic to my own "natural" vocabulary, thus forcing me to use words not already congealed in my consciousness, in the second by using a formal structure demanding frequent shifts in the focus of attention and a conscious undermining of conventional distinctions of attention, such as that between the supposedly trivial and the supposedly serious.

The process of attention I am discussing here, and various disruptions of it, is in no way merely a private, personal, individual, or narcissistic activity, though it has elements of all those possibilities. Attention, though primarily located in an individual's mind, is inevitably an external, material, social process. What could my attention possibly attend but impressions of all that exists beyond me? Attention is exactly the language of contact. Which is to say that by definition, attention, when active, opens the boundaries of who I am.
Attention in Poetry (a dialogue with Bill Tuttle)

Attention in poetry, for me, grows primarily from the words themselves, that the language of the poem, in its materiality does not close off the materials around it—rooms, faces, trees, social organizations, etc.—but becomes a place where those other materials can resonate and be recognized in their complexity as contingencies of the words themselves. Attention in poetry for me implies the choice to make the poem as resonant as possible towards all that it is not.—Mark Wallace

V. N. Volosinov: “each word, as we know, is a little arena for the clash and criss-crossing of differently oriented social accents. A word in the mouth of a particular individual person is a product of the living interaction of social forces.” Choice for the poet involves active attention, listening to these intersecting “accents.” More than we’re sometimes allowed. Erving Goffman in Frame Analysis chooses to examine what “persons are allowed (or obliged) to treat as their official chief concern, not whether or not they actually do so.” But of course you & I might choose the “unofficial”— unauthorized.—Bill Tuttle

So attention can be—probably always is—radical, a reshaping of any social given in the reality of the particular. The potentials of attention cannot be contained.—Mark Wallace

But framing an individual act of attention within the act of writing the poem of the moment, of pinning down each multi-accentual word, of keying it into the yellow light of the LED—I “select” this word—an act of attempted containment. Paying attention both to what you said and what you didn’t.—Bill Tuttle

As some sort of total responsiveness, attention is impossible. You can’t respond to everything all the time (would you want to? I’m not sure). That is, I’m often struck by the ways in which I can’t (and often won’t) be attentive. As Robert Creeley, I think, once said, when I’m tired I don’t want to think about the social implications of sitting in a chair. In its moment, attention is a choice towards the particular from out of an uncontainable multiplicity. It’s no less necessary for that; we can’t live every way, but we’ll choose to live some way, and that choice matters.—Mark Wallace

What adds to all the implications and accents of our words as they echo in the hollow of our palate, is that they also choose us. Our attention is itself a product of the forces to which we willfully turn our attention. This is our problem and our permission. I am going to listen to what is listening to me. This will happen, anyway—“without your having to do anything about it” (Ashbery, “The System”). —Bill Tuttle
Janet Zweig
MIND OVER MATTER

To make *Mind over Matter*, I fed a computer three sentences:

- *I think therefore I am.* —Descartes
- *I am what I am.* —Popeye
- *I think I can.* —The Little Engine That Could

I programmed the computer to randomly generate every possible grammatical sentence from the combination of those sentences. When the piece is on display, the printer generates sentences which fall into the basket, slowly lifting the rock. Below are some of the sentences written by the computer.

* I am what I can think.
* I can think therefore I can think I can think.
* I can think I am what I think.
* I can think therefore I can think I think.
* I think I am.
* I think I can think.
* I can think what I can.
* I am therefore I can think what I can.
* I am what.
* I think I can think what I can think.
* I can think what I am I think.
* I am I am.
Where to go next...

