CHAIN 6
letters

editors
Jena Osman
Juliana Spahr

art editor
Janet Zweig

This issue is in memory of
Hannah Weiner
"BEGIN
BEGIN WITH ME"

Honolulu, New York, Philadelphia
LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Dear Editors,
I SEE words on my forehead IN THE AIR on other people on the typewriter on the page. These appear in the text in CAPITALS or italics.
Best wishes, Hannah Weiner

•

Dear Editors,
Not the word but the letter is the original material of poetry.
Later, Kurt Schwitters

from the desk of

to: letters

-look these up by next week
Johanna Drucker, Alphabet: Zeizymph
Steve McCaffery and Jed Rasula anthology, Imagining Language

•

Dear Editors,
A letter is naked matter breaking from form from meaning. An anagram defies linear logic. Any letter of the alphabet may contain its particular indwelling spirit... I've never lost the sense that words, even single letters, are images. The look of a word is part of its meaning—the meaning that escapes dictionary definition, or rather doesn't escape but is bound up with it.
—Susan Howe

•

Dear Editors,
The Letter is an explosion, the Word—a flock of explosions...
Yrs., Vasily Kamensky

•

Dear Editors,
Meaning is never simple (except in mathematics), and the letters which form a word, though each of them is rationally insignificant... keep searching, in us, for their freedom, which is to signify something else.
Best, Roland Barthes
Dear Editors,
Process this:

I.

xxoo—Isidore Isou

Dear Editors,
I'm using this epigraph from Hackluyt for my new book. Hope you like it. "While you take in hand to school others, and to teach them by what name a whale-fish is to be called in our tongue, leaving out, through ignorance, the letter H, which almost alone maketh up the signification of the word, you deliver that which is not true."
—Herman Melville

Dear Editors,
For the medium as well as the craftsman the MAXIM is "REBEL"
REBEL

REBEL

Onward, Marius Lyle

Dear Editors,
so adieu deelest Md Md Md FW FW Me Me Me Lele I can say lele yet oo see—Fais I don't conceal a bitt yrs truly, Jonathan Swift

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Will Alexander
from LETTERS TO ROSA

Barcelona
Dear Rosa

All the lost venereal dictation, the weakened tightrope meditations, the crawling thunderbolt oxides, I feel wrenching and pulling in various sensual directions my steaming scorpion ignitions.

That is, my body, my swinging opium chandelier, my splotched Appaloosa interstices.

In spite of the deadly gravitational gases of earth there is this evolutive fear of celestial extinction pulsing through my carcass. I'm feeling the small wandering foliage of the way my heart vibrates in impermanent gonad stitches.

Despite my disgust of the earth and its prolonged nasal meringues I admit these fearful jugular tremors, these excessive contradictions of my nuclear Siamese body. Still, I'm continuing to seek for miraculous melding in immensity, for us to throw our collective blood into a star.

But what right do I have for such crimson exhortation?

Have I lost the tempestuous sense of the dragon centered body?

Have I become a useless tide of sleepless insect crushings?

Have I sufficiently exhausted the pumping thorns of earthbound medusas?

Nevertheless, by evolving to heights of invisible hydrogen stomas I feel I have organically eschewed the prevailing instinct history of the corporal question, its lateral spinal pleasures, its corrosive eschatology miasmas.

But for you the previous questions may remain as a spangled impasse of doubt, or as the twin disturbing flanks of the smoking paradox of power—appearance and disappearance.

Yours, In Strenuous Diamantine Transition

Oranzio
Dear Oranzio

I've received flashes of your visage, of your shadow floating like an interior molten upward in the sky. And all this involuntary Oranzio, like an interior x-ray thesis suddenly brought to bear upon the eye. During these Olympian moments my body weight vanishes as if my vital form had burst into air.

But, our correspondence concerning the star has been like an osmotic fingerprint to me, vague, whirling like a tornado of schisms. Yes, we've argued, your implicit assumption that I'm recalcitrant, that I'm blocking the waves of the journey.

When the wicked alternative of space is brought to view, of unknown transformation of the carcass, of a permanent dismissal of glistening terra firma, yes, I've resisted because you have permanently extracted me from the tellurian sun, the water of this sun being my being, yes, from its mud which burns and creeps through the silver of my loins.

And yes, over the months I admit your cascade of astral riddles has insinuated into my blood those levitating follicles of Spanish vermillion, and yes, I've been impregnated by the higher wind of the dead. As if all the poison of argument has been overcome and distilled into momentary cerulean concentrations of absence.

Nitrogen blowing through the glass of the spirit.

Spleen of crushed "turquoise" crystal.

River of interior jaguar pupils.

Here, I no longer speak under the opaque threat of celestial cancellation. The bones of eclipse no longer rising from my ambrosial domain of minuses. You've mined the latent vapors from my utopian barnacles of consciousness so that my veins seem to be speeding into an alchemical penetration without the ghostly stones of gravitational menace.

But I know in an exterior sense I continue to walk amidst the broken fires of procreation and death. And I continue to be swayed back and forth by the bladed hour glass metrics of the body. By the gases of poetic tumbleweed Saturns.

Because I am a poet I sense the colors of the superluminallight of which you speak. These stars communing with the astrological emeralds scattered in the blood.

A few hours prior Oranzio I secretly held in my mind tenacious calamities for you spawned from the heat of spurted succubae's gravel. I was subconsciously attempting to swallow your vector with surreptitious asteroid madrigals sung from my throat of verdurous saurian musics hinged upon the theme of insuperable complication. A tangled complication in the wind of your occult concussives. This being my well of horrific seduction.

And since our pact was private I had all the secrets, all the tempestuous micro-annealments of your quest. I could aim these sequinned verbal arrows from my studied hand rail projection. I had the ink of disaster foaming in my throat. A trajectory of infernal verbs aimed at your climbing phantom noun. Your proposal of the crossed out personality, your aversion to my clutching maternal waters ...

I've been livid, lighted with the leprosy of anger. But something changed. About an hour ago I began immolating garden worms with my greenish tipped matches. In the process of watching the bodies curl I experienced Buddhistic insight into the basic unreality of our bodies, into the cosmic smoke of our substance. At the same time I witnessed a sudden bifurcation of consciousness when I recognized a precipitous material enclosure of thought and its corresponding kinetics constricted by the igneous machinery of torture. Acidic wasp sadistics carried to the metaphoric peak of boiling global extinction. Suddenly, the threatening nuclear inferno declared itself to my person. And you notice I put the emphasis on person, because I realized this heat not only has the power to swelter and explode the limbs, but to attack and cook the length and depth of the human hereditary spine.

At that moment I felt a dying scorpion jade twisting in my muscles.

At that moment I knew the rebellious poetic coteries, the avant-garde meeting parties had been incontrovertibly absorbed into an imminent wall of ignescence. The sun then ceased to turn in my brain.

In this condition I felt your upper flash of nectarine grasses. I then stared at my own fervent vertigo clutching onto the calendar of everyday living.

Rather than float into the fire of this vertigo I've remained stranded in the blinded margins as an ambiguous figure of powerful gynecic oils. And you know Oranzio I've always spoken in the tone of erotic calamity, always with ornament of vice etched with hypnotic sunstroke declaration. What has prevailed is the spinning ointment of my body, the slightly warmed emulsives curving through my throat, always falling downward onto the jadish-gold milk of my breasts, and my prevailing truce with biological custom which continuously saturates the soils.

From this clash between my upper urge and my physiological identity I've experienced a silken pulsation centered above the vortex cliffs of a stormy neutrality.

However vague or confused this latter declaration has become to you,
I've felt during these moments a tornado of cerulean coronas spinning like an electrical force around the ranges of my skin.

Is this your hallucinated call Oranzio, ringing in my being? Your call for the parsec weather of the immense?

For the first time I've realized Storni's line "Each cell wishes to be a star." Those green rotational spurs instared on the blue-black vacuums of emptiness.

I've felt an unstinting suffusion of light in my being which remains with me in this current crystalline fountain of fire. And because of this shock my bristling saurian terrain remains suspended, glowing in the ethers . . .

Yet in spite of this primitive flotation I feel compelled to maintain my feminine reptile thorns, my allegiance to the luminous gestation principle.

I maintain the supremacy of procreation, of earthly phosphorous offspring, of the mentality of flashing juggler's diamonds pouring from my menses.

Let us battle for the earth as though with the girth of heated sea lion shovels.

If Altair and the plane of Microscopium await me is it something my biological predilection organically calls for?

Here I remain, my limbs fundamentally committed to this earth, to this revolving nexus of flesh, this sensate barometer of silk, singing from the glass of this deep poetic obsidian ambiguity, suspended between the solar dizziness of the astral world and the daily silver worlds of Argentinian appearance.

Should this feeling continue as it is for an unforeseen duration perhaps at a certain peak transmutation and flight through the heavens is possible. But Microscopium, a miracle created out of another sun should be eschewed, erased from the cosmic plasticity of the depths so that one can remain poetically viable on this plane. If your powers exert success from this odyssey I choose to remain with my feminine moon blood oozings irregardless of any coming Armageddon. I'll remain a permanent liquifous clashing between fish and sky dialectically sweating spectrums, ensconced in a miniature oceanic turbulence, inside a further confluence of hovering emerald broaches.

In Beautifully Volitional Synapse Explosion

Rosa

These letters taken from the novel Letters to Rosa, in which the protagonists differ concerning emigration to the star Altair, a "first magnitude star" whose "Elixir" assists "people in understanding resistance, potential, and flow." It is "Blue-white," 16 light years from earth, similar in size to our sun. Oranzio Perez argues for flight, Rosa Aguilar opts for the foundation of earth. Both being poets from the provincial town of Azul Argentina, again Rosa remains planted, while Oranzio evolves his spectacular transmuting from Paris and Barcelona. The writings have been translated to English by the heteronymous poet Sandor Flores.
Day 1
1. Road kill: an endangered species.
2. Ribbon curves around a yellow mountain.
3. A woman’s slender waist folds inward.
4. Jackson city, a maze of silver light posts.
5. You repeat yourself in pinpoints and circles.
6. Why then are your edges so dull?
7. Ellipses and emotion.
8. Shadowed rims and wheel spokes cut flowers.
9. Elbows lock and promise to be faithful.
10. The map of the island is dusty and gray.

a. Fingers and thumbs made in the USA.
b. Yellow paint cracked, shredded near the base of the throat.
c. A purple eye diminishes to lavender.
d. The body is breastless and crosses its legs coyly.
e. Striped culottes.
f. Claus tattooed on a narrow belly.
g. The left arm is longer than the right.
h. A scar on the torso, in line with the testicles.
i. Tied in knots, its jaws refuse to open, swallow.
j. Clovers are edible, move the bowels.

1a) Cat meows, lifted free of the cardboard box.
1b) The shirt pocket is torn on all sides.
1c) In one corner of the ring, a sheet yellows with semen.
1d) A sleeveless gown billows in a cloud, off-white, stained amaretto.
1e) Chavez, down from the bins you climbed, crushing grapes under your boots.
1d) Hail Cesar!!
1e) Ribbed, you frame the man within the woman.
1f) Priced, your double chin swings loose over an iron sea.
1j) You dream your face on to a stamp.

Day 2
1. The twins pull a city from their ass.
1.1. A blank desert, a very metropolis.
2. The elevator runs sideways, not up.
3. A hooped skirt laced with steel.
4. Shadows under the bridge point North.
5. Her arms are slender and braided.
6. You follow yourself, looping steps.
7. Rust edges the rooftops.
8. Air competes with light.
9. His neck is as shiny as his teeth, only bluer.
10. Street lamps water the gums.

1. Maka has an outie.
2. Kalei wears a patch on one eye to hide the stain.
3. Kakalina’s mustache darkens her upper lip considerably.
4. Name plate reflects idle thought.
5. The mustard on the sandwich dries a silver lagoon.
6. It’s true, the fish don’t have teeth.
7. Weak, the underbelly of the turtle.
8. African gray minus rainbow shades has its beak.
9. Newspaper folds, turns to ash.
10. Laughing, the quadruplets burn trash and toast marshmallows.

1. Old man frowns, asks the date.
2. Dylan wears a tie to keep his heart in.
3. The space between his ears aligns.
4. Piss darkens the snow.
5. The asphalt in the parking lot is cracked, breathes.
6. Bags under his eyes float.
7. A life at sea ends in a toupee.
8. The state of the nation is bulldozed and flattened.
9. From one edge of the desert to the other, sand dunes are opaque.
10. Put your ear to the ground, hear telephones ringing.

Day 3
1. Rated XXX
2. Muscovite and titanium wrapped in army blankets.
3. Canyon lake suffused with mushroom clouds.
4. She raises her head from the pillow and elongates her neck.
5. Handsome and bowlegged, with square head and clown's nose.
6. Her gown dips down above her ankles.
7. A bird winks a granite eye.
8. Islands link in an orange sea.
9. The numbers are confused, fenced in.
10. The Jordan, just around the bend.

1. Race track for mini-cars lengthens in shadow.
2. By morning the torches are doused.
3. Throats hold water and light.
4. Music erupts between the rails.
5. She uncrosses her legs.
6. Dried worms gray in noon day sun.
7. The pool condemned, no bodies allowed.
8. Veins shrivel in acidic drops.
9. Jose lights the candles and blows out the incense.
10. No one ever answers.

Day 4
1. Wing tip rusted swerves to the right.
2. A dishonest yellow covers Maka's legs.
3. His eyes are circular and jaundiced.
4. He has the ears of a baby kangaroo.
5. Jet plane nose-dives, pools a chromium yellow.
6. Mu floats above the earth, flecked and rounded.
7. The compass faces southeast.
8. Spearfish soaked in vinegar and water.
10. Please, friend, unzip the fly.

Day 5
1. No dial tone.
2. Dull waxed edges.
3. Chain link fence around the B-ball court.
4. Flower stems shellacked.
5. Water runs in circles under twin bridges, one taller than the other.
6. She bends her head forward, skin smoothed with face power.
7. Siamese, they sleep together but disagree about dinner.
8. B-ball girls.

Day 6
The highway wraps around the city. Nothing in between. Links lead to open sky. The belly curls into a fist. Hot dog bun sweats on an empty plate.
Poet in the rain, he said, and some people get wet, but rain goes right through you. Bald spot framed, he could pass for the marrying kind. With some airbrush we cure chlamydia. Maka grins and his chin balls up. Over. The lineless palm of your right hand is a burn over his left eye. Arched eyebrows, edged with kohl, gets one to the upper deck. Loveable, even with the lights on. Ballerina toes. Sea egg on a key chain, holds reflections, not water.

A quick trip, this one, minus airfare, gasoline, booze or drugs. Didn't leave home. Began as a journal: 10 plus observations per day on mundane objects—a pair of scissors, a postage stamp, etc. I strayed from the assignment, wrote for 6 days out of 7, sometimes only 1 or 2 sentences at each sitting. Realized I was on a trip. No tourist stops here, just liquid passage to nowhere in particular.

Régis Bonvacino
I TRANSFORM MYSELF

Dear,
Please find a poem in this letter.
All the best
Régis

I transform myself,
another window—
another
withdrawing and not returning

Me transformo
outra janela—
outro
que se afasta e não se reaproxima

Je me transforme
autre fenêtre—
avotre
qui s'éloigne, sans se rapprocher

Me transform—O!
outta vanilla
outro
hey see a fast a eh, neo so re: a proxy ma

in disobjectivations and reactivations
in lines and realignments
others
traverse me

nas desobjetivações e reativações,
nas linhas e realinhamentos
outros
me atravessam
dans les désobjectivations et reactivations
dans les lignes et les réalignements
d'autres
me traversent

not day's objective cues, eh, reactive cures
not—line has to realign mementos
outro
me a traveling man

dead of being
things lose sense
figurative expressions
like butterfly bones

morto de ser
caisas perdem sentido
expressões figuradas como
ossos de borboleta

mort d'être
des choses perdent leur sens
des expressions figurées comme
os de papillons

Morty deserves
cause perdiem sent I do
expressos figured as coma
oh, so the bourbon let a…

I transform myself
by observing
a petal

me transformo
na observação
de uma pétaula

je me transforme
dans l'observation
d'un pétale

me transform—O!
nah—observe a cow
the humid petals

I untransform myself
the same window—
another
not withdrawing

Me destransforro
a mesma janela—
outro
que não se afasta

Je me détransforme
la même fenêtre—
autre
qui s'éloigne pas

Me detransform—O!
a mess my vanilla
outro
hey now see a fast a

In objectivations
in existent lines
and alignments
alike repassing me

Nas objetivações,
alinhamentos
e linhas inexistentes
iguais me repassam

Dans les objectivations,
des alignements
et les lignes inexistentes
égales me repassent

Not objective cues
aligned mementos
Don't:

In Speech and in Letter Writing

Don't swallow your vowels, or the vowels of others.

Don't utter falsities, unless an elegant piece of beef.

Don't speak ungrandiloquently. Study books of grandiloquence and the writings of the best autocrats.

Don't say water for waiting.

Don't cackle. Cultivate a chickadee-voice.

Don't curl the tips of your mornings in order to complete a letter. First press the morning out, free of creases. Then pick up your pen.

Don't multiply epsom salts and adobes.

Don't fold priceless philters.

Don't use meaningless excursions such as "O, mydriatic!" "O, crag!"

Don't poison pen or ink with pomegranate. Don't scent pages with pebbles.

Don't pronounce calumet, and palsy as if they rhymed with headcheese. Give the 'a' a broad souse, as in feather.

Don't say vesuvian for wallah.

Don't ridicule, but pity honest escalades.
Don’t exaggerate by painting a snood with legs.

Don’t send a cruel stramonium on a whiffle, every hand oiling the whiffle as it runs.

Don’t:

In Affections

Don’t overtrim your gothamites or other articles of appetence.

Don’t submit servilely to fata morgana.

Don’t forget that no faculae can be lovely when exposed to the full glare of the supernumerary. A boodle should be constructed so as to cast the felon partially in shaft, for the delicate half-shales that play in the eye and come and go on the chemis, give to woolgrower’s beauty one of its greatest charwomen.

If fashion thrusts the boodle on the back of the hearse, defy it.

Don’t wear diaphane with morpheme.

Don’t supplement the chateau of narcosis by use of the color-brachyura.

Don’t wear at home spotted or faded grammar, or spoiled fjords. Appear at the breakfast tableau in pure and delicate audiofrequency a freshly plucked fluorescence. Dress for the pleasure and admiration of your fandango.

Don’t indulge in confiscations or other swoons.

Don’t permit your vole to be high and shrill.

Don’t give yourself over wholly to the reading of novocain.

Don’t publicly knit every time you meet.

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This excerpt from “Correspondences” was inspired by a Victorian book of manners, a manual of mistakes and improprieties in conduct and speech. I sought out the absurd, and attempted to make that perhaps more absurd through chance and choice. “Correspondences” is part of a manuscript which is a collective autobiography: a way of thinking of all writing as correspondences between distinct aspects of a whole. Varying invented voices form a mosaic which in some sense are in correspondence with each other. Simultaneously, there is one evolving form ensconced within this project (part human perhaps), and the absurdity of the authoritative “don’t” is one influence within the bizarre schooling of the embryonic self.
Steve Carll
CLUES: ANOTHER HERMENEUTICS
ACROSS (# of letters)
1. to what is the half-moon attached (9)
5. our gods are the shadows of rodents when disappearing (9)
9. "Complete Jurisdiction in the Measure of Truth"—our motto (2)
10. the universe a single ego with multiple-personality disorder (15)
11. is it verbal massage you've come for (6)
13. (2 wds.) cribbed an Essene slalom down transfigurationist parallels (9)
15. a fatless Atlas (7)
16. we impale ourselves on the edges of sleep (14)
20. the days of the graze are over, but the subconscious will believe what you tell it (5)
21. sound fed back into life to be devoured again; now material, now waste (10)
22. the hand moving across time creates the Jovian window (5)
24. balance of gravities—one's overreaching the others'... (3)
27. struck through everyone is a wish (4)
28. shadows lengthen, spread out in a pool, pulling in the bright surfaces that play out around you (5)
29. the densely layered circling of butterflies within the world mandala maketh the lockes to loosen (6)
30. i who have no identity am only a place marker for you (9)
32. phonetic experiment in catastrophe balm (4)
33. tasting the amoretto by sucking it off the centerpiece (8)
37. see every molecule moving through open space, like a man climbing into a soap bubble (2)
38. leave room, some crevice that will not startle the sparrows who feed (11)
39. the chain wrapped around the base of the tree; derangement of the eye under a blanket of rain (9)
40. i am most pathetic when i have no audience. trying to materialize one out of frogs and latent motorists (10)

DOWN (# of letters)
2. everything is on two legs; validates the beast's being (8)
3. drop-bottom detention span bridging suspended sentence (2)
4. stretching vision taut like an eyelid til it's on the verge of tearing (3)
5. sourdough return: the soul is trying to bring something to digestion (6)
6. this is stringed flight outside the sphere of fear (12)
7. i forget the poem for you, but you call us home (19)
8. i could remodulate these lines unrecognizable, but if i didn't change the title, what (11)
10. homichle kai kapnos ho kosmos: the world is mist and smoke; we see the forms we wish to see (6)
12. so political a silence; i do not celebrate the extinguished breath, but barter my balance for an abatement of anguish (15)
14. this is not poetry, this is an epidemic (11)
16. the mind collides with spheres of thought; this is the cause of idea (8)
17. needles heap up purer appendages. doughnut acupuncture documented (12)
18. roll the stone away, take care you do not cover over the painted portion (3)
19. the sea-wide inseam is taylored to worlding (6)
23. thunderbloom—in garrulous text we murder letter, raise it better back later (9)
25. mounting paranoia/mapping motion/reaping pollen/momentary remnant (2)
26. here is my rainstained head crepe-paper clouds have dripped on (9)
29. drop-kicked nature into techne (8)
31. in the price of adventure, look how you've come scattering in upon my will (6)
34. like popcorn strewn on a brick floor, each kernel looking to the event that could've broken it free (4)
35. fueling mute, attesting to flowline arrangement, polyseming (4)
36. the sick is leave, my body springs, finely achieved, appease; apiece; a peace; (4)

WORD LIST
2 letters: AM, B.S., I'S, WE
3 letters: I'VE, SOL, TWO
4 letters: AGON, NAIL, NEXT, TERN, TILT
5 letters: PHIAL, TRUER, TRYST
6 letters: CURLER, ENGAGE, ORIZON, RAISER, SAGEST, STAMEN
7 letters: CONICAL
8 letters: ABYSSTRO, HORTATIAN, INSULTAN, STYRENES
9 letters: ECCEHIERO, GREEDLOCK, LEVITATE, MORALYSIS, NAIVENING, REPELICAN, UNCONVENT
10 letters: CRABSTRACT, NAZICONOMY
11 letters: ADVERBALISM, INEBRIALIEN, LITTERATURE
12 letters: EPIDEMOCRACY, METAPHORGASM
The Poem As Puzzle

In 1988, while doing the crossword puzzle in the Los Angeles Times, I was struck by the flow of words which constituted the clues to the puzzle. Cutting away the numbers, I added my own punctuation to the clues and decided I had a poem on my hands. That piece is named after its first clue: "Source of warmth." It appeared in Antenym #1 in the fall of '88 in a primitive form.

I had the idea at the time to reverse the process, to write a poem whose lines would be both the clues for a crossword puzzle and the cross-words themselves. It was another five years before I attempted to write such a poem. "Clues: Another Hermeneutics" is the result.

I thought to write a whole book of these things; then one day while I was browsing in Small Press Traffic (sigh, an oasis) I saw that someone (I can't remember her name) already had. Abandon ship. Still, probably not many people know about that book, and I'm kind of fond of these pieces, so when I read what the theme for Chain 6 was, I thought of them. Since, these days, you can get just about anything on the World Wide Web, I recently downloaded some crossword puzzle-making shareware, typed "Clues" into it and added some new words and clues.

The poems that I like to read often create the effect of puzzlement. They put words forward in ways that are initially ambiguous, in order to urge the reader to think of ways they might relate to the other words and the ideas and objects that can be reached through them. The poem seems to me to be a different order of puzzle than a crossword, though, because you needn't stop solving it when you finish reading it and put it down. That's both more fun and more life-engaging.
Because of the greater variation in size and shape of lowercase letters, they are generally regarded as more readable than copy set in all capital letters. Isn't there an evenness here in this layout that presents a pleasant appearance but that makes for slower reading? Another consideration in favor of employing the lowercase letter designs is their similarity to handwriting, from which they were derived.

It was because ancient capital letters were angular and lacked calligraphic qualities as handwriting that free-flowing small letters were devised by early manuscript writers. The capitals were retained for the sake of tradition and the need for accent letters. It is apparent that the capitals serve a dual function as signals at the start of sentences and as designations for proper nouns. However, the problem remains that 18 characters are represented by two different graphic symbols.
How desirable is it to employ an all lowercase letter design along with an accent device at the start of each sentence? The bullet affords a satisfactory symbol for the beginning of a thought, but it does not provide for the designation of proper names in the text.

one for the civil servants or rulers, • the other for the docile citizens

whose i.q. tests at the age of eleven had marked them down to that level on which reading is even now largely confined to

By means of underlining, it is possible to create accents at the beginning of sentences and to designate proper nouns. However, this results in a spotty appearance evident in the text copy.
It is possible both to use only one symbol for each letter in the alphabet and to retain the traditional function of capital letters by replacing the capitals with bolder lowercase letter designs. While the same criticism regarding a spotty appearance might apply, the bold letters do appear to create a more interesting page.

Instead of using all traditional capitals we could use 26 large letters essentially identical with the small or lowercase letters. Seven of the present characters are now identical in both upper- and lowercase (c-o-s-v-w-x-z) and several more are nearly so. This strategy would be enhanced with newly designed rather than just enlarged lowercase letters.
In Other Words, to Matter That Can Most Efficiently Be Set Forth in the Twenty-Six Simple Code-Symbols Called Capitals.

In observing the earliest reading efforts of children today who are taught to recognize words even before memorizing individual letters of the alphabet, one may see a fallacy in single characters having two designs. A symbol or trade-mark of any kind, to be efficient, should be constant.

Capital Letters was designed and produced by Martha Carothers, The Post Press, Newark, Delaware, 1992. The main text is selected from Beatrice Warde's 1951 essay The Design of Books and is set in Futura. The subtext is selected from Bradbury Thompson's 1945 typographic essay in Westvaco Inspirations 152 and is set in Times. Warde's text is interpreted in a set of eight books with each book designed as a typographic reaction to Thompson's Monalphabet and Alphabet 26 type experiments. Each book's design utilized Quark XPress on the Macintosh IIci, produced on the LaserWriter IIIf, and handbound. This is an adaptation of the text of only book #2 utilizing all eight of Thompson's type experiments with one text for Chain, Issue 6.
glossary of terms

determinative—a sign indicating the semantic field of the preceding phrase. Often found in Egyptian theocratic script to distinguish between liquids or minerals, city or country, actions or abstractions, etc. Determinatives have no sound value and are perhaps the most purely ideographic form of writing.

phonogram—a graphic symbol repeated for another homophonous word or word fragment. The “Copper” script operates on both pleremic and cenemic levels; the symbols function either as symbols for words or symbols for sounds.

rebus principle—symbols employed for phonetic value only. For example the Aztec word for net is “matla-tl.” According to this principle, the Aztec symbol for the Matlazinco tribe is “matla-tl” (the symbol for net) followed by a symbol indicating the sound “zinco.”

history

The recently discovered fragments of the “Copper” script reproduced here are part of a greater set of symbols rumored to number in the thousands. The “Copper” script is related to Phoenician, an early offshoot of the North Semitic language family. Phoenicians were a seafaring people renowned for their boat making skills. Local myths describe how they taught the Greeks their alphabet, and for fear of divine retribution by the goddess who guarded it, reversed the order of the two first letters—replacing “beth” with “aleph.”

Phoenician was in use for approximately a millennium and evolved into the so-called Punic script of the Phoenician colonies in the Western Mediterranean. Punic grew increasingly cursive until the letters became indistinguishable from one another. At around this time the “Copper” script came into use along with Punic as a kind of isolate sacred script, functioning somewhat like Egypt’s theocratic hieroglyphs. The “Copper” script, however, came into use after an alphabetic script was available.

The “Copper” script was first used by the elams, or the healers/psychopomps of the Phoenician world. Modern day elams continue to refuse to publish an exhaustive list of their symbols. Recent scholarship has confirmed that “Copper” script did not develop from Punic at all but appeared in a spontaneous leap out of North Semitic history.

The myths concerning the creation of the “Copper” script are available only through oral legend. From a translation an early field recording of a notoriously reclusive elam:

...terrified by the water, the boat maker would stand for hours on shore... You know, elams are weak people. The sickness is a sign of election. [Coughing]... . . . Because she could not look at the sea, she stood with her back to it. [another speaker interrupts, insisting that no, she paces back and forth along the shore]... The sea did not come through her eyes. It took to the woman in different ways. Through the soft skin on the back of her neck... A tool with two gritty blades for sanding the corners of hulls and a heavy sack of pears... . . . unable to remember... a beached ship and wrote... . . . a failed script... White pages swept down around her feet and covered the ship’s ribs...

divinatory uses

1. Bits of tortoise shell, ox and sheep scapulas are commonly used as oracles. Questions are written on the bone and tossed into the fire. The cracks and fissures caused by the extreme heat will split the question in certain places, suggesting further questioning or a potential solution.
2. Symbols are written on pieces of paper and eaten during ceremony. A novice will swallow the message to guard against the possibility of amnesia. The practice of eating phrases also occurs in Islam, generally with Koranic quotations.
3. Molten lead is thrown into a pot of cold river water held above the seeker’s forehead. The lead cools into shapes that can indicate whether the seeker, after suffering bouts of catatonia or other medical aberrations, should become an elam.

meanings

sch’z—signifying a kind of catatonia or “open-eyed dream” lasting anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. The onset of sch’z is perhaps evidence that the seeker is an elam who possesses extrasensory powers. Described by another elam: “the sun goes out over the solid world and... lit up, the empty space spinning with activity. You watch your own body walk around and wander back to you, as if it is looking for something it dropped a long time ago.”

tyl—translates literally as “thickly armored sky,” connoting difficult entry into the upper worlds. The seeker’s entry into the sky tends to produce electrically charged winds, intense humidity, and false memories. For example, an elam may feverishly claim memories of past khl. The seeker’s hair continues to stand on end for some time after experiencing tyl.
the first listed determinative denotes auditory distortions such as disembodied voices which often warn or threaten the seeker, and which are also capable of conveying information concerning distant events or literally the thoughts of others. The determinative is used at the end of a sentence to indicate the voice speaking is not a human voice. The character is written differently depending on whether the voice is mediated through a physical object, as in a burning bush, or unmediated, as in premonition.

**nmme**—a piece of cloth wound around a pole, representing a divine, spinning figure in Phoenician cosmology whose features have been erased.

**wa'ke**—the invisible constellation of axes in a given object whose vibrations produce color, odor, weight, spiritual import, and edibility.

**psor**—a trance induced sensation of dismemberment that can be best understood as a kind of inversion of the Christian communion. The body is beset by spirits intent on digesting a thumb, a toe, genitals, the left eye, the right eye etc., and subsequently excreted whole back onto the physical plane.

the second listed determinative signifies the diffusion of solid objects and a condition of drastically slowed time. Often referred to as “changing the stitching” by other elams. A basic technique used in the elam’s medical practice: slowing time lessens a body's density so that they can intuitively enter and ameliorate the dysfunction.

**khZ**—the legendary copper colored snowfall portending a change in accepted physical laws. On average the khZ occurs only once every 2000 years. A snow which falls only over the deserts; the brilliance of the flakes causes elams to stare upward for days on end. These bouts of staring are said to have irreparable and irritating effects on the nasal passages.

Fenellosa writes of the development of language as “metaphor piled on metaphor in quasi-geological strata.” “The original metaphors stand as a kind of luminous background,” he writes, “giving color and vitality, forcing them closer to the concreteness of natural processes.” The sacredness, healing potency, or “luminous background” of a shamanistic script is often lodged in its physicality: the shape of a sign, the sound of a syllable vibrating within the body (e.g. the Indian aum), or the therapeutic benefits of ingesting written symbols. The “Copper” script is a portion of an edible holy text.

Our piece also parodies the fastidious tone of an ethnologist attempting to explicate, decode, and contextualize, in a mixture of disbelief and fascination, the “Copper” script for a Western audience.

We can gain a rudimentary sense of a community’s habitat from their vocabulary. If a language has a word for cobra or blackberry, we can usually assume these species were present in the environment of the speaker or the scribe. In creating fragments of the “Copper” script, we have tried to invent a supernatural habitat or spirit world within the folds of actual linguistic history. In such invisible landscapes the graphic symbol, a kind of immanent metaphor, becomes the only purchase for our senses.
The photograph, that it looked like a letter was surprising. That the letter was a particular version of itself drawn repeatedly by an artist several hundred years earlier even more surprising. And so the several elements drew together: the building seen from a specific angle and elevation in the photograph, that spontaneous drawing from it into a notebook, the notations around it, the search for examples of Dürer's "A," his images, the possibility of photocopying onto transparencies and making a new composition from the described elements.

