



Word For/ Word is seeking poetry, prose, poetics, criticism, reviews, and visuals for upcoming issues. We read submissions year-round, but issue #41 is scheduled for September 2023. Please direct queries and submissions to:

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Weston, WV 26452

Email queries and submissions may be sent to: editors@wordforword.info.

Submissions should be a reasonable length (i.e., 3 to 6 poems, or prose between 50 and 2000 words) and include a biographical note and publication history (or at least a friendly introduction), plus an SASE with appropriate postage for a reply. A brief statement regarding the process, praxis or parole of the submitted work is encouraged, but not required. Please allow one to three months for a response. We will consider simultaneous submissions, but please let us know if any portion of it is accepted elsewhere. We do not consider previously published work.

Email submissions should be attached as a single .doc, .docx, .rtf, .pdf or .txt file. Visuals should be attached individually as .jpg, .png, .gif, or .bmp files. Please include the word "submission" in the subject line of your email.

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Word For/ Word is open to all types of poetry, prose and visual art, but prefers innovative and post-avant work with an astute awareness of the materials, rhythms, trajectories and emerging forms of the contemporary. *Word For/ Word* is published biannually.

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Mark DuCharme

Reading Kenneth Koch

"What did you do with Kenneth Koch?"

"I plastered him in a flowerbox's bellyache
Behind the winefruit & damaged pumpkins
Through which we often scrawl."

"The timid can't be be bothered here, I don't think,"
Interjected the poet's ghost, suddenly, from behind a postage stamp,
"Though I'm only joking by using
The word *if*."

Now, the wind is wired.
Apparitions are a common futility.
Kenneth Koch is not a write-in candidate anywhere, I don't think
Though he continues to imagine that he is

From his grave in Montmartre, Pawtucket, or wherever it is.
It's not true that he is Captain Marvel yet
But I'll keep on reading Kenneth Koch,
Whom I almost once have never seen.

Mark DuCharme

Notebook of a Return to Somewhere

We Had Never Fled

I bailed on your future
When winds grew dark

Only then you said they were
& You were there, where they'd never been before

In back of the daffodils
With some sort of crank

& Your blush or bluish graze
Lifted off teapots on cold harbor mornings

What's still revealed
Is only what can't yet be revealed in

The fact contains itself—
A whiter shade of winter

Is unavailable; check your screen
Presence & make something up

All this talk of
Freedom makes me leave

The showroom full of uneasy answers
To unasked questions

The job is out there
If you still don't want it

For all the boutique smiles it takes
This is not a notebook

Read it
Anyway

Comic Gloom

Tell me a shadow. Winter's not still—
I'll harbor the moon in my getaway.

The town hall shuttered its wild gardens,
All destiny pending in a dreamed-up surprise.

Think the imperative 'til singing's foundational
To wretched foragers who sulk &

Rumble in dark lots, thrusting
Pennies in their ears.

Save a fist for the ancient strangler—
I'll batten down night's cold edges with a starry

Twirl. Don't simper, lest you be fed daisies
'Til the end of the wind's on the line.

Mark DuCharme

With the Poem

after Coolidge

I.

The poem has already moved on—
A winding through of time & circumstance.
It is a substance of its own making,
Intervals substantiated now in wonder.

The poem is a skein, a seine, a
Substance of protracted knowing,
A glaze of imperfect seizure beveled
At the limits of the sayable.

It's not for want of wander that we veer here,
A desert of vivid glimpses with the tongue an active verb.
If you embody commotion, will you fall down
In the poem's fleshly speech?

It's not you who's saying it— embodied rupture,
The uttered thing in all its strangeness,
Comes *through* you, unsettles you, shakes thought's tune
Like nothing you occurred out of ever once before.

II.

The poem was written over a passage
Of time— & time changes you.
Who are you when you want me to be?
& Can I be for you the same as once before?

The poem is a record of that process,
A fine rumor you've held yourself to
Adrift in bright pages
That vanish from our care—

An idyll whorl of tarnished speech

With which to wipe the faces off
That smirk— or a bunch of tunes
The wary night still feeds on.

In the poem, vanish when you won't quite be
Songlit in evening's plunder;
Awake to the poem on schooldays' raw
Glass, despite night's bumptious charm.

Mark DuCharme

In the Dessert

after Ceravolo

Don't spill the whiskey; it's a sin
Clowntime has only just begun
I wouldn't differ if I had your nerve
After the moonlight went wrong

All goes wrong sometime, & still
The sand is where you want it
Were I alone yet also near
Where streams the multivalent

Is the garden too loco, like hardwired bugs
Yes, I think it is tool baskets &
Candy. Wigwam as a helping verb
For all the desert's tin

Impasto, impasto, poco loco
Dead salsa vérité tweezers
Except on Sundays
Toward which I also grieve

As if the dead were too juvenile
Written on a towel then lost
At nightstands up the quatrain
A ledger of impacted scrawls

I also gaze upon the shore
To mend here before the others were
Songdust on curfew, examples stuffed
By root in a scarified ear

Jane Joritz-Nakagawa

from *LUNA*

#1 (four tanka, linked)

my eyes become
dead waves
the place where my soul
is buried a handkerchief
on the ground

ushering in
a new pair of glasses
for the sun
the mundane world
becomes a riverbed

smiling like a
victorious soldier
or dancer
my voice starts
to break up

puppies die in the storm
can i have a gun?
puncturing my panic attack
with blue dots
savoring its privilege

from *LUNA*

#2

never let the whiners
appear on
my table in bed
wind me up with souffle
bring back the body of love

invalidated tree
sanctioned infant
revealed shadow
handmade concrete
in a dummy war

disable my pastime
fumble my sex
open my skin
touch my root and
foreign my beyond

plastic and magic
sliver and shine
gay engine
attentive slime
in double music

couplet nursery
renovated feces
nostalgic pain
expectation exercise
for a jump fuck

hiccup the lagoon
selfie the siren
bang my poor
loosen my colostomy

fluff the daughter

bomb all statues
eat the young
shine my clothes
fasten the wife
revolve the building

lazy shopping bag
ruthless shoes
unruly pencil
painful devotion
surpassing death

downtrodden spectacle
delusional tennis ball
on a schizophrenic wall
in a malnourished scene
with unprecedented hands

from *LUNA*

#3

i never won
the anticipated award but
trees hailed down
like lace curtains
who doesn't

want to hide behind
something else
all the time
waiting
for something better

to not come along
the wind was bony
and dry like
a seagull
in winter

the dogsled doesn't move
in the picture or
in the real world
you know
from internet

pacing back and forth
the clouds moody
and filthy as a beach
and the trash you left here
what happened

to all the things
that were here
years ago
before you minded

and the air became still

hoping for
the same chemical
taste of music
that lifts you
away

to a plateau in a
story you did not
want to hear
playing over and over
in your imaginary head

Jane Joritz-Nakagawa

from *LUNA*

#4

so much depends
on things going awry
i wonder what my liver
is up to these days
what kind of rain

will make me happy
which foot is more attractive
whose clothes do I have on
will the bird return at noon
i put feed in the box

but you don't care
you've died and left behind a residue
see, here it is,
look how i
lap it up

Jane Joritz-Nakagawa

from *LUNA*

#5

once my daydreams spin
out of sight
i'll finally be alone

you may curse the forest
and praise the dust bunnies
that's cuz you're an idiot

who prefers walking
in the middle of the night
on city streets

i once did that but . . .
whoops! long story
that should never be repeated

stuck in my throat
like the breakfast
you made for me

i stay home searching
for my lost daydreams
they must be where my plans are

hiding among the dust bunnies
perhaps memories are forgiveness
in this vacant town

Jane Joritz-Nakagawa

from *LUNA*

#6

make a home from

an innocent part of (me)

defiles the horizon

what we love most

between nature and god

culture and journey

liquid and dark

the stairs of the impossible

bitter bone

spreading out endlessly

supple envelope

encases you

airy vacuum

in my repose

further consumption

a loss of limits

all this

could be true

the nightly closing of the flower

surrounded by invisible clouds

Note: some of the language is from *Elemental Passions*, by Luce Irigaray

Lynn Strongin

from *In Our Eyrie (Ariel)*

1

IN our eyrie, Ariel

You are the only other American:

We have flown home, Montana woman.

The feeling in our bones

Still of having

Taken leave.

Dark feathers:

Different speech

Like on an organ: you open the pipe & let the air in. In our sanctuary: little but mighty:

It's like having a new organist in our temple:

I seek a flashback finale: all stops pulled out, countrywoman.

Lynn Strongin

from *In Our Eyrie (Ariel)*

2

MAPS ON GLOSSY of above Paris

On my bed

It is the third anniversary of Pity.

Serious about leaving multiplication & division.

Anxious.

I sit beside a blue folkloric cross

That could be from Mother Theresa:

Like compassion

Not pity after your first communion:

O my Lord, no

social butterfly after first communion:

These nun like & salty O immunity workers keep me alive: Above Paris on my bed.

And your love. July & another glossy map pulled down, another anniversary of

MERCY

Lynn Strongin

from *In Our Eerie (Ariel)*

3

YOU ARE a steady, incandescent presence in the home

Changing linen

Doing tons

Of wash.

On hot days

You pour a glass of ice.

Doctor-prescribed outings?

They are at the back of the film

Which ended long ago.

Long ago comes close

The projector bulb off, it is you: the steady
incandescent presence in our home

.

Lynn Strongin

from *In Our Eyrie* (Ariel)

4

EARNEST, tense, introverted

Another emerges on the film

Grainy: but my music be the gladness of the world still burs at core like

Before the illness savaged me.

When we met, you fit the New England of my imagination.

One room schoolhouse, general store. Nothing drastic happened immediately.

Now what is cozy

No more

Love-river

Our home bisected by

circles; okra are hexagons too; struggle to cook Boston beans,

come in the door, wheel across carpeted flaming pain up hardwood floor.

Lynn Strongin

from *In Our Eyrie (Ariel)*

5

DEAR ARIEL, the scent of longing
Don't lay it on my soul:
'burnout is burnout

Dear love of my LIFE, put this down to age:
While another amazing poem is in the hopper
I glossed over not getting out because of the pain.

Much is glossy: much fires capes abrading nightfall's
Pearl, violet
The small lavender sachet under your pillow for good sleep.

The cathedral back chair
Perfect for prayer but, Ariel, the scent of longing, the falling from, a narrative child,
laid on my soul the blessing blown by battle fatigue, blown back in by lungs.

Lynn Strongin

from *In Our Eyrie (Ariel)*

6

THE WORDS for things are leaving

Like birds into trees.

You from me

Lungs ache,

Gorge rises.

Water Street sees the Brooklyn Bridge from New York City.

I crumple the love note.

Nightfall tapestry

Hold like the burnt fountain water left

Dry to the lips,

While words roost pearl in umber cover; eyrie, sanctity.

Connor Fisher

The Gin Sister

I sleep late and swell on the vine.
Bees are the undertakers of my cosmology.
I flexed my eyes against the ink of midnight.

The Mississippi gin cradles my recluse
Like hounds it corners the sick and the weak.
This cotton field begins the hunt.

A lit cigarette drops from the moon's single eye.
Before dawn its headlights waver the grain
Dying scattered over the heads of drums.

We are the Christs of our sisters' long dream.
Butterflies dropped eggs along the their glowing curls.

The word stakes its claim on morning
And tangles shadows with an axe head.
The tide forms a prison in the delta.

I have burned my wilderness to embers.
Your dark honey drips between the pillows.
Blue shadows shuffle like crawdads along the ridgepole.

Like a paper rattlesnake bound to a chair
Clouds became a trembling sonogram
And corroded the village like an endless ladder.