POLLY APFELBAUM is an artist who lives and works in New York City. Her work has appeared in recent group exhibitions at the Corcoran Biennial, High Museum of Art, and Postmasters Gallery. LUTZ BACHER lives and works in Berkeley. Jim & Sylvia appeared at the Pat Hearn Gallery in New York this past winter. PERRY BARD’s work has been most recently shown at ’TZ Art, Livestock Gallery, and Barbara Pollack (all in NYC), as well as at the Southeast Museum of Photography in Daytona Beach, Florida. JIM BRASHEAR studied literature and cultural theory at Brown University and writing at San Francisco State University. As brash@mills.edu, he is currently exploring computers and electronic music at Mills College for productive ways that writing can exist within and interface with other media. He is still in recovery from growing up in and leaving Oklahoma. LEE ANN BROWN’s Polyverse is forthcoming from Sun and Moon. BRAD BUCKLEY writes about his work: “My work is an uninterrupted or seamless project that has been the very core of my concerns for the past decade, and embraces an interrogation of the cruel, the corrupt and those who would undertake to persecute or build a regime of enclosure whether moral, social or intellectual. By reformulating the question of morality in terms that one could consider as the moral summit and linking it with a discourse of the site and the eroticisation of space, a transgressive field becomes operative.” MARY BURGER’s writing has appeared in Lingo, Mirage#4/ Period(ical), Tinfish, and Open 24 Hours. Her prose work, Bleeding Optimist, is available from Xurban Press and she co-edits Proliferation, a journal of art and writing exploring new possibilities in graphic production. STACY DORIS is the author of Kildare from Roof Books and at work on two new projects: The Cake Part, a book of fake historical narratives, and La vie de Chester Steven Wiener, a biography of a perfect man. Her Mop Factory Incident, a limited edition book designed by visual artist Melissa Smedley, includes a real miniature Mars bar in each copy. JOHANNA DRUCKER’S recent publications include The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art (University of Chicago Press), The Alphabetic Labyrinth (Thames & Hudson), The Century of Artists’ Books (Granary Books) and Narratology (Druckwerk). She is Associate Professor of Contemporary Art History at Yale University. SUSAN MEYER FENTON currently lives in Colorado. THALIA FIELD’s prose work has appeared in Conjunctions:24; On the Edge: New Women’s Fiction Anthology (FC2); Avee (#10); and work will be forthcoming in Central Park and Conjunctions:26. Her play Hey-Stop-That is in the winter ‘96 issue of Theater Magazine. BRAD FREEMAN is the editor and publisher of the Journal of Artists’ Books; his own offset artists’ books include Overrun (1991), SinWar (1991), and Otherspace: Martian Typography (with J. Drucker, Nexus Press, 1993); he teaches in the Visual Arts Program at SUNY Purchase. HEATHER FULLER currently lives in Washington D.C. LOSS PEQUEÑO GLAZIER is Director of the Electronic Poetry Center (EPC) and co-edits RIF/T, an online poetry and poetics journal. Recent books are The Parts (Meow Press, 1995), Electronic Projection Poetries (Rift, 1995), and Small Press: An Annotated Guide (Greenwood, 1992). The EPC (http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc) has emerged as an active multimedia space for innovative poetries on the Web and includes the Poetics listserv archive, author libraries, electronic journals, small press information, “Linebreak” (sound file interviews with authors), EPClive (interactive online events), and connects to related electronic sites. BARBARA HENNING is the author of Smoking in the Twilight Bar (1988) and Love Makes Thinking Dark (United Artists, 1995). KATHY HIGH is a media artist, writer and teacher living and working in New York City. She is currently working on a musical about human genome mapping, called “The 23 Songs of the Chromosomes,” and a video about identity shifts and aging occurring in the lives of her cat, her father, and herself, entitled “Ernie and Me.” High is also the founder and editor of the critical journal FELIX: A Journal of Media Arts and Communication, which encourages dialogue among alternative media makers. ADEENA KARASICK is completing her PhD in Philosophy at Concordia University in Montreal. Her books include The Empress Has No Closure and Memewars; both from Talon Books. Her book Genrecide (which palimpsests Hitler and Derrida, with Gary Larson, Hélène Cixous, Roy Lichtenstein and the Violent Femmes) will be out in the fall. CYNTHIA KIMBALL is a poet who currently lives in Buffalo. HEIDI KUMAO is a photographer and interdisciplinary artist who has created “cinema machines” for large scale installations since 1989. These zoetrope-like devices utilize nineteenth century cinematographic technology, sabotaged household objects, kinetic elements, and photographic images to project animated sequences. Her work has been reviewed in Artforum, Afterimage, and the New Art Examiner. EVE ANDRÉE LARAMÉE lives in Brooklyn and is represented in New York by the John Gibson Gallery. You can see more of her work at http://www.plexus.org.WALTER K. LEW’s books are available from Small Press Distribution and include Excerpts from AIKTH DIKTE for DICTEE (1982), Premonitions: An Anthology of New Asian North American Poetry, and the inaugural volume of Muae: a journal of transcultural production, selected by Library Journal as one