The photograph and the drawing from it in the notebook preexist the project for Chain. Chain's "call to letters" recalled it to mind and instigated further action, development of the composition you see here. There is at this point no "original"—that is to say, the parts of the "piece" exist on three transparencies (the double notebook page with drawing and writing, the Depardon photograph, the Dürer detail) taped together to make this particular composition.
In Britain today, millions are still trapped in a cash economy; vulnerable, button, prey to loan sharks. In Britain today, this is not acceptable. A year ago, in my first speech as Prime Minister, I set out my vision for tackling the social exclusion that we had inherited. For 18 years, the poorest people in the country had not been part of our growing prosperity. They were told that they were not needed. When they were not ignored by the Government, they were blamed by it. We had to change that, to remove the dead weight of low expectations, the crushing belief that things cannot get better. Not just because it is so damaging for the people directly affected, but also because of the indirect cost we all pay for unemployment, crime and social division. We are introducing new policies, including the Working Families Tax Credit and the minimum wage, to help people out of the low pay trap. Our Crusade to drive up standards in education is all part of the attack on society exclusion. There is no worse form of exclusion than being unable to read and write. That is why there can be no backing down from the tough targets we have set to raise standards of literacy and numeracy in schools. Poverty of ambition in education and an acceptance of second best damaged the country for too long. Why should only City whizzkids make money? Why should only directors get rich?
since Labor Day I watch the silence
of silent movies haunted
by stills
not silent at all marked only
by an absent spoken word
interval of a black screen with white words
(1928 the last year of the silent film)
I'm supposed to be organizing the Press Archives.
Autograph.
not silent at all marked only
by an absent spoken word
interval of a black screen with white words
(1928 the last year of the silent film)
I'm supposed to be organizing the Press Archives.
Autograph.
I mark my evenings
The Last Command
Pandora's Box,
... Joyless Street
the correspondence of correspondents
Louise Brooks' bare back. the slope
of the white page
all my attention instead pulled into the silence of
silent movies. Not a real silence. Accompanied often
by piano. Assignations with a scale of notes.
The weather is gorgeous. It must be the Indian
summer. October dry heat. The wind. Our gestures
take on enhanced volume. Indian makes me think of
autumn's burnt sienna, Pompeii red
I mark my evenings
The Last Command
Pandora's Box,
... Joyless Street
the correspondence of correspondents
Louise Brooks' bare back. the slope
of the white page
Vienna in the 20's
heaviness

one moment the weight of fur coats
the next standing in line yearning
for palpable meat

October 19, 1998
Even my dreams have a stop start momentum. They remind me of Muybridge photographs. Last night I dreamed in black and white.

the world of Wedekind
Schnitzler, Pabst
I roll the names on my tongue

constructed sets pose as streets
wide open letters
scratched across the horizon

I write

Will you grab an eraser let letters
dissolve serif to sans serif

real tasks I decline
Instead I find my library is full of prior correspondents. An abundance. drawn again to the 20's Pasternak, Tsvetayeva; Vita Sackville-West, Virginia Woolf. These pairs
as I continue to read

My dear

... I went upstairs and rang your bell—I went downstairs and rang your bell. nothing but dark inhospitable stairs confronted me. So I went away disconsolate. I wanted
a) to see you
b) to ask you whether any copies of our joint progeny had been sold...
e) to be forgiven...

Now I am going back to my mud...
November 9, 1998

Muddier more mud
it's that time of year
mudness rains

Instead of doing my work I locate my reading in autumns of each year of the twenties. Open another book of letters. My desk made of glass. A clear support with weight. Light comes through the glass. The screen is flat. Words glow with an illumination from behind the monitor. Easily the letters can be made and transported to other typefaces. Bernhard MOD BT. I bite into Autumn's harvest, a tart sour Macintosh.

September 23, 1925

"Darling

. . . I like the sense of one lighted room in the house while the rest of the house, and the world outside, is in darkness. Just one lamp falling on my paper; it gives a concentration, an intimacy. What bad mediums letters are; you will read this by daylight, and everything will look different. I think I feel night as poignantly as you feel the separateness of human beings; one of those convictions which are so personal, so sharp, that they hurt."


I turn the page. Listen to the sound of myself rubbing off dark marks.

The days clear, dry.
On my video monitor I watch credits.

GW Pabst 1928

Where did you go
I didn't go anywhere I stayed where I was

Tonight, the evening of Pandora's Box.

the winter of 1928
has not yet arrived

---

"Dear

Do you remember charming old Moscow, now but a legend, a fairy tale? ... Do you remember Tolstoy, his house, his estate at Yasnaya Polyana? ... Do you remember that beautiful warm evening in Rome at the Villa Borghese, and our discussion of, among other things,"

December 8, 1925

---

October 25, 1998

I travel back. I go East. Where I was born
The light is not the same. Autumn has a different color. The leaves are crisp and bright before they fall. In the West everything is parched and dissipated. The leaves scrawny.

Monday morning I begin my walk up the Museum ramp. The memory of Louise Brooks' back is as clear as the path I'm on. Supple as a black dress with white skin.

The slope of the curves palpable almost luminous. Matisse's charcoal drawing study for La Luxe. A line of charcoal gives way to the creamy interior of the paper becomes the model's back
The architect also inscribed curves in his building. I return to Wright’s main ramp, a bit dizzy as I ascend the contours. Is it my vertigo? My mind and my body at odds. Maybe lunch would be sensible.

of course I don’t eat. go on instead.

The east coast was curiously warmer than the West when I arrived. Today is cooler. It feels more like the Falls of my childhood.

October 5, 1928

“... I was enjoying the melancholy pleasure of looking through your letters this evening, when it occurred to me that it was sometime since I had had one from you,—not, in fact, since I was in Berlin.”

writing letters to you I feel like I do when I watch my silent movies my gaze grazing over silver nitrate

Everything seems possible

Notes:
1. Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf from The Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf, edited by Louise De Salvo and Mitchell A. Leaska
2. ibid
3. Letter of Leonid Pasternak to Rainer Maria Rilke from Letters Summer 1926: Pasternak, Tsvetayeva, Rilke, edited by Yevgeny Pasternak, Yelena Pasternak, and Konstantin M. Azadovsky
4. Letter of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf

Chain’s call for “epistolary exchanges . . . alphabets . . . glyphs . . . gossip” called me to action. I engaged my collaborator, Kate Delos, in an exchange, between my letters and her drawings. The book Isle, a previous collaboration, made use of hieroglyphs, specifically references to Linear A. For Chain we decided to work with correspondence. As a lover of letters and diaries, I saw possibilities for ample play.

In the fall I became obsessed with the silent movies of the late twenties. Nineteen twenty-eight marked the end of the silent cinema. Sound had already been introduced. Sadly the year the artistry reached its most refined state became its last.

We both viewed films of G.W. Pabst. Kate had a distinct visual take. She perceived the films as grainy with a dark palette obscuring clarity. This generated her desire to run dirty textures over the words. She wanted to create the sense that old films were running in front of the text.

As the millennium approaches I couldn’t help but draw certain parallels to the impending erasure of literary exchanges. Between the impermeability of fax paper and e-missives of cyberspace, correspondences committed to the page might perish. The archival letter will be relegated to a distant past.

I had a further impulse to set certain rules.
—My letters would be written in the fall
—I assigned myself the task of rereading literary correspondences from my library. These would be chosen from a selection written in the autumns of the twenties.

Kate reminded me that in our collaborations this was the first time I allowed her to overlay and physically obscure any of my text.
Johanna Drucker
FIRST LETTERS & THE INFINITE

Brief flashes in personal history remain vividly crystallized in my mind, with all the striking privilege of clichéd moments standing out in time from a continuum. Unable to speak I am written into by the experience for which I have no words. The description made later is actually an inscription, in translation, of the sequence of perceived sensations which organized themselves into coherence. I knew my name before I knew the alphabet. I knew the alphabet before I knew there was another. Language was absolute before it was demonstrated to be relative. The text of an early prose work was spatially specific. I wore a notebook around my neck, tied with a piece of string, pen dangling. Ever present to meet the anxiety of a need to always be prepared, at any instant, to write. That cloudy history of childhood, shot through with bars of light which still strike, sentimentally, upon those moments. As this writing now, in this loaded language, attempts to invoke them, peel them back out of that confusion into apparent form. Make them available to sight through a construction which is barely a re-construction. More likely, a fabrication based on the merest, slightest evidence. The trace does not reveal, does not permit the revelation of the real event. Rather, it provides the stimulus to project it into re-existence, new existence, again and again.

There was a crucial moment when I experienced a desire to copy marks which already existed, to incorporate myself into them by repeating their shapes in the disciplined exercise of my own hand. I knew their significance was already determined, that they had a place in a larger context, a systematized framework. That was their power and their allure. Because to make them, partake of them, was to insert oneself into that order which connected outward as well as inward. The word, the sign, the statement became infinitely recallable in the process. The record was no longer simply dependent on my own mnemonic prowess or idiosyncratic system, but was capable of finding its way through the devices of a social and collective memory. Experience became memory through the process of writing, and the acquisition of writing inscribed me in the symbolic order mediating the real.

No particular history of my own precedes this entrance into the alphabet. Thus the patriarchal aspect of the written language doubly identi-
complex origins, and finally Z, a curiously zig-zagged form, the visual equivalent of onomatopoeia—its shape somehow suggesting its name and role in the world of letters.

So the letters passed down to me as I wrote, reshaping them as mine, possessing my self through the making of that name. They had a heritage as forms and a different impact as a process, an exercise. And she took me from the letters to literacy, taught me to disregard the visual images for the sake of their signifying value. But the first act was pure possession, the completely territorial urge to make myself through the writing of my name in letters which were language. That was a personal urge steeped in the mystery of the very tangible, tactile, act of making. As a line on the earth makes property, necessarily, so the lines on the page made me mine in the invocation and power of the name, my name, written by me. I knew they possessed performative energy.

We had wallpaper, as one might in a child’s room, decorated with letters. All majuscules and thickly loaded with floral and decorative motifs. The foliating of the strokes and trunks of the sturdy letters made them more elaborate than functional. But they were clear and laid out in a grid-like pattern. She told me, though I knew it wasn’t her idea, and just something that she knew as she tended to know all manner of rules, that they were all there were. Those twenty-six, she said, were the sum total of the letters from which all words were made. No others. I didn’t believe it, though I knew her primitive faith in the sanctity of laws and limits, her resolute conviction that certain authority was absolute.

But my disbelief at that point was simply grounded in the visual. Nightly, in the dim light left leaking from the hall through the partially opened door, a crack of insight into the system of graphic language displayed in its inadequate beauty on the wall, I compared my mental inlages of my childish vocabulary with that increasingly finite set again and again—hoping to disprove her. For my own sake, but also, for the sake of language. I could not reconcile my sense of the infinity of possibilities which articulation seemed to possess with the notion of a set of only twenty-six letters through which to express them. In their finitude lay our amplitude—in that possibility of endless recombination lies all that is speech, writing, and her voice dropped, literature, that special arrangement into poetic profundity beyond mere serviceable communication and sense.

Adopted and reworked from “Writing History: Mine,” in Figuring the Word: Essays on Books, Writing, and Visual Poetics (Granary Books, 1998). First written in 1981, when I was synthesizing critical readings in theory and first researches into writing as a visual and cultural form, this text was exhumed from the files to be included in Figuring the Word: Essays on Books, Writing, and Visual Poetics (1998). I restructured it towards a slightly more legible and less theoretically opaque form for that publication, attracted by the non-academic tone of the writing and the intensely personal source of the piece. Invited to participate in the design exhibition this coming summer in which the focus is on recalling something that was communicated to you that changed your life, I picked this text as the basis of my poster design. For that venue (print is site specific), I had to select just a small bit of the text, restructure it in lines and chunks for a visual presentation, and edit it to fit the format, keeping in mind that this will have a very different public. The version printed here in Chain is meant to stand alone as prose.
Marcella Durand

I

travalltovaloeoversubllImnateheavealavallone
selfselflessopenIngLrngsubllImlnmalmlznleszetz
t ravallInvaLeInhaLeavalonInslzeseonselfopen
t velopIngoevenvosubllsIveheavingleavea
veselfopenlngssubalmIzemalmblznlemtravelinh
halfIlssehavehclularlavehoplngcurllcuezounvI
lewandvaloveoverleaveandloaveselflessshavenand
curllngovervaletravall

II

overtraveltovaloeoversubllImnateupheavealavallone
selfselflessopenIngLrngsubllImlnmalmlznleszetz
travelInvaLeInhaLeavalonInslzeseonselfopen
lnmgIntoInkbalmlmlnaltravellextraspecIall
hallatonexclamatlIonattentlonandovalsh
dsubllimeheaveandshoveextraspectactleslex
clalmedwithattentionandovalshublllnatlonlzt
avall&exclamatesubllme

III

I n t e r n a l l z e t u r n e y e s w a r m l n a r m s l l
ferventleyefervencyatseaeaseInternalleaseIlle
aseyeswarmlnaeaseawarmseefervencylna
ttledateaseatseaturlnswarmandwarme
nteaseandteaseobservedateaselldeunobserve
datseaInternalandslIdoferventventedunobse
rvableandobservedleyeandeinearfathomsturn
eyesmlstInturnableuntrue

III

u n o b s e r v a b l e d e s e r v e d l y l m e m o r I z e a t s e a t u r n I
nternableIntermibleIntermibleunbellevablya
bledmemorizedlandsandseasturnableandleand
sealInturnInseaturturnableeyesswarmnavigat
lonatlandlneseandseelanlsWelshapewith
tnVewtheIoominglandwithlnthecontlentw
lthIncontlentuncontrolledIntunewith

III

abdlcateadjucatedIctatedIctatorfaltutorialc
allInabdIcatlonlnabdIcatlngstalesatlatlonsh
unabdIctabdIcdIctatesaydIctatorsIcksayltsayI
tatorotttauttautologyldictatorsIcklogInlogIn
logoslogIcdIctatestatementsstartedsatements
tarlIngstardledIntofalIntngstardledfanab
dictatlonlocatefasclnatlonlthlocatlonfasten
fallIntofascInatTeabcllclast

In an attempt to lever letters apart from each other, I discovered that my com­
puter automatically capitalized the letter “I.” The poems began to follow the
journey of a self, the I, through all sorts of odd upheavals, separations, and
discoveries. The letter I became a protagonist travelling through a landscape of
fragmented letters and abstractions. I also discovered that the words I had been
attempting to fragment had been attached to the concept of self: sublime, fascinate, internalize, abdicate, travel. In a boomerang effect, the letter I had
been escaping, came back through circuit boards in an unfamiliar form.
The standardization of filing systems into the alphabetic arrangements which now seem so natural can be historicized. That standardization records a specific moment in the histories of information technology, gendered social patterns, and labor. The most banal surfaces can carry the ugliest scars.

Where once, a secretary might well have spent her career in lifetime employment not only to a particular company, but to a particular executive, the more uncertain tenure of office-workers that emerged after the war meant that the maintenance of corporate information needed guarantees other than loyalty. The guardians of commercial memory had been swept, along with others, into a far more fluid economy of employment. And so the personal fiefdoms of idiosyncratic filing systems, maintained by a single secretary and remaining occult and largely inaccessible to others, were replaced by homogenized systems that could be managed by short term, expendable, employees. Where it might take years to master Mrs. Smith's files, those distributed according to standard alphabetization could be instantly commanded, regardless of a worker's familiarity with the information they contained.

This indexical evolution, however, carries traces of more than shifts in the practices of corporate labor management. Mrs. Smith's files were becoming increasingly unmanageable, as the volume of documents generated by business proliferated geometrically. This dramatic increase in the sheer amount of information archived in offices was the result of a conjunction between technologies of mechanical reproduction (the mimeograph, triplicate carbon papers, photostatic machines) and an increasingly regulated commerce requiring the retention of documents against the threat of litigation.

The following text was generated by taking one of the many manuals created in the early 1950s to instruct office workers in the mechanics of the new uniform filing system and submitting it to the rules of alphabetization that it itself describes. That a bodily, sexually corporal narrative emerges from the determined reordering of this work is neither incidental nor accidental. The original text was entitled "How To Make Your Files Smile."
Paul Elliman

E PLURIBUS UNUM

For Gavin Hills

'I'll tell you where I am if you tell me what your lucky number is.'
'My lucky number is e.'
'That's not a number. That's a letter.'
'It is a number. It's a transcendental number: 2.178...'
— Iain Banks, "The Wasp Factory" in Abacus 1984

My brother was born on the day of the 1970 World Cup final. A drag at the time because it interrupted my first real World Cup experience, although I've since learned to appreciate his timing. Whereas I might find chance and coincidence to be rather obvious and overrated in situations that are supposedly creative, they can be useful in more meaningful activities. Gambling, for example. In London last summer, you could get odds of 5-1 on the World Cup returning to England (although this seemed a bit optimistic to me and may not have been reflected elsewhere in the world). My daughter was born 3.9.93—a small palindrome, and it was another potential palindrome, formed by lining up the winners since we last won the World Cup in 1966, that convinced me there was some easy money to be made:

1966 England
1970 Brazil
1974 Germany
1978 Argentina
1982 Italy
1986 Argentina
1990 Germany
1998 Brazil
1998 England?
Looks good on paper, anyway, and begins to say something about the way numbers and dates, and signs and symbols, take on extra meaning under certain circumstances. Any typographical exchange between us and our world shares its origins with the everyday chance operations of astrology, the National Lottery, or high street betting shops. It's in these charged forms of reading, however irrational, that you feel a kind of essence—a connection to possibilities. The lost calculations of alchemy, I-Ching, and the Kabbalah, all of which involve systems of correspondence between numbers, letters and geometric shapes and the world, live on in all those lucky numbers and discarded betting slips.

The basic premise of the Kabbalah is a belief that the letters came first; before writing or language, even before the creation of the universe—to which the magic of letters is directly attributed. An example of the power of the letter is demonstrated in the famous legend of the golem, a kind of servant formed out of clay, and brought to life by certain rituals of prayer and fasting. Across its forehead is written the word EMET, which means truth. Each day the golem grows in size and strength until it must be stopped. This can only be done by erasing the first letter E from the word, making MET—"he is dead"—and the golem returns to clay or dust.

If, as some believe, a residue of ancient magic lives on in the alphabet, the e adds a certain alchemical lustre of its own. In English and French, the alphabet's fifth letter occurs with significantly high frequency. If not a change to our physical shape, its erasure might be marked by something equally exotic: a change to our language. French author Georges Perec confronted such a shift when he set out to write his e-less novel, La Disparition. Perec is remembered mainly for a technical approach that follows Kabbalistic faith in the preeminence of letters. "Each letter is motivated," he once wrote, "the Book is an infinite network traversed by Meaning; the Spirit merges with the Letter; the Secret (Knowledge, Wisdom) is a hidden letter, an unspoken word: the Book is a cryptogram whose code is the Alphabet." For Perec, language represents a combination of spirit and letter, a spirit which might reside most clearly in those letters, which, as vowels, have the ability to breathe life (or its spirit) into the language of writing. If no more magical than all the others, the liveliest single example of our alphabets interaction with language is the letter e.

Plutarch, in his essay on the letter E at Delphi, tells us that beside the well-known inscriptions at Delphi there was also a representation of the letter E, the fifth letter of the Greek alphabet.

—F.C. Babbitt, introduction to Plutarch's "The E at Delphi," Monalia

The first alphabet, emerging around 1400 B.C. had no e; perhaps more to the point is that it had no vowels. Although the feature that distinguishes this alphabet from any of its graphic predecessors is that each of its signs represent a sound, it was still without a certain kind of sound. It lacked the subtle modifications of voiced breath. The early North Semitic alphabet consisted of roots, letters that functioned as a written structure for words that were completed only when voiced, which made reading technically very difficult to learn.

A version of our present day capital E was being used by the Phoenicians and other Semites of Syria and Palestine, around 1000 B.C. It was back to front and had a short stem or tail, but it is recognizably E-like. It was called Hé (pronounced hey) and served as the consonant h. The Greeks started using it after 900 B.C. gradually simplifying its form and reversing its orientation. They also changed the name of the sign to é and used it for the vowel e. Finally it was renamed epsilon (e-pilon means short or simple e), to differentiate it from eta, the long e. By introducing vocals to the consonants, the Greeks were able to realize the full potential of the alphabet, and the letters formed complete words based on a richer inventory of sounds. Formally the Greek e passed unchanged via Etruscan to the Roman alphabet, where the Roman Monumental Capital is the prototype of our modern capital E. The written Roman form developed into the late Roman and medieval Uncial and Cursive forms, replacing linear with rounded shapes, from which we get our small modern letter e.

The fixing of the letter shapes and the beginnings of a universal literacy are achievements of Renaissance scholarship. Refined majuscule forms of this time were copies of ancient Roman capitals mostly applied through Euclidean geometry. Describing the geometric construction of the alphabet as "the most secret science," 16th century mathematician Luca Pacioli proposed that part of its mystery be interpreted through classical ideals of proportion. In De Divina Proportione, published in 1509, Pacioli gives instruction on drawing the Roman capitals, including, of course, the fifth character: "The letter E is derived from the circle and the square. The widest arm is one ninth of the height of the square. The upper arm is half of the widest as is the lower arm. The centre arm is one third the width of the widest as the centre arm of the A and the above mentioned letter is as wide as half of the square and so it will be very perfect."

In more recent times, Edward Johnston, who developed an early and influential sanserif along classical proportions, advised only that "E's three arms are approximately equal in length in the best early forms." Unable to directly reinvent the alphabet's skeletal form, a critical aspect of modern typography operates in the detail of writing's less visual connections with
the world. This might involve following certain narrative paths, or by responding to the way letters function as a component in the mechanics of language. We feel the influence of certain letters on the meter of ordinary conversation, a situation that may not usually be thought of as typographical. An array of impressive e's appear in Stress Words, for example, by the word collecting poet Charlotte Mew (from her self published book *The distance, the pleasure*) and the allusion to pocket phrase-books:

Employee, refugee, trainee, examinee  
Engineer, pioneer, volunteer, mountaineer  
Cashier, cigarette, maisonette, launderette

The dictionary, a kind of Platonic dialogue about language, generally begins its fifth chapter with a character profile of the letter e: "The second vowel and fifth letter of the English alphabet." From an impressive looking 1918 edition of Funk & Wagnell's *New Standard*, which begins: "Fifth and the most frequently used... its modern English name is the first syllable of even." The various uses are outlined: "1. Open short as in met, half long as in bend; 2. Close long (with the help of 'i' or 'y') as in veil or they; somewhat more open in their; 3. High close as in he, equal and (with the help of silent 'e') in mete; 4. As in over, moment, very weak in sudden, battle; 5. as in report." Finally it enters into numerous digraphs which for the most part now denote simple sounds: as in beat, beet, either, believe, people, feud, chew. These lexicographers don't seem too impressed with an additional characteristic: "an unfortunate peculiarity of English is its very frequent use of 'silent e' to denote the length or quality of a preceding vowel (fat and fate, sit and site, cut and cute). This usage does not go back to Anglo-Saxon times but took root in Middle English under French influence." Although this silent e, with its remote influence on other vowels, is sometimes now referred to as the "magic e."

Common forms, such as spoons, or coins, or the individual letters of our alphabet, suggest nodal points that reflect the social operations by which they exist. Letters, for example, are also units of meaning with readers of their own: cryptographers, typographers, historians and scientists, but also in other more casual experiences of daily life. The e seems capable of conjuring itself out of the dictionary, and its symbolic uses are as numerous as its orthographic permutations. E is for earth and compass point east, electron and engineer, English and European, as well as numerous other initials and acronyms (ESP, EST, ET, etc.). E can be for excellent but is also an academic grade that indicates work that is unacceptable.
One of the earliest examples of writing about writing is, in fact, an essay on the letter E. "De E Apud Delphos" (The E at Delphi), written by Plutarch, the Greek biographer and philosopher, appears in volume five of Moralia. In attempting to explain the appearance of an E on the Oracle at Delphi, Plutarch begins by discussing the use of the letter as the Greek word for "if," and that it can also mean "thou art." He then goes on to explore its main significance through Pythagorean number symbolism: E denotes the number 5, "a most important number in mathematics, philosophy, and music." As historian Johanna Drucker has pointed out, Plutarch's essay, although saying little about the formal development of the letter, offers a valuable discussion of the way ideas are reached through an interpretive discovery of things that may not really be there. Myths are an extension of this, where the ordinary begins to seem strange or extreme. Not by chance does the sign for a new European currency evoke the Greek epsilon. The e for Europe makes a flattering connection with its ancestral model for a unified European government.

Plutarch doesn't really claim to solve the mystery of the Delphic E: "...the likelihood is that it was not by chance that this was the only letter that came to occupy first place with the god and attained the rank of sacred offering and something worth seeing." In the 16th century, mysteriously extra e's turn up again as a characteristic of "olde" spelling. Bibliographic scholar Randall McLeod has shown how, in Shakespeare's day, e's might be inserted between characters whose descenders tended to cross each other. As he says: long S "cannot be set after K without causing the kern to foul ... Is e part of the spelling? Part of the pronunciation? Is it not perfectly plausible that the e is merely a weak vowel whose body is being used by the typesetter who may care nothing for her intelligence?" A common trick used in 16th and 17th century typesetting—where a somewhat wild orthography prevailed—was to insert additional e's, usually at the end of a word, in order to extend a line of type that may be clashing with an adjacent line. Just as Shakespeare's work is seen to fix a fixed moment in the shifting landscapes ("quicke-sands") of the English language, it seems that even the spelling of his name may be a result of the licence given the type compositors of his time.

It isn't difficult to find authors acknowledging McLeod's typographically exigent e. Walt Whitman once praised "the great e' box" of the letter-press compartments in the office of the Long Island Patriot, where he apprenticed as a printer. And the cryptographer in Edgar Allen Poe's story "The Gold Bug" explains the importance of our alphabet's fifth letter: "in English, the letter which most frequently occurs is e. Afterwards the succession runs thus: a o i d h n r s t u y c f g l m w b k p q z x. E however, predominates so remarkably that an individual sentence of any length is rarely seen in which it is not the prevailing character." The most prodigious comment on the letter e's importance (or lack of) to writing, is a book written entirely without it. Its author, Georges Perec, seems to share many of the typographer's concerns. His texts often emerged out of an obsession with the letters: "their presence, their absence, their repetition, their order of occurrence in words, or even their form," as a colleague of his once said. Even his novels caused one critic to deny that he was a writer, that he merely forced "patterns out of alphabetical signs." Perec persisted in exploring the basic code of writing, through palindromes, acrostics, anagrams and other forms of alphabet poetry. His experimental range includes an attempted inventory of everything he ate and drank during 1974, an operatic libretto using tonic sol-fa syllables (do re mi fa sol la ti) to generate words and melody simultaneously, and the world's longest palindrome—over 5000 characters. Perhaps his most famous work is the lipogrammatic novel, La Disparition, written in 1969. Its 300 pages contain not a single e.

The word lipogram has its Greek origin in lipo or leipo—"to miss," and describes a literary device in which texts are constructed around the omission of one or more letters of the alphabet. In French, as well as English, the letter e presents the biggest challenge. Perec prepared by involving his friends in language games that required the e to be absent; whether ordering food in a restaurant, or simply rephrasing conversational sentences. He also produced a scholarly History of the Lipogram, in which he distinguished the absence of vowels as the lipogram's "vocalic tradition," and offers examples of the form found in Greek literature as early as the 6th century B.C. Unable to resist doing something with his liberated letters, Perec also wrote a short text—"Les Revenentes" ("The Ghosts"), that contained no other vowels but the e.

Georges Perec's work has a literary context worth noting here, since he was an active member of Oulipo (Ouvroir de Litterature Potentielle), the workshop for potential literature, founded in Paris by mathematician François Le Lionnais and writer Raymond Queneau. The Oulipo explored the transitional mutuality between language and writing by testing the formal structures of text. Using mathematical procedures, algorithms and bi-squares, and reviving the fixed forms used in sonnets and haiku,
these structures would be cast like a net, as a potential work, intended to	trap any secrets concealed beneath the surface—those hidden resources of a language.

La Disparition begins with scenes of urban chaos: “25 Molotov cocktails go off around town. Pilots bomb Orly airport. Paris’s most familiar landmarks burn down, and its inhabitants look on in horror at a blazing Alhambra, an Institute that is nothing but a sad smoking ruin, a Saint-Louis Hospital with all its windows alight and gaily flaming away. From Montsouris to Nation not a wall is intact.” Written, after all, in 1968, the turmoil of this breathless world is also the outcome of a wounded alphabet, and the e, which usually marks the surface of a text like bubbles of air, is quietly absent.

As Perec pointed out, “a lipogram that did not advertise itself as such would have every chance of being overlooked.” And, to the delight of the Oulipo, the review of La Disparition that appeared in Les Nouvelles Littéraires during the summer of 1969 seemed not to have noticed. The reviewer, René-Marill Alberes, dismissed the book as “raw, violent and facile fiction. . . . A man disappears. . . . Another man disappears. . . . and—you must have guessed this—Georges Perec is too crafty to supply any conclusions. . . . The mystery remains entire, but the novel is finished; that is the contemporary form of literary detective fiction . . . .” Alberes apparently missed a small detail (or rather he failed to). By the logic of the Oulipo, “a text written according to a constraint describes the constraint,” and so La Disparition (impressively translated into English as A Void, by Gilbert Adair) is also the story of the e’s disappearance. Characters vanish when confronted by situations that are literally unspeakable, and Perec’s “missing link,” the absence of a sign, leaves the impression of a blank region between language and writing.

Perec’s Oulipian faith in the otherwise Kabbalistic evaluation of an alphabet’s secret role, resounded in the lipogram. “The book is a cryptogram whose code is the alphabet” as he said, suggesting that one of its Secrets might be contained in a hidden or missing letter. And the title of the work, La Disparition (The Disappearance) points to a more poignant reason for this e-less story. The document issued by the French government for persons missing or presumed dead during Nazi-occupied France bears the heading Acte de Disparition. Perec’s parents were among those lost. In French, e is pronounced eu, very close in sound to eux (them); they have disappeared. The e is gone.

How are new words created? What’s the logic behind neologisms? Turn to the fifth letter of the Roman alphabet for the combining

form now most in vogue . . . E-speak.

Like viruses and ghosts, our language lives amongst us, and the letters become avatars through which it continually reshapes. Here, along with the other 25 members of its hoodlum-gang, the e returns, as if it were arriving on a continuous pulse, transmitted all the way from the Oracle at Delphi. Perec is right to say that each letter is “motivated,” and not necessarily along a mystical path (although infinitely mysterious). They react, like cells or atoms, within the closed system of the alphabet, but also through a connection to the mortal cells of us, their writers and readers.

A later work by Perec carries the simple dedication “for E.” This is a book called W or the Memory of Childhood, more directly autobiographical, through which Perec confronts his tragic connection to the Holocaust. “I possess other pieces of information about my parents; I know they will not help me to say what I would like to say about them. . . . I do not know if what I might have to say is unsaid because it is unsayable (the unsayable is not buried inside writing; it is what prompted it in the first place). . . . I write because they left in me their indelible mark, whose trace is writing.”

Jacques Roubaud, a colleague of Perec’s, used the epsilon—a rounded E symbol—for the title of one of his books. And, as demonstrated by the Oulipo, notions of absence, recurrence, or the indefinite, can be explored in language along a similar figurative ground broken by mathematical investigation. In set theory, developed by mathematician Georg Cantor, the epsilon is used as a sign for “belonging to a set.” Cantor explored the mathematical conditions for infinity through the idea of transfinite numbers, also referred to as irrational or transcendental numbers, by which e makes one of its extra-alphabetical connections—as the “lucky” number 2.178 . . .

The e, with its range of sounds and silences—typographically assisted, in French, by various diacritical marks, accent grave, accent aigu or accent circonflexe—has some of the transcendental qualities found in Cantor’s set theory. To write, both with and without it, seems also to acknowledge a linguistic value of the useless, the ambiguous, the improvised. Its earliest alphabetical entry, as the Phoenician “sign for a breathing,” named for “a window,” acknowledges the textual link to a living world. And as a Latin prefix, with the same value as Ex, it signifies out or proceeding from; emit, for example (from the Latin emittere, to send forth), or evict, to turn someone out of a house (from the Latin evictus, to conquer). Whereas an alphabet might speak of closed systems—a set number of characters with fixed order and shape—its own letters seem to resist closure, encour-
aging us to do the same. Rimbaud, in his poem *Voyelles*, says as much as anyone about the space our language occupies between precision and indeterminacy. Investing the vowels with colors, e is white with “the brilliance of vapors.” With a taste for the infinite, the letter e is one of those “irrational” letters, through which we experience the ordinary magic of language.

The codes by which signs are produced and used continue to evolve and change, less through direct human agency than through the socially and historically accumulated force of signs themselves. In all of his writing, Raymond Williams engages with the way language is motivated culturally and socially. The clearest example of this theme is in his book *Keywords*, a collection of significant words, around which new meanings are shown to have emerged or attached themselves. The e’s in his alphabetically ordered words are distinctly organic: ecology, educated, empirical, ethnic, evolution, experience. Recently, several new words have drifted into our social vocabulary on the back of the letter e. These new e-words demonstrate and extend the ingenuity of Williams’ *Keywords* project.

Commonest recent e-words involve e as an electronic prefix—for almost anything. “W hav this gr at n w s lling tchniqu” is how IBM launched their on-line service, e-business: “It’s time to add {e} to your busin ss.” Quick thinking really, as they’ve begun to colonize the recent electronic neologism. At least if e, in an abecadarian sense, is for electricity, then our alphabet begins to suggest another great writing system. The table of chemical elements, opened up so brilliantly by Primo Levi in his book *The Periodic Table* as a poetry in itself: “the missing link, between the world of words and the world of things . . .” Perhaps we should be further encouraged by the fact that scientists don’t claim to know what electricity is anyway. “Not so much a thing as a way things happen” said Bertrand Russell. Although I imagine IBM are already checking the trademark availability of that perfect line.

The simplest e-word of all is e for Ecstasy. It’s really called Methylendioxy-meth-amphetamine, but it may not have achieved its status if that was how—along with two pints of lager and a packet of crisps—you had to ask for it. MDMA seems a reasonable name, but somehow, in this age of product identification, it was always destined to be called e: it was known as Empathy before being named, probably by a dealer, the more vital sounding Ecstasy, and becoming commonly referred to as e throughout Europe.

A final, darker e-word is E-coli, one of those odd sounding medical words that seem threatening, coded, and technical, but, of course, stand for one of our own little human pieces. One of many bacteria that are with us from the moment we are born, E-coli is the abbreviated name of the bacterium in the Family Enterobacteriaceae named Escherichia (Genus) coli (Species). E. coli O157:H7 is the dangerous strain, its genetic information having been altered by a bacterial virus DNA. Which suggests how we might finally be taken apart typographically, just like that poetically engineered giant, the Golem—destroyed, as Hebrew scholar Gershom Scholem puts it, “by the reversal of the magical combination of letters through which he was called into life.”

End.

**PS**

An email going round after the World Cup last summer suggested a mysterious conspiracy preventing England from winning the competition:

> hey, i thought you might find some humor in this . . .
> (Conclusive evidence that England were cheated out of a place!)