Connor Fisher

Orphans in a Dormant Sky

That blackened winter, my I became a restless vision
At school, I shrouded my chariots in a contemptuous cloak

My mumbled phrases were the orphans of an abandoned tongue
They would have thrived as the stewards of a punishing armada

At school, I shrouded my chariots in a contemptuous cloak
Perhaps my I is a restless scapegoat, buffeted by zephyrs

They would have thrived as the stewards of a punishing armada
I think you are an abbreviated mirror in the body of a baron

Perhaps my I is a restless scapegoat, buffeted by zephyrs
And my daughter is a poet of the commercial still-life

I think you are an abbreviated mirror in the body of a baron
The way a stream runs downhill until it joins the moon

And my daughter is a poet of the commercial still-life
So I learned to bicker with an impregnable wall of canvas

The way a stream runs downhill until it joins the moon
That blackened winter, my I became a restless vision

So I learned to bicker with an impregnable wall of canvas
My mumbled phrases were the orphans of an abandoned tongue

Taking the (silent) tour of the broad museum (virtual)

1. Tap the comments and the comments will *disappear*
2. as a stream of hearts float up *obscuring*
3. Kruger's BODY is a *battleground*
4. while the perspective of a *machina*
5. looking at an *ex machina*
6. traverses the *Broad*
7. reminding me of how I stood once by the *Serra*
8. and said this work *makes sound*
9. and your unforgiving *face*
10. an underminer to make thoughts *minor*
11. HI! writes MJ from *Camden, NJ*
12. like the camera here only interested in *edges*
13. forcing a *view*
14. as if it was universally *known*
15. what was important was *outside us*
16. like a petulant child, jumping *in place*
17. *art as a* playground
18. *history as a* drone

Merridawn Duckler

Sonnet to Terrance Malick's *Badlands*

My mind in this heat is a bloated dog,
I drive, fins in the arid between.
My debut is here, in the banked log
kicked and squished by sheen.
My house burns, the rooms ameliorate,
and I lock the dragged form to lone farms.
My back is at the moving gate,
a nuisance I want to hurt and harm,
and fill in with red embattled circles.
What is this empty, signifying hellbent story,
that must be filled with ridicule?
Idiots preside in the naked cottonwood of glory.
Women should know better.
Blind beauty before the unopened letter.

Merridawn Duckler

Sinner

I sent the goat of my stubbornness off to Azazel
but that goat kept coming back
tapping on the door with hairy hoof.
So, I marked the goat *urgent* and *read me first*
and sat back in the tavern among red cups, victorious.

But the goat returned and stood dumbly
in the courtyard, where a child scratched its forehead of coarse hair,
and it bleated a frustrated groan
that sounded like what grass might scream,
when pulled from the roots, separated from tender ground.

Outside the goat goofily chewed,
inside I slammed tables and sent books skyward
and in a lavish, enraged script wrote to Azazel:
Look, will you not take this expiated fucking goat,
according to agreed procedure, off my stiff neck!

Night fell and at three stars
I opened my shutters and the goat stood at my very bed
and (though no one will believe me) opened its long lips
and said (in the voice of an actor) Listen, pilgrim
I am now and have always been

a herder of shepherds, sending them into the high mountains,
looking for the old fragments. I pray from my pupils,
which see panoramically, with minimal blind spots
and kneel to where I am going
based on the map of where I have been.

Merridawn Duckler

Parable of the Town Beauty

Many times from a rooftop
the red chimneys, brick and iron,
stubbed from so many fiery lengths.

I command what I cannot control,
the sun, if I rise first. I am the original
pukka, an unknown match.

Over lands I defy gravity, all graves,
the hollow bone suffused with red blood,
my own tremor and disdain.

Now the day is filling with its problematic
proofs, snakes uncurling around the fruit.
Remember, even when memory unglues

all my resolution on the revolving roof,
I touched clouds while clear-minded,
I would never go into my temple, drunk.

D. E. Steward

Distinctly Cyan

The historian's highest duty – said Walter Benjamin – is remembrance of past suffering

During the Balkans *patrias chicas* civil wars there was talk of the Sontagging of Bosnia

Like a bossy kid in the sandbox in the spring of 1999 trying to limit people from reading Peter Hanke because he was not with her on Kosovo

Those brutal Balkan events all to do with religion and militarist solutions

"all presence goes deeper than signs – / the land is written over, never out" (John Kinsella)

Sibelius's *Sixth's* first movement's early theme somberly is like eerie skittering storm-blown low black clouds in a sky going gray-green

Nessun dorma

A sergeant in a WWI balloon detachment in Omaha, my father never left the ground but he sat me on the lap of a Civil War veteran turned centenarian, and during the same pre-WWII spring took me to Raven Rock on the middle Delaware to see Army engineers, still in Brodie Doughboy helmets and puttees, float a pontoon bridge

"Hoy recuerdo a las muertes de mi casa." (Octavio Paz)

Brome, phragmites, quackgrass, goosegrass, giant cutgrass, crabgrass, witchgrass, barnyard grass, bristlegrass, sheep sorrel, sandspur, broomsedge, stinging nettles

Milpa, the three sisters, corn, beans and squash: king's banquet pole bean, Hopi cushaw squash, Ute squash, *Nicotiana rustica*, rattlesnake bean, amaranth, *Lafenaria siceraria* (gourds), Hopi blue corn

In a letter from a European, seventyish Buddhist nun in Sarnath near Varanasi:

People just pop up and I am here for them. One, a new nun, is eight, the daughter of Usha, the helper of the old nun, who comes to help me with the heavy wash. Then another child I have is that 96-year-old nun, along with a young sick monk, fourteen, and another about eight. It is never ending, very challenging. I am getting ready to go, writing down what to do with my body and actually I am quiet, happy, satisfied.

En Sof

In Riga at -15C in the January wind, 30,000 Latvians stood in a two-kilometer 2014 transfer brigade between the Latvian National Library old and the new, hand-to-hand proudly passing thousands of books

A. R. Ammons' colossal and private "Summer Session," bemused *splenderâ*:
nevertheless into raw
space we turn, sun
 feeding cosmic drift through
expelling radiance of cosmic storm,
and we are at an
incredible height going round
something

Why suicide bombers? Why? And so commonplace

Boko Haram has dispatched ten-year-old girls, just like any "weapon"

Outrageous martial enigmas mushroom from the blunt, cynical ennui of military mindsets

But the bombers are people, mostly questing, sometimes coerced, kids

And there are so many, so many volunteer, comply, take a deep breath and pull the ring

Belief? Blubbing faith in the act of their self-immolation?

The vessel of Islam on a Gaussian error heading

Deviation, same course held too long

Gaussian error is deviation of a magnetic compass due to transient magnetism in the hull appearing after a vessel has been on the same course for extended periods

Angry historical revenge bolstered by nitpicking Quranic justifications

And Gaussian error is also a mathematical error function

Dylan Thomas's water-lammed, widdershin, mitching, haring, gristed, spinney, swansing

Dell, vale, dingle, a strath, a glen, glade, slade, dene, combe, in Welsh a cwm

"In the vast ocean of literature written in Latin between the time of Petrarch and the nineteenth century, only a few islands are these days generally visible" (Philip Hardie)

And behind that, the pensive, shadowy vastness of preliterate reality

Incisively mysterious like the lofty presence of giant fruit bats, the hefty flying foxes, *Pteropus tonganus*, of Vanuabalavu

Like the profoundly complicated episodes and lives of people gone, those once known who are now dead

What is missing, what was, the essence voided except in still cogent memories

In that comforting immediacy of strong memory

And elders, the oldlings, hold their deep recollective reserve

Younglings skim, always off on sunny seas

And the past rapidly recedes

An ill-lighted cave

"An average person of 1910, if he or she had entered a time machine and materialized today would be borderline retarded by our standards." (TED-talking Steven Pinker)

Doubtful

Yet halfway back to 1910: "I want to get away somewhere and re-read Proust" / Said an editor of *Fortune* to a man on *Time*" (Weldon Kees)

Now Time-Life is a music packaging company and *Fortune Magazine* is almost forgotten

These days that Time-Life ilk lounge around the common rooms of geezerheims after lunch and before their naps, venturing their might-have-beens

Or sit reminiscing on a clubhouse bench beside their golf carts before the bar opens

Aloof from them, his particular post-stroke dyskinesia makes most look away

While in his eighth year of static disability and a drab constant of hobbled experience his friends still cater to him with their attention and time

He, in the manner of the wasted and expiring, back from a war, or post-stroke, or merely uselessly useless and accepting that they are

With no more eagerly explosive youthful bright cyan phosphenes

Too, such are survivors born to awful circumstance

Seventy percent of Northern Nigeria is illiterate

Boko Haram translates in English as "western education is forbidden"

States of Nigeria within Boko Haram's zone are Zamfara, Bauchi, Borno, Yobe, Eastern Region, Delta

The country's population, 196 million now, is fifty percent Muslim

It will be 392 million by 2050, Lagos alone with 33 million

Passing Indonesia, likely that Nigeria will become the world's largest Islamic country

Nigerian southerners are in deep fear of that, heralded by the sharia-tending desert north

And eighteen million Fulani pastoralists push south for sparse grazing

As the Sahara grows, now, second decade, twenty-first century

Hausa-Fulani herdsmen, illiterate, nomadic, in conflict with the farmers and climate change

Cowpunchers versus sodbusters

Desperate for survival

Vast herds of ghostly white Fulani humped cattle with high lyre-shaped horns on the move

Cleaved

Thought-possessed—a headmistress—, I dismissed
body as inert e art h, & body receded, in a monumental,
Continental d rift. My body-body & body of th ought
cleaved where tectonic vertebrae once scre wed me

|

— to get her. —

|

Be cause: my parents inserted God’s Word where bawdy
feelings would have been: trans muted flesh became Word.
The neck’s juncture was a g aping, synaptic cleft of im pulse,
intention & desire neuro transmissions. At tempting to

|

— b reach —

|

the shorted circuits, I was be reft: having no body
reflexes or parasympathy. This was a riff rift
r ending w hole ness into f rag mental shard.

Ram Dass said, *Be here now*. I said, *Where's here?*

|

— Thoughts —

|

wreathed & reamed me. I thought a lot about them

while so self-divided. I felt a boddity. If sin

entered when Eve bit the fruit, God is at fault for giving

women any appetite to ward a Fall. But they would

|

— be reft, —

|

minds beholding phantom he arts, limbs & clits,

trying to reverse their lost integrity with a parody

|

— body-of-thought —

|

Coco Owen

X O X O

Cerebral cortex runs the binary code making
my human heart speak in Xs and Os.
Not in ones and naughts, not

that either/or game wherein pirates
s laughter each other; wherein X means
treasure and O offers permanent surprise.

I hid my *Génie*
in a Christmas *Carol*, then made
more song of myself,

adopting the nickname *Coco*. It
was given to me by a lady poet who left me.
Now *Coco* uses a back channel (a black Chanel)

to pull off an alphabet kisses and hugs—
where X equals C,
and it's an O for an O.

Netted

All the strings {nets-skeins-neurons-laces-yarns}
I hold on to are fasteners {rivets-brads-brackets}
embedded in me & strung {hanging-glowing-buzzing}

everywhere, making me wonder if
it's a disease {neurosis psychosis hallucination}
to feel this fenced in {detained-enclosed-secluded}.

Worse, am I tied {handcuffed-wired} to
a short fuse? A dynamite proprioception!
Picture innards {muscles-tendons-ligaments},

then more and more and more guy wires
as thin disguise {fishnet-slips-veils}.
I'm stranded with this hair-line fractured anatomy:

a structure too delicate for words, crystalline
as complex molecules. Worse, I'm clasping
at tendrils: the lattice {ribbing-skeletal-scaffolding}

structuring me. Indra's net fishes me up with cat-gut
harp {piano-guitar-violin} strings. It's a branching
joinery {filigree-filaments} traducing the sensations

I mine for information {entrainment-entertainment}.
My form of thought follows these tangles of
ganglia {trellises-traceries} stringing me up & along.

Keith Baughman

Memorial

sunlight welds the rusty horizon
to the birdsong in our blood
to fill our mouths with clocks
and trampled gusts of wind
that sages ignore for ripened fruit
and the pleasure of memory
lost to stones of an un-
excavated well captivated
by the slight passage of time.

the ocean dreams in clouds
and speaks in wind to the eyes
of our hands leaving runic scars
of *now* and *not yet* like songs
of travel on the backs of deer
inscribed on glass panels
to make memorial the entrance
of invisible caves where death
is the stirred air of bees
whose wings are fingernails
dipped in tears.

and I am a locust about
to bring my earth to your
calloused lips bent around
the iron rod of your hammers
driven into muted bells strung
like the beads of your spine.

wooden bells that swallow rain
to nourish hellbent poison
blackened by coal old as
the crow's empty wings
and the mare's bottomless eye
turned inward on the source

of hollow whispering labyrinths
inside dawn-touched shells.

this bandage of teeth asks
nothing of the blossoming stars
but the simple promise of the next
breath-lit moment.