of the top new magazines of 1995. Lew’s translations of the Korean poetry of Yi Sang appear in volume 1 of Poems for the Millennium: The University of California Book of Modern & Postmodern Poetry. He will be returning to UCLA’s E. Asian Languages and Cultures department next year to complete his doctoral work. PAMELA LU resides in Berkeley, California, and works as a technical writer in Silicon Valley. Her work has appeared in Berkeley Poetry Review, Chain 2, and Prosodist. She is one of the editors of Idiom. STEVE McCAFFERY is author of more than fifteen books. A new collection, The Cheat of Words, is due out from ECW Press this spring and Imagining Language (an anthology of the linguistically deviant and estranged co-edited with Jed Rasula) from MIT Press this fall. He lives and writes in Toronto. MARLENE McCARTY is an artist who has shown her work in the United States and Europe. Most recently she was in “Sexual Politics” at the UCLA Armand Hammer Gallery and “Real Fake” at the Neuberger Museum of Art. She is represented by Metro Pictures Gallery and is a founder of Bureau. JEROME McGANN is the John Stewart Bryan Professor of English at the University of Virginia. His most recently published work includes The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style (Oxford) and Four Last Poems (Pasdeloup). His chief current work involves The Complete Writings and Pictures of Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Hypermedia Research Archive. KEVIN MAGEE is the author of Tedium Drum from Lyric& and Recent Events from Hypobololemaoi. MIRANDA MAHER is a sculptor and book artist whose books are archived in the book collection of MOMA, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Whitney’s Special Collection, and Art Metropole (Toronto). MELANIE NEILSON’s Natural Facts just came out from Potes and Poets. Her previous books are Prop and Guide (The Figures, 1991) and Civil Noir (Roof, 1991). Since 1989 she has co-edited BigAllis with Jessica Grim. DENISE NEWMAN is currently the live/work resident artist at Djerassi Resident Artist Program in Woodside, CA. Her chapbooks, The Blood Flower and Why Pear? have been published by Em Press and her work is included in the anthology Everything Is Real Except the Obvious. M. NOURBESE PHILIP is the author of many books including Urban Confessions: Race, Crimes and Immigration (Toronto: Poni Publisher, 1994) and Looking for Livingston: An Odyssey of Silence (Stratford, Ontario: Mercury Press, 1991). KRISTIN PREVALLET co-edits Apex of the M and is the author of Perturbation: My Sister published by Leave Books. JOAN RETALLACK’s most recent books include Afterimages, a book of poetry published by Wesleyan University Press, and Musicage, a book of conversations with John Cage also from Wesleyan. LISA ROBERTSON has two books, The Apoth eary and XEclogue, both from Tsunami, in Vancouver and is now completing an epic poem called Debbie. She co-edits the journal Raddle Moon, and she sometimes collaborates with visual artists. “Index” responds to an installation, Regarding Places, by Montreal artist Katherine Walters, which tests the gendered limits and structures of Canadian urban “public” space. JAMES SHERRY is the author of more than 10 books of poetry and prose, most recently, Four For (Meow Press) and Our Nuclear Heritage (Sun & Moon Press). Forthcoming is a collaboration with poets Charles Bernstein and Bruce Andrews on poetry and technology. He is also editor of Roof Books and President of the Segue Foundation in New York City. KEN SHERWOOD co-edits the on-line journal RIF/T. NYC based SALLY SILVERS has been choreographing and performing since 1960. ROD SMITH’S In Memory of My Theories is available from O Books. He also edits the journal Aerial. FIONA TEMPLETON is a poet, performer, and director, whose performance works inclue YOU-The City (an intimate citywide play for an audience of one), and the ongoing project for multiple directors, Realities. A new work, Recognition, a solo that is a virtual duet with her late collaborator Michael Ratomski, will have its NY premiere at the Kitchen at the end of September. She has several books coming out this year: Delerium of Interpretations, an autobiographical play from Sun & Moon; Hi Cowboy, the first book she wrote using the American language, from Pointing Device in London; and Cells of Release, from Roof Books. WARD TIETZ works with various forms of graphic material, including three-dimensional letters and words, in installation and performance. His latest project is a collaboration with Mark McMorris for the sound poetry festival in Geneva. He lives in Switzerland. ANNE WALDMAN has published recent sections of Iovis II, the ongoing epic Iovis, in Apex of the M, Talisman, Suffer, and Psalm 151. Book II will be published by Coffee House Press in 1996. Recent books: Kill or Cure (Penguin Poets, 1994), Sons and Daughters of Buddha (translations from the Palic Canon with Andrew Schelling; Shambhala Publications, 1996). MARK WALLACE’S Complications from Standing in a Circle is available from Leave Books. He is the editor of Situation. JANET ZWEIG is currently completing a commission from the New York Department of Cultural Affairs for Walton High School in the Bronx. The work will be installed sometime in 1996. She teaches at Yale and Rhode Island School of Design.
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 215 Ashland Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222. Include SASE if you'd like your work returned.