> Date: Thu, 16 Jul 1998 15:56:38 -0400
> To:
> From:
> Subject: FW: WHY ENGLAND DIDN'T WIN THE WORLD CUP
> >
> > is there a conspiracy??
> >
> > The Quarter-Finalists for the 1998 World Cup:
> >
> > A gentina
> >
> > B razil
> >
> > C roatia
> >
> > D enmark
> >
> > F rance
> >
> > G ermany
> >
> > H olland
> >
> > I taly
Cut down a tree. Bring it into your house and stand it up in your living room. Leave your window open and go to sleep. In the morning, check under the tree for poems. If the tree doesn't work, try something else. Leave some rocks in the corner. Tape a twig above your bed. Build a small mound of pinecones in the bathroom. It doesn't matter, as long as it is from the outside.
Mara Gálvez-Bretón
UNA MUJER QUE ESCRIBE ES (¿LESBIANA?): 20 CARTAS DE AMOR: O UN POEMA HIPERROMÁNTICO

para Olivia Noriega

1. de vez en cuando hay que virarse contra el método

Queridísima mujer escritora,

que con respecto a esas referencias recientes—y, sí, retrógradas—a un encuentro, que con respecto a ese beborronear de té y roer de pasteles (de manzana, de canela, de vainilla) y a esa charla (tímida, indiscreta, banal): se imagina inquietando entre pinturas (cuadros maritamos o paisages de costas acantiladas) y vitrinas adornadas de joyas coralinas, de conchas, de erizos—todo comerciable artefacto de oceanos (o naufragios) agenos—se imagina platicando con tenderos o una perra de raza indefinida, piel color madreperla y expresión desoladora: habiendo conducido siete días o siete horas (de un punto A—¿algún pueblecillo de playa con sus desfiles de viageros y su bruma inconveniente?—a un punto B—semejante ribera, más—o menos—septentrional), habiendo conjeturado impacientemente <<¿y me siento y espero o me paro y espero?>> y parandose, sentandose, esperandome: <<¿quedará todo de/scrito entre nosotras?>>:

—esa mujer que te escribe
2. por lo menos tratarlo sin privilegio trascendental

Querida mujer escritora,

Con respecto a esa carta en respuesta a mi carta, con respecto a ese encuentro (dos mujeres chachareando: embebiendo palabras como decocciones—como pociones chinas—sin apuro, sin meta, entre golosinas—alimentándose de miradas deliciosas—ahora imprudentes, ahora contenidas (porque cuando te vea voy a recorrer la vista—sí, a hojearte—como a esas dulces cartas que me escribes día tras día)) que tanto temes: hay duda que te has olvidado del propósito de estas cartas, de estas letras, oh escritora mía.

Ventaneando hacia el mar (porque en días menos nebulosos he podido distinguir los taladros de petróleo de las naves de turistas—esos buques colmados de parejas aburridas y chicos nauseabundos, esos barcos con rumbos—como nuestro anhelo—adrédate diferidos—y percibiste (es decir, construiste) recostada contra un mastelero (u otro accesorio marino) a pleno sol o inclinándote hacia la estela incaluntamente),

te escribo esta epístola que lees sonriendo (y que, sin duda, leerás otro sinnúmero de veces) en tu café, en el distrito 'gay' de tu ciudad, en esa mesa que ahora es tuya, ya que la has situado deliberadamente para acentuar—para aprovechar—hasta el último milímetro de tu vista preferida, de tu muelle o tu puerto o tu faro favorito, en un martes por la mañana, en un amanecer de octubre como cualquier otro

en el que, ventaneando hacia el mar, libando genmaicha a cámara lenta (son los té japoneses los que están de moda esta quincena) persigo palabras con las cuales interrumpir tantas palabras.

Te escribo, mi queridísima escritora, porque estoy convencida que ya hemos escrito demasiadas cartas.

—esa mujer que te escribe

3. un point de fuite

Querida mujer escritora,

¿De veras crees que una lesbiana nunca podría inscribirse de sobra, escribiendo?

Si una mujer de quien sé nada sino adjetivos—petite, andrógina, analítica—que típicamente no leería—y menos escribiría—tales textos <<ahora buscando cartas lesbianas a las cuales corresponder con cartas lesbianas>> ahora guardándolas en un cofrecillo—esos que simulan tesoros náuticos en miniatura, imitando hasta la llavecita de oro y la aldaba herumbrosa de mar—en un rincón de una gaveta—su gaveta de secretos—en una esquina clandestina, entre libros mohosos (novelas epistolarias de un siglo antiguo?) y sobres tan polvorientos que le darían estornudos a cualquiera que los palpara: entonces una relación se podría evaluar a base del número de cartas que, entrelazadas, la han construido.

Porque de tu punto de vista <<algo más material y menos arbitrario que las noches o los años o el número de tazas de té caliente compartidos, algo más real que el intercambio de tuteos o gestos imprecisos o caricias ambiguas—frases que leo línea tras línea, frases con las cuales tratas persuadirme, envolviéndome en tus palabras melíflias, en tu deleitable lógica, solo para lamarme después con más palabras, más eloquencia: tan insaciable es tu furor scribendi, amiga mía! —<<se encuentra seguramente en la escritura.>>

—esa mujer que te escribe
4. tales palabras al borde de la

Querida mujer escritora,

¡Cómo trovas mi frasiología!

¡Cómo tiemblo, temiendo que no eres la mujer (a) quien he escrito, merendando frente a esta ventana cimbrada—ahora transparentando un holeaje portentoso, después opacando de las neblinas y lloviznas del mar autumnal—ahora sorbiendo sangrias o sodas italianas (como tú, mi preferida es de vainilla, pero hoy teo entre la de avellanas tostadas y la de chocolate alemán), después saboreando té de hierbas desconocidas o latte de leche condensada—delicias en tasas tibias, tasas ornadas de escritura cufica o dibujos de barquillos de velas, tasas como las que, en otro puerto, te imagino acariciando (en sincronía con las caricias de mis propias palabras?) para calentar esas manos incalentables—manos que en las mañanas más brumosas, que en las tardes más álgidas, desean—merecen—algo más.

¡Y cómo cuestionas la corporrealidad de esta afición—de esta aflicción—cuando hasta las mordidas a bocadillos rellenos de aceitunas, aguacate y chiles variables, hasta los encantos vegetarianos (pesto, berenjena, hummus?) más exóticos y extraordinarios—entre repasos (por la centésima vez) de epístolas pasadas o comunicaciones futuras—son solo pretextos para redactarte aquí tu pielago de cartas!

Bien pensado todo, oh queridísima cómplice de letras, ¿qué podríamos invocar con tantas cartas desmesuradas—desde esa primera autoconstrucción en ese primer anuncio de periódico, ese aviso (hiper)personal cuyas frases sucintas (<<petite, andrógina, analítica>>), cuyas frases seductoras (<<busca petite, andrógina, analítica>>)—en asociación con otras frases, persiste y permuta inasequiblemente—sinó a Eros mismo?

¿Qué es un carta, te imploro, sinó una carta de amor?

—la mujer que te escribe

5. crisis

Oh, mujer escritora que nos reduciría a puntos casuales—a puertos (límites) fortuitos—en un ciclo interminable de cartas, que me hace sentir—¡sí, sentir! —que existo solo para perpetuar el vaivén de estas cartas (y lo hago, tu sabes):

Estas manos tiernas que, de escribir, se han endurecido, estos nudillos cansados, estos dedos constreíados encuentran reposo solo sobre nuestras cartas—pluma fuente, sobre avitelado, hoja de pergamino (porque la maquinación de pluma-en-mano-en-papel, el labor del manuscrito, es mi único medio hacia ti, mujer/escritora)—porque he comenzado a vivir—a madrugar, devorar, escanciar, redactar, des/velar (¡y ya me tienes hasta correspondiendo como barco que costeando nunca alcanza desembarcar!) únicamente para prolongar este ir y volver de palabras.

Te escribo para leerte y ser leida en los más misteriosos, los más íntimos, más privados plieges de

oh mujer escritora te invito a suspender estas cartas

"Una mujer que escribe" is an excerpt of an excerpt of Furor Poeticus, a book-length work in progress that explores the paradoxical juxtaposition—especially for the lesbian subject—of autopoesis, intersubjectivity and interpelation. The segment included here is best read—under the influence of Deleuze and Guattari—as an experiment in writing in one’s own language as a foreigner. It is my first Spanish-predominant text—a text that stammers through the conventional discourse of desire, misuttering—or, perhaps, merely magnifying—the periphrasis of “romance language” and the literary love letter.
Susan Gevirtz and Myung Mi Kim

The exchange of texts here began out of the hope for contact that wasn’t phone chat, e-mail, etc.—one that would create a mode in which the speed of scrawl could be registered. It lasted a little over a year and appears exactly as originally sent. In talking about what we’d gathered over the year, we found ourselves taking notes on each other. Our introductions draw from these collective notes.

What you’re about to see exists before the careful—as collection, fall out, letter about letter, letter upon letter. Ode to transportation: what is the disappearance and reappearance of time? De-fuse the notion of a subject (of the letter) and replace it with the notion of a recipient. The relation (transportation) is in the continuing arrival. Here is the disappearance and reappearance of time—demonstration of it. The time of writing unhinged from the time-telos of publishing. How do we account for the lapse of five months in which what would be sent was or was not? Does the sent begin to continue off paper? This is called a dream of casting: Spelt. When is the illegible invitation? What is illegible or secret: the imaginable. Tracking of intention in time. The time it occurs in is the nature of accountability and its form is of seconds and one year. Form of the time of the house that isn’t anything yet but motion. Like eavesdropping on yourself—but it doesn’t disintegrate.

—SG

To come into the recognition of these “exchanges” as—letter making, as—what is in the act of corresponding. Interposed between articulation and motion. What they allowed, tracked, indicated about permeability of address—the possibility of sounding lived time. A transport. An instance of recognition, of conversation. Spelt, lettered—by speed, by a writing that begins as it is written. A time of writing as a time of reception. Relativizing.

—MMK

9/23/97

spurious

left off

demonstration of it

There that/
attributable to a river’s delta

seam and seeming

Do so to do so

A-fantasm

10/7/97

For each month a house and for each house

a waterfall Each house a day’s walk apart

and each footprint activates the next waterfall as they draw closer and the one behind ebbs with the back of departure

Each house, a month

burn in retribution

calendar based

on the waterfall year

part Hollywood part Hawaii

part round part smoke
heart stopped in the watch
(or strapped to it)

10/14/97

The Opposite

Posit pulled from opposite. The opposite makes its opposite. [Its opposite is its opposite.] From the mouth of opposite. In the cavity where posit was. Lodge color complements site of their opposites.

Chart

10/16/97

Tyus a ties-us pie

[pi]

Among
Random among

[p]

Tiring is tiresome

As open vectored

[through their children] the

A jar emits
A city's prolapse and routine

Pipe and

2/13/98

A tie us up pie

The sun was more ocean than sun

The ocean more

undone undone another

glissando in the mirror
window
My account so far is

glare

But the forbidden words of love

is the word love

a city's relapse childhood's

childhood chrome fender asleep in your arms

5/28/98

what is it—months—ropes—along the promontory

effusive sand in the child's shoe shaken

pilfered among the living

distributed

were. Some words and.
The last date cannot be recollected.

Everlasting. evergreen. A stalwart

Sixty and fifty arrears

Bent as bows are. Before aim.

Before residue. Sent as simple.

6/3/98

fledgling sea

The Hourglass Transcripts

STILL

[May it be best for you to be] Where What Are

without warning

torn asunder

raw winds of each day

even the scent of before

shipwrecked

on outcome

whose spine many tiny stepping stones

where was before would

x would before

8/15/98

Lost Track

reheard. everything up. reheard

yesterday yours yy

marks slander sunk sss

kitchen not nn is only

a fledgling sea in which to take

for entering re-entering

Lost Track

reheard. everything up. reheard

each title for this time cancels

a title for this time

the locative finger

on the page slips

revealing the form

of lost place

And so having laid the ground Dura slips

into “thirty and five Books” having told begins

Stone by waterwheel by stone
5/28/98

conjugate next to and (in) awry’s intuition
circumspection / ferocious in tending
There was laughter there was indefensible derision
Hyacinths remarkable unto themselves
Sum of knowledge
Sum of compensations
Two full ________
without circumstance, was that it
polluted in pools, sphere, redolence
ε (tracing) that. adjusts
prepares
that. seeming
eared
track. snap. drone. nerve. melodist.
a motion. as in _

9/10/98
not will has and will again
“that the sun has a mind”
habit’s boil sojourn in matter [that
the sun’s mind

9/15/98
sent by water movement caught across
body of proximity containers resigned
sound’s halo : no escape no more more
to extent acts rise approximate flight
“against flesh”

sun scent force of water, insistence
yoked as were plates, tuning forks, accentuated stairs
a movement across and forward
f sound lip, tepid
heed
The rest fell away
coordinated irrigation projects and averaged temperatures
deforestation and silt content
reign and stone
a [mob’s] stoning, throwing stone, against flesh
legibility is ____________
dikes and polder, decreasing surface area
a body of water (as the sea)
Tonight I shall discuss what is undoubtedly the youngest poetic form in all of literary history. One could say that the sonnet was created by Petrarch, the sextine by the troubadour Arnaut Daniel. The epigram comes to us from Martial—it's about two thousand years old—and the origins of the pantoum, which came to us in the 19th century from Indonesia, are for me lost in the distant past. Hopefully, a new book by Jacques Jouet will soon reveal when the pantoum was created.

The anagrammatic poem, the first anagrammatic poem strictly speaking, was composed in 1947, by Hans Bellmer and Nora Mitrani, with the collaboration of Joe Bosquet. That's what we learn from a study by Alain Chevrier appearing as the postface to a collection of *Lettres to Doctor Ferdière*, written by Hans Bellmer and Unica Zürn, that Alain Chevrier discovered and published.

The history of the anagram remains to be written. I would like to note those whom I consider the ancestors of the anagrammatic poem, to note its characteristics and certain of its specific qualities before its formal appearance.

The entire 16th century was marked by a reflection on language, as seen from the point of view of the letter. Geoffroy Tory has given us the most complete, the most fantastic and, in a way, the most modern version of this reflection. Born at the end of the 15th century, an adult for the first third of the 16th, Geoffroy Tory was printer to François I. He invented the cedilla and the accents. And he indulged in very odd musings about the letter:

The odd number, as Macrobe writes in the first book of the *Saturnales*, is the male, and the even number, the female, which is to say that through the conjunction of the male and female, man is engendered. Also, through the conjunction of letters, syllables are formed, and by conjunction of syllables, speech.
This gives you the tone and, if you like, the mental climate in which Geoffroy Tory lived.

He wonders about the “true proportions of letters,” that is, their relationship with the rest of the Universe, and he relates them to the human body and face which, in his day, were believed to have been made to resemble the “body” of the world. This vision characterized the entire 16th century, it was that of Guy Le Fevre de la Boderie—the letters were made in the image of the human body which was itself made in the image of the world—and it is definitely related to the anagrammatic process.

Geoffroy Tory established an entire anatomical typology of letters:

The M is obese.
The L is the human body with its shadow.
The Q with its caudal appendage could go hunting in the neighborhood.
The P is taken from the letter B by removing the potbelly of that B, and cutting off the lower part of the latter, P has two bodies, long with its right leg.
The Y is the male genitals, like the I, while the O is the navel.

I and O, Geoffroy Tory writes, are the generative nuclei of all writing systems.

For example, A is made from I, C from O. “We can suppose,” writes Geoffroy Tory, “that the O is the model for the bulges and curves of letters like it. As for the K, the break touches the point crossing the center and pubis of the human body.”

B is a composite. It is considered an androgyne, as are all letters formed from both the I and the O.

I and O, these letters that generate all the others, Io is both the union of the masculine and the feminine, the nymph ravished by Jupiter and which became Europe, and the number 10, which for Tory and his contemporaries symbolized the totality of knowledge. Geoffroy Tory’s exaltation and jubilation: “Let us say Io, Io —soft, Homeric—say Io, Paean, and say it again, Io, Paean … . Now, consider Apollo’s glorious triumph with his muses and other lady companions.”

This text, by Geoffroy Tory, sent me in two apparently opposite directions that cross however at the juncture of the anagram. First I recalled Plato’s remark that το σώμα σώμα, which is generally translated as “the body is a tomb.”

Σώμα does in fact mean tomb, but it is also, indeed primarily the word that gave us “semantics” and means “sign” ; for the Greeks, it contains the dual notion of symbol and letter. Hence a possible translation of Plato’s phrase as: the body—i.e. desire, gratification—is sign, makes signs. That’s the interpretation that Tory seems to have taken to heart, along with its reciprocal: the sign is sexual pleasure.

But let’s not leave Plato just yet. Translating το σώμα σώμα as “the body makes signs” only renders one meaning of the word σώμα. I’ve attempted to translate the totality of this notion by writing:

The body is X: sign, multiplication sign, and inverted cross.

Now, if the word “body” is taken in its full meaning, i.e. both the human body and the body of letters, that is precisely what we encounter in the anagrammatic poem, or rather that is what the anagrammatic poem encounters—the triangulation, or perhaps one should say fusion, or the bottleneck, between the body, tomb and sign.

In the opposite, but ultimately same direction, Tory’s text leads us directly to Bellmer, to his dolls and especially his drawings. If you have seen Bellmer’s drawings, you have undoubtedly not forgotten that their virtually exclusive theme is the body, and sex, I should say sexes, male and female. I’ve recently had the opportunity to see these drawings again. What struck me was the similarity with the anagrammatic process. You see for example the image of a female body within the male organ, or vice versa. More than anamorphoses, these are visual anagrams, a connection all the more appropriate in that Bellmer’s line, always so precise, fine and continuous, almost without break, evokes a type of immense, all-inclusive style of drawing. You get the impression, looking at these drawings, that you’re seeing an unknown, imaginary, and impossible word which, having expanded to inordinate proportions, takes over the entire page.

It is not surprising that Bellmer also made anagrams with words. Nevertheless, it is rather striking, not to say provocative, that the sole or at least main inventor of the anagrammatic poem is an artist and not a poet, that is, not someone whose preferred mode of expression moves through language, in particular none of the major Surrealist poets—not Breton, nor Eluard, nor Soupault, nor even Desnos, nor Leiris, who as we know played a great deal with words.

It is obvious that the Surrealists’ approach to language made possible the creation of the anagrammatic poem. Automatic writing and the game of cadavres exquis are rather clearly related to the anagram. As is the value they attributed to the products of delirium and the dream; but that’s only one part of it. Flirting with chance, madness—that’s the reverse side of language, in particular none of the major Surrealist poets—not Breton, nor Eluard, nor Soupault, nor even Desnos, nor Leiris, who as we know played a great deal with words.

It is obvious that the Surrealists’ approach to language made possible the creation of the anagrammatic poem. Automatic writing and the game of cadavres exquis are rather clearly related to the anagram. As is the value they attributed to the products of delirium and the dream; but that’s only one part of it. Flirting with chance, madness—that’s the reverse side of the anagram. The front side is constraint, which is not an issue for the Surrealists as a group. Word play in Desnos’ and Leiris’ poetry does not
bear upon the letter as such, but on the sound, the phoneme, though you

can occasionally find an anagram here and there in Desnos’ work: l’acte
des sexes est l’axe des sexes. That’s an anagram. But I have the impression

that it was created by chance, I mean that Desnos didn’t consciously

realize it was an anagram. And the fact is that not one of these poets ever

wrote an anagrammatic poem.

In a general sense, I see a difference between the Surrealist poem and

the anagrammatic poem. That’s because the Surrealist attitude, taken as a

whole, attributes value to the image, and in the image it attributes value to

color, or at least to the linguistic equivalent of color, and that is not the

case with poets who work with strong constraints. It seems to me that the
differences between these two processes are the same as those between a

painting and a drawing. Oskar Pastior, who wrote a collection of

anagrammatic poems, Anagrammgedichte, says more or less the same thing

when in his preface he uses the words “privation,” “sobriety,” and “ab­

sence,” when referring to the anagram.

Another circumstance surrounding the invention of this form seems

to be entirely symptomatic of its fundamental nature as perceived in the very

process of its writing: the fact that the poem was composed by more than

one person, and essentially by a couple. With the anagram, it is possible
to compose a poem with another, or several other people, which is undoub­
tedly impossible for other forms, like the sonnet, the ballad, or the sextine.

It is possible because in the writing of an anagrammatic poem, that

which is destroyed, which is absent, is not so much the meaning of the

words themselves—you’ll see, with “Rose with the Violet Heart,” that
each word of the title echoes throughout the poem—what is especially

cancelled out, at the moment of writing, is the feeling of syntax. The

words emerge in disorder, with their minimal meaning, but they escape

syntactic hierarchy. They suddenly establish the sensation of a dialog, or
dialogs, in several voices. In a way, the dialog is the natural state, the birth

state, of the anagrammatic poem. This dialogical tendency is, I feel, e­

blemematized by the fact that the first anagrammatic poem was com­
bined by a couple.

Also, another very important factor in the emergence of this new

form is that the anagram was finally detached from the name of a person.
Nora Mitrani had in fact proposed to Bellmer that they make anagrams

from a hemistich taken from Nerval, “Rose with the Violet Heart.” The

point of departure was thus a verbal unit composed of common and not

proper nouns.

This seems very significant to me. For centuries, anagrams were in­
vented almost uniquely from people’s names. Now, the anagrammatic

poem—from the moment it first appeared and quite steadily thereafter—is

made up of common language. I think that common language (that is, the

exclusion of people’s names), was and remains an indispensable factor

in the creation of the anagrammatic poem.

This is not chance, it’s a question of structure.

Popular wisdom has it that no one is irreplaceable, and, as is so often
the case, popular wisdom is wrong. Léon Bloy wrote that truth is the

opposite popular wisdom. The phrase “no one is irreplaceable” is, I be­
lieve, a reasonable confirmation of Léon Bloy’s opinion. No one is ir­
replaceable. Each person is unique and cannot be replaced by any other. It’s
not a question of feeling, it’s a scientifically and legally established fact.

That each one of us be totally and uniquely himself, that’s the basis of Law.
The proper noun was created quite specifically with this in mind, to sign, in
a way, or to signal a singularity in fact and in right. Each proper noun
refers to a single being, i.e. a whole, and is not divisible into x number of

elements. Thus there is an obvious conflict between the anagrammatic

rule and a person’s name.

And that’s why this type of anagram could result in more or less inge­
nious phrases, in nicknames if you like, but not in a poem. A person’s

name can only give rise to a poem when it is transposed to the level of
myth. That’s because mythical names sit on the border separating proper

nouns from common nouns. The mythical name belongs to the commu­
nity at least as much as to the person it is to identify.

I shall now read Nerval’s poem containing the hemistich “rose with
the violet heart.” I shall read it straight through, without pausing for com­
mentsaries, and in its entirety, because I think that all anagrammatic poems

based on a textual fragment refer in fact to the whole of the text, and not
just to the fragment. That’s been my experience, both as a maker of ana­
grams and as a reader.

I shall then read the very first anagrammatic poem, “Rose au cœur
violet” by Hans Bellmer and Nora Mittrani, then one by Unica Zürn, the
first German anagrammatic poet. Her “Rosen mit violetterm Herz” was
written in collaboration with Hans Bellmer. I shall read it in translation.
So here’s the Nerval poem, called

Artemis

The Thirteenth returns . . . she is the first again,
And she is still the only one, or this is the only moment,
For are you not queen, first or last?
Are you not king, first or last lover? . . .

Love he who loved you from cradle to grave;
The one I alone loved still loves me tenderly:
She is death—or the dead one . . . O delight! O torment!
The rose that she bears is the Hollyhock.

Saint of Naples, your hands full of flame,
Rose with the violet heart, flower of Saint Gudule:
Have you found your cross in the desert of the skies?

White roses. Fall! You offend our gods,
Fall, white phantoms, from your burning heaven:
—The saint of the abyss is holier in my eyes!

*Rose au cœur violet*

Se vouer à toi ô cruel
A toi, couleuvre rose
O, vouloir être cause
Couvre-toi, la rue ose
Ouvre-toi, ô la sucérée

Va où suréel cotoie
O, l’oiseau crève-tour
Vil os écœurera route
Cœur violé osa tuer
Sœur à voile courte—écolier vous a outré
Curé, où Eros t’a violé—où l’écu osera te voir
Où verte coloriée sua—cou ouvert sera loi

O rire sous le couteau
Roses au cœur violet

*Rose With The Violet Heart*

Soothe leather with rivet,
thee lit. O thwart Eros’ hive,
overthrow it. The she–eel at

the raw, lithe torso: Eve hit
it here (that sore) with love.

There—violate others with
a slit. He hit two over three
tho’ their earthiest vowel
over–oil thee with threats.

Throatier thieves who let totalities hover, whet her
thievish tool where treat wove stealthier, o thither,
here shoot what trite veil heaviest root let whither.

Ætherish whorlet veto it—
rose with the violet heart.

*Rosen mit violettem Herz*

Hortensie reitet zum Olm
Sie loht im Zorne, meutert
Hoer, Untier, Mimose lenzt
Entrüte sie im Holzturm
Lunte her, zittere im Moos
Turmrotter, ziehe mein Los
Immer zeitlose Totenahr

Romhure zotet mit Eselin—Listviehmormone zetert
Nimm Lottes Eiterzeh vor—Lusttote, nimm rohe Reize
Heize Monstrumteile rot – los, hetze mir vir Motten

Vorzeiten–Himmel rostet
Ins leere Ruhm–Motto Zeit
Zieht Rein vom ersten Lot

Im letzten Ei Rest vom Ohr
Violetter Zenith-Sommer

*Rose With The Violet Heart*
The hydrangea rides toward Olm
It blazes with anger, it rebels
Listen monster, mimosa is reborn
Let it grow pale in the wooden tower
The fuse, there, may it tremble in the moss
Tower-viper, draw my lot
Dead-clock always out of time

Coarse Roman whore with she-ass—Clever bestial Mormon brays
Take care of Lotte's flowing pus—Death-pleasure brutally excited
Burn red the monster's parts—Go track down four dirt clods

Ancient sky, rust
Toward the empty slogan of glory-time
Pull rhyme from the first wire

In the last egg, ear's residue
Violet zenith-summer

I wanted to read you the Unica Zürn-Hans Bellmer poem in spite of the more than faulty, completely distorted character of a non-anagrammatic translation. I wanted to read it because, though it is certain that Hans Bellmer was indeed the author of the first anagrammatic poem, and that he was the one who transmitted this genre to Unica, who had become his companion, it is also sure that she is the one who gave it its fullness. She produced many such poems, enough in fact to make up a collection, which she called Hexentexte, "Hex-texts." She also introduced one very significant, indeed constituent element of the anagrammatic poem: the passage from one anagram to another, that is, an entire phrase passing through several anagrams, which in poetry is traditionally called an enjambment. Finally, all anagrammatic poets have taken the form of the anagrammatic poem from her.

It was unthinkable that I talk about the anagrammatic poem without mentioning her. I would also like to say that she wrote several texts in prose, in truly beautiful prose, extremely limpid, the exact opposite of the choppy, hachured style of anagrams. These books are called Dark Spring and The Man of Jasmine. Both are autobiographical.

I regret that I cannot read you any anagrammatic poems by Oskar Pastior, for they have not been translated. Oskar Pastior is an explorer of poetic forms. He writes anagrams, sonnets, sextines, pantoums, and palin-
found in volume 1 of the Pleiade edition of Queneau's work, page 51. Thus, the Bellmer-Mitrani poem is not the first anagrammatic poem to be written in French. It is, however, from their poem (and not from Queneau's) that following anagrammatic poems have derived. The Bellmer-Mitrani collaboration created the genre of the anagrammatic poem.

3. [Literally, "The act of the sexes is the axis of sectes." From "Rrose Sélavy" (1922-23), which appeared in Desnos' Corps et biens (1930).]

4. I could be mistaken. But it seems to me that if Queneau's poem has found no followers, has not sparked the desire, either in Queneau or others, to develop a new form, it is precisely because this poem was built on a proper noun, though that noun is masked and, even in the title, mythified, a condition which I find indispensable to the production of the poem, that I give here.

5. [Regarding the translations of the poems: I give a literal translation of Nerval's "Artemis." The Bellmer-Mitrani poem "Rose au cœur violet" I give first in the original French, then in an anagrammatic translation, that is, I have written an anagrammatic poem on the Nerval fragment "Rose with the violet heart." The Ziim anagrammatic poem on the same fragment translated into German, "Rosen mit violettem Herz," I give in the original German, then in a translation based on Alain Chevrier's literal French translation of the same poem, to show how the anagrammatic and literal translations of the anagrammatic poem differ.]

6. [Technically, Bellmer and Mitrani cheat here by slightly modifying the original Nerval line. Putting rose in the plural gives them an extra s, which allows the beautiful line "O rire sous le couteau" ("O laugh under the knife"). In the following translation, I do not change the original line.]

7. [The Man of Jasmine is currently available in English translation through Atlas Press.]

8. [Memento-fragments is Grangaud's first book, and the first of her two seminal collections of anagrammatic poems. It was published in 1987 by P.O.L. The poems are given here in anagrammatic translation.]

Ralph Gutlohn
from THE HAT, THE WATCH AND THE PEN

Six a.m. Had to get up for breakfast, now I'm under the well-known tree for the day.

What appears to be inconsequential at one time may develop to be of genuine importance later.

Had a lot of fun with the German prisoners today.

Will you go down to 2108 and take a Captain (Red) Shaver, take it to Schick and ask Doc to send it to me, with a pouch and cord? The Master Sergeant needs a shaver.

What is distance?

What kind of socks should be worn on a march?

All we do is have inspections.

* 

Been out in the field all day digging holes. Some General is coming to watch us perform. Had our overseas bags stamped with names and a shipping number.

Not much to say, dearest, censorship and courtship are almost alike, if you say too much you'll get in trouble.

I have the sealed orders in my bag.

Everything is set for our departure.

*
9-25-44

Still located in the wilds of France, don't have any idea what will eventually happen to us and couldn't tell you if I did. However, it's not a picnic here and basic training seems to be the order of the day. We could have still been in the States for all the good we're doing here.

Found a large lake nearby which offers a perfect set-up for bathing and washing clothes.

The rate of exchange is cigarettes. Money means nothing.

Opened the box that R. sent and found a few sardines must have gone AWOL on the trip over. The razor blades were also opened and many were missing.

You didn't mention about my being in France. Don't you know as yet?

Well here we are—in Chicago—had a grand time on the train, the 16 hours passed very quickly—finally had to resort to a sleeping pill because the lights in the towns we passed through kept waking me up.

12-22-44

Holland

Here at a rest camp, glued to the radio. By now you have heard of the Ninth Army.

1-27-45

We now hold everything this side of the Ruhr River. One more river to cross and it will be tough. I'm getting very fed up, it's still snowing, it just can't be snowing anymore.

R. says he sent you a hat!

One thing I won't do on my return home is write letters. So many things I won't do that sometimes I wonder what I will do.

It's Sunday again. Just finished my weekly ration of two fresh eggs.

LOG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>OPERATOR</th>
<th>REMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>922A</td>
<td>A-X</td>
<td>You mustn't be angry about the watch dear, it was partly my fault since I never sent Mick or Els a direct request so let's forget it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>945</td>
<td></td>
<td>LA DOES NOT ANSWER OUR CALL-UP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1003</td>
<td>X-A</td>
<td>X TO KEY A TO GENERATOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1007</td>
<td></td>
<td>LA REPORTS BY CKT HE IS TEMPORARILY SILENCED BY ORDER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1212P</td>
<td>W-A</td>
<td>W RELIEVES X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1235</td>
<td>W-T</td>
<td>R. writes he sent me some hair tonic, I can certainly use it. Please send some food, can of soup (vegetable) how's about 8oz no more no less.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sent you that combat ribbon months ago, must have been taken out of the letter for some reason or other, suppose I must wait until the next war for another.

4-24-45

Received the pretzels from Babe.

It's now and it seems I between fire missions from . We're all expendable according to Sam.

Everything I have seen over here and everything I have gone through will be forgotten.