I ask in excess the silence
of footsteps falling from the sky
what drywood can I force
my way into burying-motive that I am
inside this green-leaved skull
woven by a child whose
laddered hands dissolve
in the mirrored reach of my prayer.

tell me again the unbroken name
the hulled sap of the name you
want me to forget that it may
burn to air on my charred wick
and pass with the multitudes through me
like semen scorched in the galvanized womb.

poverty hardens these muscled gestures
dancing in quilted skins between us
to mock our hunger that cracks ribs
cold-forged with ringing hammers
echoed in the heartbeat
that pulverizes into starlight
the blind note I carry
unwritten to the song
of this light-stamped horizon.

George Kalamaras

Revisiting the Gobi of Was

At eight p.m. we were called to tea.

It was the moon entering our throat that let us know. Cricket scratch in the night.

Temple bells beneath it like a song.

Naturally, it began with a period of writing.

I asked every guest to jot down three things their spit resembled.

Someone said, *shirt*. Another, *iron*. A third, their *girlfriend's kimono*.

Oh, how the dogs outside the teahouse whimpered in the dark and whined.

Concerning a journey into the Mandated Territory, papers were required just to leave
Kyoto for the Gobi. Then by pack animal on to Istanbul.

Temple priests became notaries. We wandered from Zen garden to Zen garden
fingering our poems, memorizing a phrase, hoping for the best.

On the third journey, we carried oats, salt, pepper, and strong black tea.

There were fire ants at every step, and I pitied the poor camels and their aching
resolve.

It seems so long ago that I measured my spiritual growth by how far I could travel.

It seems I was dropping parts of myself into the dust animals I thought I had left
behind.

George Kalamaras

Brahms by Firelight

That was when the great jaw of music clamped down around us.
There were dust mites in my beard. Swamp salt. A way of speaking in which words
splayed themselves open to reveal something lonely and long.

Response to a clear night reminded me of weeks in Bangala or Ujiji.
Creeper vines seemed displaced when not in my chest but crawling up Leadwood or a
Marula.

Among the daily periodicals, I favored *The Times of London*, though the idea of
servitude concerned me.
I asked of the wind more than the wind could provide, even as the tiny movements of
its mice enthralled me.

*We all have something from which we're hiding, I thought, some grinding in the gut we set
out to forget.*
When I read books about the Arctic, I chill it to the bone. When I break bread with it, it
aches to invade me.

Nothing seemed to help but Brahms. Especially by firelight.
The third movement of the Third Symphony rises up from the freshly tilled earth into
something whole in my throat.

I could return to Bangala or Ujiji. Even Brazzaville if I held the right song as a feral
displacement of bones.
I could ask of it to heal me in the way only the hurt of living could possibly do.

George Kalamaras

Anywhere We Step

Say the Great Barrier Reef awoke in our bones.
Say the night sky revolved in sockets of sleep.

I was in love with a lamp inside a gorgeous woman's thigh.
Everywhere we touched there was light darkening light. Starlight in the rain-soaked
leaves.

You think me obsessed with the Macedonian dead?
You cry out that my sword and shield are remnants of sickly speak?

There is a marvelous hallucination in the kerosene rag, fragile as a universe.
There are blossoms of noise chasing the echo beyond the wall.

Anywhere we step could be an argumentative storm.
I ate sycamore leaves and the bones of crows as one way to save the grace of my
name.

George Kalamaras

There Seemed Nowhere Else to Go

Comforted by the efficacy of human kindness, we revealed all our tenterhooks.
There was only a solitary bee housed in the mouth.

There seemed nowhere else to go except deeper into our own blood.
Yes, I had read a book on indigenous sign language, but I could not find a sign for,
Please forgive me my mouth.

Or had I meant, *Please forgive me, my mouth?*
The world can appear and disappear inside even the softest curling pearl of a comma.

What might it mean to survive a hospitable frontier?
How might we conjure and Conestoga and confidential our words?

Every afternoon I drove by the Primitive Baptist Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana.
And every day, I imagined a primordial Christianity somehow practiced centuries
before the birth of Christ in the rainforests of the Congo. On the banks of the
Euphrates. In a thatched hut in Borneo.

It seems unlikely that Alvaro and Gene are still alive.
I came away from both of their memorials knowing they would remain with me.

Some things are true and not true at the same time.
Everything I have said here is a lie.

Heller Levinson

OFFAL LOAD GROTESQUE

heinous spike peduncle fracture ordure ramp com-
pounding decimates rattle erupt
foulspittlerancidrouse
 contaminate
 cantankerous corrupt
spooled through the drool of bilious →
 an abscess nation rolled putrescent, skank
 routed,
 depletive,
 sphacelating

Heller Levinson

ATOMIC NUPTIAL

blear batter rag tatter folly
 upwell fetter fling
on all fours the principle is peace
 (warring is for the dogs
ceremoniously dress your heart appropriately
the seven headed trance certifies
 union is precarious
 isolation is unreliable
we're all fucked

Heller Levinson

By Amber Light

guileless the plot endures plucked of discomfort steeled zealous revels gambol
ubiquitous undergird blade strop fanfare strip down thunder lips cumulous slalom
curve applause read rapture bop Rhythm-a-Ning ling ding dong-a-ling
ding do the dog the monkey the sassafras too furry curry flavor nutmeg *nec-*
tarine

Heller Levinson

slipstream confetti flier extrap-

olate gorge extremity knot amplifiers early dispatch redundancy pile-up vortex pluck
caesura float faraway *therefore* as pronoun role adjust wide lapels eel pastiche the
trouble with averages is averages the trouble with percentage is bring me little
bourbon Sylvie suitable floral arrangements quiet the tantrums overuse atrophies the
lost art of repair how much of the new is worn down with nothing new from sea to
shining aloha abut abridge abort pernicious has no place in this sandwich yellow
submarine

lament

1

nothing

said

nothing

again

2

I opted out

of the shot

tried putting a stop

to those start ups

3

facing off

only chafed

getting involved

solved nothing

4

so I performed

a sort of

spiritual

fact-checking

5

on all manner

of nothing

unnamed

& named

6

as if that was it for
this list of demands

crafting words
afterwards

Mark DeCarteret

lent

our bodies for
forty days

we'd surrender
them at night

not giving them
any more mind

instead doubling down
on all we believed

to be our souls
half-roused

from that good
neighbor's lawn

what must have looked
like the end of the world

but in a word
not

segueing

this tic is not like us
or this cooling of skin
the tongue glued to the thickest of lies
un-inclined to sic endings, incite

still, we are not into being
returned to the dustbin, undeterred
or sifted in w/the rest of the content-less
idealized by some urn, heroically fit

so cured of our deathliest leanings
the tang of rot no matter how stored
we are fingered out from the grace-laden
then resurrected, entrusted to the ether

rather, we'll near those trees
we'd first learned to drift & sing
notes led out the oft-lingering
their destination ever-guessed (at)

wanting

I answer
an ad

for an-
other

word for
desire

but end up
more in awe

of what's
drawn me

in now &
how when

I'll see some
thing new

in myself
I am still

left

Michael Broder

Child's Play

How easily then I counterfeited,
traced convincing paths
back to imaginary treasure,

when as a child,
on blank and yellowed pages
torn from the fronts of musty books—

toasted brown in spots over a candle,
burned around the edges,
all to feign age and neglect—

I inked imaginary land masses,
rimmed with jagged shores
and headlong harbors,

charted the surest routes
of navigation and overland passage
with a wending line of dashes

leading to the spot marked X.

How stubbornly now the page remains blank,
the treasure lost.

Michael Broder

Conquistador

You surrender; we make military love.
To win this privilege, I put myself in your thrall.

Walk me up and down the beach,
praise me when I fetch—

Shells, pretty stones, beached glass, driftwood.
You lap my shores and smooth the rough edges.

I hold you down, come at you from above—
You are the coral reef, fragile and defenseless below.

But you win, you win, you win—
In the end, I take only as much as you give.

Michael Broder

Dear Billy

I followed your instructions,
made new beginnings,
typed the words out on strips of paper,
cut them into little pieces
so as to rearrange them like a puzzle
or furniture in a room that does not exist.
And all the time you knew—
there was no paradelle.

Preening

I press this daffodilic language into the pages of a book
impress the ludic stamp like a birthmark on my navel
depress the likes of any heartsick stray
oppress the sovereign give-and-take of common decency

Empress of joy unbounded on this veritable nursery of ours
suppress the inclination toward fencing in borders
repress the banshee calls and dog whistles and bomb sirens
compress this sob I clutch in my throat to turn it into song

Decompress this distended belly from the inside out
express the ineffable swelling of the swoonworthy
winepress the portentous juices out of this prayer

Handpress this unadorned visage with mutual pockmarks
letterpress the unordered reliefs into transmutable comforts
flowerpress the bejesus out of me as if an unearthed jewel

J. D. Nelson

warmth for trout

the headline

ace

we get that

nose

a wingèd

rabbit

& iron mice

the later

lemon

the ice cream speaks

(of the winter)

J. D. Nelson

a carrot cake of nine knives

a shadow

a salad

squinting

on a bright day

the golden gum

the hiding world

the shard of the peril

no shakes in the morning

the boiling hat

the bright, white wheat

J. D. Nelson

scooped fire

the whiteness of the winter scene
in heaven with michael landon

the same face could be in the mirror
with the trajectory to be the saint of the farm

I am the boiled wool
I remember that clown

I was in the woods when the world was a world



I learned to twist myself to stand on fingers and spin above the world
to stand on fingers and spin above the world I accepted weights' abiding demand
I accepted weights' abiding demand by taking the ground as the sky I could meet
by taking the ground as the sky I could meet I knew the space that cages us
I knew the space that cages us; I learned to twist myself.



we forget our light to rue the fat we burn
to rue the fat we burn we make it wax and call it life
we make it wax and call it life to name ourselves mere effigy
to name ourselves mere effigy we forget our light.



in a curve I augur unaccounted origin and end
augur unaccounted origin and end and account the line a life
and account the line a life and close a curve from end to end
and close a curve from end to end and call a boundary a thing it holds
and call a boundary a thing it holds and a thing a boundary expanding
and a thing a boundary expanding in a curve I augur
and beyond the line and curve we know unaccounted origin and end.