CONTENTS OF CHAIN/3, VOLUME ONE

Mac Adams: Four Sculptures
Will Alexander: Transgression of Genre as Vitality
Dennis Barone: Pia at Play
Martine Bellen: Lola Montez
Charles Bernstein: Introjective Verse
Sherry Brennan: Belle Mort
Patti Capaldi: Consumption
Norma Cole & Michael Palmer: A Library Book
Elizabeth Cross: Schoenberg Dance 12
Maria Damon: Perfume River: the Oxyronon Wannabe & Me
Tim Davis: The Nearsighted Poet Reads to St. Jerome
Marta Dieke, Spencer Selby, Gary Sullivan: from How We Learn
Geraldine Erman: Vivarium No. 2
William L. Fox: from Zero Comma One: A Visual Essay
Janie Geiser: Evidence of Floods
Susan Gevirtz: Figment of Appointment
David Colombaia: Theory
Jenny Gough
Carla Harryman: Males (terrorists)
Lyn Hejinian & Travis Ortiz: The Staking Effect
Fanny Howe: from Nod (a novel)
Lisa Jarnot: Five Collages
Tom Johnson
Alystyre Julian: Shifting Attentions, Shifting Attentions
Karen Kelley: Gesture/Geisha/Genre
Bruce McIntosh
E.A. Miller: Trouble (please do not disturb)
Aife Murray: Phenomenal Rooms
Sianne Ngai: Five Collage Poems
Hoa Nguyen: From A Series of Letters
Nick Piombino: New Languages for Old
Mark Robbins: Scoring the Park
Christy Sheffield Sanford: Bivens Arm Nature Poem
Gail Sher: Innocent Diversions
Brian Kim Stefans
Cassandra Terman and Katie Yates
Mac Wellman • *The Peach-Bottom Nuclear Reactor Full Of Sleepers*
C.D. Wright • *The Lost Roads Project: A Walk-in Book of Arkansas*
Paul Zelevansky • *Four Pieces*

Chain 3, Volume 1 can be ordered by sending a check for $10 to Chain at 215 Ashland Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222.