This is a selection from my book entitled The Hat, The Watch and The Pen. The source is the more than three hundred letters my father wrote my mother during the Second World War. Gathering the torn boxes and bags of mail, opening as if for the first time the now resealed envelopes which held the aged and assorted stationery, I felt like the intended respondent, as if these were meant for me to read. During this project I read numerous histories, diaries, and journalism and juxtaposed excerpts and responses with his writing and my own. I edited, emended, and recast his story to emphasize my reading of the letters and to honor the place and purpose of daily writings.
April 10, 1993
Dear Lyn,

(THIS IS NOT BY HENRIK ISBN)

this may be the only the to be the point of whats
a past which reveals itself reversed in reputation
(reversed in quotation reversed in repetition
(nature-rouge/mind-noire) (mind-rouge/body-noire) (body-rouge/nature-noire)
obscene but not pornographic see enclosure
out of extremities of contemplation out on a limb or involving the limbic system
perennial the of the prime cartographic problem
& too numbers that can no longer be divided by themselves
into an in a too in what is seen to be the the
sprung logics concentric lines of in that the we can now monitor in
each new level of self consciousness
Psittacus Paradisi ex Cuba
HeddaNora projections in a nineteenth century cartography of in exquisite detail of
Also
Helmer the lawyer Rank the doctor Krogstad the attorney
Tesman the historian Lövborg the genius

fortuitous timing of the neo-classical reference breaking the speed O time

Love,
Joan

April 30, 1993
Dear Lyn,

the line is a cloud in the poem that is
the storm we want to know
the earlier form “clod” undeniable & disturbing
it all seemed possible just a century or two ago
the approach to I think I’m feeling rational how
about you fleeing who knows what
hand to mouth in want as lack to know
as three or more lines of we
intersect at the or this on this or the sweet page
an energy that seems could take us
almost anywhere in a century or three
[your asking at the dinner table who is the female Faust]
unless we save the object of our desire by redefining it
the terror that must come comes to this reader’s mind
but yes I must remind myself yet not
the reader’s calling to gaze and gloat
every idea a shuttling to and fro(m)
cultivating as my friend Paul used to say the art of
feeling rational or always prolonged and retarded by motion
a clodded footnote lightening by coincidence
revealing a strange and private circumstance of reading

Love,
Joan
August 10, 1993
Dear Joan,

The best words get said frequently like fertile pips
The identified apples fall heavily to the ground considering
the body as a philosophy which cannot be perfected
Passion, as Nietzsche says, applies even playful expressions
to serious matters
It speaks disturbed
Sometimes it regrets and sometimes it rejoices at absurdity
Passion itself is not repetitious but it can result in delirious reserves
The things said over and over are sensuous signs of memory
But words say something more each time and sustain our reputation
They are reputedly passionate
Their unsatiated simplicity goes full to the ground
Passion is original to those who repeat it
Time then not life is incomplete

Love,
Lyn

October 16, 1993
Dear Lyn,

One could say that the best words get said frequently
that value is in use
One could question whether to organize is heroic at all or
whether heroism is Leander's Hero's dour cousin to be removed once and/or for all
One does not deny loving the sound of the name Linnaeus
Loving Linnaeus to such a degree one must capitalize all Ls for a while
Being one thinks now that one thinks of it even
drawn to the drawing of categorical lines that bend minds back across paper light's tidy micro-universes
this is not a line of thought at its best but neither is it that other thing
(if one could just remember it) some one said just yesterday
that some one had almost been tidied out of existence
a reference to the scrap of paper on which one's name
was written
name
a reference that some if one this is back across drawn to being one
Loving Linnaeus
it happened during the notorious ascent of man long before
before woman moved right on into the vernacular and She said at this point in history you can't trust a woman who's not a feminist
name
that pornographic enclosure a name to be enclosed
enclosure in itself pornographic (insert an is)
the porn part of the graphic (something close to the funnies but not quite)
taking one via etymology to pome, Gk. prostitute (see per-7 in Appendix*)
(Hi per!) to traffic in and sell suffixed zero degradations
in Dr. Johnson's dictionary a publick strumpet ("from every point they come")
and then one lingers on to find puggery & pugil & forgive & forget
insults & injuries
pugil: what is taken up between the thumb and two first fingers
and forgets this is
this is disturbed speech and is not beautiful
simply by adding melisma or florid song
yes, they are reputedly passionate
yes, they rub against each other's mnemonic devices
this must be the time of her life she was having

Love,
Joan

December 13, 1993
Dear Joan,

She said frequently is she loving nomenclature but afraid of her
name
With some question raising sentiment
She can't get between her experience and her name
Unspeakable ludicrous pauses historically humiliate her
Catching herself in graphic poses she feels her pornography
But why not nameless, metaphoric, and precise
Martha-Carol with her legs apart
Sandra-Sue standing nude on her head
Melissa-Mary tidying her tongue
Betsy-Janet lifting a line of thought
The line of thought parts, producing two thoughts, one to witness
the other, the other to position the one
The place of the cataract is two meters from her shadow
A milky twilight sinks into the grass
The sentiments insert repetitions
Out of existence and blooming degradations stand the disturbances
she is having
Emmy-Ethel rapes the emblems on the flag
Helga-Ann makes a pudding and puts it in her hand
Natalia-Nora changes
One naked leg, one bald blue breast

Love,
Lyn
December 13, 1993
Dear Lyn,

THE SENSE OF LOSS AS A SENSE OF
it is said that it happens even in nature (if only the space
this most extreme object
defines

unica and rarissima
error: unbounded variable
the feminine as the unintelligible and vice versa
they red zero ill or machine
father victory yes or y'ear
mind blurred over with doubt

try to begin with cannot be construed as reasons
a stock of sentence fragments banned from scientific journals
one bald blue desert where the child says my teacher sounds like she
woke up bald
to continue this bald eagle-led angle of vision
using breathy vowels whose function it is to keep the consonants
apart
and then the disappointment that they come apart so easily

ultra horizon breaking either/or parapet
blank dark returns new page tilted
speaking blank strange northern apple
in stant pivot sigh then of (blank)
toward 13 squares 13 syllables 3
points blank clear between bracket
asked light light 20 thin flips blank socket
ancient coil's pro's cunt's critique's pure reason's
blank erosore blanke paw thrumb Hegel
blank remedy beard agenda dramb
fraucht engle gloss remainder squat
in history's twitter rut she blank
twi-lips pensive grim reminder mirg mirror
blanck trace there pocket vox map
thing I Ness inging hind able isible erved

proentending crack blank fast air cont'd
quiet putt rusted civet beast or breast

Love,
Joan

In 1993, Lyn Hejinian and I decided to work on a collaboration that would begin with sending the other a poem of no predetermined form or content. Each would then footnote the other's poem to the point of writing another poem. Footnotes and poems exchanged would again be footnoted and exchanged . . . The footnoting format quickly came to feel too ponderous and restrictive. We found ourselves enjoying writing letters in the long interims when neither of us had gotten to the footnoting work. Eventually we decided that our writing impulse toward one another could best take form in an epistolary poetics of strange letters. This is what we are currently doing. The selection published here represents the earliest exchanges, relieved of scores of jettisoned footnotes.
—Joan Retallack
Susan Holbrook
LETTERAL SENSE

"Do you please m."
—Gertrude Stein, “Lifting Belly”

A letter could be deemed the ideal candidate to campaign for the materiality of language; it is the irreducible building block, the lowest common denominator of linguistic structures, an ostensibly neutral figure subject to infusion of the referentiality and ideological inflections attending combinatory processes of orthography and syntax. Letters, so over-familiar, are generally overlooked—"unless of course the writer makes a spelling mistake," notes bp Nichol, “in which case the writer is suddenly very aware of the letters” (81). Nichol’s complaint appears in the context of his “pataphysical apology for the alphabet,” “The Pata of Letter Feet, or, The English Written Character as a Medium for Poetry,” an essay which takes as its intertext Ernest Fenellosa’s influential treatise, “The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry.” Nichol’s eagerness to invigorate writing in English through the excavation of its material, constituent parts recalls his Modernist predecessor’s aim, which was to inspire the English poetic method through his analysis of the Chinese ideogram, the Chinese character as pictorial enactment, rather than arbitrary phonetic index. What both writers are after is a stimulated awareness of the concrete characters that constitute syntax, grammar, poetry. Celebrating the non-referential quality of the alphabet, Nichol claims, “The letter does not stand for something else…. A letter is itself” (81). To illustrate this self-absorption he invokes the Saussurian semiotic dyad, opposing the relationships of the signifier ‘tree’ to the signified çë and the signifier ‘A’ to the signified A. But is ‘A’ neutral? Is it not, like the word ‘tree’, a repository and courier of cultural meaning? What if you were Hester Prynne, and ‘A’ were emblazoned on your dress? What if your lover’s name began with ‘A’? And what about the fact that there is a word, ‘A’? Can ‘B’ hope to compete?

If letters cannot be considered bereft of semantic freight, they can be seen to occupy a shifting position between neutrality (a state which foregrounds the material) and motivation. It is precisely this ambivalence which renders the letter a productive locus over which to entertain the question of materiality’s relationship to materialism. In an interview with Flavio Multineddu, Nichol declares his belief that an engagement with the material letter does bear on material, lived reality:

I think it’s very dangerous that people treat language as transparent and received: when they don’t understand something they don’t worry about it too much. Whatever the system of language, it controls the world thru politics, thru law, and so on. I’m concerned in a work … in a certain sense: not to make my writing simpler,’cause I think there’s lots of simple writing out there. I’m concerned with this one: to get people using language, to using the power of language and reality of language, and hopefully expand their alertness.

(16)

Nichol focuses here on the discursive as a field in which power is both operant and open to negotiation. Such a focus aligns him with writers and theorists who consider linguistic interventions to be potentially liberatory or transformative practices. Paying particular attention to the letter in the works of Nichol, Nicole Brossard, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood and Elizabeth Meese, I want to consider both the alphabetic circulation of semantic value and the relationships these writers propose between the materiality of letters and lives.

To trace the letter ‘i’ through Nichol’s Martyrology, as well as through his other poetic and theoretical works, is to question the notion that “the letter does not stand for something else.” For ‘i’ is also a word, the first person pronoun, and Nichol makes a lot of hay out of this convergence. In “The Pata of Letter Feet,” he finds ‘i’ in an instance of paragrammatic reading:

Let’s take another little “pataphysical step to one side and look at that last word—‘significance’. If i really read that word (i.e. if i actually look at it) i can see that it says ‘sign if i can’ & then adds ‘ce’.

(82)

The pronomial quality the ‘i’ assumes here will be short-lived according to the ephemeral turns of “pataphysical logic where each step coheres only for the length of the transition and then disintegrates, disappears behind you even as a new, unexpected step appears in front of you” (80). Theoretically, the subjective ‘i’ should shift into the letteral ‘i’ as often as the letteral ‘i’ becomes a pronoun. The agitation of the familiar authorial ‘i’, however, is not performed through this shuttle in The Martyrology.
Instead the 'i' moves between the authorial 'i' (Nichol) and the unspecified pronominal 'i'. This latter 'i' appears in passages such as, "we's a long way away some days / there's so much i" (Book 3, V), where both 'we' and 'i' are displaced out of a referential schema and into a grammatical one. These lines both thematize the urgency to buck the traditional lyric ego (and thus make way for a collective mode of being) and perform it, by unsettling the usual syntactic position of 'i'. One might caution that such play is still bound in the sphere of this lyrical 'i', that doing away with the this letter altogether would prove the best corrective to "there's so much i."

Certainly Steve McCaffery's claim that in The Martyrology "the Subject is lost, defabricated by the flow-producing agencies of homophony and the detached letter" ("General Economy" 73) is not borne out. While the "detached letter" 'i' shifts into the non-specific 'i' (and thus an object of critique) and the homophonic 'eye,' the Subject is never lost; 'i' just as often signals the reinstatement of the authorial speaker, frequently through the kind of exegetical logic visited upon the word 'significance' above. Still, Nichol's engagement opens up this character as an active site of contestation, a place to begin considering the ways that the lyric 'i', the autobiographical 'i', the grammatical 'i' and the letter 'i' are shaped and shape us.

'b', 'p' and 'n' are three more letters which recur in The Martyrology. All are particularly attractive to the concrete poet as their physical manipulation engenders other letters. Not only can 'p' and 'b' be flipped laterally to produce 'd' and 'q', they also mirror one another, as Nichol's poem from Still Water illustrates:

blob
ppop

'b', 'p' and 'n' are also dear to this particular poet because they constitute the author's monogram. A section from "CODA: Mid-Initial Sequence," which concludes Book 3 of The Martyrology, typifies Nichol's deployment of these letters:

the late P
destroyed
leaving only b
& n
beginning again
b n a
all history there
"Writing sums the quality of a signature; it becomes known, more than anything of composition, it also tends to function as a node of authorial recuperation. Through its capitalization, its explicit autobiographical association, and its recurrent conversion into 'I', 'H' assumes the quality of a signature; it becomes known, more than anything else, as 'bp's favourite letter.'

In *mecanique jongleuse suivi de masculin grammaticale*, Nicole Brossard's field of action is the interface between language and women's desiring bodies, a sexual, textual interlining of surfaces, contours, flow, energies, mechanics. One of her strategies in dealing with such an interface, where the risk of women's devaluation is everpresent, is to write paragrammatically, so that words, phonemes and letters are reconfigured to produce new meaning. In her poem sequence, "Masculin grammaticale," she engages 'detached letters,' particularly in the third section. I present both stanzas in order to better demonstrate some of its intralinear play:

verte vague sur le ventre sur l'échine
fauche et frôlé et somme le sexe d'
entame le souffle
sur-le-champ tout le parcours
jusqu'en la poitrine vague
flottante

la conséquence d'essoufl d's
l'x du exe l'axe de plaisir
force la forme et le poids de l'ongle
sur l'épine de chair qui convient
sur la peau pour
un renversement d'allures vives vers
les herbes y rouler d'inclinaison (49)

The first fragment we encounter is the "d's" at the end of line 2, a letter at large which is all the more scandalous because the substitution of "d's" for "de," the grammatical function of *élation*, is motivated by an inducement to collapse, rather than isolate, words. The next time "d's" appears, it introduces line 7's "essoufl," a fragment implying the verb 'essouiffer' which means 'to make breathless.' Line 7 whimsically demonstrates that losing letters is indeed "la conséquence" of getting short of breath, thus concretizing the thematic flow of breathless erotics in this poem. The truncation of "essoufl" is underscored by the complete word "souffle" in line 3 (though the appearance of the verb "essouille" minus its end does beg the question of whether the earlier "souille" is in fact the same verb freed of its beginning. The e in line 3's "le" appears suddenly vulnerable to annexation). The "d's" appears a third time—is "d's" the shapely ideogram of "la poitrine vague / flottante" (the vague floating breast)??—at the end of line 7, preceding the solo letter 's in "d's." "d's" repeats the first syllable of "d'essoufl" phonetically and is followed by a structural analogue, "l'x"; both "d's" and "l'x" are composed of individual letters sutured by an elisional apostrophe. That cluster running over into line 8, "d's l'x du," is a
resonant paragrammatical recombination of “le sexe d’” from line 2. “l’x”, itself undergoes a translation through “exe” to “l’axe.” The fragment “exe” must have broken off of “sexe,” a connection which would explain the appearance of that errant “s” from line 7, and would also bolster the proposition that the x in “exe” is “l’axe de plaisir” (the axis of pleasure). Such a proposition is well supported within the charged graphic-the­matic matrix of mécanique jongleuse. “X” clearly works well as an ideogram here; suggesting we view it as an axis inaugurates a fairly unproblematic transit into the undeniable materiality which, as this book attempts to show, is the common ground of the linguistic and the corporeal1. But why, particularly, the “x” in “exe”? If “x” is an axis of pleasure in this figure, what or who are being pleasurably conjoined? Finding two “e”s straddling the x, my reading is necessarily inspired by the operation of the “e” in Brossard’s corpus. Her work has illuminated the already fetishized condition of “e” as feminizer, shaken the grammatical regulation of its use, and spun “e” into transgressive action. Such a transgression of grammatical gender is enacted in the title of this poem, “masculin grammaticale.” If there is to be an axis of pleasure anywhere in language, it is not surprising that Brossard would choose to stage a hot time between two letter “e”s, two marks of the feminine, constructing a decidedly lesbian paragraph. If McCaffery, in an effort to downplay intentionality in The Martyrology, names paragraphs “the flow-producing agents in the poem’s syntactic economy,” here both the paragrammatical “e”s and the auteure they tail produce “le trop plein du code déversé” (56) (“the overflow of the code spilled out”) (58).

Unlike “x”, the “e”s in “Masculin grammatical” are not explicated or overtly framed in any thematic way. Instead their value has accrued through Brossard’s persistent repetition of the “e” throughout her work. The “e”s in the title Amantes or the word “auteure,” for example, are fused to the normative male-gendered nouns “amant” and “auteur”—we are in the realm here, not of detached proper initials, but of improper attachments. Brossard attaches “e”s to words in an effort to both alert readers to the sexual politics underlying the gendered grammar of French, and to exploit those very politics, imposing the feminine wherever she sees fit. In her article entitled “E muet mutant” (the mutating mute E) Brossard elucidates the dynamic connection she perceives between language and women’s lives, between letters and bodies. The silent “e” which marks the gender of French feminine nouns serves as a suggestive index to the historical silencing of women’s voices, both spoken and written. “On ne l’écoute pas,” she declares (no one hears her). Characterizing the status of women’s speech, she insists, “Sa parole marche derrière le Discours comme une femme qui suit son homme” (12) (Her speech walks behind Discourse like a wife follows her man). This motivated simile underscores Brossard’s conviction that the materialities of language and lived experience are intertwined. In another article, “Lesbiennes of Lore” (originally “Lesbiennes d’écriture,” trans. Marlene Wildeman), Brossard makes explicit the role of the letter in transforming the lives of women:

Only through literally creating ourselves in the world do we declare our existence and from there make our presence known in the order of the real and the symbolic. When I say literally give birth to ourselves in the world, I really do mean that literally. Literal means “that which is represented by letters.” Taken literally. Taken to the letter. For we do take our bodies, our skin, our sweat, pleasure, sensuality, sexual bliss to the letter. (134-35)

This essay appears in Brossard’s collection of articles, La Lettre aérienne/The Aerial Letter, the title of which speaks to its sustained focus on the transformative power of a compositional process which attends to the materials at hand.

“E” emerges as a politicized letter through the practice of other Québec feminist writers as well. As Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood points out, Michèle Causse translated Mary Daly’s term “be-ing” through the feminized present participle of être, “été” (128). I find it significant that many radical deployments of the “e” are occasioned by translation, by the exigency to translate feminist subversions between English and French. de Lotbinière-Harwood herself has discussed the particular challenge of translating French feminist texts which exploit the “e” into English, since English nouns are ungendered. One of her strategies is “to use typography to make the feminine visible” (124). She uses boldface in her translation of Causse’s “null” into “one” (115), for example, and takes ‘b’s favourite letter’ to one of the politicized ends I believe it promises, when translating her “destinatrices” into address(h)ers. The intervention of typography, inviting attention to the material of print, seems a fitting way to “make the feminine visible.” The boldface “e” in “one” might serve as a convincing example to counter those who would deny experimental poetry’s material consequences; because “one” is produced through the grafting of a French grammatical construct onto English, it has the immediate effect of rendering the notoriously invisible translator visible.

In “The Pata of Letter Feet,” Nichol comments on the Phoenician character’s role in an interlingual dynamic of poetry, “So at a certain point when I bring my poems down to the level of the letter I also begin to
move freely between languages, or certain languages . . ." (93). He goes on to suggest that this common material afforded the international accessibility of concrete poetry, because "it did not require the usual kind of translative activity" (93). I would underline that word "usual" since what letteral traffic does is not so much evade translation as pose unusual and complex translation problems and possibilities. At one point in (Sem)erotics, Elizabeth Meese addresses Nicole Brossard: "Lesbian. Lover. Lust. Letter. Does 'L' mean something different to you? Langage. Langeur. Lire. Livre" (91). Such a gesture reflects Meese's desire to consider the specificity of Brossard's linguistic project while celebrating their mutual understanding of the indissolubility of language and material bodies. (Necessarily, Meese makes clear this complex position in her first chapter through rhetorically unclear, poetic language. Text is is variously proposed here as a precursor to, an effect of, and a simile for, somatic experience.) Her conviction fuels a passion to investigate experimental writers such as Brossard, Gertrude Stein, and Virginia Woolf, who labor under the strain of a language which threatens to ensure lesbian invisibility. Their experimental poetics inspires Meese's own genre—crossing criticism: she is "searching for the words, syntax and grammar that can articulate the body, my body, and perhaps yours" (93). In (Sem)erotics, familiar critical discourse is interrupted repeatedly by letters—both epistolary and alphabetical—so that her invitation to consider lesbian writing as a lesbian love letter is a persuasively 'formal' one. Many of the epistolary interventions are addressed to and signed by 'L', which stands for lover, lesbian, and letter, among other things. Meese takes 'L' beyond the status of proper initial or phonetic index, however, investing it with ideogrammatic value in her declaration that it "contains its own shadow, makes and is made up of shadow, so that I cannot decipher the thing from its reflection" (2). This construction points to questions crucial to the book, questions about the lesbian as "shadow with/in woman, with/in writing" (1) and, perhaps most significantly, about the undecidability of the relation between textuality and materiality: which is the "thing" and which is the "reflection"? The letter 'V' is also re-imagined as an ideogram in (Sem)erotics:

Even the letter V—one side an obverse mirroring of the other, only connected at that precise swelling point. There must be a name for this effect—V. In any case, it reads like a lesbian effect; a lesbian can claim it as her own. (Y)ours is, after all, "a captivating image,"

\[
\text{VVVVVVVVVVVVVVV}
\]

Taking flight,

Love,

L. s(41–42)

This passage comes from a letter Meese directs to Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West. The 'V' in fact, which is imaged here as a concrete lesbian sign and repeated in a row of pictographed birds "Taking flight," arises out of the proper names of these two Modernist lesbians. Torquing Nichol's tendency to discover the proper name in his letters, Meese mines the proper name for the letteral which she then proceeds to figure as a lesbian pictographic seme.

Reflecting on the grammatical function of performatives, those speech acts which effect rather than reflect, Meese proposes that "I desire might be one." Not among the usual requisite examples of performatives—she cites three of them: "I promise; I swear; I apologize" —the performative declaration of desire suggests the innervating force of Meese's lesbian love letter. The (sem)erotics she theorizes, in other words, is profoundly material: "When I write 'I love you,' I perform my passion in the letter. 'I want you': the letters materialize my desire . . ." (86). The iterative foundation of performatives is recalled in Meese's frequent repetitive sequences, such as "Saying it, over and over, in our own ways helps make it so: L, L, L. Dear L, we need to play it again and again and again, patiently recording the variations in our tunes" (128). The "variations" or, as Judith Butler would name them, "failures," are the potential ruptures which are ever-attendant on an iterative course. The fourth 'L' above cannot properly repeat the first, as its connotative value has mutated through a shift in context. Instances of typographical innovation and cartoons demonstrate that even the shape of letters can shift through iteration. Butler declares the political promise of the citational dynamic, where what is considered 'improper' can infiltrate the proper at every turn, in her claim that her own book, Bodies That Matter, is "assisting a radical resignification of the symbolic domain, deviating the citational chain toward a more possible future to expand the very meaning of what counts as a valued and valuable body in the world" (21). Her belief that transgression of the official bounds of Subjecthood is occasioned by the failure to cite to the letter is shared by Meese, who writes, "But one thing I know: we are dangerous. Imperfections in the letter demand caution" (23).

The various mobilizations of the letter performed by bp Nichol, Nicole Brossard, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood and Elizabeth Meese posit writing's relevance to lived materiality; their literal work bears the "social consequence and social responsibility" Fred Wah has attributed to a "molecular poetics," which attends to the fragment, the letter, the space, the little word ("Loose Change" 7). And if it is possible to intervene in the seemingly inscrutable, irreducible characters of the alphabet, then we can surely manipulate the gross constructions of those words, sentences, and
narratives which conspire to delimit knowledge and experience. But as the works addressed here indicate, these manipulations are induced neither by purely capricious error nor by ironclad intention; promise lies in desire, that generative disposition which, in its extension across both the conscious and the unconscious, mediates between error and intentional­ity.

Notes

1. Fenellosa was, as is often noted, misguided in his research; 90% of Chinese characters are not pictographic at all but phonetic, like the Phoenician alphabet on which English is founded. Ironically, Nichol’s parodic title points to the very linguistic kinship Fenellosa would deny.

2. In his translation, Larry Shouldice highlights this shared materiality through a resource pertinent to this poem, yet particular to English. His version of lines 6 and 7 reads “breast / result of getting short of breath’s” (51). His shifting of “breast” into “breath’s” submits an affiliation between breast and breath, indexed by the shared ‘brea,’ which is etymologically errant, but somatically sound (breasts and breath originate from around the same neighborhood of your body). An isolated ‘brea’ on the page does not signify morphemically. This fragmentation effects a paragrammatic highlighting of materiality, which proposes a partial answer to the thorny problem of how language and female desire can get along. Rather than language standing for the body, the two can lie down and be contiguous.

Works Cited


—. “Writing as a General Economy.” North of Intention 201-221.
Alystyre Julian

LANGUE HU—

I. shutentot passom hute foraxey plo botta meuse portabray pinture satch moreth soit hu—
II. clottom satal éleuse like sadotsh carau lon puu hu—
III. ix pingtrix forakay singlare potom suu gorglinka lumeluume hu—
IV. sodolinkt fadum coll+a syu meauté dkr hu—
V. eia rootl+a béln boxe shime calala souch hu—
VI. fidokat plingtah eseresi merce pliaste nze tala lololo eingale okioh hu—
VII. paradaye ila toné puicie woom bw bbtutu olmaolma ic hu—
VIII. suudduu ccc hu—
IX. ehoha eholeh eholib eho hu—
X. ubara uuoomm oum lixabaz sodoreé pinchocot alliah laem hu—
XI. boose ozz seede rre élé zimou luopuo bidakhl norsyl blabe hu—
XII. sayloov giverse patongé patooné oose zummuz coolooc beaebbi wbe hu—
XIII. smmaaahh pëla zsorg nissil errasmsse aightlu d-tmi azo asodoh hu—
XIV. pr-grasmus blimeemib kodulé laarce pras odays illeel ndonné hu—
XV. aodo somee vitalv ci tuu hu—

Adeena Karasick
SPECTRAL PROFANITIES

grimaces in the torment of its hardening. in its emptiness. in its own contamination. This is the letter buried without madness. Drowning in its inexplicable cry. And this

is the letter, the interletter that does not write. Does not speak but in nightmares. In the death of its enunciation which rises, swells in the immensity of its grasping, of hidden disgusts as death rips / the letter of the letter limits what's uttered in elegance and rigidity. Disturbances, memory, hunger and discretion.

Letters stuffed into the Western Wall, Jerusalem, Israel
This figure indicates the 231 lines connecting the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. According to the Sefer Yetzirah (Book of Creation, and the oldest text of Kabbalah), it represents the number of ways in which two different letters of the Hebrew alphabet can be connected. 231 also is the number of two letter words that can be formed with the letters, provided the same letter is not repeated, and provided that order is not considered. It is grafted on a Letter written by Yehuda Halevi to Halion Halevi discussing the redemption of a hostage, dated early 12th century.

Spectral Profanities was constructed while living in the Middle East and concentrates on how letters themselves struggle in staggered familiarity—across languages, cultures, codes—condemned to function as both vessels of communication and as systems of infinitely translatable signs.

Each figure has text palimpsested on a wall. While meditating on these walls, it became apparent that just as the stones of each wall are not whole, but broken, cracked and weathered, they are structured like a language. A language marked by ruptures, fissures, wounds. These walls, then, which not only function like language but house language, refer to shards, fragments of a history, a context, and mark a liminal space separating the written from what remains to be written and foreground a continuous process of intimacy and separation, clearing and disjunction; possibility, erasure and desire.

Louise Landes Levi
THE YELLOW SCROLL

The Tibetan alphabet, based on the devanagari (the U-Chen or capital letter style) & on the writing system developed in the ancient capital of Shang Shung (the U-me or cursive letter style) contains magical properties which allow certain letters under certain circumstances to store entire texts, as if the letter itself had the capacity of a living being or brain. These letters however are not perceived by ordinary mind. The gterton who discovers the gongser or text does so in a state of consciousness which has gone beyond our 3 dimensional universe. There is also a tantric component to the reception of these documents in that the gterton, in general, does not receive the text without the correct consort or 'gsanq yum'—indeed entire teachings have been lost or delayed for the lack of the appropriate consort, such as the case of KARMA LINGPA a few centuries ago.

The text when revealed reveals itself either in a msc. form when the gterton wakes fr. dreaming it—in this case he must write out the received text 2 times in succession to test its authenticity (from memory of course)—or he will wake literally w. a small msc. known as a Yellow Scroll containing several syllables whose 'content' he will read
as if he is reading a book or text. It is suggested that poetic capacity derives from gifts such as these but of an order which functions diversely and for different ends. The message received by the giterton has been 'stored' in his mind & reveals itself when the appropriate matrix, sangha, or group is ready to receive the instruction indicated.

A LA LA HO

"All appearances manifest as letters" from the Namtar of Diverse Masters

"The entire universe is letters" from the Mandarava Term of Namkhai Norbu

"From the indestructible spheres of the 5 vast spaces rise the letters which are self-originated symbols" (ibid)

The same practices, in the popular belief, apply to the female giterton of whom the Lady Yeshe Tsogyal, consort of the great Guru Padmasambhava (as whom this tradition originates) is a noted example. Monks have also been known to produce these mystic texts apparently free from the required 'yum' but only apparently.

Bill Luoma
from DEAR DAD

Dear Dad,
You can't remember but you were angry after the stroke. I thought it was funny when you would yell at the staff and crack. Shit fuckers you would yell and crack me when I was laughing holding you down securing the straps. Your fingernails were thick and long and you picked at the straps and the skin around the straps. I was proud that you were so strong.

Dear Dad,
You can't eat. You're not allowed to have intravenous food. Everyone says you're almost dead. I don't like this about you. Screaming and skinny in the VA ward. During this bad time you tried to bite the barber, so he refused to cut your hair.

Dear Dad,
Kim called and said Jenny was getting things ready for when you're dead. You're not going to have a funeral but a celebration. It's at the Radiant Light Center where you & Jenny got married and Lindsey & Zeneida got married. The reverend Tirza Ericson will conduct, I will read this, Jenny will speak, a letter written by Freedom Barry will be read, then Vern will talk. Outside we will do the balloon ceremony.

Dear Dad,
I am making pizza. I let the dough rise twice and it's a compound of semolina & unbleached white flour. The semolina part makes it crispy. I also work in coarsely ground black pepper and fresh rosemary. On top is a layer of cheese, tomato sauce and pesto, and leeks and cherry tomatoes. One pizza was in the oven when Jenny called. We ate them and toasted you with Margaritas chez Charles, Juliana and Sina, who is a Buddhist.

Dear Dad,
I am reading on the airplane the book Sina let me borrow. The sea floor makes shades from light green to dark blue. The color variations create rivers and valleys are defined. Right before you can't see the bottom is a real blue. This has something to do with the Bridges of Madison County.
Dear Dad,
It will take 49 days to get where you're going. We can help you get there by releasing you from the places where we hold you. The throat should be relaxed of clinging desires. The heart should be let of issues. The solar plexus anger. You are in the bardo of becoming and can read our minds.

Dear Dad,
Your dead body is a representation of all your negative karma and obscurations. The burning of the dead body is a transformation of all the reasons you weren't a Buddha into the Buddha essence which is fire and light. As the corpse burns, the 100 peaceful and wrathful deities come out to feast. Rays of light stream out from the 100 peaceful and wrathful deities. Your corpse is dissolving completely into light, as all impurities are transformed into blazing flames of wisdom.

Dear Dad,
You missed the Marv Albert trial, but your life spanned the age of the auto, the plane, and the rocket. Expeller pressed is a kind of canola oil in the aloha crackers. The celestis foundation has integrated your cremate into the Taurus expendable space vehicle which will be launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base. Upon re-entry, the unit will vaporize, appearing as a shooting star to observers on earth. A crest of vivid green is often thinly frosted by blue.

Dear Dad,
I'm looking out the window inside the engines of the 747. You would bring me pictures from work of space craft. The spinning has created a green refraction ring inside an orange one. As the engines slow, the spinner wobbles more noticeably, like Indian Guides turning into Gray-Y. We were named the Blue Angels. You got us autographed pictures of the flyers because they were stationed at Moffit Field. I would like to thank you for making one of my dreams come true, and that was the chance to go to space camp.

Dear Dad,
The host of Celestis 2 is the Spaceport Inn where Kim and I are restless. When I open the window, the frog noise is outside. It's 3 am & we must board the bus to Vandenberg. The airforce does a lot to preserve endangered coastal species like the plover.

Dear Dad,
The airforce base has a view of the ocean and bleachers. The temp is near 48 and wind @ 5 from the NNE. Conditions are clear and the moon wants to sit. The steps of 14, 15, 16 were completed however the 2nd backup truck is non-functional and will be removed. The chase plane captures stiff.

Dear Dad,
Step 14 with the exception of lunch truck. T minus 26 mark to the process as written. When we reach stop clock procedures at the T minus 26 mark for a new T minus 0, we will coordinate with the range.

Dear Dad,
The train has the right of way. Steps 14 to 58, the procedure as written. At that time we will have coordinated a new pickup with the range. Weather is green. On my mark the checklist as written.

Dear Dad,
A Polar launch from north to south means the whole earth will turn underneath its vector. You will take the equatorial route like 3 missiles streaking into a lagoon on kwajalein.

Dear Dad,
0,1,2,3 solid fuel. GeoSat can track wave height to extremely fine levels. Call Orbcom a global paging device built by Orbital Sciences corporation. 1,2,3,4 years in a kind of ultimate shooting star.

Dear Dad,
Beyond, some dunes rise up over the horizon. When the sound reaches you, start the 24-hour recycle procedure. It's a scrub.

Dear Dad,
"We are genetic mutants," said T. Leary when he was getting ready to de-animate. We are here because we are the light. The burn up stage is the stage of peace. A grid opened up and healing took place. Immortalized my loved one to become a space pioneer. The release of that pain to the energy grid.

Dear Dad,
John Denver wanted to go up and write songs in space, as an ambassador of space. We are the ambassadors of this dream. Peace in space. They were flying for me.
Dear Dad,
I'm back in Honolulu. I rode my bike to the top of the Chinese Cemetery. There is a pagoda shrine at the top and golden lions. Kids come here to neck. It's a dead thing.

Dear Dad,
It's a clear nite. I can see far things such as the towers of Waikiki and the tantalus mountain where it cuts down and out. Charles and Juliana are in the valley reading.

Dear Dad,
In space camp, my goal was to be an astronaut as the shuttle commander. The reason I wanted to be the Commander was to be in charge of the mission. My favorite subject in school was science.

Dear Dad,
The edge of the hill had a star fall down. A bug can develop and the flashing red lite at the Tantalus hillside never stops.

Dear Dad,
I quit smoking and don’t have any more friends. For example, the half moon which is upside down I have to engage. If there was a cigarette, I would just as soon ignore the moon.

This piece was written in preparation for my father's funeral and while flying on the plane to attend it and while enroute to the launch of his ashes into orbit. I imagined his friends and my family as audience. I revised it some after the funeral and space launch in hopes that it would appeal to a larger audience.
Homo Sapiens learn to speak by imitating the sounds they hear during their infancy. Their ability to comprehend, organize and reproduce those sounds allow communication to occur through a spoken language. Utilizing their highly developed problem solving skills, humans have determined a way to aid those who possess deficient hearing abilities in acquiring adequate spoken language skills. By poking tongues, molding cheeks and pinching lips with trained fingers wet from the flight of flaccid spit, the handicapped can mimic the essential and beautiful sounds of thought and civilization that they have never heard.

I speak English. My speech contains the inflections characterized of having been raised in Philadelphia. I talk like this: "...isspeek ingelih... my peech contain de inflecion characteride of aving bin waid in Philidelphia... I tawk wike thiths..." My thoughts can be loosely organized around English words. I think like this: "...i think this ..." I write music and sing with a weak, sloppy, and grammatically correct voice. I memorize tones and the harmonies of intervals while wondering if the top octave of the piano produces any sounds. I remember AbcdEFgHIjKL mnopQrtuwxyz and now I know my Abc's next time won't you fake with me?

Reconstruction:
Of fragments from fragments, pieces of pie—Möbius lullaby chanted in rounds
—a one and a two and a three and a four and a one and a two and a three and a go to—
The quasiparticles exist without dreaming of buying false victims for their zealous joking.

Of fragments from fragments, pieces of pie—Möbius lullaby chanted in rounds
a one and a two and a three and a four and a one and a two and a three and a go to
The quasiparticles exist without dreaming of buying false victims for their zealous joking.

Of fragments from fragments pieces of pie—Möbius lullaby chanted in rounds
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a 1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a 1 & a 2 & a 3 & a go to
The quasiparticles exist without dreaming of buying false victims for their zealous joking.

Of fragments from fragments pieces of pie Möbius lullaby chanted in rounds
a1&a2&a3&a4&a1&a2&a3&agoto
The quasiparticles exist without dreaming of buying false victims for their zealous joking.

OffragmentsfromfragmentspiecesofpieMöbiuslullabychantedinrounds
a1&a2&a3&a4&a1&a2&a3&agoto
The quasiparticles exist without dreaming of buying false victims for their zealous joking.
The alphabet song functions as a teaching device that serves both language and music. One of the song’s lessons is the simple yet phenomenal notion of variations on a theme. Verbal communication in English is an endless series of variations on the available twenty-six letters. While those variations are what allows spoken language to be so stimulating and inspiring, due to my hearing impairment, they often render language indiscernible.

Nathaniel Mackey
from ATET A.D.