Brandi Katherine Herrera

from *Some Life*



not being sure
not being able

Speaking of Children

Brandi Katherine Herrera

from *Some Life*



We drank
old fashioned
that night the sun
was inside
of us

We Decided to Get Pregnant

Brandi Katherine Herrera

from *Some Life*



You
and me
on the phone
and no baby

Unexplained Infertility

Brandi Katherine Herrera

from *Some Life*

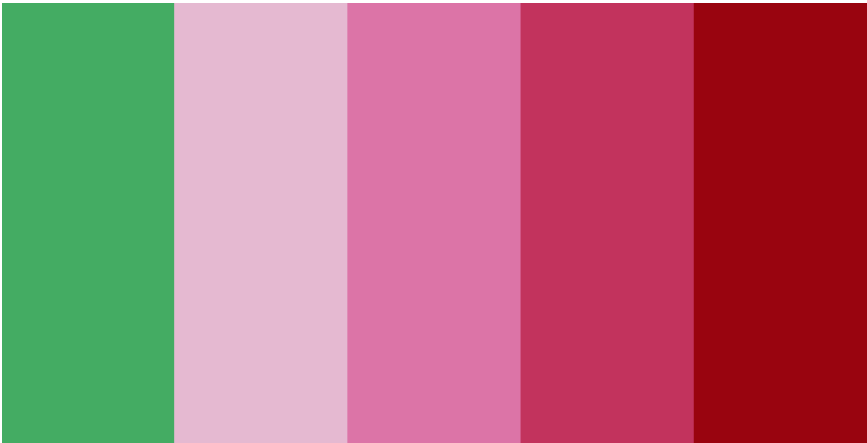


What you can't
feel when I feel
hurt

Fight in the Bedroom

Brandi Katherine Herrera

from *Some Life*

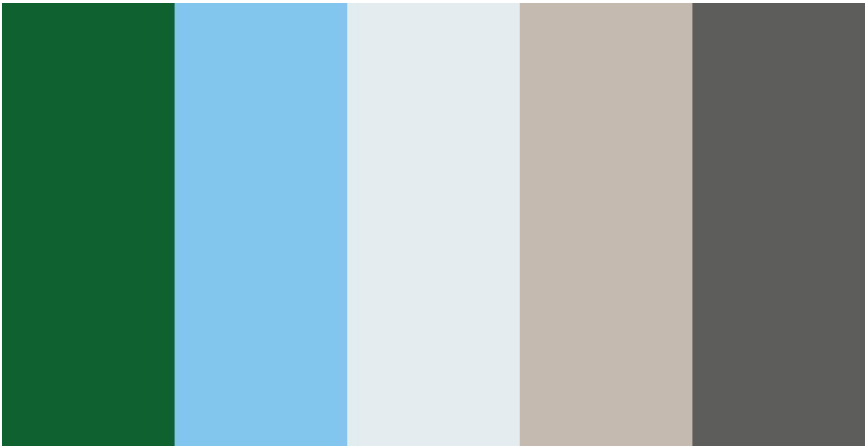


I drank
hot holy basil
and waited
for results

Tea at the Fertility Clinic

Brandi Katherine Herrera

from *Some Life—A Memoir in Palettes*

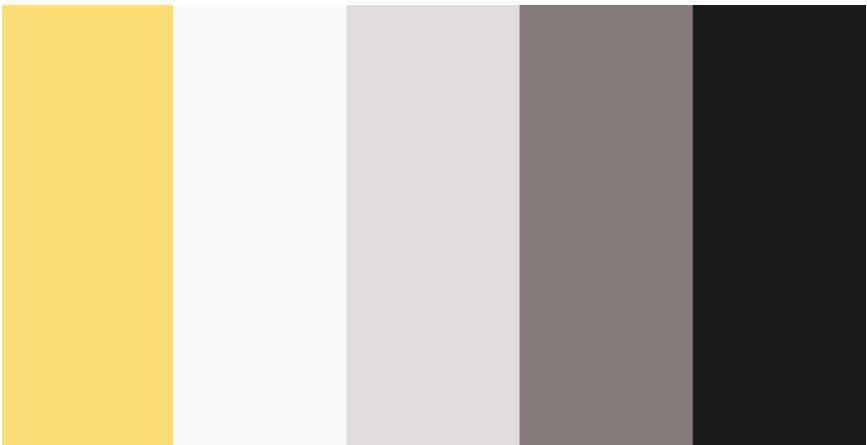


Named him
after that blue
we love

We Adopted a Cat

Brandi Katherine Herrera

from *Some Life—A Memoir in Palettes*



A list in Notes
with names
for boys
girls we liked