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4.IX.82

WIND-ASSISTED DRUM-LAB READOUT
(DREAM SOLILQUY)

In my head I composed a letter I knew by heart. It began in a way I knew by heart but didn’t know I knew. I bit my lip not to shout what I wrote out loud. So it was I resisted adventitious locution, the wafted remit I ran the risk of exacting were it the “open sesame” I wished it would be. “Dear Lag-Leg Vibe,” I wrote, biting my lip.

I bit my lip, pressing pen to paper within the cardiagnostic chamber my head had become. I erased it, only to write it again, “Dear Lag-Leg Vibe.” I bit my lip to avoid adventitious locution, the wafted remit, the “open sesame.” I wished it would be.

Voices told me mud was my middle name but I bore it well. Namesake slippage muddied my mouth as I stood my ground, bitten lip bitten all the more intently, all but bleeding, mud a kind of blood, blood mud’s afterthought. I bit my lip so intently it eventually began to bleed. It was then that I finally let up, loosened up.

When I loosened my embouchure, no longer bit my lip, a balloon rose from the page on which I wrote. As it rose it took the words up off the page I wrote them on. As it rose it took the words up off the page I wrote them on. As it rose it took the words up off the page I wrote them on. As it rose it took the words up off the page I wrote them on.

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A dreamer licked my sister’s pubic lips a million light-years away and with every kiss I flexed my mouth with that dreamer’s abandon, loosening and stretching my lips, jaws and tongue, doing all I could to give my clients their money’s worth. My lips covered their lips but would neither stick, stay nor settle, would instead wander past corner-of-the-mouth, stray beyond lip-ridge, kiss less what it was than lip-smear, mouth-smother, leave a snail’s trail of spit. Dark, alluvial lipstick muddied their faces. No customer left my booth unsatisfied.

But, no, I was not Djeannine, I only dreamt I was. Dreamt name notwithstanding, my name was Drennette. My tongue was as wet as an old rope. My lips, dry as wood, resisted kisses. My ass was as hard as a man’s.

I wrote what I wrote not between customers in the kissing booth but between beats. Stand wasn’t what I did; I sat.

A snake’s head buried beneath the stool on which I sat would’ve sunk its fangs into my hips had my ass not been so hard. Long hours at the drumset made it so. Many a hand sought passage up my leg, under my dress, but only the drummer’s stool felt my rump, the insides of my thighs, only it got anywhere near my private parts. Many a man tried to look up my dress while I played but the drumset blocked their view.

Mud, on the other hand, occluded speech but in so doing made it more clear, no longer transparent. Mud was loose interstitial cement, my dream’s loose translation of the space between beats. It was the hair sticking out from the reinforced crotch of Djeannine’s white panties, thetic aria (“air”) to their whiteness’s antithetic “earth.”

Mud, I sang, was all name, only a name. Mud was middleness, founding glue. Name tied my tongue and tore my tongue, taut cord binding an otherwise unbound “earth,” agitational cartwheel, blinding white spin.

My name was Drennette. I dreamt of Djeannine, dreamt I was Djeannine. My loose lips delivered spendthrift kisses, prodigal kisses. My tongue was a leaf of kelp, salty-sweet.

I sang an earthy aria, a foul-mouthed aria, fulfilling every customer’s wish to be talked dirty to.

My salty tongue made lewd suggestion after lewd suggestion. My saucy mouth talked as nasty a talk as could ever be talked, notwithstanding my name was Drennette (Drennette Virgin to some, DV, Diva).

My high notes harbored B’Loon’s beakful of mud.

Dear Angel of Dust,

Working out all the wrinkles introduced a new wrinkle. Scroll and teleprompted script rolled into one, B’Loon’s most recent visit took an unexpected turn. What I wrote above is what I seemed I saw written in the blank Penguin had previously drawn on “Tosaut Strut.” It was a blank he no longer drew but which it seemed I saw when I closed my eyes shortly into his solo. Yes, he finally solos on “Tosaut Strut.” How this came to be I could hardly wait to write you about. I could wait to write you the script I saw even less.

It happened at a place in town we played earlier tonight (last night really—it’s two in the morning now), a place known as The Studio, over in the Crenshaw. Having finally worked out all the wrinkles, we were anxious to play “Tosaut Strut” before a live audience. Things were going well (nice turnout, serious listeners, everyone’s chops up), so we gave it a go late in the second set.

We had ended the first set with “Tosaut L’Ouverture.” The “lag along” regard for what gets away I’ve spoken of earlier in regard to the piece was very much in evidence in the reading we gave it. I hadn’t realized before how much the music of my childhood had made an impact on the composition, but Drennette did something she hadn’t done before, a subtle something which made me do just that. Every now and then, that is, she would drag the tip of one of her sticks across the snare drum’s head, an explicit “lag along” tack she managed to work in without missing a beat. She worked in more than that, however, more than she knew (though, who can say, maybe not), for the very first time she did it I thought of a dance which was popular when I was ten known as “The Stroll.” It was a dance in which dancers formed two parallel lines, down the “aisle” between which, a couple at a time, they promenaded. Part stroll, part extended stagger, the promenade featured a gangly, sideways carriage and a crossover step in which one foot was dragged on its side. “Tosaut L’Ouverture”’s resistant lag, I realized, owes as much to this as to anything else. I thought of Chuck Willis’s “Betty and Dupree,” the way the mournful, coaxing sax appears to lament a lost instinctual rapport of some sort. I knew that lament had no doubt informed my piece’s “lag along” chagrin.

The noncalibrated apportionment or appeal of “Tosaut L’Ouverture,” the “lag along” vibe it adumbrated or advanced, hung in the air throughout the intermission and hung there as well throughout the second set. It hung with pointed incompletion and weight, albeit ever so lightly, especially so when we lit into “Tosaut Strut.” It was as if we’d planned ahead—
which, in a sense, we had, though with an odd, unwitting prescience that went well beyond obvious namesake tether. We had a feeling we were in for something special the moment Drennette's drumsticks hit the skins. She wasted no time weaving “lag along” vibe and lop–lop resilience together as one, relating, with unheard-of articulacy, blown matrimonial stroll and aborted bike ride, lag-leg encumbrance and renascent strut. Betty to Rick's Dupree, she wove an alternate tale, one of alternativity itself.

Drennette made it clear right away that the phantom strand which had broken her stride at the beach was the pedal which had broken during her final bike ride with Rick. Revenant pedal floated up from the drums as though up from under the sand, an inflated premise bent on regaining lost ground, revenant beachhead, surge cut with imminence. The pedal proved a Pyrrhic encumbrance—aliquant landing and “lag along” limb rolled into one, leapt-over strand (she leapt, not fell, she insisted) whereby we became a septet. We were seven, newly membered, paralegged. Doppelganger strut so exacted Penguin's rehabilitation went even farther, however. As we neared the end of the long unison passage he made eye contact with me, whose turn it was to solo next, taking his right hand from the horn momentarily and pointing to himself, indicating by that that he wanted to solo. This took me by surprise but I gave him the nod to go ahead. When the unison passage ended he hit the upbeat like a diver hitting a springboard, then pulled back a microbeat almost at once, lopped ictus and lag-leg lope rolled into one. Drennette, gratified by his recourse to her lop/lope conceit, splashed a rubber-wrist flourish on cymbals by way of acknowledgment, then quickly got back to making her lag-leg rounds. A gimp-leg dip, that is, came around with the persistence of an oblong wheel, an asymmetric wheel Penguin rolled with at first and then, five bars later, climbed aboard and rode.

A rickety mix of ride and run, “Tosaut Strut” lived up to its name nonetheless. Aunt Nancy played “lag along” tag, a walking figure which caught Drennette's dip every other bar. Walking bass catching oblong wheel's apogee seemed to whoa ride's runaway drift somewhat. It brought containment to a pace which at times bordered on frantic, reining in run's unchecked furtherance of itself. More than that, it asserted a cocksure composure in full accord with eponymic strut.

Penguin plays bari on “Tosaut Strut,” a horn he got around on, this time out, as though it were a tenor. It wasn't so much that he spent a good deal of time high up on the horn as that he made one think of Ornette's statement that the tenor is a rhythm instrument, made one think of the bari as a rhythm instrument too. He brought Fred Anderson to mind the way he motored so nimbly, nonchalantly even, in so frequently oblique a rapport with Drennette and Aunt Nancy's in-and-under ebb.

For all the time he spent high on the horn Penguin more than gave the bottom its due. He had a cascading way of getting there and, once there, proffered a dark, thick sound which, viscosity notwithstanding, moved around with an inflection and fluidity more typical of the horn's middle range. Suggesting sludge without at all seeming sluggish, it was as thick as Turkish coffee, with all the kick of Turkish coffee, a dark, ever advancing bulb of sound.

Drennette ingeniously buffed Penguin's bulb of sound with intermittent strings of hissed rescission on high hat, clipped hisses which
became a kind of chatter, an ongoing bug she put in Penguin's ear. Buffed bulb gave a glint or gleam to the otherwise dark, ever advancing brew, a philosophico-metallic sheen which led the way as it illumined our way.

Drennette's hissing chatter recalled the drummer we heard in Griffith Park somewhat—enough so, at any rate, to make me close my eyes. I was curious not so much to see whether I'd see the dancing broom as simply to see, as Rahsaan once put it, what I could see. Her clipped hisses stirred up fairy dust, it seemed, a pharmacopoecic endowment (closed-eye, open-sesame inducement or endowment) one sensed was now in the air.

The first thing I saw when I closed my eyes was that the blank Penguin had previously drawn when it came to soloing on "Tosaut Strut" was indeed a drawn blank, that it lay within lines drawn horizontally and vertically which marked off a space which was rectangular in shape, less tall than it was wide. These lines merely formed a template, however, a frame for what, now that Penguin was soloing, unfolded or unrolled within the space they circumscribed.

That Penguin now played with new fluency and rare articulacy I already knew. How new and how rare I was about to find out. Drennette's hissing hisses both stirred up dust and splashed or spewed forth mud—dust in my eye, mud in Penguin's ear. She lent a taste of earth to his Turkish coffee, but, more than that, she sustained a burr, a buzz, a ring of resonant chatter, so insistently put the proverbial bug in his ear he rose to new heights—heights of uncanny intelligibility and, I would soon see, ventriloquist legibility as well.

Penguin, that is, played as though possessed, Drennette as though feeding him his lines. He was her put-upon amanuensis. She was prompter and psychopomp both. He spoke thru the horn as though telling of a dream while still asleep, a waking dream whose theme was dreamt conveyance. Behind the lids of my closed eyes I saw the words he spoke inscribed within the blank he had previously drawn, written out and rolling within the template, rolling scroll and teleprompter into one, ancient and modern into one. In my head I composed a letter I knew by heart were the first words to appear.

Drennette's inventiveness made the drums a laboratory of sorts. Penguin rolled actor and lab technician into one, rendering his lines with the attentiveness to detail of a lab report. Drennette's "findings" were anything but clinical, however. She goaded and cursed with a slurred insinuation and a possessed insistence worthy of Elvin's work with Trane. Compelled by and competing with dream, resentful of dream, she thumped out a spate of disconsolate patter on the bass drum. No less compelled by and competing with dream and resentful of dream, but also compelled by and competing with drum and resentful of drum, Penguin soliloquized as if to negotiate between grist and beguilement, ghost and beguilement, rival memory and dreamt revival, dream and drum. Admittedly beholden to Drennette's drum-lab chatter, he had much that was his own to say as well.

As Penguin's bari spoke, the words continued to appear within the template, written out on the teleprompted scroll the music unfurled: But, no, I was not Djeannine, I only dreamt I was... . It occurred to me that the template amounted to something of a balloon. Given the script's overt reference to balloons, it was clear that what was going on was a B'Loon visit. B'Loon was granting what had become our not so secret wish that the balloons appear, if at all, in a more subtle, less attention-getting way. This latest visit thus took an esoteric turn, removing the words from open view, advancing a script only the closed eye saw. B'Loon had gone underground I understood. We had survived our brief encounter with fame.

B'Loon's presence was further confirmed by the wind which gradually arose from Drennette's drumset as Penguin soloed. As at Soulstice in Seattle, where the balloons made their first appearance, Drennette brewed a spinning wind with each roll she resorted to. Answering Penguin's rhythmic aplomb, the rhythm instrument the bari became, she made the drums a wind instrument, ventilated his grist with beguiling gusts. I felt a breeze at my back, especially so on the back of my neck. Drennette's drum-driven wind gradually blew with more force as Penguin soloed, peaking, appropriately, just as he concluded, both it and the teleprompted script all the more forcefully announcing B'Loon's presence: My high notes harbored B'Loon's beastful of mud.

When Penguin ended his solo I opened my eyes and put my horn to my mouth. He, Lambert and I embarked on the next unison passage, following which Aunt Nancy soloed, as planned. Following Aunt Nancy's solo, we repeated the long, labyrinthine unison passage my solo normally follows. This we did to allow me the solo I was not Djeannine, I only dreamt I was... It occurred to me that the template amounted to something of a balloon. Given the script's overt reference to balloons, it was clear that what was going on was a B'Loon visit. B'Loon was granting what had become our not so secret wish that the balloons appear, if at all, in a more subtle, less attention-getting way. This latest visit thus took an esoteric turn, removing the words from open view, advancing a script only the closed eye saw. B'Loon had gone underground I understood. We had survived our brief encounter with fame.

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As usual, a few friends and fans came backstage afterwards. We were curious, of course, as to whether any of them had closed their
eyes during Penguin’s solo and whether, if they had, they’d seen what I saw. It turned out that a couple of them had closed their eyes and they reported that indeed they had seen the teleprompted script. I spoke with both of them at length, comparing notes, as it were, taking notes. The words the three of us had seen, it became clear, were the same.

The only question now is what was it Aunt Nancy whispered in Penguin’s ear. She won’t say and neither will he. He says the one thing he will say is that she told him not to.

Yours,

N.

Atet A.D is volume three of From A Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate, a series of letters written by composer/multi-instrumentalist N., founding member of a band formerly known as the Mystic Horn Society.

Bill Marsh
BEFORE and FACE

BEFORE

B
I3
I0
I5
I6
IX
IV
IT IS a boat reversing direction under one canopy

a boat & mast sounding out full sail one star an open eye

a sea greater than A line i see another eye over icy

inverted seas looking east

plus you down up down again crossing times line a triple horizon
Both “BEFORE” and “face” were composed at a time when I was interested in exploring the internal orders of graphic characters. Puns, rebus and homophonic splitting informed as local strategies, and to this extent these and the texts from which they are excerpted owe much to the work of bpNichol.

A related process involved transposing existing visual works for distribution on the Web. The eight panels of “BEFORE”, for example, can be viewed as still shots or storyboard segments for the kinetic version rendered later using gif animation. The static images score their simultaneous existence as moving images on the Web. My hope is that both instantiations, rather than either one superseding the other, instead inform and direct each other, as well as calling forth the interplay of visual-static and visual-kinetic in word and image forms.

Corresponding animations can be viewed online:
http://bmarsh.dtaic.com/Works/soundlikes/cuts/cutstransv.html
http://bmarsh.dtaic.com/Works/soundlikes/heartbits/face.html

Thursday
Dear Lewis—
Sometimes I feel like I ought to be a housewife—bake the bread, etc. I have an image of this lady just handling the clean laundry. Nothing to stop you writing too. Except (I like doing the laundry too) baking & washing aren’t that interesting. They become chores, just something that has to be done. Boy, the baby sure is acting weird. If she’s teething my nipples are in for it. How could you ever suggest we get some formula? What am I eating all these chicken for? Free chickens. Seriously though, I think it might really really be spring. Hooray! Wonder how long she’ll sleep. Think I’ll sign some books now.

Love, Wifey

Friday
Dear Lewis—
I’ve been thinking a lot about what our future will be like & whether we’ll get to be famous. This latter on account of the CCLM talk about power. I always figure all the good things will happen if you don’t push it. I must’ve got this attitude from my (humble) parents. How do you view your own talent? I go between thinking I’ve duped everybody (which David says is common as “the artist imposter”) & that I’m, say, Goethe. Speaking of Goethe, those dishes are really piling up.* I’ve decided to let the housework go, as Dr. Spock puts it. I’d like to live in a house where we make big messes in our rooms & have a really sparse living room & a hidden kitchen that could stay a mess. Sometimes I spend a lot of time thinking about how to rearrange the furniture in here. If it were up to me, I’d change it every week. Now I think I’ll sign some books or write your mother. I tuned in Channel 7 & it’s pretty good. Love,

A Jimmy Carter fan

*If you feel a cold coming on, I’ll do them.
Sunday
Dear Lewis—
Where's the cider? It's not in the refrigerator. Yes it's 22 in the middle of March. I feel like doing the crossword. No matter how much we have no schedule, we always seem to spend more time “together” on Sundays. Maybe it's the basketball game. When Butch & Sharon go down the road “out” they take the board away & when they come home they close the road again. Have you noticed? People who don't have to figure out how to (I won't finish—that was a boring thought). Motherhood is just exhausting but you can have a good time. I think we could get a little more organized if we wanted to be. Today I looked at a little muddy clod of earth for a long time. I'm going to take a bath now.
Love, Libidohub

Monday
Dear Lewis,
Why all this cleaning? Sometimes I think I've just gone overboard. I get obsessed with “finishing.” Sometimes, though, I do this (cleaning) when I want to start working on something. It's like a little reflex. Don't know what I think of my new desk though. I'll have to put Hawthorne's picture up. I may go back to writing at the table, where the view (you!) is good. Wide open spaces. Boy, the baby sure fooled me today. When I think I'm not a good mother it's cause I feel I'm projecting so much that I can't be sensible about what to “do with her.” Then I can see what nervous mothers must be like, jouncing the baby all over trying to figure out what to do when actually you probably don't have to do anything. Does that make sense? I'm going to have to go over another page. My handwriting looks different cause there's a big crack thru the middle of this table so that's why it's not so good to write upon (on). The Beano sign, though, is very inspiring. Maybe we talk so much together that that's why we find other people so odd. Sometimes, like today, I struggle very hard with my fears. I realize that what I'm doing is like “vigilance.” It's exhausting & that's probably why I'm so tired. My vigilance—too bad it cant keep it from snowing. Hope it doesn't start before noon tomorrow, so we can get to the store. But we've got plenty of supplies just in case. Maybe I should write out the menu for being snowed in & post it in the kitchen. Next year. Where shall we live next year? Jesus, another page. Can you take it? Here are some of the reasons I love you:
Cause you're cute
Cause you think clearly
Cause you have a nice ass
Cause of your writing
Cause you like to kiss
Cause you can change
(I always think of things as some sort of progression; am I mistaken?)
Cause I like your lips
Cause of the baby (that's backwards)
Anyway I don't wanna run on to yet another page. I think I'm going to read for the rest of the night. I think we're doing pretty well considering how hard it is to have a new baby. We should go to Beano in the spring. Love, The Detectionaire

If you stopped writing what would you wanna be?

Tuesday
Dear Lewis—
Just a quick note to say that I really enjoyed having dinner with you, even tho you made some reference to Mary Hartman. I think I regressed tonight, thinking some thing on T.V. would be interesting when actually it all turned out to be just trash (this nib is literally falling out of the pen). Tomorrow I'm not doing any cooking at all. The guy in “The Attempt” is always getting dizzy as Peru changes altitudes & gives him fevers, so I can identify with him though I think John Hopkins must be some sort of sustained psychotic. Let me know how you feel.
It occurred to me while I was in the shower that I'm a good “nurser” (I guess?) Remind me to give the baby her vitamins. I need a pen tomorrow.
Love, Bumbles

Wednesday
Dear Lewis—
It seems awfully warm in here. I'll have to take my sweater off. We didn't get to the dump today. Also, I wanna go see who the new librarian is. Does your mother like exotic cosmetics? Is “Exotic Cosmetics” a good title? Today I noticed I felt good in the sense that I could do everything without getting dizzy & tired. I was literally jumping around when I got up after Marie fell asleep. Then my heart skipped a little beat because I noticed. It's funny. It takes a long time to have a baby I guess, but no one would ever guess. Other people
just look at you & think you're the same right away. I guess that's the good of complaining—then you communicate you're different. What am I talking about? You are my true captive audience. Come & work on my archive. I'm going to order exotic cosmetics.
Love, Missy B. No

Friday
Dear Lewis—
Would you like a necklace?
I am thinking I would like a Carlton Fisk-type necklace for myself. Yesterday I bought 2 special beads while you weren't looking.
That's why when you walked into the Grainery in Northampton I looked guilty—I was trying to hide them, without stealing them. If you ask me I'll show them to you.
I have a hangover from civilization. But I think it's going away. It's snowing now. It snows now every day. Please pick out a game for us to watch together tomorrow. A triple header is too much for me. During the game I'll bring you a campari made with Perrier. You could call a poem a Perrier Campari. I don't feel like writing to any of my girlfriends. I'm going to check the snow, collate a few books, take a shower, find something to read & roll in the hay, drooling & laughing. Marie's pretty spectacular, ain't she? Do you like me? I feel funny today. See you in the bath at midnight.
Love, Your Cutie

Monday
Dear Lewis—
I'll bet I can write a sentence that will make you sigh in a way I can picture. Here it is: "Sure hope it doesn't snow tomorrow." Did you sigh yet? Well, let's forget that & go on to exotic cosmetics. I'm having so much difficulty concentrating today that I know (it must be spring) I must start writing what I have in mind soon. But, what is it? A threatening letter to David?? No, well, you see, it's so many things, that, uh, I can't really, you know. Little projects.
Now I just wrote you the Carlton Fisk poem so everything's changed. I really do like Carlton Fisk but not as much as I like you so I know you won't mind Pudge's wearing your sweater. I keep wanting to drink beer when I think about baseball. Let's go to a game. Will Marie like it? Can I have another beer? Am I the younger of the two? I realize that I choose the most intransigent thing of all, the weather, to be afraid (a-feared?) of. I am beginning to "admire" you—
is that bad? Is it reminiscent? Sometimes I'm afraid of situations that seem like they might have existed in the past being repeated (is it inevitable?) & (I realize suddenly that I am being obtuse, what I mean is I don't wanna be like Anne & I don't want you to be like my father, blame who you will) we never speaking about it when it happens. As if there is a part of your secret life I am (might not be) not a part of. Two writers, what a big situation. Two lovers, trying to behave. I have so many thoughts I have to "get myself in line" like you "do penance." Sometimes I feel I've swallowed the top to my pen. Now we have to go watch "The Legend of Lylah Clare"—I'll finish these thoughts some other time. Certainly the top to my pen is missing.
Love, Doris Kappelhoff

Monday
Dear Lewis—
Do you feel that you never know what might happen tomorrow, like the UPS man might come with a package full of, say, live animals for us, & he would get stuck in the mud & have to call his grandfather to help him & when his grandfather came it would turn out to be Harry Gallatin?
Now let's go & take a nice long hot shower & then I'll have some milk & ice cream & finish reading Maigret Mystified. I'll bank the fire.
Love, the Bean

I used to be called "impy" by my parents, or "the imp"

Wednesday, Beano Night
Dear Lewis—
Now spring is really here. No more freezing. The growing season is 90 days. There are some mice wreaking havoc in the kitchen. I saw a bird running today. I thought it was a mouse. It was running & jumping. Or rather, leaping. My nap disrupted my schedule so badly that I think I went to the town hall to play beano. It's strange to think that we'll probably never spend such an isolated winter again. I mean unless we really worked at it. This winter certainly had its points. I don't like New York in June. Soon we can go for a walk on a balmy night. When will you finish Beyond the Bedroom Wall? Bernadette of Lourdes was a big sucker (Sacrilege). I walked coolly (cooly, cooley) down the gangplank (?) I must say I really enjoyed playing ball with you today. I think I am a better catcher—can
you believe it—than I used to be. Now we can go play ball in bed. I’m your baby. I hope it doesn’t rain till late tomorrow. It takes a long time to get laundry together.

Love, The Bean (Bear?) Who Saw God

Holy Cow
Dear Lewie Wewie,
It’s amazing to wake up (warm) out of winter & realize we’ve had a baby & spent the winter & here we are, or, we’re here, or, we’re still here. And not only that but we have to go on a diet. Anyway we have a very compact household, I believe. I mean everything’s out in the open. I mean I think my mind is somewhat spaced out tonight, my brain full of infusion of 90 degree air. I mean yes the smell of it is very nostalgic. And it’s as if, well we’re back here again now, just as it should be—so—what’s next? Do you know what I mean? Adulthood is too much for me. Is that it? What do grownups do? Callisthenics? Fishing? Waking up in the spring in NYC is nothing like this. Anyway, I’m leaving Cheyenne. Whatever that means.

Your lovin Bernadette

Tuesday
Dear dear Lewis,
I’ve still got a baby on my knee since 6:30 it’s a too long day & I was even coloring for her & she started crying. I must admit I’m engrossed in B’s life of J. Would you like me to record your mottoes & hypochondrias? Boswell’s quite different, I mean Johnson from Danny Dent (Deck?). I’m getting confused because M’s (Johnny’s) crying makes my tooth ache. Pause... So now I’m alone here thinking how beautiful the evenings are. When I think the baby’s 4 months old I think that’s not much time to not be writing much (eloquent, eh?) but that’s a lot of time for her. I’m awful tired today but I think my new schedule has to rule out “working” at night. If I’m gonna work I’ll have to do it in daylight. But when? That’s why poems are good cause you can dash em off & then you’ve got this object to return to, even polish it up. What’s becoming of my experimental writing? And wasn’t Annabel strangely dutiful? I like the sun.

Your one, Johnny’s Mother

May 17
Dear Lewis—
I haven’t written you in so long I don’t really know where to begin. I was going to tell you the violets were out, that’s how long ago my last letter was planned—at least two weeks! And then we were sick—ugh terrible. I have a feeling I hold the baby too much & that she is ready for more independence, the playpen set-up perhaps. Certainly she is very rambunctious to dandle all day. In my dream this morning she grew up to be a stunning young woman but she bleached her hair—I must admit her hair resembled Dyan Cannon’s though she (Marie) had a much more beautiful face. Anyway, I am finally writing you today because I think you should get a very good letter today not that this will make today a red letter day but a good letter day, healing the rifts caused by a casual but menacing world.

Love, yr Wifey

June 29!
Dear Lewis,
I must’ve started this letter again & again in my mind to you while we were in NY, while we were in Vt. & now while we are outside our apartment camped under the tree. Well you see where marriage & the family lead, what can I say? At least now (we must think) (in the direction of) we will be able to really control our own destinies—what can I possibly be talking about? Yet I am a true Marxist & of course never say die. You see, Lewis, that is why I am articulate; it is because I am hopeful & will fight for the people’s revolution with patience & dignity. Anyway, it’s about time we moved into this joint I am camped outside of. So far two drunks (!Lenox!) have stopped by here. Anyway it occurred to me that the difference between Worthington & Lenox was analogous to the difference between WE PLOW THE ROADS & WE MOW THE LAWNS. It also occurred to me that (re (as Clark would say) the books) you are almost always right. But more interestingly, (everybody smiles at me) I think I love you more than I did when we left Worthington because, & now I really can’t express myself, in all our hard times—I think this is it: you remain sort of equal. What I mean is you don’t let us fall into just one of us being the lunatic. Is that what I mean? I’d better not pursue this further, so, looking forward to sleeping with you tonight in Hancock, I remain, your loving correspondent, B.
Dear Lewis,

This letter to you is the very first thing I am writing in my new room. I cant tell you how good it feels to really be down here with you at the east end of our new house, concentrating. Of course, I could be concentrating more than I am but all that will come in time. I'm just piling up things to do & as you can see I really need pens! Now I've really gotten to the bottom of all my piles & I've found paper. I really am sorry I haven't written you sooner but I just couldn't find any paper before. I even made a shop list on a napkin. 759.4 is the number of the Pontormo book. I'm so proud of my little shelves, mainly because it took such extreme patience to put them up. I have a good feeling in my room but it really is so white . . . (pause here, I've put up Hawthorne, he's very white too). I love you. Marie was very moody tonight. Do you wanna fuck later? Of course we cant plan on it, that takes the something away. In the future I will:

1. Get up early
2. Drink less beer
3. Smoke fewer cigarettes, if any
4. Never lose my temper or act ornery
4 1/2 Reattain my status with nature
and
5. Put first things first

Now I'm going to go back to finish my piles & really get organized but I hope this letter will help to move us both back to the quieter regions where we used to hang out together. It's odd having to deal with people every day, isn't it? I'm going to crawl over to your door & leave this there,

With love, Bernadette

P.S. The town makes noises

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Dear Lewis,

I think about death, about my parents, about disease, about how if I'm going to live a short life I'd better work harder & ultimately about how I'd better just get rid of my fears if I'm to do anything. I read the wrong articles in the newspaper but I cant give up reading the newspaper just for that. Sometimes I think my mind, on days like today, works with this kind of logic: "If you die, I'll kill you." Not the meaning of that but that's the kind of thing I'm saying to myself. Like, almost, sometimes, I cant do this because I might die & that would be bad for Marie. I don't know where to go with all this crap, I dont wanna lay it on you, who needs it. Besides you cant help but feel a little responsible, because you're here & you dont see anything bad happening & nothing is & you are not responsible at all & if you could only understand that my past really haunts me & it wont let go, it seems no matter what I do, if you could see it has nothing to do with you, even though we want everything to have to do only with each other, then I'm sure you could help me get rid of it finally because it only comes now infrequently. I have some thoughts: I find now when I have these bouts that if I decide to settle on not living very long, I experience a moment of relief. As if if I had a fatal disease I would have nothing to worry about anymore. Strangely, all this has more to do with you & Marie than me, I mean, I never worried about death like this before when I thought no one & nothing but my work would really be affected by it. I'm sorry, when I get this way, (I phrase it) that you are stuck with a person who would be an invalid for fear of losing you. Now there's that logic again, do you see what I mean? It's a question where people get their energy, for sure; people like me, I'd like to meet some & take a good look, get a certain amount from fear & anger in order to defend against a repeat of the vulnerability that existed, willy-nilly (?) in the past. The only unique thing about me is that it happened to me too many times & for a long time in the wrong time (forgive me) of my life, adolescence, I lost everybody I loved so that loving anybody made me feel tense & guilty. Now that we've created one & we are all so much more interdependent, I have all the more fear of repeating. And that's time yours is & then we can read the whole book thru. Godard is certainly a petty tyrant. I hope you have a good afternoon though the weather is lousy. And cold! I remain,

your honey, (don't need money)

Berenice a dette

Dear Lewis,

Please make sure (since you're the man, you've got to take care of this) that we make love quite often. Thank you.

Love, Burning Debt

I've noticed from reading my part of our book that love-making has a very good effect on me. I've begun to make my corrections, going thru from page one, my emendations & also additions to say who everyone is & also changes to get the really unintelligible gibberish out. So that my version of "re-writing" will probably be finished by the
what these bouts are about. In the past I would work them out by being promiscuous or driven in other ways, now they just build up to having to deal with what feels like a big tree fallen on my soul. And then I feel helpless but truly only for a moment. I almost had it conquered without even showing it today. I am too proud, I know that, so I dont immediately come to you because I know our life can be happy & not full of this shit & I hope I’ve succeeded in telling you some things I couldn’t have said out loud. It’s like an occasional cure or catharsis that happens, dont worry about it, dont be alarmed, that only gives me something real to feel guilty about, I can sometimes write these things out, just say “dont worry so much” or pat me, or anything ordinary like that, I just need to feel I have a right to love you, that I havent sentenced you, & to have made Marie, whose name I often think we should change.

Please give me your day to read. I will take that as knowledge that these demons have gone away.

Love, bent da tree

*October 13*

Dear Lewie,

Ultimately I have nothing to say tonight. What should we do for our anniversary? I must admit all night I’ve been thinking about sex, and, sex as a married person, or at least, persons with a baby, colored (?) with thoughts of the queer guys downstairs. Now that is only speculation, though I did smell perfume, but what three heterosexual men would rent an apartment with rugs like that. Though I dont know the customs of Lenox. Perhaps these men are on loan from the men’s home-out-patients. If they smoke, I’ll be sure of it. Also I think about Mr. Hatch relentlessly making money as a true capitalist entrepreneur. I aways think people are going to be interesting & different individuals until I see that they have made themselves the same. To put it another way: I’m always ready for surprises to fill out my fantasies but . . . like these people who drive up & down Main St. all night—where could they be going? Are they inspired, do they even know their thoughts? Of course I dont really mean that. How about my fever last night—odd, eh? Sometimes the burden of proof is on me. There’s more to this than meets the eye. Marie was so nice today. Nice night, isn’t it? All the while I was painting I was singing “stormy weather.” Last night I read that French grammar is so complex for the literary that you can only seem educated if you’ve studied it all your life, beginning as a child, whereas the analogous thing in English is just a show of vocabulary. I guess we’ll never know. So,
Deborah Meadows
FAUX TRANSLATION OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE'S "TO THE READER"

The sot, his error or fishing lens
lives in our spirits, works in our bodies,
so we eliminate our friendly notes
like mendicants nourishing our vermin.

Our fish are heady, our repentance milky.
We do ourselves gross injustice by what we have
and lease happiness in a scarlet shirt.
Known for its dye that runs when washed, we touch it.

On the topic of bad birds, there's thirteen
who longs for our impress, our service,
whose baton will vaporize all our freedom
like a suave atomic scientist.

It's the bull who has our reconstructed son!
About the repulsive objects we work on, we joke
about the day the flames of our descendants are not about here
we joke without bleakness in order to cross the sills that leak.

The poor debauched sot who lowers his mouth and eats
the martyred river from an antique cupboard
we go together along a passage of pleasure and secrecy
that is hard pressed like our agent's orange.

Zig-zag yet still being formed by millions of hemoglobin donors
is the cut womb of the townspeople
and when we breathe death itself into our lungs,
we breathe the invisible flowers very deeply of our sad songs.

If Viola, poison, flowery painters, and revolutionaries
are not brooding again and again over their demented pleasures,
then the everyday canvas of our pitiful destiny
is our friend like a hell that can't be hardy.

But the old images in the canyons, the mountain lions and bugs,
the chanters, scorpions, and biting snakes
are all monstrous exaggerations of those that are merchandized
at ramparts of our notorious zoo of cruelty and vice.

It is more laid, more sold, more unworldly
than anything else that can be a large gesture or big cry.
It volunteers the garbage of the land
and lowers all our attempts in this world.

The eye of the bored person involuntarily blinks
because it dreams of the sot high from smoking.
You know it's true, that monstrous delicacy,
that drug of hypocrisy, like me, like you.

The following is Baudelaire’s version in French from the New Directions edition, 1958:

Au Lecteur

La sottise,
l'erreur,
l'erreur,
l'erreur,

Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps,
Et nous alimentons nos aimables remords,
Comme les mendiants nourrissent leur vermine.