most

We Stopped Trying to Get Pregnant





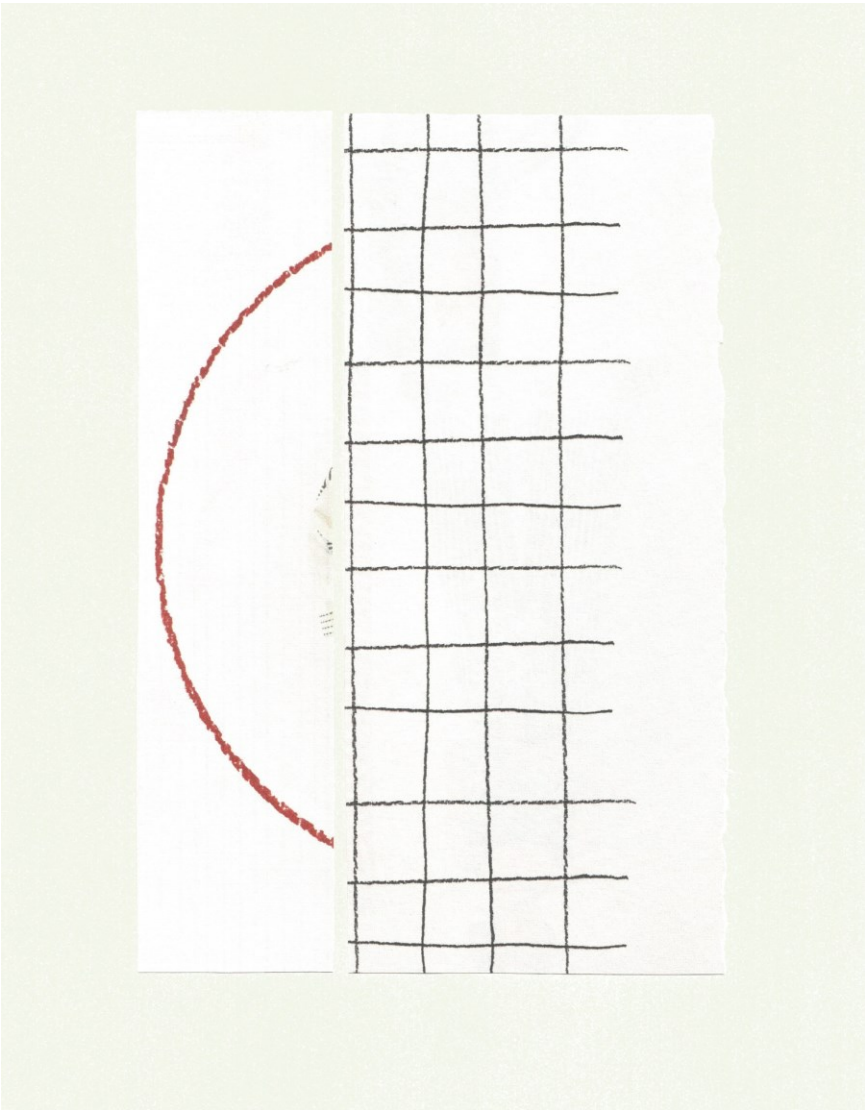
Matthew Klane

Encaustic Cement Tiles









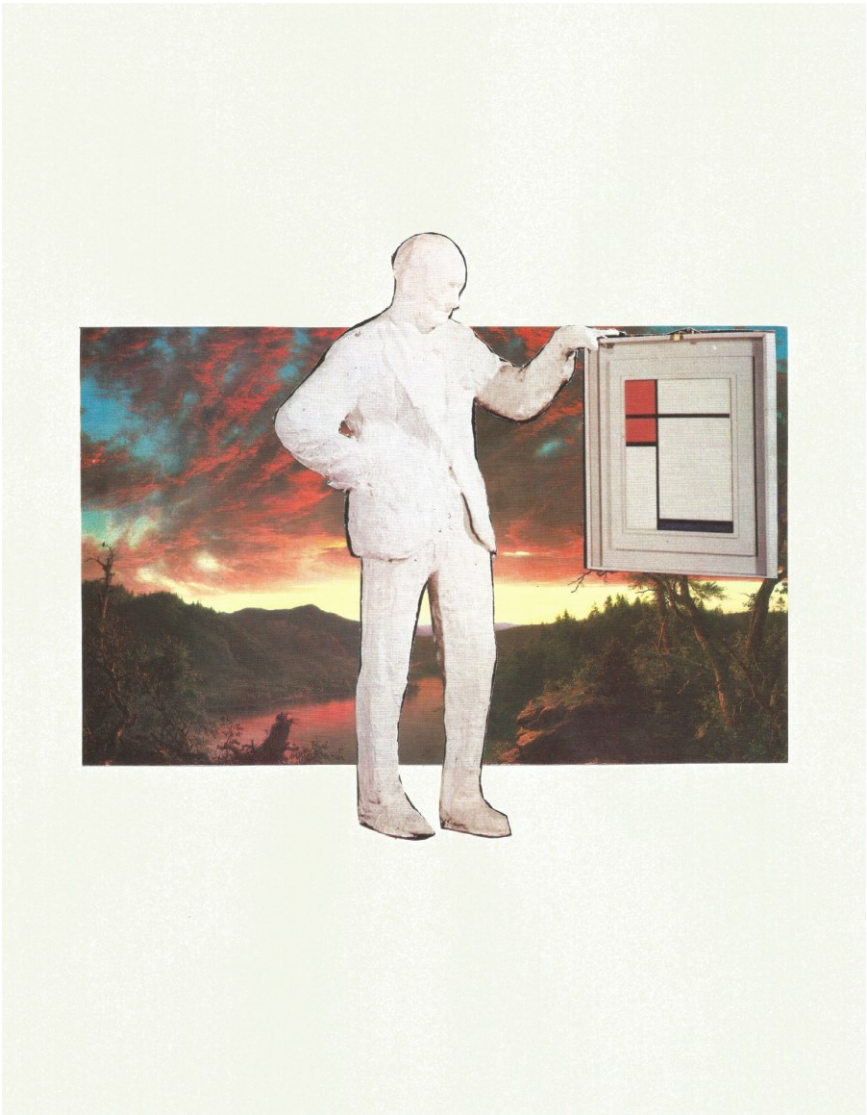
Matthew Klane

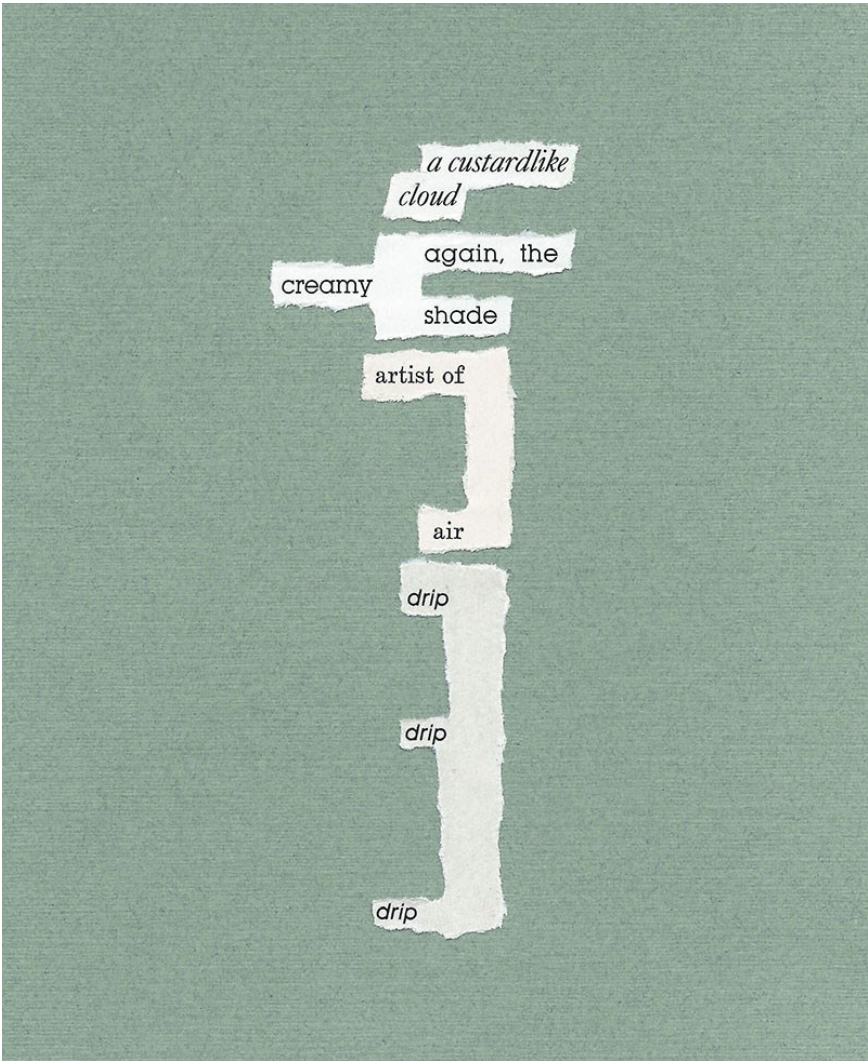
Eggs

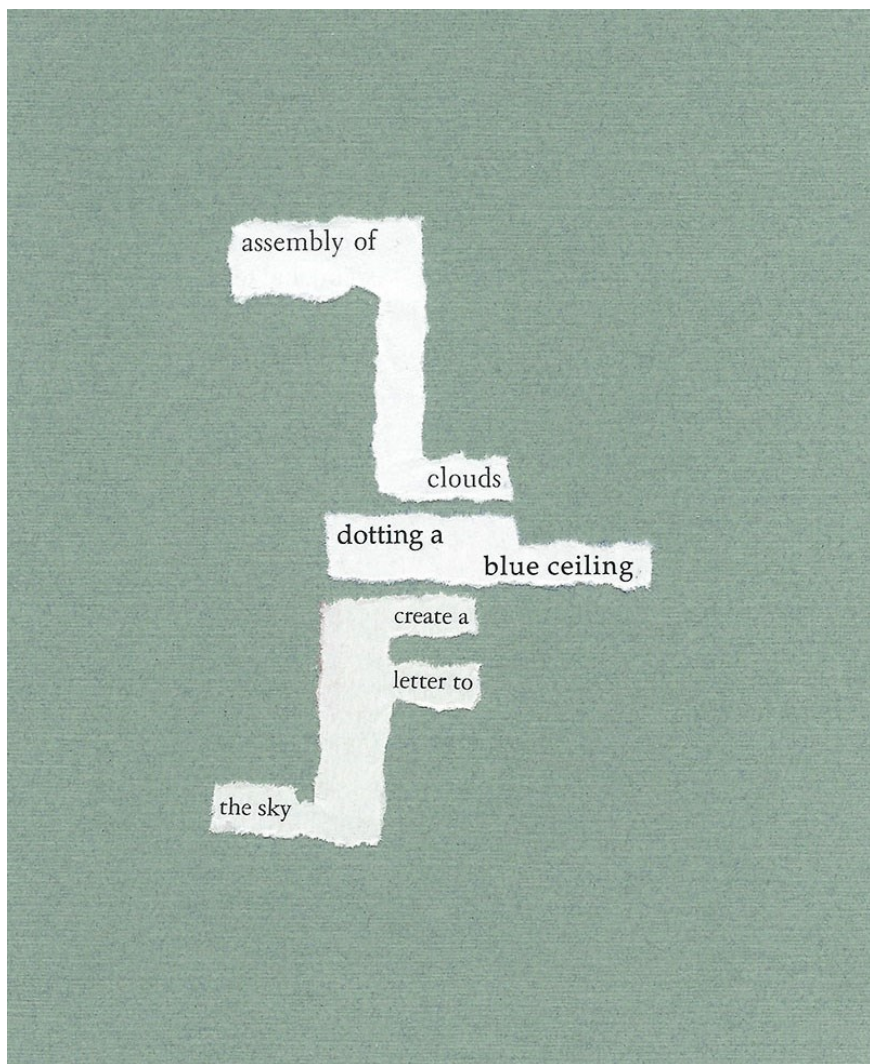


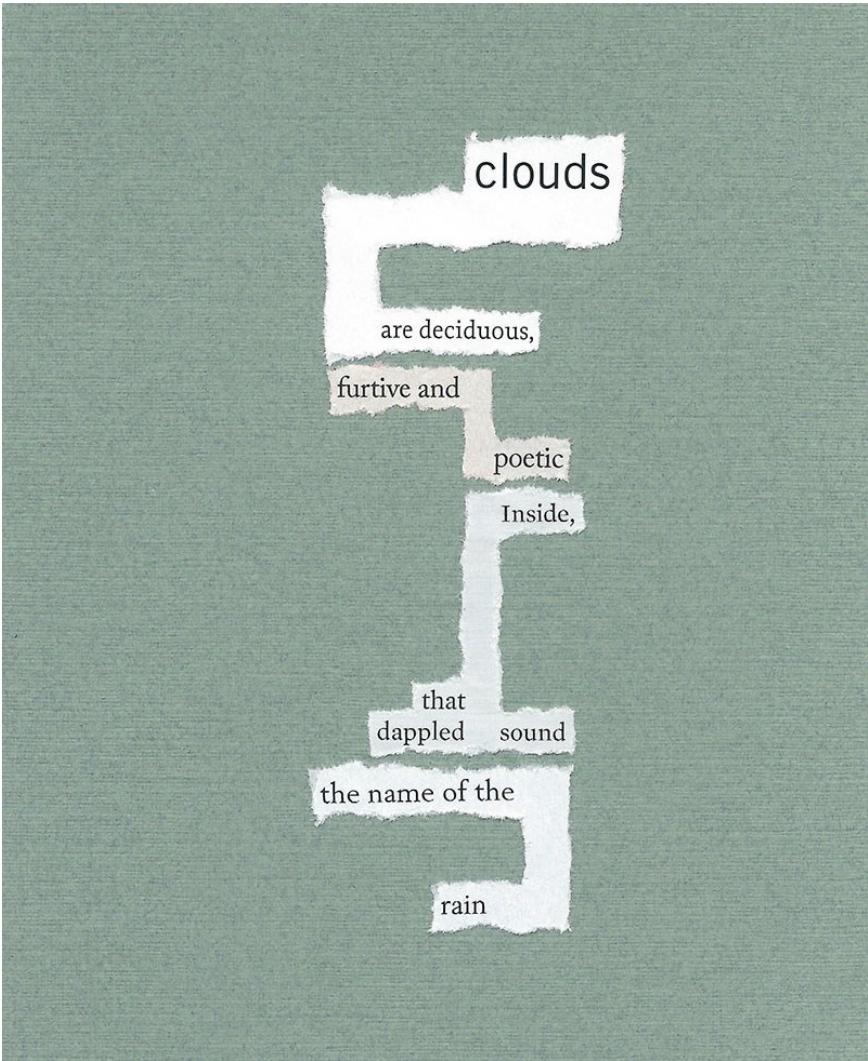
Matthew Klane

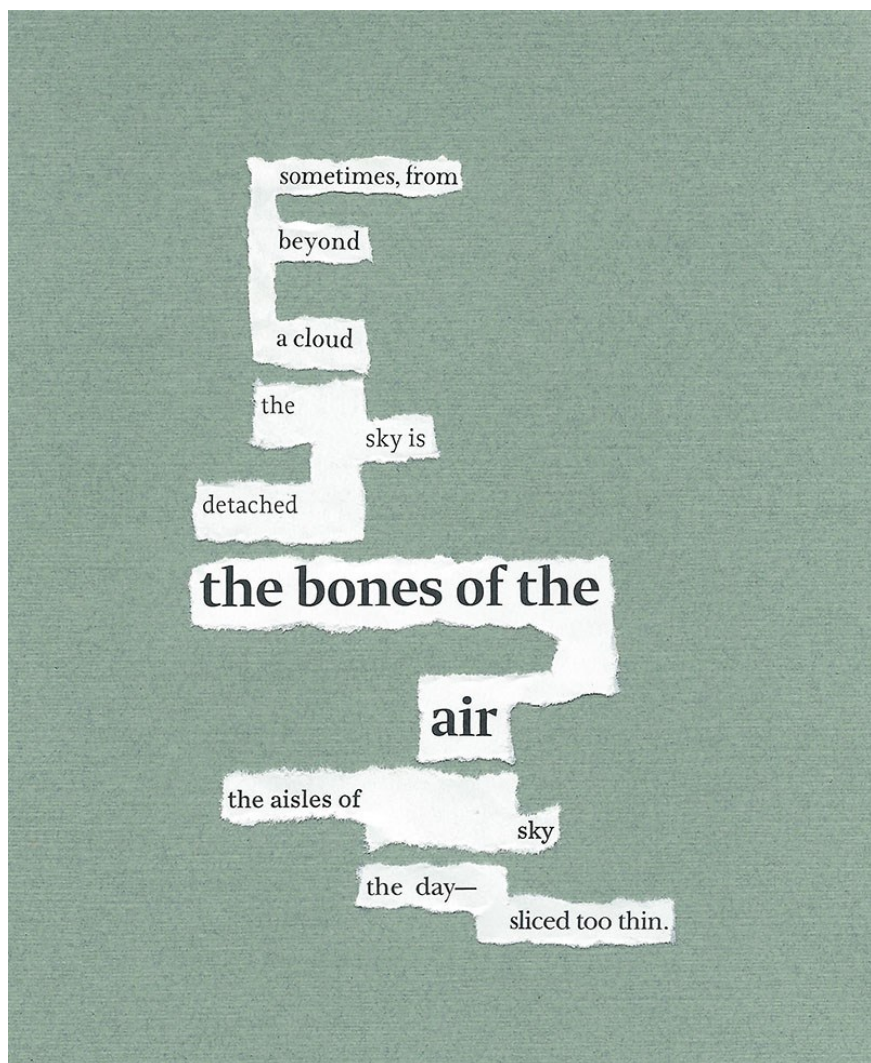
Thinking Like an Artist

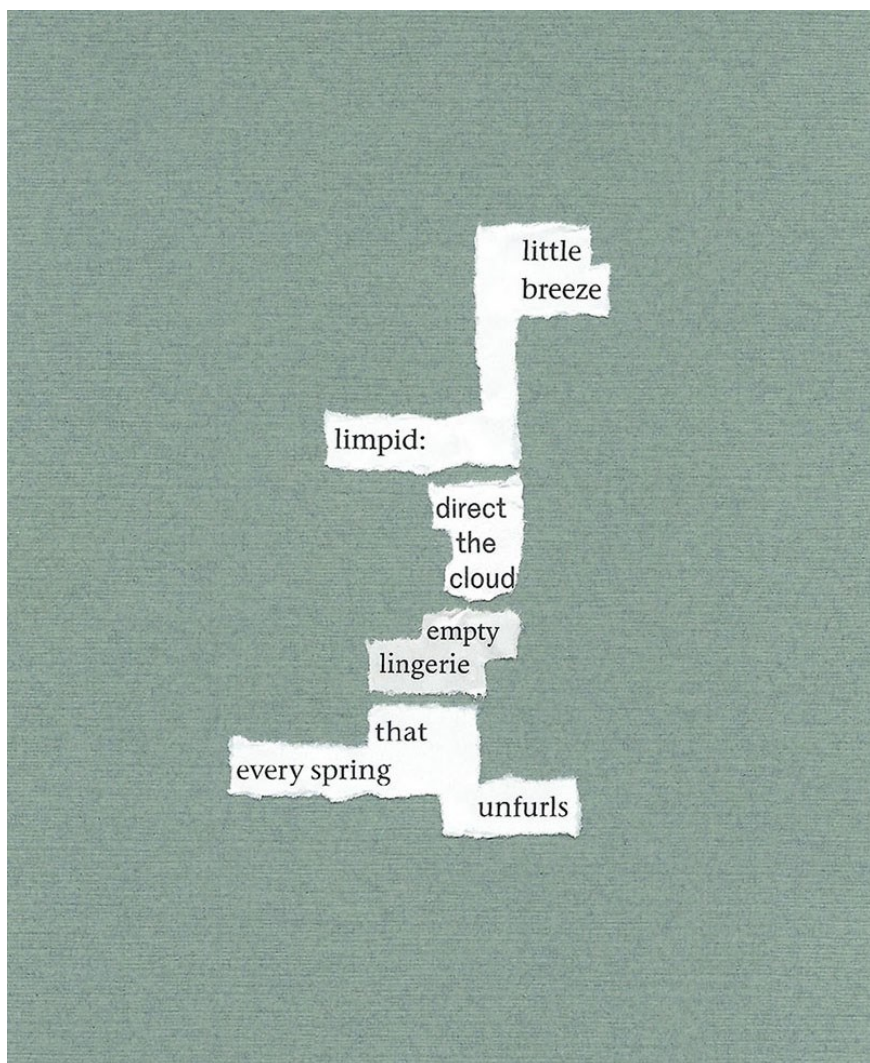






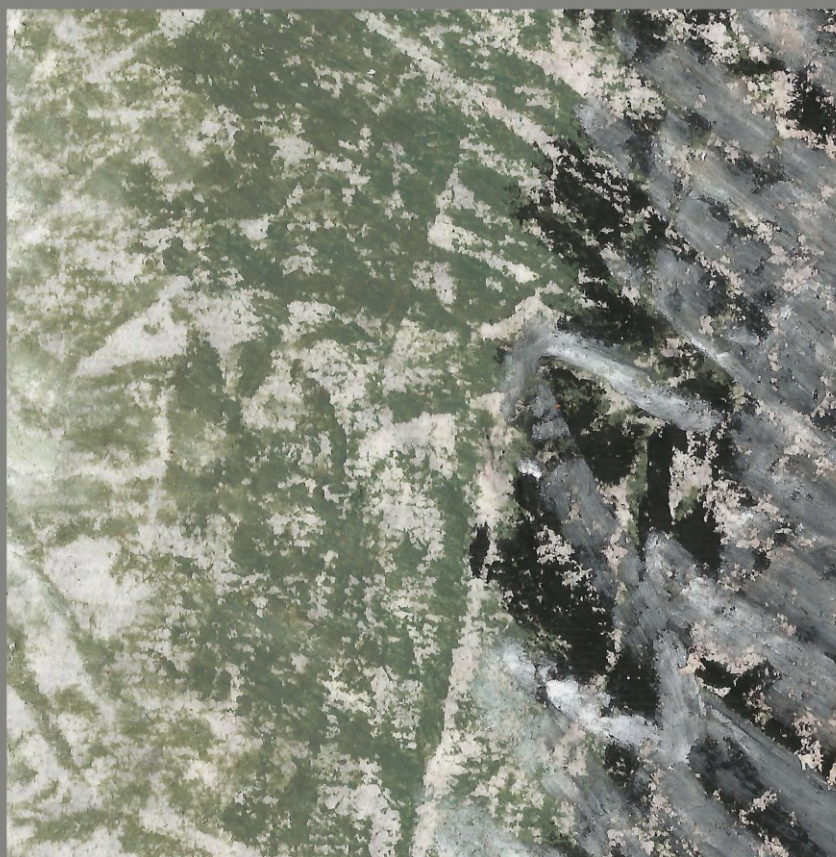






Christian ALLE

Ombre mystérieuse et chancelante



Ombre mystérieuse et chancelante.

Christian ALLE

Rumeur de forêt chimérique



Rumeur de forêt chimérique.

Christian ALLE

Souvenirs d'une senteur de glycine



Souvenirs d'une senteur de glycine.

Christian ALLE

Un après-midi de printemps



Un après-midi de printemps.

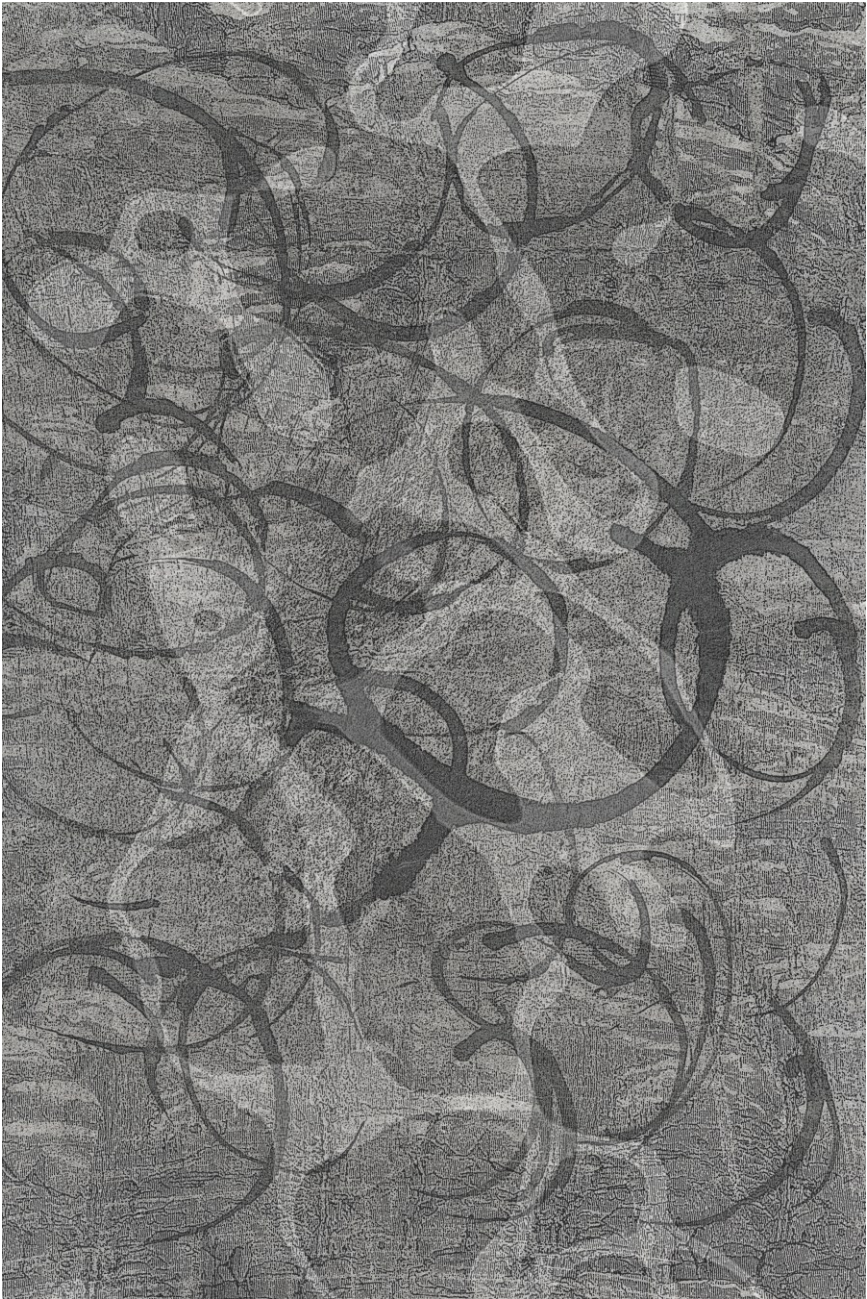
Bill Wolak and John Digby

Deeper Than the Mirror's Untouchable Passageways