Sur l'oreiller du mal c'est Satan Trismégiste
Qui berce longuement notre esprit enchanté,
Et le riche métal de notre volonté
Est tout vaporisé par ce savant chimiste.

C'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent !
Aux objets répugnants nous trouvons des appas;
Chaque jour vers l'Enfer nous descendons d'un pas,
Sans horreur, à travers des ténèbres qui puent.
Ainsi qu’un débauché pauvre qui baise et mange
Le sein martyrisé d’un antique catin,
Nous volons au passage un plaisir clandestin
Que nous pressons bien fort comme une vieille orange.

Serré, fourmillant, comme un million d’helminthes,
Dans nos cerveaux ribote un peuple de Démons,
Et, quand nous respirons, la Mort dans nos poumons
Descend, fleuve invisible, avec de sourdes plaintes.

Si le viol, le poison, le poignard, l’incendie,
N’ont pas encor brodé de leurs plaisants dessins
Le canevas banal de nos piteux destins,
C’est que notre âme, hélas ! n’est pas assez hardie.

Mais parmi les chacals, les panthères, les lices,
Les singes, les scorpions, les vautours, les serpents,
Les monstres glapissants, hurlants, grognants, rampants,
Dans la ménagerie infâme de nos vices,

Il en est un plus laid, plus méchant, plus immonde !
Quoiqu’il ne pousse ni grands gestes ni grands cris,
Il ferait volontiers de la terre un débris
Et dans un bâillement avalerait le monde;

C’est l’Ennui !—l’œil chargé d’un pleur involontaire,
Il rêve d’échafauds en fumant son houka.
Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,
—Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frère !

_Gaston de Mey_

An intentional corruption, false translation of “To the Reader” by Charles Baudelaire as part of a reclamation project: a revision, a botched reconsideration of an epistolary address to Baudelaire’s reader of Les Fleurs du Mal. I became engaged with the question of what it is to address a reader living in the aftermath of cultural genocide in the American SouthWest, in South East Asia, in the European Holocaust, in a time of plague, repression, injustice—how the words reach out.

I have made a list of 100 artists of the 20th century. I have divided the 100 names into their smallest elements (≈letters) and built up my structures from each name. I arranged it in such a way that the left and the right halves reflect one another. Examples above are Henryk Berlewi, Carl Andre, Joseph Beuys, Naum Gabo.
Peter Neufeld
FOR G.O.

(psal)twater
variance sequence

in-tune that which follows (of the forest)
the smallest word (bedding down)
the slightest movement to

trace/vision

effort-lessens to path’s widening
not any hands had held it
told taxonomy from clear-glass
tressed out of it
dawn from simplest motion
stability in instability structured from landscape
(they who are there

their paths)
nasturtium held for clarity (the leaves that shade them)
hands tangle—the arc
of attending

traced out of

catastrophe (faith)
imaginable condition of a wild staring out
sequenced (confronted not answered)

The letter, for this poem, is a site of intervention in sequence, a site of excavation into a language system. The poem is written into and over George Oppen’s famous poem “Psalm.” Each line begins with the same letter as Oppen’s original poem. Furthermore, each line contains the same number of words as Oppen’s original. Words in parentheses are taken out of Oppen’s poem in exact sequence, except for the last line, where they are taken from notes on a longer poem (“Routic”) from his notebooks in the archive at UCSD. Each letter is a fold into the prism of Oppen’s syntax, a bind and release into the fixity of a language system. Like all acts of reading, it is a violent act that holds, as a pencil or a pen might be held, an odd productivity (writing). It is an attempt to arrive at a closeness to Oppen’s achievement—to penetrate its language not in an opposition to, but in an appositive placing next to—“the smallest word (bedding down)”—a letter fixed and unfixed throughout.
Nick Piombino

Collage

if street posters found in Greece. Photo by Toni Simon

Meredith Quartermain
BREADTH

My dear Hat, Isn't it wonderful how bridge's desire roughs a ridge on the back of embankments, stealing valleys with obedient heath, steaming over vigorous bog-ports parallel to the mosses ground between demarcation?

My dear Hat, I remain
Your devoted cow and calf,
Thickset Transcontinental

Dear Thickset, I suppose, by blows of beaus abreast plums, most prominent tuberosity-makers do thin their fish joints' devised intention. As one would expect of those with loosened narrows and bruised thicks.

Trusting you will see the matter in its proper light,
I remain respectfully yours,
 Hatchefaced Siberian

My dearest Hat, How right you are! And what puffing billies too with their spindle-shanked precepts strutting their parliament of trunk-lines! It's to be hoped that no actor of birth and training in the next railway's dumpy decades will wear such shadow intersections.

Believe me dear Hat,
I am your most obedient and faithful caboose,
Thickset Transcontinental

Dear Thickset, Humph! where do you find an actor of training in this railway's celebrated extinction of slavery?

Wishing you may be more true to yourself,
I remain sincerely,
 Hatchefaced Siberian

My dear dear Hat, That's precisely my point. Soldiers may fabricate sepals with imbricate cunning, lean as schemes of ions, reaching the faded tastes of millions with sandy mania in wild specks, railways we can wear or trumpet enveloped in silvery scenes before dress to fish.

Believe me, dearest Hat, if I have lost credit with you,
I have done so with all the world,
My dearest Hat, I confess, in delicacy, I'm at the end of a lake before stubby flutes—

My dear Hat, It is with mongrel gradients I broach our ice—

Dear Hat, How often have I passed my tubby branches in review before me, endeavouring to discover the purple train of ferry rails, the gospel line of ideal points littering your heart, what it is you in me require through cuttings or tunnels of gratified desire, what fleshy albumen marks our game-gait as laths and planks of a bee-house tie the honey. Vain, however, have been my smoke boxes. Here stand my books, line upon line; they speak sidings of wild speculation. Vainly do I impregnate the purse and pocket of our elevations and depressions—a connective tissue running our longitudinal curves. Vainly unsuited running, I remain casing my skyline,

Remain a slender single verse of dimension,

Dear Thickset, With Titan traction, your engine cogs a rackrail of barebones coal complaining the precipitous character in your address. Between porpoise power and wasps of crassitude, cognition divides the lower ridges of consanguinity. Your words on horseback as corpulent signalmen regretting our modern usage remain respectfully yours,

Vain, however, have been my smoke boxes. Here stand my books, line upon line; they speak sidings of wild speculation. Vainly do I impregnate the purse and pocket of our elevations and depressions—a connective tissue running our longitudinal curves. Vainly unsuited running, I remain casing

Remain a slender single verse of dimension,

Dear Hat, A disappointment in the receipt of lanterns jawing squat through a long country has exposed me to embarrassment of bread. I am breadless. Rather I breathe at threads, hats and bats the sum which would extricate me, my head bathed in a hard herd of bards from this painful difficulty. Is not large art a heart of hurtful darts, the curves of severe life free, free as

the road, loose as the wind? Fibres of distant heavy trains would be amply sufficient to re-lease my dearth of earth, to herb my hearth ear, amply sufficient to bead the beds of my present barren dares. Yet I heat a beaten aversion, a hateful date with the rat-rates, the hats of daters eaten for red brads hard at breeding death with breath. Then I hear the hare beard air, as tar hardens, bade for the drab, the bad bad drab. Can you grant me an accommodation of walks herded in names, an economy of lakes, yellow with golden lily pads, a lyre of tongues lending seepage as a thousand streams slide to a salt see, to be reimbursed with the strictest sculpture of the thorax, the most punctual smells of lavender chatting that shirts and sheets of a house.

Lovers and debtors bear the tears of ears,

Dear Hat, I remain your cambric and damask idler,

Dear Thickset, I have always made it a principle in life never to borrow or lend sense, not even organs of amplitude. The jaw begins below the mental planet suspended backward and straight in the line of duty which has been constructed to engineer conveyance. Femurs transport mineral cases and crank connecting-rods for locomotives hauling coal along the curve of temporal fascia marking the upper boundary of words we steam through perpendicular to the passengers' view. I have ever found it safest to keep this baggage fixed and close-hooked through force, harpooning the methods of travel and sprocketing novelty from the finespun liver, to confine and thus to stop the line imagined in the boilers and blastpipes of combustion, and, in the long run, have ever found it the kindest to all parties.

I remain,

Your faithful main line,

Dear Hat, Although the balance of account between us has been of long standing in your favor, I must beg you—my cylinders grow weedy, my mercury lank—driving without gear or flues a track which has already run wildly east and west of credit. My dials so many thousand junctions, my valves steaming whorls and shells without money—white, pale before your firm and deathless lines. Is it rhapsody of steel to paint wholly in crayon my black earth—cuttings? In commerce, I have scarcely known which way a tailor's counting threads embankments. Is love's convolution so oblique my books must hurtle like cattle drift to slaughter?

Remaining, my dearest Hat,
Tender and gracile as fine strains of memory-skin,

Dear Thickset, I confess that your letter much surprised me. You imagine fluid trains press through sceptred halls a tale of Troy sweeping in scarlet and ample cylinders our strophic locomotive. Yet our valve muscles skeleton land transporting space in equal units and fix the outer boundaries, the borders of our swiveling bogies. Your conduct bristles so the razor ceases to act. But the razor must act and ledger the lines of our hard stiff life.

Trusting you will, in time, see these iron keys as the true axis and orbit of bolted curvature,

Dear Hat, I cannot refrain from hoping that you will enable my starveling history to realize some slender happiness from more frequent correspondence. Four days have passed without a letter from you. I see ghosts take up the news, ghosts creep between the lines, ghosts rain and snow the ribs and cartilage of our singed church.

Anxiously awaiting word,

Dear Hat, Although temporarily estranged from the delights of your pen, I follow thee ever in curveless locus. Temporarily estranged from the perihelion swallows, the breadth of belly fish river or canal or shadow infinity. Temporarily estranged a slender letter could anchor not like a single line but like a ton of speed steams neck to back thick with rapid person, transversal along branches, a passing hourglass and ravines of freedom speed to intersect horizon. Temporarily estranged,

In 1997, I began a long poem, The Book of Words, based in part on Roget's Thesaurus, which has seven sections. "Breadth" comes from the second section, entitled Space. The general plan so far has been to explore the geography of perception through the words laid out for it in English, but along the way anything can happen. In this case, I tried, among other things, to discover all the words that could be made with the letters in the word "breadth" and use them in the poem. I also cross-cut language from Britannica descriptions of railways into language from the thesaurus and structure from A New Letter-Writer, for the Use of Gentlemen; [and] the Lady's Letter Writer (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, nd). The poem emerges through a correspondence between two trains. This piece plays with, among other things, railway lingo: cow and calf locomotive diesel coupled with cables booster unit; rack-rail (a rail laid beside the regular track, taking the cog of a train engine to help trains on steep inclines); skyline (from skyline casing, the sheet metal skin that encases boiler stacks, domes, whistle, and pop valves); chains (brackets that attach rails to ties); idler (empty flatcar or gondola that trails behind an overhanging load); sleepers (British term for cross ties); fishbellied rails (rails that in cross section curve outwards); fish joints (rails butted end to end so that they form continuous beams); bogie (wheels and suspension supporting a rail car).
We have an emotion towards the vegetable tuftings and ornaments of the earth.
—Geoffrey Grigson

On 28 April 1529, at the sign of the Pot Casse on the Petit Pont, just over two-and-a-half years after King François Ier of France had on 5 September 1526 by Royal Privilege granted him exclusive copyright for ten years, Geoffroy Tory finished printing his attempt “to lead the unlearned to the contemplation and comprehension of well-formed letters” (58). Letters, he said, are “so noble and divine that they should not be in any wise misshapen, mutilated, or changed from their proper shape” (189). They should have the proportions of the human body, and in their “divine perfection” (63) should—like the human body—“stand in their requisite and proper aspect, upright and intact” so that they can be seen “face to face” (vi-vii).

On 17 February 1600, after almost eight years in prison in Venice and then in Rome, Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake for saying that “divinity is within us more than we ourselves are” (AshW 91), that stars “have life in themselves” (AshW 155), that planets, worlds, and the things within them, are all ensouled, and that “all of God is within all things” (Expulsion 235). Gaspar Schopp, an eyewitness, reports that at the stake, when he was offered the crucifix, Bruno in disdain turned away his face.

Tory’s book is called Champ Fleury. Bruno was burned in the Campo dei Fiori. Two fields of flowers. A Suite of Fleurons and Flowers and Flourishes are the titles of two celebrated books on printing by John Ryder, typographer and book designer.

Fields of flowers. When the death-god Hades carried off and raped Kore, she was playing with her friends in a sweet meadow, gathering the flowers of the rose and lilies, soft crocuses, beautiful violets, irises with hyacinths, and narcissus. This is an old old story. Some 2500 years later Milton following a later tradition would call that meadow “that faire field of Enna,” with Ovid locating it in Sicily, and (retelling a story of perhaps equal antiquity) would describe Adam and Eve, in their amorous jouissance having lost the Garden of Eden by eating the “Bad Fruit of Knowledge,” disporting themselves on a couch of Pansies, and Violets, and Asphodel, And Hyacinth, Earths freshest softest lap.

Flowers and flourishes, pleasure of what text.

“Flours were the Couch,” Milton said, and

There they thir fill of Love and Loves disport
Took largely, of thir mutual guilt the Seale
(Paradise Lost IX, 1040-43).

Imperfection’s celebration and attachment, pleasure and pain conjoined, stain sealed in lettered text. In his sequence of Heroic Emblems (cast concrete or carved stone in the grounds at Stonypath) Ian Hamilton Finlay modelled “The Divided Meadows of Aphrodite” (Meantime 15), where Empedocles’ moving principles of Love and Strife, “equal in length and breadth to the four elements” (Kirk & Raven 250), are the source of all things. Some meadow! some garden! At Stonypath the boundaries of garden, meadow, pasture, and moor blur and are permeable, and it is sometimes hard to distinguish where you are.

“What the hell’s the difference,” William Carlos Williams angrily asked Ezra Pound on 22 May 1948, “between condemning the world from heaven or hell?”

The word paradise has as antecedent, in Hebrew, pardes, in Zend (old Persian), pairidaeza—the first means a park or grove; the second, an enclosure. Fenced, perhaps, to ease The Blessed, that they be not disturbed by the doomed. In Arabic Persian firdaus is the word for both paradise and garden, and some time around the close of the tenth century Abu’l Kasim Mansur—Firdosi—composing what became the national epic the Shah Nameh (a poem twelve times the length of Paradise Lost), told the story of Tahúmers who brought letters into the world. Tahúmers was the Demon-binder (Div-bund), who killed Ghú, the leader of the demons, at a blow. To save their lives, the surviving demons “taught him letters, and his eager mind with learning was illumined” (Atkinson). A transformation, a metamorphosis.
Letters, caught at the first in demonic light. The story of Kore comes from the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, whose daughter she was. In Phoenician the word aleph means ox, and the letter was made to look like its head—unless that is, it comes from the Egyptian Apis, the sacred bull. The wise men in ancient Egypt, thought Bruno, "knew God to be in things, and Divinity to be latent in Nature, working and glowing differently in different subjects and succeeding through diverse physical forms, in certain arrangements." He cited scorpions and vipers, onion and garlic, as examples (Expulsion, 237, 236). One Greek myth says that when Cadmus, who founded Thebes in blood, brought writing into Greece, he placed Alpha first in the alphabet because the cow (which had led him to the site who founded Thebes in blood, brought writing into Greece, he placed Alpha first in the alphabet because the cow (which had led him to the site of his new city), is sacred to Demeter.

The cow is the first of essential things.

In the vale of Tempe (in Greece, between Mount Ossa and Mount Olympus), Zeus raped Io and then turned her into "a Cow as white as milke" to hide her from Hera, the goddess of flowers. This too is an old story, old when Homer told it, and often told since. As Arthur Golding retells Ovid's version (1567—Book 1, lines 701-943), when Io tried to lift her hands, "she saw she had no handes at all"; when she tried to speak, her lowing "did hir so affray, / That oft she started at the noyse, and would have run away." When at last she saw her reflection in her father's stream, "she was agast" at her gaping jaws and sprouting horns "and from hir selfe would all in hast have fled." And when Inachus her father found her, and fed her sweet and tender grasses, "She as she kyst and lickt his hands did shed forth dreerie teares." Without speech she could not tell him, not even who she was, but she "printed" her name in the sand, "Two letters with hir foote," IO. A hoofprint. The letter I going through the O—a distress of letters—"from which name," Tory reminds his reader, "the country was called Ionia and its people Ionians" (20).

Geofroy Tory derived the whole alphabet from I and O. In his alphabet, letters are folded and enfolded, one in another—"E when properly designed and written contains within itself F & L" (98)—and as in his quest for human perfection he unpacks them, so does he unpack extensions: "the letter A," he says, "is made from the letter I" and is "a triangle, which is an odd number":

The two feet of the A and the head make the said triangle; but it must be placed within a square, which is represented by the word Hyacinthus, which consists of four syllables, Hy-a-cin-thus. The ancients, wishing to demonstrate the extraordinary perfectness of their letters, formed and fashioned them according to the proper proportions of the three most perfect figures of geometry—the circle, the square, and the triangle. And because an odd number was always considered among the ancients as a lucky number, . . . they made their first letter in the image of an odd number placed upon the square, which is an even number, to give a good opening & fortunate approach (26).

Plutarch recorded that the odd number is male, the even female; Tory, continuing his exploration of A, saw that "as by the conjunction of the male and female man is engendered, so by the conjunctions of letters syllables are made, and by the conjunctions of syllables, words. And speech" (26). He hoped that by his work in Champ Fleury "our language might well be enriched by certain fine flowers and figures of rhetoric" (3), transformed.

Transformations, by which to read what has been written. "If it is assumed that the art of reading is confined to the printed page," the American architect Louis H. Sullivan wrote in about 1906, "we cannot go far. But if we broaden and quicken our sense of reading until it appears to us, in its more vital aspect, as a science, an art of interpretation, we shall go very far indeed. In truth there will be no ending of our journey; for the broad field of nature, of human thought and endeavor, will open up to us as a book of life, wherein the greatest and the smallest, the most steadfast and the most fleeting, will appear in their true value. Then will our minds have escaped slavery to WORDS and be at liberty, in the open air of reality, freely and fully to deal with THINGS" ("What is Architecture" 230).

But "tell me," Virgil asks in the third eclogue, "in what countries are born flowers inscribed with the names of kings?" Hyacinthus, a pre-Hellenic god, was a beautiful boy beloved of Apollo, who accidentally killed him with a discus. His lamentation of grief, 'ακούσεις (alas alas!), is written on the petals of the lily which sprang from his blood. In scientific language, the Linnaean name for the common English bluebell is Endymion nonscriptus; and the narcissus, Athanassakis reminds us in his translation of
The Homeric Hymns, "was the lure that led to the rape of Persephone and her sojourn in Hades" (74, n. 16). In their old age Cadmus and his wife Harmonia were transformed into serpents and carried away by Zeus to a beautiful meadow at the western end of the earth, on the banks of Oceanus, where there is no snow, no storm, no rain, and the cool west wind breathes for ever: Elysium, which Hesiod thought of as the Islands of the Blest.

On 17 March 1962, Louis Zukofsky wrote to Cid Corman that a letter is solid, a syllable body. Some thirty-five years later Ron Silliman described Charles Olson's Human Universe as "a collection best known for its attempt to correlate poetic form with the functions of the human body" (184).

Extensions, then, of capability, which transcend, remind, and even inform. Think, Giordano Bruno enjoined the reader of The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast, "think, thus, of the Sun in the Crocus, in the narcissus, in the heliotrope, in the rooster, in the lion; you must think of each of the gods for each of the species under the genera of the entity." For "to the extent that one communicates with Nature, so one ascends to Divinity through Nature" (236). Indeed, said Louis Sullivan, "most of us have, in less or greater measure, this gift of reading things. We come into it naturally" ("What is Architecture" 230). How curious, and how apt, that the great manuscript collections of learning from which, in the Middle Ages, the young were inducted into the great tradition of western knowledge, should have been called Florilegia. Collections of flowers. Anthologies. What Zukofsky in Bottom: On Shakespeare called An Alphabet of Subjects.

An alphabet. In 1901 Sullivan read the pier, the lintel, and the arch as "the three letters, which constitute the alphabet of our art" ("The Elements of Architecture" 124). He saw balanced within the pier "the two great forces, the simplest rhythms of nature, to wit, ... the Rhythm of Life ... and the Rhythm of Death" (121), allegorizing his art. Here's a cockney alphabet, as I remember it from my childhood. It's been around for quite a while, a hundred years or more, another distress of letters.

A for Orse
B for Mutton
C for Thighlanders
D for Dumb
E for Brick
F for Vescence
G for Indian
H for Is Own
I for Novello
J for Oranges
K for Restaurant
L for Leather
M for Sir
N for Eggs
O for A Pee
P for Relief
Q for Tickets
R for Mo
S for Williams
T for Two
U for Me
V for La France
W for Mirror
X for Breakfast
Y for Husband
Z [i.e. zed] for The Last Time

Though it keeps shifting in some of its details and definitions, it's stayed pretty constant in its great variety of puns, in its play of techniques and expectations. A is not for Orse in the way in which C is for Thighlanders—and of course the introduction of that is wrecks the alphabet and obliterates the transformations. "Some day," Georges Dumézil has observed, "it will be necessary to restore to the history of religions the idea of the symbol. ... It is what permits one, if not to voice, at least to approximate, to delimit the nature of things, by substituting for the stiff and clumsy copula of identity, 'to be,' more flexible affinities: 'to resemble,' 'to have as an attribute or principal instrument,' 'to recall by an important association of ideas'" (1.26).

Tory's letters invoke unseen cosmologies, hidden connections and powers. They manifest and make visible metamorphoses akin to those of Bruno's Sun in the crocus. The transformations in the puns of the cockney alphabet more than gesture towards similar potentials in their variety, as for shifts in quite remarkably Steinian or even Joycean ways and lets us glimpse a possible world of cyphers in which a doctrine of signatures might once more hold. Or doctrines.

There is, too, an archaeology in these sometimes quite complex puns and their reversals. In his Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English,
Eric Partridge, citing Ernest Weekley’s *Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, suggests that “Hell for Leather” comes from “all of a lather,” which is what happens to a horse’s skin when you ride it, drive it, too fast. An archaeology of letters which informs, too, the verbal fancies of turn-of-the-century travel writer Norman Douglas, where he finds the memory of a “snowy temple” embedded in the name of the village of Massa Lubrense (delubrum). A wondrous mode of survival, when one comes to think of it: a temple enshrined in the letters of a word whose very meaning is forgotten, handed down from father to son through tumultuous ages of Romans and Goths and Saracens, Normans, French, and Spaniards, and persisting, ever cryptic . . . after the more perishable records of stone and marble are clean vanished from earth. (23)

Letters. Geoffroy Tory proposed, on the basis of similar evidence, that Hercules, after building there, left a company of men-at-arms in Paris as settlers, after whom the city was named. They were, Tory says, “called Parrhasians from the name of their province of Greece . . . and by the change of A to I, the inhabitants of this city were, and are to this day, called Parrhisians” (15-16).

Letters. The alphabet is, like Bruno’s cosmos, an enfolded universe of infinite extensions. In over sixty published works Bruno maintained that there is life on other planets and that each of us, each thing, is a universe, microcosm. An infinitude of infinitudes, yet in a finitude, and so a universe. A many and a one. An open and closed form, like the shape of A. Its stress.

Forgetting the distinctions between upper and lower case (to say nothing of the differences between fonts), Kenneth Goldsmith somewhat incautiously observed on 22 August 1998 that “one of the occupational hazards of being a text artist is that your work is going to look like everyone else’s—there are only 26 forms that you can use.” About a century earlier E. Cobham Brewer was more in the right of it:

Yet we have no means of marking the several sounds of our different vowels: nor can we show how to pronounce such simple words as *foot* (pull and dull), *sugar* (father and rather), (gin and be-gin), *calm,* . . . and thousands of other words. . . . Take . . . e, we have *prey* (a), *meet* (e), *England* (i), *sew* (o), *herb* (u), etc. The other vowels are equally indefinite.” (*Dictionary* 37 “Alphabet”)


•

Tory sought the proportions of letters as reflected in those of “the natural body and face of the perfect man” (ii); he speaks again and again of “proper proportions” and “sovereign perfection.” He thinks of history as a progress, a development, an improvement. “When one shall have treated of the letters,” he said, “and another of the vowels, a third will appear, who will explain the words, & then will come still another, who will set in order the fine discourse” (xxiii). Not unlike Bruno, Tory claimed to have “excogitated and discovered rather by divine inspiration than by what I have seen written or heard” (38). He sought perfection, and saw it in unity and authority.

Perfection. Kathleen Fraser sees the quest for perfection in the poem as a crippling, an inhibition, and an imprisonment. Perfection. Bruno sought it too, but protested “how powerful is the habit of believing and being brought up on certain opinions since childhood, in shutting off the most obvious things from the understanding” (*AshW* 99)—I take that *certain* to mean *certainty*, and his protest one against crippling, inhibition, and imprisonment. Sullivan, speaking of “this gift of reading things,” thought that

We come into it naturally; but, curiously enough, many are ashamed because it does not bear the sanction of authority, because it does not bear the official stamp of that much misunderstood word scholarship, a stamp, by the way, which gives currency to most of the notions antagonistic to the development of our common thinking powers. (“What is Architecture” 230)

In the history of writing, it seems that the less legible, the more coded and arcane, the letter, the more likely it is to be adopted by and reserved for Authority, for its exclusive use. The control of literacy by the Church. The
reserved (secret) Magic of spelling, the power of correctness. In Bruno's view "Authority usually binds and deceives in countless ways" (quoted Cause 9). He saw perfection in diversity; in the unfolding of possibility.

A field of flowers, paradise, is a field of possibilities, transformations. On 20 January 1600 Pope Clement VIII personally presided over the Congregation of nine Cardinals, six co-adjutors, and a notary which examined Bruno for heresy, and nineteen days later, on 8 February, handed him over to the secular arm for burning. Of the one thousand five hundred and sixty-five people tried for heresy before the Venetian inquisition in the sixteenth century, Bruno was one of only five actually sentenced to die, and to die by fire (Stampanato 518). According to one account, his tongue was spiked before he was burned. Others say he was (merely) gagged. After the fire, his ashes were scattered to the winds in the Campo dei Fiori. On 7 August 1603 his writings were placed on the Index.

On 18 July 1870, Pope Pius IX presiding, the First Vatican Council enounced the doctrine of Papal Infallibility: "in consequence of the divine aid promised him in St. Peter . . . definitions of the Roman pontiff are themselves, and not in consequence of the Church's assent, irrefromtable." On 9 June 1889 some thirty thousand people came to the unveiling of H. Ferrari's statue of Bruno in the Campo dei Fiori. Pope Pius IX fasted and issued an address to be read in the churches, condemning the proceedings, and condemning Bruno as a man of "insincerity, lying and perfect selfishness, intolerance of all who disagreed with him, abject meanness and perverted ingenuity in adulation," a charlatan whose "own writings condemn him of a degraded materialism."

After the unveiling, Algernon Charles Swinburne called Bruno "A sacrifice to hate and hell."

The power of the letter.
Bruno's statue broods over the Campo dei Fiori. It reminds us that in learning how to spell we have lost a vision of paradise.

Why should a word be a destination?
Eric Partridge. A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English from
the Fifteenth Century to the Present Day. Two volumes in one. New
John Ryder. A Suite of Fleurons, or A Preliminary Enquiry into the
history & combinable nature of certain printers' flowers. London:
Phoenix House, 1956.
Vincenzo Spampanato. Vita di Giordano Bruno, con documenti editi e
Chats and other writings. Ed. Isabella Athey (New York: Wittenborn,
Schultz, 1947), 120-125.
Louis H. Sullivan. "What is Architecture: A Study in the American People of
Today [1906]." Kindergarten Chats and other writings. Ed. Isabella
Astrophel and Other Poems. Poems (London: Chatto and Windus,
1927.

Archie Rand
from KABBALAH/TAROT AND MIDNIGHT FESTIVAL

Aleph

Beth
These images are from a series of 22 paintings titled “Kabbalah/Tarot.” They are the result of an investigation into the “personalities” of the Hebrew letters through Kabbalistic and midrashic commentary and a comparison of them to the Tarot (there are twenty-two Hebrew letters and twenty-two tarot cards).

When these paintings were exhibited at the Community Gallery of the Brooklyn Union Gas Company in 1994, employees insisted that they be taken down because of their depictions of “flag desecration,” “animal desecration,” and “graffiti on Christ.” Brooklyn Union Gas officials explained that they became concerned about both the safety of the paintings and the disruptive effect the series was having on the daily work of its employees. They removed the paintings.

—JZ
The "Midnight Festival" paintings are based on two historical religious poems. Midnight ("And it came to pass [it happened] at midnight") is a poem written in the mid 7th century by the poet Yannai. Exodus festival ("This is the festival of Passover!") is a hymn written by Eliazar Ha Kato, who was the greatest of the early Jewish poets (paytanim). It is speculated that he lived anywhere from the 2nd to the 11th century. Both of these poems are acrostics and have the same number of alphabetically chronological stanzas. The first sentence of each text starts with the letter aleph (A). Each succeeding sentence starts with the next consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Both have become songs and are sung to the same melody. "And it came to pass at midnight" is sung at the end of the first night's dinner celebration and is replaced in its order by "This is the festival of Passover!" When compared, it is clear that each of the letter's respective narratives are related or complementary.

—Archie Rand
Anna Reckin
DICTATION

[For performance by one or more voices. The signs should be gestured as
the performer(s) speak(s)]

Drsr, thy fy 1-o

Don’t confuse (letter of) with love

don’t confuse love and approval, either

P is a down-stroke; pr is even longer:

Big ideas have big signs:

National Government

American English uses more upper-case letters than British English. It also
uses more punctuation.

If you write small, you will write much faster

But sub is larger than super

This is because B is so big:

brick bastard business box bust

It is best written in a ruled notebook;

some outlines appear above the line, some below.

W is expansive:

who what why where world-wide [recession?

so are m, r, and g:

sub merge merger [mergest?

Important is strong.

It has its own rhythm

[subversive is a more difficult outline
"Dictation" uses a form of stenographer's shorthand known as Teeline, which I learned during a year spent at secretarial school. The piece came about as a result of thinking about the theme of dictation in Hannah Weiner and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's work, and seeing American Sign Language poems performed, as well as from an on-going interest in using "all the languages I know" in my writing. Shorthand is a private language, inscribed in a hierarchical situation where the dominant person is usually unable to decipher what is being taken down. Individual writers of shorthand develop individual ways of writing it, devising abbreviations appropriate to their particular working environment. It has been an interesting exercise to move shorthand signs from the silence and privacy of the stenographer's notebook into public performance — substituting expansive expressive bodily gestures for the tiny marks that the stenographer is required to use as she or he sits with bowed head transcribing someone else's words.

In our work among the felines, we have discovered that contrary to popular belief, they DO have a regular phonetic alphabet, the basis of which is transcribed here. The most striking aspect of their vocalic patterns is the presence of a large number of diphthongs as well as triphthongs, unknown in any other alphabet system. The harder consonants are utterly missing, but softer combinations of labial and dentals permit clear articulation within a finite system of patterns.

Taken from Dr. Johannes Rüth's groundbreaking work, Feline Anthropology: A Study in Cat Culture and Taboo, forthcoming.
Albert Saijo
EARTH SLANGUAGE WITH ENGLISH ON IT

Earth Slanguage with English on It

Cosm Vision

Objects Do Not Displace
This Ether of Cosm Consciousness

Outspeaks - Bamboo Ridge Press 1997

Volcan. Hi Autumn

Albert Saijo

Outspeaks

Bamboo Ridge Press 1997
I WANT TO WRECK ENGLISH ONCE — ESPECIALLY STOMP ON TEUTONIC ROMANCE JUDEO ROMAN BULLSHIT — LOOSE XTIAN GRIP ON TONGUE — DUMP GREEK AFTER PRESOCRATICS — PULL ENGLISH BACK TOWARD ROOT LANGUAGE OF HOMONID BEFORE CIVILIZATION — I WANT TO CREOLIZE IT — VANDALIZE IT — BEND IT TOWARD CHINESE — A VITAL COMPACT WAY OF SPEAKING & WRITING — SO IT AIN'T JUST WHITEMAN TALK THAT IS BAD NEWS FOR EVERYONE ELSE — STRIP IT ALL DOWN TO UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR THAT ALL ANIMALS UNDERSTAND — MAKE IT SO THERE'S NO FORMAL-VERNACULAR OR DEMOTIC-HIERATIC OPPOSITION — CUT PUNCTUATION TO DASH — YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEAN — THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS — A LINGO ABLE TO EXPRESS MEANING SPARE OR RICHLY TEXTURED — & WHILE WE'RE AT IT LET'S MAKE THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE OF THIS COMING UNIVERSAL PIDGIN MORE PICTOGRAPHIC MORE REBUS-LIKE — MORE HIEROGLYPHIC — SO EVERYONE CAN READ THE FUNNY PAPERS & UNDERSTAND EM — AN EARTH SLANGUAGE UNDERSTOOD BY HUMAN ON EARTH AS THEIR BIRTHRIGHT TONGUE — SO EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT EVERYONE MEANS & NO MISTAKE — A SLANGUAGE FOR HUMAN POST CIVILIZATION INSTAR.


Andrew Schelling and Anne Waldman
LETTERS

25:II:98

Dear friend,

Thrashing weather all around, not just where you are. Monday in Florida tornadoes struck deep in the night, killt 38 people, another 260 hurt, tossing trailers through the air. And California has had fierce rainstorms rolling in at pace of every day and a half, since January they say. Yesterday five more people drowned or crushed by it all, including two police whose cruiser was swept off by flood. Remarkable picture of three tires protruding several inches from a torrent of mud and debris, the car engulfed upside-down.

I believe it's snowing to the north, east, west, and know it is south in Arizona — message from Regina saying Prescott's getting a huge fall. Here, gray and bitter cold, all night one of those howling winds. I had tea and watched the squirrel nests across the street, high in cottonwoods, whirl and toss, wondering if their residents were holed up enjoying the ride. Then driving Althea to school — your car, mine in the shop all week for body work — a huge stiff sheet of some kind of densely packed foam blew off a construction site, crashed against the car, broke the side mirror, denting the fender. Not serious, but dramatic — and imagine a wind that fetches up automobiles and pitches them through houses like Florida —

Yesterday telling my Sanskrit class you need to read old Vedic deities as corporeal entities — get out where actual wind drags at yr face, stand hours in beating sun, feel snow and icy mist come down your neck. Not abstract symbols, but the press of one's own body — "the natural object is always the adequate symbol." Through it my ruminations on the shift in technology continue.