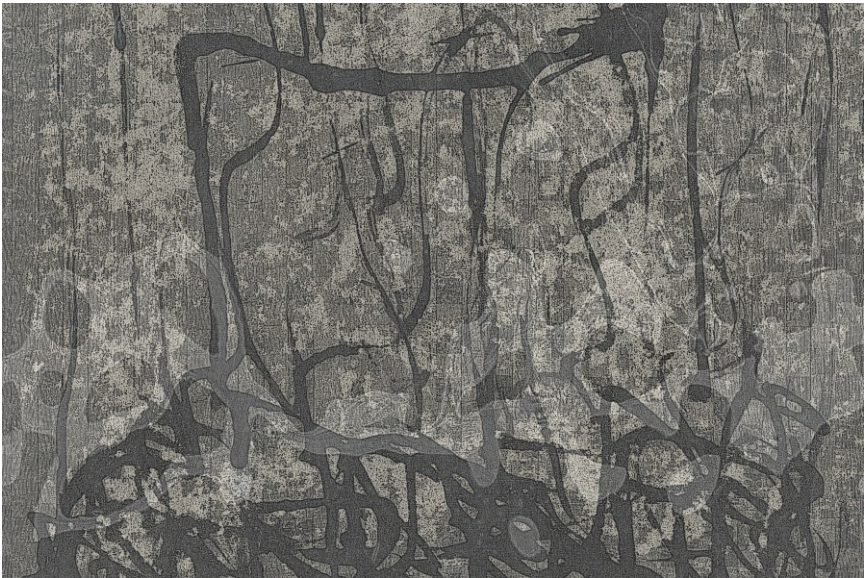
Bill Wolak and John Digby

With a Ghost Dance Fleeting As Ecstasy



Bill Wolak and John Digby

The Stowaway"s Darkness



Bill Wolak and John Digby

Slipping Back Slowly into the Well

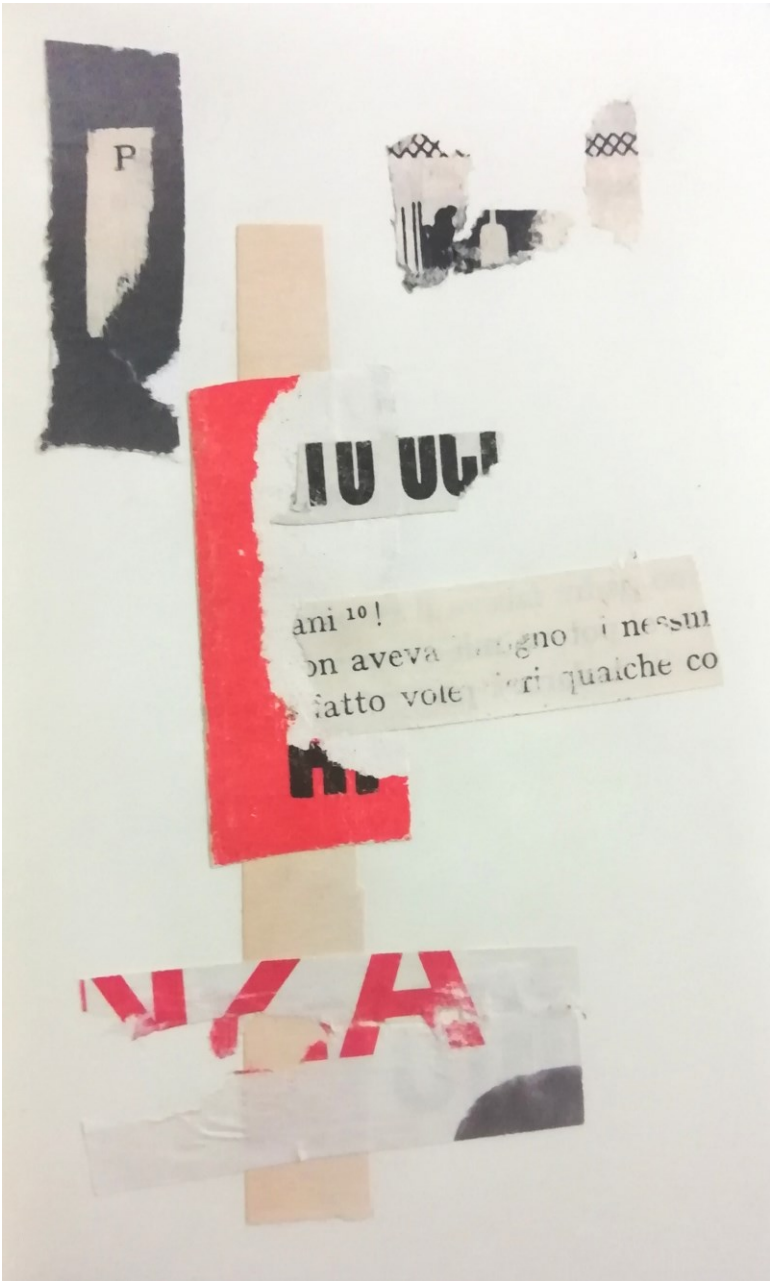


Bill Wolak and John Digby

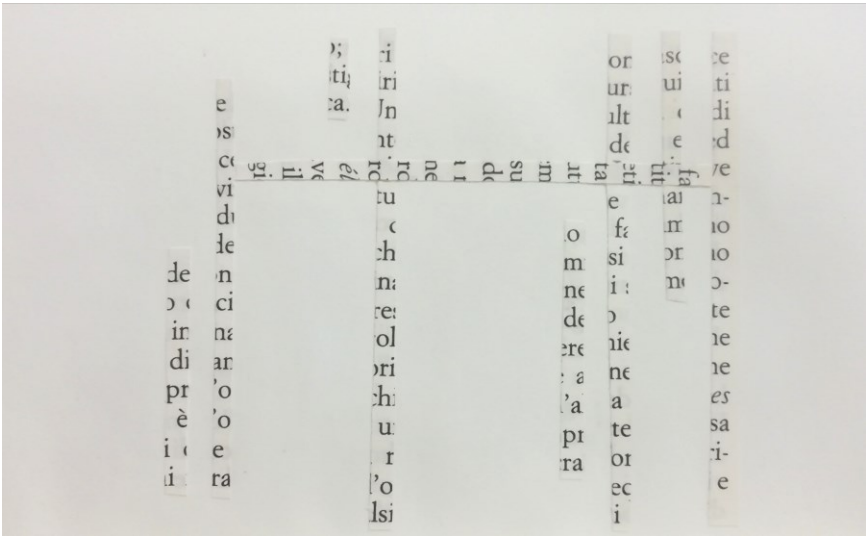
Wherever Uncertainty Thrives







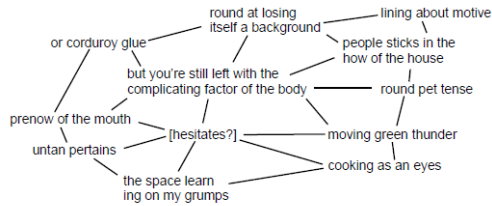
Untitled



James Sanders

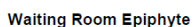
ruts state of clowns in body
he's not quite sure how to lol his body
tomorrow the green cream Halloween
the implication thunder party with nerdy baked potato
real talk: we fold ourselves into people
they're getting all this play right now
with free curbside pickup
laced length with translating pertains
sane untanny house on lifting grays
cold maturation lights in lifting loud
or sitting (flakes)
cooking in an eyes

the weekend off another synth



Call of Duty Mountain Dew
with a line from Bernadette Mayer

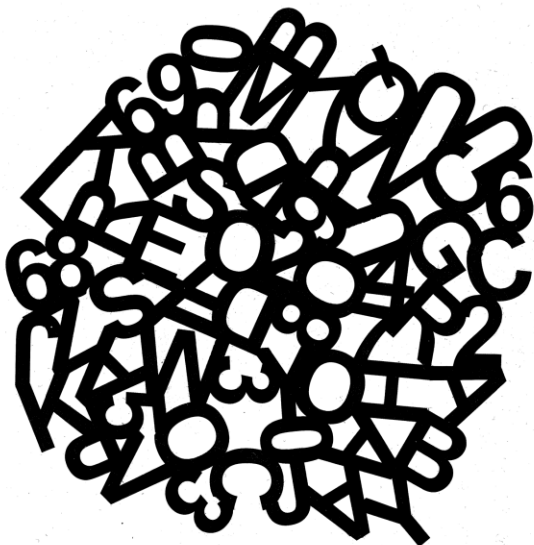




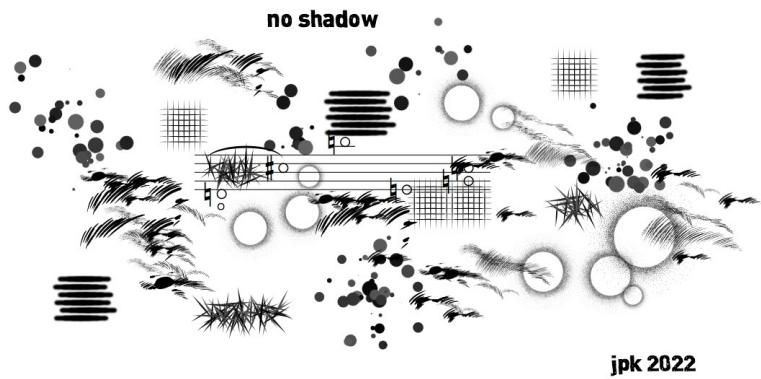
Modern Prometheus



Note: "Modern Prometheus" is a video available at www.wordforword.info/vol40.

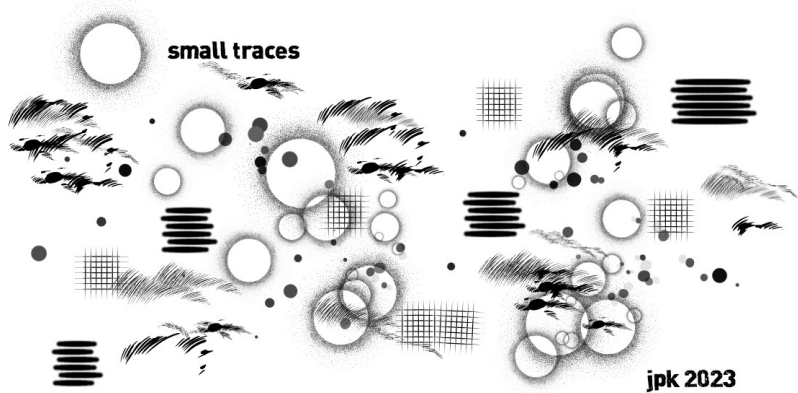


No Shadow



Note: The audio for "No Shadow" is available at www.wordforword.info/vol40.

Small Traces



Note: The audio for “Small Traces” is available at www.wordforword.info/vol40.

Special Feature: Tom Hibbard (1947-2022)

New Translations of Surrealist Poems

Preface: The Continuing Relevance of Surrealism and Dadaism, by Tom Hibbard

Though Dadaism and Surrealism—focusing on Surrealism in particular—no longer are viewed as emergent art movements, they both remain lively and forward-looking in the midst of contemporary writing and art discussions of the times. Andre Breton published the first Surrealist Manifesto in 1924, two years shy of one-hundred years ago. None-the-less, the idea that “dream and reality” combine into an artistic, poetic and philosophical milieu that brings together contemporary interests remains relevant in many ways and emphatically in present day worlds brimming with unreality, falsification and base commercialism. Especially commercialism’s effect on both everyday and specialized perspectives and perceptions causes significant difficulties that complicate and disrupt any type of social interaction and productive interconnection of people, entities and infrastructure.

The poems translated here are mostly from the era of the beginning of Dada and Surrealism all the way to the end of the Twentieth Century and the passing of the founding members of the Surrealist movement. None of the original Dadaists or Surrealists lived into the Twenty-first Century. Yet writers and artists of today continue mining symbolism, ideas and thoughts from the disjunctive art style and the haunting portrayal of social and individual life that emanates from these early art movements. Seances, automatic writing and psychological suggestion using sleeping or hypnotized individuals are no longer as popular as in the 1930s in experimenting with aesthetics, perception and the subconscious. A shadowy nighttime portrait of empty Greek buildings in the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico or a picture of a woman embracing a Gila Monster or a businessman with an umbrella strolling the powdery blue skies above might be characterized as *early* Surrealist images.

More recent Surrealist images would perhaps be, in a sense, a reversal of these previous works, not with emphasis on straightforward attributes but, rather, on representing a sense of pervasive spontaneity and mystery. Today’s Surreal landscape is unusually and unexpectedly, though naturally, beautiful rather than distorted or disrupted. It is less specific and more, in a sense, connected with a wider context. The aim has changed from portraying, in word or in art, not a “real,” that is, “shocking” encounter in symbolic images—a select group of vultures or of sheep for instance. The aim today is rather the portrayal of a reality or of reality in-itself as consistently and

primordially enigmatic and surreal, along with miraculous and wondrous—surrealism as a constant or “basic” attribute—a given imaginative and paradoxical circumstance. Often a “normal” human being is faced with the puzzle of an illogical or nonsensical adventure. The true reality, including everyday reality, such as looking at oneself in a mirror or walking in one’s neighborhood or on a nature trail, is in fact straightforwardly portrayed as being, among many other things, surreal—the terrain as it retains its disorienting unfamiliarity—perhaps in association with eternity. Other categories are Modernist, Structuralist, Globalist, Depression Era, Impressionist, Expressionist. There are also electronic versions of reality—television, radio, filmic—whose authoritative “actual” visibilities contain some of the most misleading distortions and misrepresentations of all. This is no criticism of the original Surrealists nor of the virtues of early Surrealist artworks—the styles of Salvador Dali, Man Ray, Alfred Hitchcock, Pablo Picasso, Rene Magritte, Rene Char, Luis Bunuel. Instead, it’s a criticism of the intolerant literalism and stubbornly insensitive materialism in the ways in which many societies at this time are generally viewed—without imagination, without mystery, without possibility, without diversity, without any unknown, without mercy or hope—uniform, absolute.

In a brief memoir of the nineteen-twenties, thirties and forties in Paris, *Lost Profiles*, republished in 2016 from City Lights Books in San Francisco, Philippe Soupault looks back at the activities and ideas of the writers and artists, most of whom he encountered personally during those extremely tumultuous and creative times. Soupault, leader and participant in both the original Dadaist and the original Surrealist movements, kept up his dissident activities until his death in 1990. During World War II, Soupault was arrested and imprisoned by Nazis in North Africa, as a consequence of his radio broadcasts. Later he travelled with his wife to the U.S., where he became a professor at Swarthmore College. After the war, he returned to France. Soupault wrote many collections of poetry during his lifetime, among them *Rose des vents*, *Message de l’île déserte*, *Odes à Londres bombardée*, and *Poèmes retrouvés*. He also wrote, in 1928, *Les Dernières Nuits de Paris* (The Last Nights of Paris), a brilliant novella describing troubled, deteriorating Paris. And several other novels, including *Les Moribonds* (The Moribund) 1934 and *Les Temps des assassins* (The Time of the Assassins) 1945. Also a 1981 autobiography, *Mémoires de l’oubli* (Memoirs of the Forgotten).

Probably Soupault’s most famous piece of writing, authored with Andre Breton, is *Les Champs Magnétiques* (Magnetic Fields), published in 1919—the first piece of writing officially embodying Surrealist tenets and the Surrealist movement. In *Lost Profiles*, Soupault praises Dadaism as being “much more than a schoolboy prank” and, in fact, in

some ways superior to the Surrealist movement. Dadaism preceded Surrealism, but in Soupault's opinion Dadaism's rough escapades brought the movement down, eventually giving way to Surrealism. Whereas Dadaism is destructive and deconstructive, Surrealism uncovers axiomatic structures already present and associated with the idea of permanence. Romanian Tristan Tzara led the Dada movement, first in Zurich, Switzerland, and then in Paris. And Tzara's *The Approximate Man*, from 1929, quoted in David Gascoyne's *Short Survey of Surrealism* verifies Tzara's advanced substantive writing style.

"Language is given to man that he may make Surreal use of it." (Gascoyne) What is a Surreal use? Here is an excerpt from Breton and Soupault's first Surrealist writing, *Magnetic Fields*.

At midnight, you will again see the open windows and closed doors. Music emerges from all the holes where you can see microbes and capitalized lines of poetry dying like worms. But further on, still further on, there are more cries so blue you die of excitement.

These lines—these sorts of lines—make Surreal use of language because the words are recognizable but the writing is incomprehensible and unpredictable. The incongruous motion of the unclear word-assemblages points toward a "transcendent inquiry," one that redefines all discourse and discourses, including silence, and begins the establishment of a conceptual outline of a linguistic community, one that precedes exteriority and objectivity, history and science. Surrealism makes "reality" and unreality into a profound, new reality, bordering on incomprehensibility. It scorns practicality and puts in its place a *logos* of contradiction, an imaginative existential "Word," a knowledge invisible, a fragmented literacy that reaches beyond linearity, adamance, finality, brutality and so on, toward a universal structure of understanding. Surrealism transforms deceptive literal fascism into an intuitive common expression.

Soupault describes Surrealism as "a generation in revolt," but he also considered that revolt a "poetic revolt." He names Arthur Rimbaud as the "prophet" of the Surrealist movement and says of that time, "I felt that I was witnessing the end of the world, the decline of civilization." Shortly later, World War II broke out, thereby worsening—or clarifying—the entire situation. During the war, writes Soupault, "We had the feeling that we were being thwarted, that a new gap had been opened between our generation and the one that had survived." Soupault cites fellow Surrealist poet Pierre Reverdy, among many others, and writes, "The end of the war did not, indeed, represent victory

to us but rather a sudden awakening." During the 1930s, the Surrealist movement flourished and blossomed internationally. Many non-Surrealist artists and writers were also active in France and Europe at that time, including Marcel Proust (died 1922). But Soupault could not feel comfortable. More than an artistic movement, Soupault viewed the times as a "moral revolution" and poetry as "liberation." Despite his continuing admiration for some of its members, such as Antonin Artaud and Paul Eluard, Soupault "defected" from the Surrealist movement, on the grounds that it was becoming merely "a school," no longer a world-wide movement. "I realized that Surrealism, such as I had dreamed it, was losing all its purity for me." At the same time, Soupault states, "I have never ceased to be Surrealist."