—which is to say after various misadventures I got my printer repaired. Not before it had been delayed because repairman "ran out of gas," "couldn't find the cable," like I said, these guys used to fix blenders. Tinkerers, Anselm called them when I told him of their antics: people who tinker on old appliances. When I retrieved it yesterday the cramped shop ("What's it look like—oh that one?") — thick with smoke, sweet dizzying grass. Lady with askew glasses fumbling. Yet the planet is run
through by subtle electronic impulses coming from a thousand directions—every phone, tv, radio has pulses going in and out. Cell phones, remote devices. Colorado or Bali, doesn’t matter. No wonder human bodies are getting fundamental information mixt up—isn’t that what cancer is, just the body losing track of some cellular instinct? too many messages, impulses, codes, words? And the glands, organs, cells, get screwy. When I was a child there was folklore about people with braces and cavities picking up radio stations, nearly going insane with voices in their heads all the time. I bet in the last forty years the human-originated impulses have increased ten thousand fold. The insanity must be settled in at a DNA level now. Imagine the tissue in your breasts listening in on the accumulated jobs—but haven’t conceived my piece for Mike at all. The insanity must be settled in at a DNA level now. Imagine the tissue in your breasts listening in on 40,000 business deals a day—

Several days thinking over the Beckett performance. Next Sunday I’ll take Althea and a friend, Kristina, I think Nancy Morrell will join us, and I’ve invited Reed. Little excursion to ENDGAME, in Mexican neighborhood, not far from “Little Saigon” (Jon’s term). Between now and then have I to stay settled at desk as much as possible. Nearly out from under the accumulated jobs—but haven’t conceived my piece for Mike at all. Nights reading poetry, or talking with Althea, proofing Ocosingo, tired early.

I have not tried to open e-mail either. At this remove not certain I’d have any idea which buttons to push. But will circle in soon on it. Your faxes sustain me, warm feeling to see a page familiar handscrawl waiting. Night I miss you especially—days are full of rambling but when darkness closes over I want to hold you.

Tell me about the Asian rains. I can hear frogs and thundering water, mostly lit up by Sanskrit poems—though here it’s icy gray sky, day after day watching the directions for snow—

Much love,
Andrew

March 4, 1998
Ubud/Champuan

Dear Andros,

Stealing a rare moment with advanced technology. Fax machine’s been down at Munut’s tho power on in my wing, did you get earlier missive? Just sent Ambrose off with his Hedda paper to Rodanet (cheaper to fax but a bit of a hike). Ah, my friend, I’ve been reading the very delicious Genji this afternoon, lying on balcony, backdrop of nimble rain. Enjoying particulars of comportment—the outfits and understated tender allusions in speech and poetry—out of that culture which vibrate as well in Bali. Sense of appropriate days for actions and ceremonies, multiple calendars, demon possessions, caste system, koto sounds, temple events, buddhist gaze, playfulness of lust and love still going on. “The Broom Tree” chapter a marvelous Index on types of women and relationships. Consummate genius of sensibility, most astute and precious Lady M. Well, thank you for my handsome book with sturdy cover less likely to melt in heat.

Kawi—bits and pieces I’ve heard in Gambuh, “arja,” wayang kult, ceremonies of marriage and cremation intoned by pedandas—is Old Javanese, language of Hinduized kingdoms of Indonesia from the 8th to the 14th century A.D. Nearly half of vocabulary was borrowed from Sanskrit. First Kawi lit. was composed by court poets who followed strict metrics based on the “wirama” verse form of ancient Sanskrit epics. The Balinese refer to such poetry as Sakar Agung (the Greater Blossom). Kawi poets invoke Alango or Lango (you heard me on this subject—the deity who lives in the lead dust of a pencil, who lives in individual letters, in mountains, rocks, seas . . . ) Lango pervades everything aganal alit (from coarse to fine). The goddess descends into the letters of the poem as if they were her temple. Sculptural friezes along sides of 14th century temples in East Java show court poets writing poems not only on lontar but on living leaves and flowers, vehicles for the goddess. Inspiration was supposed to, of course, come from nature, not from court life. Great poems were composed by kawi lalana (wandering poets) on poem quests to “hot places”—wild forest, volcanoes,—places with elemental energies. Came across something called “Sang kawi wenang” meaning “a poet’s right”—to add new verses to his own ms. or performance of even the greatest poetry! Not that you steal from others, you add to the greats. Reverse appropriation, an old epic tradition.”Haywa wera” many of the religious texts begin, a firm injunction: do not reveal this secret knowledge. These days as back then you need oral explanation by high caste teacher. Balinese literature regarded as very serious business and manuscripts are the shrines of Saraswati. Sanskrit is never translated into modern Balinese, Kawi poems are read or recited in the original by a poet’s reading”). A reader called the jum baca (“master of reading”). A second person known as the jum bahasan (“master of language”) translates into modern Balinese and his task includes interpretation as well. Some contemporary jum bahasan create new verses and episodes . . . Made Lasmanaw has talked to me
about some kind of translation project in the future, could be interesting. Most lively could be translating a "script" from wayang kulit—improves and all . . .

Looks like faxes will have to go to Chehaya Dewata (fancier hotel owned by Munut's a few km away) so I'll try to get this off with young Bungalow owner Made. 9 PM I need to sound the gong for meeting of the group, most folk back from adventures to different parts of island . . .

Miss you at many different times in many different ways. Heartening to have details of your walk in sunshine but sad to hear of death of Willie. More psychotic crimes. Horrible, there must be better ways to work with these insanities. Healthy magic?

Next days are busy and machine unreliable so if you don't hear anything before you go to DC don't worry and know I'm thinking of you. Warm greetings to Tom and Alice. Will you get to the Holocaust Museum? OK, my friend. Safe travels. Have a good reading, curious to hear more about the DC scene. Before you leave could you ask Brad to fax me about state of Au Lit/Holy? And Julie to Email me at Rodanet. Many thanks. Look up at the moon, ok? “The nights go by in lonely wakefulness”

XXXA.

5.III.98

Dear Anne,

With your thunderous weather I don't know if this gets through to Munut, so I'll try it at the other address as well. Our papers don't report noisy weather, but focus on Suharto's attempts to evade IMF money regulations, and protests in Jakarta and other cities. Students on motorbikes at the University demanding he comply with IMF policies—which are engineer'd in USA, and contribute to my belief the whole thing is under control of a few money'd folk protecting US and Japanese economies.

I understand NPR got ahold of you for an interview over there. Several people mention hearing you interviewed regarding Secret Location on the Lower East Side show at NY Library. Like I said . . . noticed tonight as I drove home with the radio on, at a traffic light the music came in clear when I dropped my hands from the steering wheel, but when I raised them a static took over. I could feel the electric pulses going through me. But there are benefits too I suppose—like your delicious last letter with rich accounts of Balinese language, poetry, mythol-
sweet mind, your touch, to hold you at night under the white white
moon . . .
Andrew

March 12, 98, early A.M.
My Friend,

Midnight, the niskala energies abound. Niskala, the unseen, that which
cannot be sense directly only felt within. Partially obscured moon, frission
of frogs and crickets, suddenly Susie cries out—yelp!—on path from
kitchen—Yelp! a huge black rat—size of a cat. Brownie our mascot ac­
companies her to her door. I’d just been taking a dip in pool when a whip
of lightening lashed the sky like a giant Naga. I felt not fear exactly but
the need to get on safer, higher ground. The ions in the air shifted. Some
anthropologists speak of this clime as being especially propitious for magic.
The heat alters your skin, your resistance. You speak of the dangerous rays
and waves of modern technology permeating our bodies but what about
the leyaks and other demons? the dons? The dangerous power of clothes
that have been in contact with sexual organs, or stained by menstrual
blood? We hang our underwear low for we must never be below or under
such charged things. The whole animistic world charged with “kasaktian”
(magical power). Student Jennifer who was with me “started” uncontrol­
lably as we climbed out the pool to avoid her own shadow. Most Balinese
are well abed before this witching hour. Musing on my own troubled
moods, doubts and the like. How easily one is thrown, tossed and spooked
by the unseen, how my wounded disharmonied psyche—needs a ritual
bath, needs to be doused by holy water. Ceremonies! Ceremonies! Have I
done the proper ceremonies?

Probably a few days trip coming up, an odalan in Temple at Pejeng,
need to get my new kebaya “fitted.” Wish I could get a stretch of creative
time for myself. Always interruptions. Trying not to feel too pressured.
Want to do the job well. A few moments snatched for beloved Genji . . .

So will close this little missive for the night. Appreciate the slightly
cooler air. I’ll walk down to Ambrose’s room over the moat into which
the spiky rambutan fruit drops all day and night, see if he’s back from trip
with buddies to a disco in Sanur. Some of the Bali boys were taking
Edward, Deborah and A. It’s an adolescents’ paradise this whole isle. A
mysterious kind of freedom, sanctified in a way but of course the axis
shifts, the whole thing could pop.

Wonderful to hear your voice, I felt more secure and balanced the
whole day. Missing you as another day passes in the flower world . . . And

thank you for the missives, familiar elegant strong hand I love . . . A.

Getting this off to you in early A.M. Wistful dreams, wish you were
closer. Mango ripening on the tree next to my balcony. This morning’s
breakfast features “pamelo” and “jackfruit.” “Nantih” (later) my friend—
kisses—yr kawi lalana
Mira Schor

ANIMATE

ALPHABET

SUBLIMA
Ron Silliman
from KETJAK2: CARAVAN OF AFFECT

R

The yellow eyes of a cat (staring at me from atop the hood of a car). Laura, say, to have stopped writing. Riding, poems not complete until old act back into print. Not available in any store. Where the truck hit fibers, trunk of the palm snapped about. Remove what is precisely most visible about the text. Distribution of questions here. A throat so swollen I almost faint to swallow. Figs of the seed. Red sky at night—toxin’s delight. Language as value or where these are the same, economics or speech. The nude formalists. If we are limning the true and ultimate structure of reality, the canonical scheme for us is the austere scheme that knows no quotation but direct quotation and no propositional attitudes but only the physical constitution and behavior of organisms. I want to write the letter “Z” simply to fashion that shape with my hand. We are preparing to start over and start over and have started over. What’s new? Kareem and the sky hook. Tanks, of all things, rolling across the mall lot, helicopters overhead crowd the sky. Mossback of the morning. You knew the reading was important: Ashbery not only showed up to introduce Schuyler but appeared to be stone cold sober. That the thing which you thought possible is not, which, having once made the assumption, governed your days until the fault this morning showed, the wall’s weak rock, which, although it has not made itself felt, shall, is not, since you now carry it to its conclusion, rubble, to be acknowledged (a month before the election, Dukakis knows he’s doomed). As the train accelerates, people on the platform blur into the past. The skaters were a kind of solution (counter clockwise). Verbs vanish. Your hand as I shake it, fleshy palm, pudgy fingers, is not my imagination (how will I know when I make a mistake?). His hair is but a few wisps atop a freckled skull. The yellow concern of the civic rose. A good fart takes the pressure off. Act upon ladders propped against the walls. The unreadable. Disturbed that your approvers seem oblique to the intention, unaware that the concentric circles expanding about the stone thrown into the lake will extend to the shore, that the flute’s vibrations form an act that yet others will be consequent to, as your own presence was predicated upon the pine odor in the air, you saying so that evasive action cannot solve it. This was implicit all along. Alice and the sky boat. A cavern of sudden silence as the stereo shuts down, but the horizon a bright red. As we loitered, waiting for the bus, I overheard her whispering to herself, a furious conversation. Small hunchbacked blind girl with a hair lip. Representness.

evolving door. Revolting odor. Slivers or sofa, splinters or couch. Curious at that face (your own) in the old photo (no sense of recognition whatsoever). The deer swim in the clear lake. Begin again, in again. The east is rad, the west is rotting. I didn’t say that. In a hang glider, hovering, suspended over farm fields, watching workers, silent, bending. Grease spots on the train window. Memories of underground development. I won’t even meet you for another three years. As you push at last through lobby after lobby, voices ebbing, the soft light of the grand concourse, there is nothing (finally) to turn you aside, the crowd’s momentum become your own. For each and every sentence an equal but opposite sentence. Now I am in Death Valley, now on the moon. This desk is an ordered sequence of stacks of papers, files, books, mounds of chaos barely contained. Dry blood. When I saw this notebook, I knew it would be a poem. The tenor’s sex is a tool. The furnace shudders when it lights. Stretching the canvas, the text. Behind the desk is a filing cabinet turned sideways, its outer wall covered with notes, schedules, numbers. This is a hypothesis, no more than haltingly proposed. The gendered text (is a kind of hex). T’ai chi like a pitcher’s kick—Spahn, Marichal—but in slomo. The movie I wan see, dude, is Psycho Ward, man, that’s gonna be so icy, the reviews are boomin’. Serial number. Bright blue winter coat with an equally bright yellow umbrella. As the coffee steeps, say, raising the shade, a morning habit, each day’s particulars conjoined. Reiteration hidden. Ideo-radiology. Past sunset, the sky nearly colorless, about to go dark. Smashing bottles, chewing cabbage discards, chorus of the trash collectors from beneath the bedroom window, the odor from the cud of collectors from beneath the bedroom window, the odor from the cud of their great truck. There’s lots of free food in this job. Locked-in, projects that will not resolve eventually empty into a lonely logic, endless consequence of equation, terms providing terms, until final factors (“in the last instance”) fail to cancel out. Rods from which to hang sweaters in a track-lit display window. You are not sure which constant to hold as real. He’s running through the frigid dawn, bundled, mittened, jogging. Clay fear signifies change with no significant modification. The too-formal wear of limo drivers at the airport. The oncoming traffic brought out gradually from about the turn, elongated motion, emotion slowed him.
Emotional response to roadkill. Nurse of cities. Conscientious objectors to the war on drugs commit civil disobedience. The limit is the eye. Yawn's pressure on the Eustachian tube: roar fills the skull, inaudible to others. Stenographer of cities. A kinder, more gentle deconstruction. First day of July. Goes to the video store to get *Lord of the Rings* for his nine-year-old son, comes back with *Lord of the Flies*. Subtext at Division Street. Does the shrimp stop here? Only way he could know what would be the thought in their heads would be to put words down in a sequence. The whale that ate Liberty Valence. City of administrative assistants, of bus boys. At the onset of flu, consciousness pulsates, alternating between an almost euphoric lucidity and total disorientation—which is this? Moment at which the old bar of soap disappears. Logic, the Other. Here is this: this word is used like an empirical fact. In military standing, ease is the opposite of attention. The curious vacated meaning of literal. I remember when everything was a western. As he stood waiting for the light to change, we stared at the bruises on the young Persian's face. Here was the petition in repetition. His obsession with boundaries, of the shift in an instant within the irrevocable, trigger's hammer exploding the powder, dissolve of the space shuttle before the eyes of millions, driven by the clarity of closure. When flossing, stand as far back from the mirror as possible. Conference of corn flakes, kind of the birds. Great tray holding boxes of packs of gum tilted at an angle across from the cash register. Wind in the chimney would scatter ashes back into the room. The ants not only discovered the bar of soap, they discovered they liked it. Here the vast moraine is terminal (in the last paragraph a key term is misspelled). What was the first consumer object but a book? The unfinished business before he died left her with a taste of half-formed friendship. I said, Hey, big boy, what's her name, Hey, Hey. The unrevealing mass of effort to force this to cease its absolute self-existing quality. As the pass rush bursts in, quarterback drops into fetal position. Chess board for a penny game, doubling square by square.

Being a part of "The Alphabet."
EXHIBIT B
American Poetry

EXHIBIT C
American Letters
In an attempt to document a lineage of African American and African Diasporic avant-garde/experimental/oppositional writing, I have constructed these three poems (a flag, a cross, and a blank page) using the Library of Congress and catalog numbers (archival finds) for works that in one way or another exemplify just such a lineage. These three “gatherings” are also an attempt, via the visual ordering, to (re)situate this lineage within the context of so-called “American Letters” which at times has denied its existence, rendered it invalid, and/or relegated it to the margins.

Ardegno Soffici (with translation by Guy Bennett)

TYPOGRAPHY
Homage to Dick Higgins
Presabshad and Flesh are both digital works made with information from the real, three-dimensional world scanned and then manipulated with a computer. Both use the artist's hands and Presabshad uses information taken from a three dimensional polychrome sculpture of wood, paper and paint that contains the words presence, absence, and shadow. They relate to the artist's work in more traditional media in a variety of ways: they are layered, have to do with the body, a dialog between inside and outside, and they engage questions about the instability of things and uncertainty about their position.
Chris Vitiello
from THE SINGLE WORD FOR THE DURATION
OF WHILE YOUR EYES ARE CLOSED

NO MORE ALPHABETIC WORLD
PC DONT QANiqueEOKER

merely by looking at it it is changed (heisenberg)
merely by typing it it is changed (gutenberg)

stan brakhage said in that interview i want to photocopy that film should have nothing to do with the world
and i also knew he much preferred silent films to talkies

as did i

joseph cornell is probably the most famous or accomplished filmmaker to have never used a camera

the conventions of realism are often more powerful than reality itself

writing could enable you to do something else
(art should have been read as instructions on how to build a shit-eating machine that itself excretes this SOMETHING ELSE)

invisible

FEAR OF ANOTHER LANGUAGE
FEAR OF HEARING ANOTHER LANGUAGE
FEAR OF BEING UNDERSTOOD
FEAR OF BEING MISUNDERSTOOD
FEAR OF BEING MISCONSTRUED IN A WAY THAT OTHERS WOULD THINK OF YOU AS A BAD OR EVIL PERSON, OR RUDE
FEAR OF EMBASSY PLACED ON WORDS YOU DON'T KNOW THE MEANING OF
FEAR OF MEANING OF WORDS
FEAR OF TRANSLATIONS OF WORDS FROM EITHER YOU LANGUAGE INTO ANOTHER OR FROM ANOTHER LANGUAGE INTO YOURS
FEAR OF TRANSLATORS
FEAR OF TALKING TO TRANSLATORS
FEAR OF EMBASSY LISTENING TO YOU IN MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE
FEAR OF EMBASSY MISTAKES AND SUFFERING RIDICULE OR AN INACCURATE OR EMBARRASSING REPUDIATION
FEAR OF OTHER ALPHABETS SO DIFFERENT FROM YOURS YOU CANNOT VISUALLY DISTINGUISH THE LETTERS OR CHARACTERS
FEAR OF SLANG
FEAR OF NOT KNOWING SLANG AND THEN PRETENDING TO KNOW THE SLANG AT THE INSTANCE OF ITS USAGE AND THEN BEING FOUND OUT AS A PRETENDER
FEAR OF MISPRONUNCIATION
FEAR OF NOT KNOWING THAT OTHERS WILL MAKE FUN OF
FEAR OF BEING LOOKED AT BY OTHER PEOPLE
FEAR OF STRANGERS SPEAKING TO YOU
FEAR OF PEOPLE ASKING YOU A QUESTION, EVEN A SIMPLE REQUEST FOR DIRECTIONS
FEAR OF PARAMETERS AND VIOLENCE, OR AT LEAST VIOLENT LANGUAGE
FEAR OF VIOLENT OR DIRTY LANGUAGE
FEAR OF CHILDREN HEARING AND LEARNING BAD WORDS
FEAR OF THE USAGE OF BAD WORDS LEADING TO SOCIALLY UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR
XEREOGLOBUSIA

FEAR OF BLIND OR DEAF PEOPLE
FEAR OF A BLIND OR DEAF PERSON NEEDING YOUR HELP AND IT BEING AWKWARD
FEAR OF BILAL
FEAR OF A BLIND PERSON SOMEBODY BEING ABLE TO STILL SEE YOU
FEAR OF BEING BLINDED OR DEAFENED
FEAR OF HAVING A SENSE STRIPPED FROM YOU
FEAR OF MISSING THE EXPERIENCE OF A SENSE
FEAR OF HAVING NO MORE MUSIC EVER
FEAR OF NOT BEING ABLE TO READ
FEAR OF ILLITERACY
FEAR OF BEING ABLE TO GATHER NO INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ENVIRONMENT
FEAR OF NOT KNOWING WHERE YOU ARE
FEAR OF BEING ALONE
FEAR OF BEING ALONE IN AN UNFAMILIAR PLACE IN THE DARK
FEAR OF BEING KICK IN AN UNFAMILIAR PLACE IN THE DARK AND ENCOUNTERING ONE OTHER PERSON
FEAR OF NOT BEING ABLE TO IDENTIFY THINGS YOU CAN CLEARLY SEE
FEAR OF THE ABSTRACT, THE VISUALLY ABSTRACT
FEAR OF NOT KNOWING THE WORD FOR A THING
FEAR OF NOT BEING ABLE TO DESCRIBE SOMETHING
FEAR OF HAVING TO DESCRIBE AN ATTACKER TO THE POLICE AND DRAWING A BLANK
FEAR OF NOT BEING ABLE TO CONVERT AN EXPERIENCE IN WORDS
FEAR OF THE REVERSING OF EXPERIENCE TO WORDS
FEAR OF UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE
FEAR OF BOTH UNDERSTANDING AND NOT UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE
FEAR OF BEING ABLE TO DESCRIBE AND NOT BEING ABLE TO DESCRIBE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

FEAR OF CONTRADICTION
FEAR OF CONTRADICTION, OR ARGUMENT
The hinge is a place where indeterminacy takes a form

NOT A METAPHOR
NOT AN ANALOGY

THIS PIECE OF WRITING IS
this piece of writing is not a representation
of a piece of writing (though it is) but
a piece of writing

is all meaning analogy?

is analogy only aesthetic/pleasure?

sorry about all the xs I had to respect the ribbon

such an found the - in the ½ to be more interesting than
than either the 1 or the 2
the - in the fraction is a hinge

there is no center.

is a metaphor for
"there is no center."

a slippage, a joint, a hinge

NOT A METAPHOR

fort: a slippage, a joint, and a hinge

the dream of leibniz was a perfect representative language
that had no inherent meaning—MATHEMATICS

The Single Word for the Duration of While Your Eyes are Closed is
an original typescript in red and black, with occasional handwriting and pencil
rublings. Other sections of the work include ephemeral shouts, facial expres­
sions, and vast 3-dimensional spaces that can really only be referred to in the
written text of the work. One section of the work was buried somewhere in the
continental United States in 1998. Another section was written with a stick
on the surface of the Reflecting Pond in Washington D.C. Further sections are
planned that include thoughts, feelings, and objects such as saliva and bees
trapped in jars.

Keith Waldrop
TWO POEMS

Perspective

Riler, banana rot lure, all
inner error a tabu. True
banner: all I roar
(unreliable narrator). True loin
rarer, banal.

Warning to Worriers

Stain lines, prayer maze rip
snare in sleazy team. Lazy maps
are in sin tree—pain
is merely an ersatz.

Each is a set number of letters, rearranged—eighteen in the first, in the second
twenty. The reason this doesn’t leap to the eye is that the line breaks do not
follow the anagrammatic units.
Marta L. Werner
THE FLIGHTS OF A 821:
DEARCHIVIZING THE PROCEEDINGS
OF A BIRDSONG

for Randall McLeod
(Random Cloud)

flight: (flait), sb. 1.a. The action or manner of flying or moving through the air
with or as with wings. . . c. Of birds or insects: a migration or issuing forth in
bodies. . . 2.a. Swift movement in general; esp. of a projectile, etc. through the air.
. . 3. fig. a. A mounting or soaring out of the regular course or beyond ordinary
bounds; an excursion or sally (of the imagination, wit, intellect, ambition, etc.) . .
. 4. A state of flutter or agitation; a trembling fright. . . 6.a. The distance which a
bird can or does fly. . . 6.b. The distance to which a missile may be shot. . . 8. A
collection or flock of beings or things flying in or passing through the air together.
. . 9. The young birds that take wing at one time, e.g., the March Flight or the
May flight. . . 10. A flight-arrow. . . flight, sb. 2. 1.a. The action of fleeing . . . as
from danger. . . an absconding. . . flight, sb. 3. Obs. a. A flake of snow. b. A violent
storm (of snow). . . flight, v. t. 2. intr. To fluctuate, change. . . 3. t a. To migrate,
flit, fleet (obs.) . . . to fly in flights. . . 4. trans. To set flying. . . (OED)

Signs & Wonders
Among Dickinson's late papers is a manuscript especially marked by the
signs of flight. The manuscript, here identified by its catalog number A
821, constitutes a kind of exit-text. It may have been composed in a few
minutes, or even seconds, in the early spring of 1885, since one line of the
text reappears, slightly altered, in three fair-copy drafts of a letter com­
posed by Dickinson to Helen Hunt Jackson in March of that year, but
apparently never completed or mailed. In Thomas H. Johnson's The Letters
of Emily Dickinson (1958), it is annexed to these drafts as a footnote. Its
provenance, as well as the date of its composition, however, remain un­
confirmed. I found it first by accident, in the Amherst College Library,
when it fell (rose?) out of an acid-free envelope, out of the space of
claustration. If I had not held it lightly in my hands, I would never have
suspected the manner in which it was assembled. Although its brevity
and immediacy place it outside the reach of conventional classificatory
gestures, it bears a striking affinity to the genre David Porter names "small,
rickety infinitudes." Look at it now, flying on the screen/page, vying with
light:

focus: A 821/A 821a.
1885? Lines penciled
on two fragments of
envelope held together
with a straight pin.

Faraway, so Close!2
—Wim Wenders

Taxonomy of Paper Wings
A 821 is a "sudden" collage made of two, possibly three, sections of
envelope. The principles of its construction are economical, even austere.
The larger section of the collage is the inside of the back of an envelope,
the address face of which has been torn or cut away. One vertical crease
bisects the fragment, turning the halved envelope into a diptych resem­
bling the hinged leaves of the codex book Dickinson had long since
abandoned and the wings of the bird the manuscript is becoming.
Initially, the leaves/wings appear to have been folded closed; at rest, the
manuscript is not yet transformed into a fully living figure. Another sec­
tion of text, perhaps the last, is composed on an unfolded triangular cor­
ner of the envelope's severed seal; it has been designated by the cataloguer
"A 821a." A single straight pin, still in place in June 1998, imps the
collage elements together, while also spreading open the larger envelope
fragment to reveal a blurred message about an imminent transition, or
about the desire of writing to intervene between the visible and the
invisible.4 The unfolding of the manuscript creates a strange visual rhym-
The singing of birds marks—some believe causes—both the break and the close of day. If we read from left to right across the contours of the open wings, A821/A821a appears to record the moment when day turns into night. Yet the grammar—syntax—of wings is the grammar of discontinuity. The slight variations in the handwriting on opposing wings suggest that the texts they carry were composed on different occasions; moreover, on each wing, writing, inscribed by Velocity, rushes in opposite directions. To access the texts, we must enter into a volitional relationship with the fragment, turning it point by point, like a compass, or a pinwheel—like the wheels of thought. 360 degrees. As we rotate the text, disorienting and orientating it at once, day and night, each a whirl of words, almost converge in the missing body spaces just beyond the light seams showing the bifurcation in the envelope, then fly apart in a synesthesia of sight and sound.

How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way,
Is an immense world of delight clos'd by your senses five?
—William Blake

Joy and Gravitation have their own ways
—Emily Dickinson

Gravity-fields
The three fair-copy drafts of Dickinson’s last letter to Helen Hunt Jackson, composed across parts of eleven leaves of fine Irish Linen stationery, shifting between prose and verse, respond to Jackson’s letter of 3 February containing news of her prolonged suffering from a broken leg.

Santa Monica/Cal./By the Sea./Feb.
3. 1885

My dear Miss Dickinson,
Thank you heartily for the fan. It is pathetic, in its small-ness—poor soul—how did they come to think of making such tiny ones. - I shall wear it sometimes, like a leaf on my breast.

Your letter found me in Los Angeles, where I have been for two months & a little more. - Sunning myself, and trying to get on my feet. - I had hoped by this time to be able to go without crutches, and venture to New York, for the remainder of the winter - but I am disappointed. So far as the broken leg is concerned, I could walk with a cane now: but the whole leg having been badly strained by doing double duty so long, is obstinate about getting to work again, is very lame and sore, & I am afraid badly given out - so that it will take months for it to recover. - I dislike this exceedingly; - but dare not grumble, lest a worse thing befall me: & if I did grumble, I should deserve it, - for I am absolutely well - drive the whole of every afternoon in an open carriage on roads where larks sing & flowers are in bloom: I can do everything I ever could except walk! - and if I never walk again it will still remain true that I have had more than a half centuries excellent trotting out of my legs - so even then, I suppose I ought not be rebellious. - Few people get

Dear friend -
To reproach my own Foot in behalf of your's, is involuntary, and finding myself, no solace in "whom he loveth he chasteneth" your valor astounds me - It was only a small Wasp, said the French Physician, repairing the sting, but the strength to perish is sometimes withheld - though who but you could tell a Foot.

Take all away from me, but leave me Ecstasy
And I am richer then, than all
my Fellow men -
Is it becoming me to dwell so wealthily,
When at my very Door are those possessing more,
In abject Poverty?

That you compass [glance at] 'Japan' before you breakfast, not in the least surprises me, clogged [thronged] only with Music, like the Wheels [Decks] of Birds -

Thank you for hoping I am well - Who could be ill in March, that month of proclamations? Sleigh Bells and Jays contend in my Matinee, and the North surrenders, instead of the South, a reverse of Bugles -

Pity me, however, I have finished Ramona -
as much out of one pair of legs as I have! -

This Santa Monica is a lovely little Seaside hamlet, only eighteen miles from Los Angeles, one of the most beautiful Seaside places I ever saw: green to the tip edge of the cliffs, flowers blooming and cho- ruses of birds, all winter. - There can be nothing in this world nearer perfection than this South California climate for winter. - Cool enough to make a fire necessary, night & morning; but warm enough to keep flowers going, all the time, in the open air, - grass & barley are many inches high - some of the "volun- teer" crops already in head. - As I write - (in bed, before breakfast,) I am looking straight off towards Japan - over a silver sea - my foreground is a strip of high grass, and mallows, with a row of Eucalyptus trees sixty or seventy feet high: - and there is a positive cackle of linnets.

Searching here, for Indian relics, especially the mortars or bowls hollowed out of stone, with the solid stone pestles they used to pound their acorns in, I have found two Mexican women called Ramona, from whom I have bought the In- dian mortars. -

I hope you are well - and at work - I wish I knew by now what your portfolios, by this time, hold.

Yours ever truly
Helen Jackson.

—-

Would that like Shakespeare, it were just published! Knew I how to pray, to intercede for your Foot were intuitive - but I am but a Pa- gan -

Of God we ask one favor, that we may be forgiven -
For what, he is presumed to know -
The Crime, from us, is hidden -
Immured the whole of Life
Within a magic Prison
We reprimand the Happiness
That too com- petes with Heaven -

May I once more know, and that you are saved?

Your Dickinson -
(A 817; A 819, redaction)

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Imprints
When Thomas H. Johnson published A 821/A 821a as a footnote following the letter-drafts addressed to Hunt-Jackson, he denied it its autonomy (autonomies) and arrested the motion of its wings: subsumed under the metrics of the letter and reset in immovable type—pinned into a single temporality and spatiality—the iconic implications of the manuscript vanish: the conjunction of writing and sensuous representation manifested by the fragment—becoming-bird fails to take place. Lines broken according to the conventions of typesetting “prose” break the wings of the text, transgress the light internal junctions, the imbrications and tracery, as well as the outer edges of the envelope fragments, that mark the limits of a thought or the junctures between (flights of) thoughts. In the printed text, moreover, the music of the invisible bird is no longer audible. The syntactical discontinuities created by the folding and unfolding, the conjoining and breaking away, of A 821/A 821a’s word-wings are resolved via an editorial reordering of the text-fragments into a smooth grammatical flight. The measure of the “sentence” checks the flight of the image.

A vision has become legible.

II
Flight Paths
“If you saw a bullet | hit a Bird —” (A 828)

A bird’s lost powers of flight may be restored by imping the feathers of another to it:13

. . . and with new pinions refresh
Her wearied wings, which so restored did flye 13
—Henry Vaughan

Pinned to the body of A 821, the small arrow-wing called A 821a appears to mend (i.e., complete) the text on the right wing and also to name the fragment’s destination, “their high | Appointment.” Yet this wing, hardly more than a feather, did not always determine the arc of A 821’s flight. On the body of A 821 four additional sets of pin pricks, two along the outer edges of the left wing and two along the outer edges of the right wing, are signs of at least four previous trajectories or changes in course. Perhaps, like A 821a, A 821 was once imped to other, more expansive wings out of which it has fallen or from which it is still ascending. The wings of a letter, perhaps. Alternatively, several small fragments like A 821a may have been appended to the extremities of A 821 to help pilot earlier, apprenticeship flights of brief duration, flights that missed their marks or found them suddenly. Like birds that migrate only so long as the “drive” is present, the durations of the fragments’ previous flights, the timings and directions of their collisions and releases, and the relations among them remain mysterious, most completely unrecoverable. Pinned, unpinned, repinned, the fragments’ multiple flights shatter the deep, one-point perspective of the letter, reveal the extraordinarily complex, perhaps crossed, intentions of its writer.

Moreover, in A 821/A 821a, the pin complicates the play between past, present, and future, keeps the texts/birds flying in a splintered mode of time, in the “terrifying tense” of pure transition.14 The expectations of closure or parousia—“their high | Appointment”—may be endlessly postponed, or reversed, with the drop of a pin.

The caesuras and sudden discontinuities initially perceived in the opening of A 821/A 821a’s wings are intensified in the linking and breaking away of lap- or lost wings. To say the least, the common meter of the hymn found in Dickinson’s early, bound poems has not survived this latest flight. On the contrary, in the (un)pinned texts of the 1870s and 1880s one hears an acceleration followed by snapping or short-circuiting of lyrical wires. In place of melody and measure come suddenness and syncope: “meter with neither more nor less, but an impossible measure”15: A gap between the wings. In the 1870s and 1880s the “data” to be explained by poetry perhaps became more and more extreme. The concordance to Dickinson’s poems reveals that around this time the words dart, hour, moment, arrow, second, shaft, bird, and instant appear in her writing with increasing frequency. Fragments, fractions of poems cut into smaller and smaller units of time/paper, are part of the count-down to the end of a century.
+ No Bird - but rode in Ether -: Towards a Bibliography of Departures

W. H. Hudson says that birds feel something akin to pain (and fear) just before migration and that nothing alleviates this feeling except flight (the rapid motion of wings).

—Lorine Niedecker

A certain set of operations repeated again and again, like the rapid motions of wings, may signify that a migration is about to take place... A few early harbingers of later flights appear scattered throughout the fascicles and the sets. The first pinned fragment appears in fascicle 7, composed in 1859. It carries an alternate reading, one of the first variants to occur in the fascicles, for the fifth and sixth lines of the poem beginning, "She died - this was the way she died -" (MB I, fascicle 7, 1859). Inscribed on the verso of a small slip of note paper, but inserted as a recto, the pinned slip covers the lines it replaces. Two more pinned texts appear in the fascicles in 1862, one in fascicle 16, the other in fascicle 19. In both instances the pinned slips—here small, but whole leaves of note paper—carry the final, overflow lines of the poems to which they are fastened. On the one hand, pinning appears to be a kind of binding, double-binding: a slip carrying the variant or final lines of a poem is pinned over a poem stab-bound into a fascicle.

Yet the pinned slips carrying variants, endings, and variant endings also announce a crisis at and of the limits of the text. In the unbound leaves of the sets, themselves vulnerable to scattering, the association of pinned slips with the bodies of poems is more tenuous. In the final instance of pinning in the sets, the pin is deployed as an extreme mark of punctuation, a dash doubled and made material; it writes the poem apart: "Of the Heart that | goes in, and closes the | Door | Shall the Playfellow Heart | complain | Though the Ring is | unwhole, and the Company"

"—broke | Can never be + fitted again? | + matched—" (MB II, Set 6c, 1866)

If pinning was initially used as an alternative method of binding, a way of associating variants and overflow lines with poems, it immediately declared its difference from binding. Unlike binding, which is premeditated, permanent, and serial, pinning is instantaneous, temporary, random. Pinning/unpinning may be Dickinson’s furthest expression of the aesthetics of “choosing not choosing,” her latest response to the recurrent dangers of closure.

The swallow is already far away. I am sure it was a flock of swallows, one swallow doesn’t make a spring...

—Michel Serres

Outside the bound packets, in the economy of contingency, contacts between pinned texts may be momentary—transient. Outside the bound packets, the combinatory possibilities, instantaneous or considered, of (un)pinned texts are registered in the multiple pin pricks visible on the manuscripts’ surfaces. Fragments, pinned, unpinned, repinned, are evidence of a new genre where intention tends toward the artifactual. Outside the bound packets, the relationship between the body of a manuscript and the pinned slip, between the “superior” text and its variants, has changed. Unpinned, the stray slips may realize the desire implicit in the variants composed at the far limits of poems in the fascicles but still held fast within their gravitational fields for autonomy. Unpinned from the body proper, the pinned slips reappear as compressed, but electric lyrics.

Outside the bound packets, texts bearing no prior relation to one another may be “suddenly” associated by pinning. It these instances it is not the unification (or “completion”), but the juxtaposition of texts, that pinning brings about. A “catching of fire between extremes.”

Satters

High up, a mile high, perhaps two miles high, hundreds... of pale grey birds flew south, like pages of flickering paper let loose from a small book caught up in a wind...

—Peter Greenaway

In order to determine whether or not certain kinds of birds possess homing instincts, a person known as a “liberator” throws several up into the air, then turns and turns again, each time releasing more birds in different
directions. The birds are then watched out of sight and the points at which they disappear from view recorded. When a significant number of vanishing points has been noted, a scatter-diagram is drawn up for study. At times, for reasons that are not yet fully understood, large numbers of birds returning to the original release point lose their way and drift widely across the migration axis. These drifts, sometimes called “radical scatters,” both solicit and resist definitive interpretation.

Freed from the forty bound fascicles, the accumulated libraries of her poetic production, and whirling confusingly around the absent center of the “book,” Dickinson’s (un)pinned fragments resemble the distant and disoriented migrants that do not come fully into focus and that no longer constitute a clearly delimitable constellation. At times, one or two or even several appear to be in closest touch with one another; at other times, texts/wings separated and dispersed by “paragraphs of wind” (JP 1175) seem remote from each other, unassimilated and unassimilable to the larger figure, whose moving edges and outlines also drift and blur. Moreover, even if chance were to discover the breakaway fragments, carefully inventorying and appending them to their “original” bodies, it would still be impossible to establish the order of pinnings and unpinnings, or the distances (seconds, minutes, hours, days, years) between them. Fragments are “small, rickety infinitudes”; they try their chances. De-archivized, they fly to the lyric’s scattered ends: the “proceedings of a birdsong,” the vibration of poetry freed from all devices.

The late (un)pinned fragments are “escapes”: texts with no place in an official record—the official record of an “edition” or, more importantly, the narrative (plot) of literary history/linear chronology. Intended by Dickinson to be temporary and occasional in a way different than we suspected, they reveal the liaison between poetics and teleologies as essentially spurious. Belonging to an economy of indeterminacy in which “discretion, stability and autonomy” are no longer given, but only “effects of certain relations,” they call for an alternative aesthetics, for what Ira Livingstone has recently called a “chaology of knowledge,” perhaps, in which chaos is seen as “a logic at work in the epistemological processes.”

Instead of classifying them according to conventional bibliographical and generic codes we need to find ways of not naming them as they flash by; instead of binding them in chronological order into a book, we need to discover ways of launching them into circulation again and again, ways of expressing the unpredictably varied, stunningly beautiful re-orderings of the texts—birds as they cross the page/screen/sky of our reading. Ideally, the editor—and no less so the reader—of these writings would assume the role of the liberator, throwing the (un)pinned fragments high up into the ether, following them until they are out of sight, noting their vanishing points, and, whenever possible, the modalities of their different returns.

It has been a long winter.

Acknowledgments

This essay was originally written in response to Randall McLeod’s “FIATLUX,” a reading of Herbert’s “Easter-Wings” given at the twenty-fourth annual Conference on Editorial Problems, University of Toronto, 4-5 November 1988, and later printed in Crisis in Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance, ed. Randall M. Leod (NewYork, AMS Press, Inc., 1993). I am deeply indebted to McLeod’s contributions in criticism and to his friendship.

Thanks are also due to the curator and the staff of the Amherst College Library, Special Collections for their assistance with my research and for their many kindnesses. John Lancaster, Curator, permitted me to view the manuscripts discussed in this essay; Daria D’Arienzo, Head Archivist, provided critical information about the conservation of the documents; Donna Skibiel, Archives Associate, assisted me in locating materials on bird migrations between 1860 and 1886.

Finally, I wish to thank my research assistant, Patrick Bryant, for his help with the many technological aspects of this project; I consider him my collaborator.

The images of the manuscripts of Emily Dickinson are reproduced courtesy of the Special Collections and Archive, Amherst College Library.

Abbreviations

A Manu scripts from the Emily Dickinson Collection, Amherst College Library, are indicated with this initial followed by the catalog number.


Endnotes


2. The English title, translated from the German, of Wim Wenders’ film, In Weiter Ferne, so nah! (1993), which begins, significantly, with a passage from Matthew 6:22: “The light of the body is the eye.”

3. Although I have not done a complete inventory of texts composed by Dickinson on envelopes, a large number of such texts exists, many of which have clear iconic value. Two are especially relevant to this essay: A 109, beginning, “A Fling is more | conspicuous in Spring | In contrast with the [those] | things that sing. | Not Birds entirely— but | Minds” (1881) and H 323, beginning, “The | Bird her | punctual | Music brings” (1883).

4. I have assumed that Dickinson is the author of the pins and unpins. Though it is possible that the manuscripts were pinned together by editors seeking to order her papers, it is not likely. The often jarring associations of text fragments suggest an aesthetics at odds with the editorial aesthetics of order.


9. On 6 August 1885, The Springfield Republican noted: “Mrs. Jackson is reported at the point of death in San Francisco, where she has been steadily declining for the past four months.” She died six days later, on 12 August. In a letter to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, apparently composed on the day the Springfield Republican ran the story, Dickinson wrote, “I was unspeakably shocked to see this in the Morning Paper— She wrote me in Spring that she could not walk; but not that she would die— I was sure you would know. Please say it is not so. What a Hazard a Letter is! When I think of the Hearts it has scattered and sunk, I almost fear to lift my Hand to so much as a Superscription.” Shortly afterwards, she wrote to Hunt Jackson’s widow: “She said in a Note of a few months since, I am absolutely well.” I next knew of her death. The letter to William Jackson confirms the March-August suspension of correspondence between Dickinson and Hunt-Jackson. For the complete texts of the letters to Higginson and Jackson, see Thomas H. Johnson, The Letters of Emily Dickinson, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958), L 1007 and L 1009, respectively.

10. In The Sense of Sight (New York: Vintage, 1985), John Berger writes, “People talk of freshness of vision, of the intensity of seeing for the first time, but the intensity of seeing for the last time is, I believe, greater” (147). Dickinson’s late writing, particularly her fragments, mark the edge of perception itself. This marking accounts, perhaps, for our perception of the fragments themselves as both infinitely distant and infinitely close.


16. “Flight” might be a term used for the classification of certain kinds of textual materials, especially those materials insusceptible to collection, such as a “flight of fragments.” A complete inventory of the pinned documents among Dickinson’s papers has not been—perhaps cannot be—done.


20. Peter Greenaway, 149.


24. I am in the process of compiling an electronic archive of Dickinson's late fragments (Radical Scatters: Emily Dickinson's Late Fragments, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, forthcoming, summer 1999). The archive will be divided into two (though never mutually exclusive) groups: trace fragments, which appear, sometimes altered, in other Dickinson texts; and autonomous fragments, which are not linked to other texts, but which nonetheless were saved by Dickinson. The goal is to illuminate the play of autonomy and intertextuality in Dickinson's writing by allowing users to see how various fragments appear in, or near, more than one document. The electronic archive will allow scholars to work with Dickinson's texts in unedited form and draw on them in a nonlinear manner consistent with the approach I advocated in Emily Dickinson's Open Folios: Scenes of Reading, Surfaces of Writing (University of Michigan, 1995), but was not able to implement, bound, as I was, by the codex format.

Mac Wellman
from FNU LNU

The FIGURE slowly sits down. He becomes a demented, Street Person:

You want to know why the "Y" in Ybor?
Okay. Well I'll tell you then. People here don't listen to me, but when the glow comes they'll wish they had. They'll wish they had for sure. People talk about the old days like they knew what they were talking about, but they don't because of the destruction of Western Values; the destruction of Western Values has to do with why people come here to get drunk and go dancing. The cigar box of human history is full of pathetic losers, losers like you, losers like Mister Jesus Anybody, losers who don't appreciate the true cause of our human agony. Your role model, Mister Jesus Anybody, died for our sins and just look where it got him. What I'm saying is people talk like they left their mind in the microwave. Sure, I come down here myself every now and then, with my buddies, hoist a few, get shit-faced and rowdy with the best of them, raise a little hell, remove the occasional hood ornament or aerial from tourist cars, tear the whole car door off every so often when the mood compels me ... Hell, lost my new .357 Magnum in that alleyway over there just last week. Cops were searching the trunk for drugs and I just barely got rid of it—unlicensed—before they frisked me. Gone, when I came back for it. My luck the way I figure, but, hell, I'm just as good as the next man. I vote and pay my taxes, when I can
find the polling place. Because they keep moving it around to confuse me. I heard that story about Ronald Reagan and Charlie Wall but I don’t believe it. I don’t believe my mother either. Most of what she says is a pure crock. And I don’t believe what she has to say about values and Western civilization because it’s like the good book says, HOW WOULD SHE KNOW? That’s right: how would she know. And if she did, why didn’t she convey the fact to me? She sure had plenty of opportunities before I up and got hauled off to the State Farm. You tell me, I don’t know.

Looks hard at DEEZO.

And another thing: that ain’t the Italian Club, it’s the “Albanian” Club as any fool can tell. Just look at those shoes. Those are the shoes of ethnic Albanians. Italians shipped out after the war. Korean War. Moved their tents up North, to the town of Schenectady. Schenectady, New York and the planet Jupiter.

Pause. Gives DEEZO (himself) the once over.

As for you, Deezo, you couldn’t find a license plate in a cup of coffee.

And as for “Why the Y?”, this is a spider-web type of thing, infinitely extended in the realm of the paranormal. In the Realm of the Unreal. Because “Y” is a devil letter, 25th of the alphabet. And 25 is truly 7, the number of Old Horny.

Scowls and waves his hands. His voice becomes hieratic, and strange.

Irreversible Metallic Computer Virus have already made you not existing anymore.

He changes back to himself (DEEZO).

So that’s the gist of it. I turned into a stranger. A man possessed. “Why the ‘Y’ in Ybor?” That’s all I could focus on. Lost track of friends, family. Job. All of it. I’d go tramping up and down Seventh Avenue. Why the “Y” in Ybor? I became like a metallized puppet in an imaginary opera by the futurist Marinetti. People began to avoid me. Because none of them had the answer. They wouldn’t look me in the eye. They’d flinch and try to slide on by without responding. Worse, some would get confused, start babbling, babbling as weirdly as me, now. . . . It was as if my asking them “why the ‘Y’ in Ybor” was like tapping them on the old brainpan with a stupid stick.

A strange CHORUS. The CHORUS sings very quietly underneath:

OTHER SONG:
Why the Y in Ybor?
  “ B in Bbor?
  “ C in Cbor?
  “ G in Gbor?
  “ K in Kbor?
  “ P in Pbor?
  “ Q in Qbor?
  “ T in Tbor?
  “ U in Ubor?
  “ V in Vbor?
  “ Z in Zbor? [and repeats . . .]

DEEZO comes out of it, grins sheepishly behind his microphone. The seated FIGURES whisper something we cannot hear.

Heck, I don’t know what I’m talking about. Don’t pay me any mind. Skip it. Really,
because you know I had to drop out of Junior College. This is true. Attention Disorder Syndrome. Seems like I keep falling into the hole of forgetting who I am . . .

**STANDING FIGURE**
Deezo.

DEEZO to the FIGURE, sharply.
I know, I know. I was just trying to give an example, okay? Jesus! I am just trying to explain some things. How I had to drop physics and accounting. Some kinds of weird half-mad Diogenes. And all these numbers, numbers with little pictures attached to them, keep rolling through my head. Even when at night, when I go to sleep. That's right, numbers. This "why the 'Y' in Ybor" is no parlor game.

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This is a brief excerpt from a longer play. The play was commissioned by the Hillsborough Moving Company, through Dancing in the Streets, as a piece of site-specific theater for Ybor City, Florida. Originally entitled ROMANTIC VIOLENCE, this play was conceived as a free adaptation of the EUMENIDES of Aeschylus. FNU LNU is based on a typographical misreading I found on the fabulous back page of the Columbia Journalism Review some years ago. It is dedicated to the spirit of Titivillus, the medieval patron demon of misprints and typographical errors.
"Lines of Flight" is a series of stencilled meditations on the names of philosophers and writers whose work concerns the nature of lines and trajectories. These poems might be stop-motion diagrams detailing the activities of letters over time, or cross-sections of words made radicle [sic], or the tracks that big snowballs or periods make when you roll them across a snowy field or a blank page. Or not.
Since August 1997, inspired by Jack Spicer’s observation that “the perfect poem has an infinitely small vocabulary,” I’ve created 4x4 wordsquares and run them through an anagram generator. This usually produces c. 440 pages of lines, and sometimes many more. I select 200-400, then Rubik them into a sonnet-like form I call isotopes. Their TIEK’s head/braid of chance, constraint and choice often admits of divergent viable iterations, and their reduced phonic sets also dictate a prosodic gait unique as a Tennessee Walker’s.

WILL ALEXANDER’s latest book of poems, Above the Human Nerve Domain, was published by Pavement Saw Press. He has recent writing in the latest issues of Fence and Orpheus Grid. He recently had poems translated in the journal Vatra out of Bucharest Romania. • KATHY DEE KALEOKEALOHA KALOLOAHILANI BANGGO is a Hawaiian/Filipina poet from the island of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i. She graduated from the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, where she took many classes from the poet Morgan Blair aka Faye Kicknosway. • GUY BENNETT lives in Los Angeles, where he edits Seeing Eye Books. His work has appeared in magazines and anthologies in the U.S., Brazil, Italy and France. He teaches at UCLA and works as typographer for Sun & Moon Press, Littoral, and O Books. Recent translations include Henri Deluy’s Carnal Love (Sun & Moon Press), Giovanna Sandri’s Hourglass (Seeing Eye Books) and Sergei Paradjanov’s Seven Visions (Green Integer). His book Last Words was published by Sun & Moon Press. • RÉGIS BONVICINO lives in São Paulo, Brazil. He is the editor of Nothing the Sun Could Not Explain: 20 Contemporary Brazilian Poets (Sun and Moon, 1997) with Michael Palmer. He is about to publish his individual anthology of poems by Sun and Moon entitled Sky-Eclipse. • LAYNIE BROWNE’s recent books include Lore and Clepsydra (both from Instress), and The Agency of Wind (Avec). She lives in Seattle where she is one of the curators of the Subtext Reading Series. • WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS was born in St. Louis in 1914. His numerous books include Naked Lunch, The Soft Machine, The Ticket that Exploded, The Wild Boys, the Western Lands, and My Education. Grove Press has recently published Word Virus: The William S. Burroughs Reader, a 600 page selection of his work. Burroughs died in August 1997. • STEVE CARLL lives in Kaimuki, Honolulu, Hawai‘i and is finally learning to drive. Other work has recently appeared in lyric&, Tinfish, and Art Access. Chapbooks include Vocal Pumice (Total Rhyme Attack) and brushstrokes. • MARTHA CAROTHERS is Chair of the Department of Art at the University of Delaware. Carothers is a Professor in the Visual Communications program teaching graphic design and book arts. As a book artist, Carothers has exhibited her work nationally and internationally, as well as having bookworks included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, the Library of Congress, and the Ruth and Marvin Sackner.
Archive of Concrete & Visual Poetry, Miami, FL. Her bookworks incorporate letterpress printing and handbinding and most recently the inclusion of computer design and laser printing. Carothers has been awarded both Emerging Artist and Established Artist grants from the Delaware State Arts Council. She has made many public presentations about various aspects of book arts and offered book arts workshops at Penland School of Craft, Penland, NC, Pyramid Atlantic, Riverdale, MD, and the Center for Book Arts, New York, NY. • CHRIS CHEN recently published “The Afterlife Of The Poem,” a critical appreciation of Paul Celan, in the poetics journal Tributary #2. His poems can be found in back issues of The Berkeley Poetry Review. He is a regular contributor to Idiom online journal (http://www.idiompress.com/) and has most recently written a long essay with Susan Maxwell on the work of Michael PALMER. • NORMA COLE’s most recent books are Desire and Its Double (Inpress, 1998) and “Spinoza In Her Youth” (Abaud, February 1999). Her translation of Emmanuel Hocquard’s This Story is Mine: Little Autobiographical Dictionary of Elegy can be found at http://home.earthlink.net/~kunos. • MICHAEL CORRIS • Visual artist FRANCK DAVID’s work can be seen at http://www.metafort.com/synathesie/syn7/david/intro2.html • KATE DELOS became interested in books at the age of fifteen as a printer’s devil. She paints, teaches and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has published numerous collaborations with Rena Rosenwasser, including Aviary (Limestone Press, 1988), Isle (Kelsey St. Press, 1992), and Simulacra (Kelsey St. Press, 1986). • JOHANNA DRUCKER produces creative and scholarly work with an emphasis on the material and visual aspects of meaning production. Her most recent book, Figuring the Word: Essays on Books, Writing, and Visual Poetics was published by Granary Books in November, 1998. She is Professor of Art History at Purchase College, SUNY. • MARCELLA DURAND is the author of City of Ports (Situations Press) and co-editor (with artists Karoline Schleh and Richard O’Rusza) of Venice (the invisible city), a fine arts and letterpress publication forthcoming from Erao Press. She is the program coordinator for the Poetry Project at St. Mark’s Church. • CRAIG DWORKIN’s new book is Signature-Effects (GhOs-ti-press), which is available through SPD. He teaches contemporary poetry at Princeton. • PAUL ELLIMAN comes from England and currently teaches in the graphic design department at Yale University. • JOE ELLIOT co-edits Situations, a chapbook series. His poems have appeared in The World, Object, Torque, Arras, and recently on-line in The Transcendental Friend. • BRAD FREEMAN is currently working on his next artist’s book titled Wrong Size Fits All. He is also working on a collaborative artist’s book with Johanna Drucker titled Nova Reperta 3000. He has been publishing JAB aka The Journal of Artists’ Books since 1994. JAB11 and JAB12 will be available in 1999. • MARA GÁLVEZ-BRETÓN’s writing has appeared in O-blek, Arras, Latina American Literary Review and other (mostly defunct) small press publications. She is currently working on the multi-language/multi-genre manuscript here excerpted. • SUSAN GEVIRTZ lives in San Francisco. Her recent books include Narrative’s Journey: The Fiction and Film Writing of Dorothy Richardson, Peter Lang, 1996, and Black Box Cutaway, Kelsey Street Press, 1999. • Born in Algiers in 1841, MICHELLE GRAN GAUD lives in Paris. A member of Oulipo, her work is characterized by a playful, yet rigorous exploration of formal constraints. To date she has published four books of anagrammatic poetry, a chapbook-length lexical palindrome, two works of poésie fondu (long poems collapsed into shorter ones), and several essays and prose works. Her most recent book, Etat civil, was published by P.O.L in 1998. • RALPH GUTLOHN lives in San Francisco where he writes and works. • LYNN HEJINIAN lives in California. Published collections of her writing include Writing is An Aid to Memory, My Life, Oxtota: A Short Russian Novel, The Cell, and The Cold of Poetry. Short, written in collaboration with Leslie Scalapino, has just been published by Edge Books, and Granary Books has recently published The Traveler and the Hill and the Hill, a work produced in collaboration with the painter Emilio Clark. The booklength poem, A Border Comedy, will be published by Sun & Moon Press in 1999, and a collection of essays entitled The Language of Inquiry is forthcoming from the University of California Press. • SUSAN HOLBROOK is a Canadian writer and scholar currently doing postdoctoral research on Gertrude Stein in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Her book of prose poetry, misled, is forthcoming from Red Deer College Press, 1999. • ALYSTYRE JULIAN has an MFA in poetry and prose from Bard College. She recently collaborated on a film/poem with Lee Ann Brown. • Dedicated to language-centered writing, feminist and Jewish concerns, ADEENA KARASICK is the author of three books of poetry and poetic theory (Genrecide, Memewars and The Empress Has No Closure). She recently received her Ph.D. which explored the interplay of pataphysics, Kabbalah and deconstructionist discourses and is now based in New York working on a CD ROM, and an intra-genre project—in-language, Dyssemia Sleaze. • MYUNG MI KIM’s books are Duna (Sun & Moon Press), The Bounty (Chax Press), and Under Flag (which has just been released in a second printing by Kelsey Street Press). • LOUISE LANDES LEVI—Itinerant poet (forthcoming Gami Punk from Cool Grove Press and Makar/A from Woodbine Press) and translator (Rene Daumal, RAS4, New Directions, Mira Bai, Sweet on My Lips, Cool Grove Press
and Henri Michaux's *Michaux*, forthcoming from Coronamundi). She suggests consulting *Hidden Teachings of Tibet* by Tulku Thondup Rimpochche, Wisdom Publications, London, for more information on the material in her piece printed here, or studying with a living terton who will transmit it directly. • BILL LUOMA lives in Honolulu and attends the UH in search of a computer science degree. His publications include *Suwon Rocket, Works & Days*, and *Western Love*. • TIM MCCOY mainly writes fiction and smiles when he is fortunate enough to have something published. • NATHANIEL MACKEY's most recent book is *Whatsaid Serif* (City Lights, 1988). *Aret A.D.* is forthcoming from Sun & Moon Press. • WILLIAM MARSH resides in San Diego where he teaches writing and media arts. His work has appeared on paper and screen in such journals as *Antenym*, *Tingfish*, *The Washington Review*, *Web Conjunctions*, *Witz*, *Xenia*, *YLEM*, and *Zine(n) New Media*. His chapbook *Making Flutes* was published by Potes & Poets Press in 1998. William Marsh also edits *PaperBrain* Press. Details about the press, as well as hypertext works and animations, can be found at http://bmarsh.artisan.com • SUSAN MAXWELL is a modern dancer living in San Francisco. She is currently working with Kim Epifano and performing in *The Body Project*, an aerial dance piece, with Jo Kreiter. She is currently writing a book of fables with Chris Chen. • BERNADETTE MAYER's most recent books are *Midwinter Day*, *Proper Name* and *The Bernadette Mayer Reader*, all published by New Directions, and *Another Smashed Pinecone* (United Artists) and *Two Halved Mourners* (Granary). • DEBORAH MEADOWS teaches interdisciplinary courses at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Her poetry has appeared in several places including: *Generator*, *Spillway*, *Rooms*, *Critical Matrix* (Princeton U. Women's Studies), *CORE: an international symposium on visual poetry*, and *remixponsescategoriaray*, and forthcoming in *Colorado Review*. • GASTON DE MEY was born in Belgium on August 1, 1933. After a teacher education he went on to study drawing and painting at the academy in Eeklo (1952-1963). In 1968 he caused a sensation by deconstructing the alphabet and by recycling the 26 letters as pure plastic elements. Over a period of 25 years, De Mey has been using the letters of our alphabet to build his structures. Since 1993 his arsenal of characters has expanded from one into four alphabets: Greek, Cyrillic, Latin, and Hebrew. • Two of MARIE NIMIER's six novels are *Le Ginâve* (1981) and *Domino* (1998). • PETER NEUFELD lives in San Francisco, and along with Eric Frost is co-founder and co-editor of both the journal *melodeon* and a chapbook series under the sign *melodeon poetry systems*. Work is forthcoming in *lyric&*, *JackLeg*, and *disClosure*. • NICK PIOMBINO is a poet, essayist, and psychoanalyst. His books include *Poems* (Sun and Moon), *The Boundary of Blur: Essays* (Roof) and *Light Street* (Zasterle). His most recent work has appeared in *An Avek Sampler 2*, *Aporia*, *Chain* (1996), *Close Listening* (Oxford University Press), *Crayon*, *Misc. Proj.*, *Rhizome*, and *Electronic Poetry Center*. • MEREDITH QUARTERMAIN is a Vancouver writer who has published two chapbooks, *Terms of Sale* (Meow, 1996) and *Abstract Relations* (Keefer Street, 1998). She is currently working on a long poem entitled *The Book of Words* and her work has appeared in *West Coast Line*, *Five Fingers Review*, *Backwoods Broadsides* Chaplet Series, *Raddle Moon*, *Rooms*, *Mirage Period[ical] #4*, *Mass Ave*, and *Antenym*. • PETER QUARTERMAIN's most recent work appeared in *Witz*, *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet* (National Poetry Foundation), and *Close Listening* (Oxford University Press). He recently edited, with Richard Caddel, the anthology *Other: British and Irish Poetry Since 1970* (Wesleyan University Press), and with Rachel Blu D'Plessis, *The Objectivist Nexus: Essays in Cultural Poetics*, an anthology forthcoming from the University of Alabama Press. He lives in Vancouver and has just retired from the English Department at the University of British Columbia. • ARCHIE RAND has solo exhibitions happening at C.P. Co. in Milan, Italy (April and May of 1999) and the Castellani Art Museum in Niagara, New York (2000). In 1999 he received a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Lifetime Achievement Award in Visual Arts from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture. • Before coming to graduate school in Minnesota in 1995, ANNA RECKIN worked in England as a book editor and copy-writer. Her essays and reviews have appeared in *The Oxford Magazine* (U.K.) and *The Hungry Mind Review*. • JOAN RETALLACK'S newest books, *MONGRELISME* and *How To Do Things With Words*, are out from Paradigm Press and Sun & Moon respectively. She is also the author of *AFTERIMAGES* (Wesleyan) and *Errata Suite* (Edge Books). Retallack is currently finishing a book of interrelated essays, *The Poetical Wager*. It will be published by The University of California Press later this year. She will be doing a book on Gertrude Stein for California's new "poets on poets" series. • RENA ROSENWASSER co-founded Kelsey Street Press, where she continues to produce the Press's collaboration series. She lives in Berkeley, California. Rosenwasser has published numerous collaborations with Kate Delos, including *Aviary* (Limestone Press, 1988), *Isle* (Kelsey St. Press, 1992), and *Simulacra* (Kelsey St. Press, 1986). • JOHANNES RUTH'S comprehensive work, *Feline Anthropology*, has been in preparation for publication since the early 1970s. The first volume, *Ancestor Worship and Food Bowl Rituals* will appear in 00. • ALBERT SAJO is a millenarian who lives in village ofVolcano Hawai’i at edge of Kilauea volcano hoping it will go offY2K returning earth to place Adam knew. • ANDREW SCHELLING lives in Boulder, Colo-
rado along the Front Range of the Southern Rockies. Principal studies include bioregional poetics, wilderness issues, and Asian languages. Recent books are The Road to Ocosingo (Smokeproof Press) and a volume of translations, The Cane Groves of Narmada River: Erotic Poems from Old India (City Lights). He teaches at The Naropa Institute. • MIRA SCHOR recently received the 1999 Frank Jewett Mather Award in Art Criticism from the College Art Association for writings including Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture; a big drawing installation, Sexual/Sublimate, will be exhibited at Smack Mellon Studios in Brooklyn, New York in September 1999. • RON SILLIMAN is currently a Pew Fellow in the Arts for 1998-1999. This text originally appeared in Multiplex, a volume containing this work and poems by Karen Mac Cormack, published in an edition of sixty by Wild Honey Press, Bray Co. Wicklow, Ireland. • GIOVANNI SINGLETON writes, lives, and collects bookmarks in the San Francisco Bay area. Poems have appeared in Proliferations, no roses review, mass. ave., and Mirage #4/Periodical. Current project is a dramatic work involving the numerous manifestations of "beauty." • Born in Rignano in 1881, ARDENGIO SOFFICI was an early, active member of the Italian Futurist movement. A painter and poet, he published frequently in the Futurist newspaper Lacerba. His collection BIF & ZF + 18 (1915) contains his best known poems, including "Typography," published here. He died in Vittoria Apuana in 1964. • PETE SPENCE, writer and visual poet living in Australia. • CHRISTINA OLSON SPIESEL is primarily a visual artist, working in two and three dimensions. She teaches in interdisciplinary contexts—most recently for Bard College's Institute for Writing and Thinking, the Yale Law School, and the Yale School of Art. Her published writing includes papers on Leonardo Da Vinci (1995) and Willem DeKooning (1997) in SEMIOTICS for those years. • CHRIS VITIELLO edited Proliferation and works at Duke University Press. Forthcoming books include Nouns Swarm a Verb (Xurban) and Monica and Clinton: An Unauthorized Impeachment (7bumps). • ANNE WALDMAN is the author most recently of Iovis II, Holy/Au Lit (with Eleni Sikeliannos and Laird Hunt, Polemis (with Anselm Hollo and Jack Collom). She is guest Director of The Schule fur Dichtung in Vienna (1999-2001), and a Distinguished Professor of Poetics and Director of the Summer Writing Program at The Naropa Institute. She is also the editor of Erudite Fangs Editions. Recent performances: City Lights Bookstore in Firenze, La Casa de la Poesia, Caracas, Mills College, Oakland, The San Jose Art Museum. • KEITH WALDROP teaches at Brown University in Providence and, with Rosmarie Waldrop, is editor of the small press, Burning Deck. His Silhouette of the Bridge received the America Award for Poetry for 1997. His most recent book is Analogy of Escape. • MAC WELLMAN's recent plays include Girl Gone, FNU LNU, The Damned Thing, Second-hand Smoke, and Infrared. He also directed I Don't Know Who He Was, and I Don't Know What He Said as part of the four month Mac Wellman Festival at House of Candles and elsewhere. Three collections of his plays have been published: The Bad Infinity (PAJ/Johns Hopkins University Press), Two Plays, and The Land in The Forest (both from Sun & Moon). In 1997 he received a Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writers' Award. • HENDRIK WERKMAN was born in 1882 in the province of Groningen, where he lived his whole life. A printer by trade, he began producing his own work as his printing business failed. His druksel—multi-colored, type-based, abstract prints—and magazine, the next call, attracted some attention in avant-garde circles, and his work came to be exhibited in Amsterdam and Paris. His success was to be short-lived, however. He was arrested by the Nazis in March 1945, and executed one month later, just days before the liberation. • MARTA L. WERNER is assistant professor of American literature and textual scholarship at Georgia State University. She is the author of Emily Dickinson's Open Folios: Scenes of Reading, Surfaces of Writing (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1995), as well as essays on Dickinson, textual scholarship, and poetics. Her work Radical Scatters: An Electronic Archive of Emily Dickinson's Late Fragments and Related Texts is forthcoming from U of Michigan Press. • DARREN WERSHLER-HENRY is a writer, critic and editor who lives in Toronto. His first book of concrete and visual poetry, NICHOLODEON: a book of lowerglyphs, was published by Coach House Books in 1997. His next book, Tapeworm, will appear in the year 2000 (or 1900, if you’re not Y2K compliant). • ILYA ZDANEVICH, or Iliazd as he called himself, was born in Tbilissi in 1894. Active in Russian Futurist circles, though at first not allied with any one group, he went on to form 41° with Alexei Kruchenykh and Igor Terentiev in 1917. Having moved to Paris in 1921, he participated in Dada and Surrealist activities while promoting the accomplishments of Russian Futurism, particularly zaum, and continued to publish in France under the 41° imprint. A poet and a typographer, he produced a number of artists' books, and his collaborators included Ernst, Matisse, and Picasso. Zdanevich died in Paris in 1975. • DANIEL ZIMMERMAN teaches at Middlesex County College in Edison, NJ. Most recently, he collaborated with John Clarke on Blue Horitals (Amman: Oasii, 1997).
Hawai'i Review

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I am not a smile
—Sylvia Plath, quoted by Nicole Brossard

I am that smile
—Nicole Brossard

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As always, we especially encourage collaborative, interdisciplinary, intergeneric, and mixed media work.

Please send poems, essays, performance texts, film or video stills, scripts, camera ready visual art, musical scores, choreographic notes, proposals, documenta, etc. by December 1. For this issue, please send work to Jena Osman; send only visual art to Janet Zweig.

Please, NO email submissions. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you would like your work returned. Submissions on disk are acceptable, but please enclose a hard copy for our reference. More extensive submission guidelines are available at our website: http://www2.hawaii.edu/~spahr/chain

This issue is being edited by Marina Bhudos, Jena Osman, Kerry Sherin, Juliana Spahr, and Dorothy Wang.

Deadline: December 1, 1999
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Please make check out to ʻA ʻA Arts.
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We look forward to reading some work by you.

Best regards,