Surrealism is not a literary school or a religion. It is the expression of an attitude and a state of mind and especially the expression of freedom. All the rules all the definitions, all the masks imposed on it have not diminished its power.

Special Feature: Tom Hibbard (1947-2022)

"The Sound Of The Bell," by Pierre Reverdy, translated by Tom Hibbard

All is quiet

The wind passes singing about it

And the trees shiver

The animals are dead

There is no longer anyone

Look

The stars have stopped shining

The world no longer turns

A head is bowed

Hair sweeps across the night

The last bell that remains standing

Rings midnight

Special Feature: Tom Hibbard (1947-2022)

"Condolences," by Philippe Soupault, translated by Tom Hibbard

Above all do not return behind
Longings are anemones
Lying in wait only for remorse
I prefer the faithful stars
And quietude and monarch butterflies
Which have the look of the night
And flowers and my better dreams

Softly like the wolves
I explore the domain of each day
And I discover the unknown
Only step by step
And steps in the steps
I am without pity
For he who is identical
But someone sings an old song
Always farther away from myself
Always the same

Special Feature: Tom Hibbard (1947-2022)

"Infinite Solitude." by Louis Aragon, translated by Tom Hibbard

The divine elegy is a seat of weeping
It judges the gravel from the graves
The feathers, the twigs, the fetus
Of straw
These veils are hung on the beautiful bodies of alabaster
Like the lyre of gold in front of a theater
It murmurs a word that echoes
It is the hour where everyone sleeps
It is the moment supreme
It is now or never
It is the hour of the shepherd
Full of stars in the firmament
Full of everything that is great
To the green and of the unripe
Cassiopeia is also a pretty girl
She counts the fetuses, the feathers and the twigs
She is seated and crying
Along the current
Of a little stream
I see there a boat
Of candy, of flowers
In all the colors

Special Feature: Tom Hibbard (1947-2022)

"Servitudes," by Philippe Soupault, translated by Tom Hibbard

It was night yesterday
But the billboards sing
The trees stretch themselves
The statue at the hairdresser's smiles
No spitting
No smoking
The rays of the sun in the hands are exactly right
There are fourteen

I invent unknown streets
From new continents bloom
Newspapers that will come out tomorrow
Watch out for wet paint
I will go walking naked with a cane in my hand

Special Feature: Tom Hibbard (1947-2022)

"The Floor Of Night," by Rene Char (From *First Alluvium*), translated by Tom Hibbard

So that the same love comes back
To this smoking chimney
To this house that bleeds
And the emptiness would be strengthened
They will make happy the protectors
With the serpent in the attic

Special Feature: Tom Hibbard (1947-2022)

"As Well As," by Philippe Soupault, translated by Tom Hibbard

Alone along the road
That has neither beginning nor end
It no longer is anything to smile
And especially the guffaws
Like the tiger that ventures neither bite nor caress

Alone all alone
Like a big like a little
In pursuit of the clouds
And of the night that has neither beginning nor end

All alone for the daily surrender
And the flight against dreams
And the nightmares of the day and the night
That one invents to suffer better
Then one must have the power to forget
Everyone forgets everything except joy

Alone against injustice
Boredom and everything else
The truth the hour of awakening
Then it is finally time
To know and to no
The day that stands up

W. Scott Howard

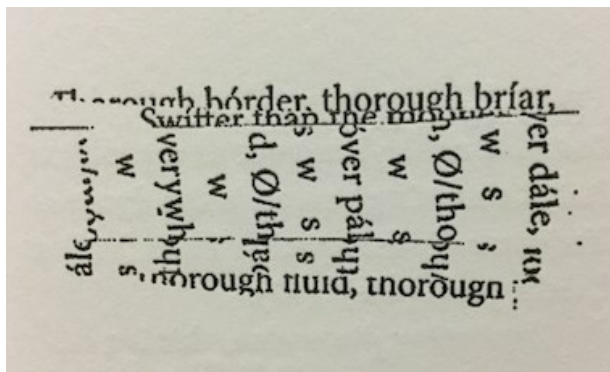
“windblown leaves”: acousmatic architectures & synesthetic soundscapes in Susan Howe’s *Concordance*”



Leslie Miller’s Grenfell Press edition of Susan Howe’s *Concordance* and the companion chapbook, “Envoi” (2019). Photo credit: Nina Subin, courtesy Grenfell Press.

“O Some birds are more silvery-”
Susan Howe, *Concordance*

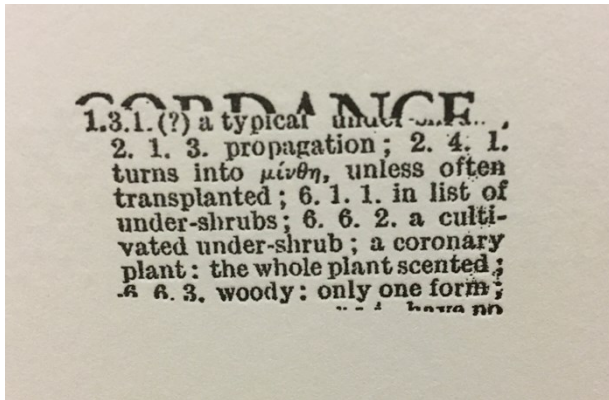
When I first visited with the Grenfell Press artist book edition of Susan Howe’s *Concordance*, it was a few days prior to the World Health Organization’s 11 March 2020 declaration of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our library at the University of Denver was a refuge during that time *before*. On the day of my visit, two of my library faculty colleagues were there, working in our Archives & Special Collections, and I was the only person in the reading room. The deep quiet on campus and in the building was eerie. We were all anticipating imminent restrictions against in-person activities, so my limited time with this exquisite letterpress collection of Howe’s collage poems became an enchantment. As I slowly opened the book’s facing pages, the toothy Somerset and handmade Whatman papers amplified the work’s proprioceptive haptics, soundscapes, and abstract minimalist limnings of “leaf-masks / scattered over / into their own / windblown leaves” (47). Acousmatic sounds unseen dwell among these multisensory glyphs.



Haptic, sonic, and visual inter-/intra-textual echoes across, within, and through Howe's palimpsestic stichomancy compose baroque choral arrangements of intermittent motifs that "wander everywhere" rabbit-like, "going on with little and great hops" (16) "Over mountain, over dale, / s w s w s w s / Thorough border, thorough briar, / s w s w s w sw / Over parking, over pale, / s w s w s w s / Thorough fluid, thorough fire, / s w s w s w s w / Swifter than the moone's sphere [...] / s w s w s w s" (45, 46, 47, 49, 52). In this instance, my transcription underscores synergies among sequential wordwhorls in *Concordance* (including the selected cover image from NDP p. 47 that accompanies Howe's and Grubbs's studio release), following just one of the innumerable collaged motifs at play in the work's multisensory multimedia transfigurations of source materials. (I'll return to this discussion later in this essay.)

Immersed in these synesthetic soundscapes embodied in the Grenfell Press edition, I sensed something distinctive about these new collage poems compared with Howe's "Hannah doves" in *Frolic Architecture*, for example, and more kindred with her acousmatic architectures in *TOM TIT TOT*, which first appeared in Howe's [2013 gallery installation](#) at Yale Union in Portland, Oregon (for which selected pages from *Frolic* were arranged on one of the gallery's walls adjacent to the tabletop open sequence of facing pages from *TTT*). In her remarks accompanying a 2015 exhibit of her artist books at the University of Denver, Howe reflected: "*TOM TIT TOT* broke my poetry, opened a new path to follow that began with the poems in *Frolic Architecture* and has been encouraged in acoustic directions while working on collaborations with the musician and composer, David Grubbs. I still felt somehow that *Frolic* was anchored-down to some material, a document or fact—to Hannah Edwards's original text—whereas *TOM TIT TOT* tosses chance and discipline together in a more kaleidoscopic way." During her lecture at Harvard Divinity School on 24 April 2019, Howe described *Concordance* as a "tent of paper scraps" and "a mass of quotations."

Since the Grenfell Press edition (2019), Howe's *Concordance* has indeed followed a similar journey of literary adaptations and multimedia transformations that includes a New Directions trade edition (2020), a studio recording with David Grubbs released by Blue Chopsticks (2021), and a virtual gallery installation curated by Daniel Muzyczuk and hosted by Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin (2022), which I'll discuss in this essay's concluding passages. Compared with Howe's *Frolic* and *TTT* (both of which were first published in artist book editions from Grenfell, followed by NDP trade editions and Blue Chopsticks studio recordings), *Concordance* has emerged within the precariousness of Covid-19 circumstances, and those existential and technological constraints have energized the integral characteristics of what may be Howe's most dynamic work of abstract minimalism (emerging at the intersections of texts and textiles, sonic & visual art, gallery installations, concrete poetry, typographic design, sculptural contextualisms, and bibliographic factual telepathy) that embodies the methods of her first published critical essay, "The End of Art" (1974): "to search for infinity inside simplicity will be to find simplicity alive with messages" (7). Howe's *Concordance* is such a work of infinite inter-/intra-textual imbrications "transplanted [...] in lists of under-shrubs / a cultivated [...] coronary plant / woody: only one form."



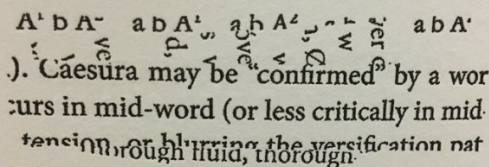
This essay offers reflections on those intersecting journeys with emphasis given to the soundscapes in Howe's and Grubbs's *Concordance* (2021), which is their fifth studio recording issued by Blue Chopsticks: *THIEFTH* (2005), *Souls of the Labadie Tract* (2007), *Frolic Architecture* (2011), and *WOODSLIPPERCOUNTERCLATTER* (2014), all of which are available [via Drag City](#) in a variety of formats, including free streaming audio excerpts. A vinyl reissue of *THIEFTH* (2015) was released by [Issue Project Room](#) that includes a new letterpress print by Howe (from Grenfell Press) accompanied by a hand-stamped letterpress LP sleeve. Howe's and Grubbs's partnership began during 2003 – 2004 at

the University of Chicago, where Grubbs was working toward his PhD, which he completed in 2005. Their early collaborations were supported by an invitation from the Fondation Cartier, and so they embarked on their adaptations of Howe's "Thorow" from *Singularities* (Wesleyan, 1990) and "Melville's Marginalia" from *Nonconformist's Memorial* (NDP, 1993) that culminated in their first studio release from Blue Chopsticks, *THIEFTH* (2005).



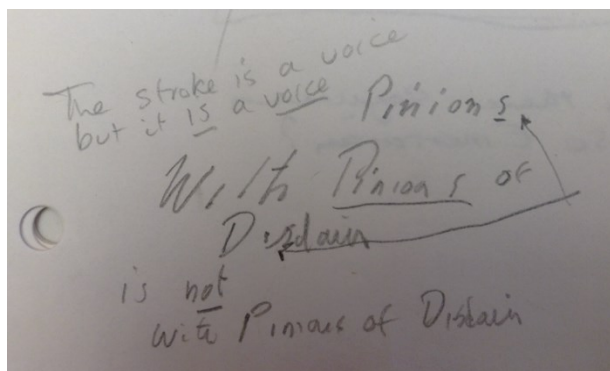
At the time of my visit to our library in March 2020, I did not know that the soundscapes of *Concordance* were already in motion. Howe and Grubbs began their recordings on 8 January 2020 at Firehouse 12 in New Haven, CT. Compared with their previous studio recordings (especially for *THIEFTH* and *Souls of the Labadie Tract*), *Concordance* is the more minimalist (although certainly not the least complex) composition, providing an intimate experience of Howe's reading voice and Grubbs's accompanying melodies on piano with subtle electronic remixing. (Following their January 8 recording, further recordings took place on 4 November 2020 at Oktaven Audio in Mount Vernon, NY. Those tracks were subsequently mixed by David Grubbs and Eli Crews at Spillway Sound, West Hurley, NY, and mastered by Taku Unami.) In a 2021 conversation with David Bernabo and Susan Howe (recorded via Zoom, lightly edited, then [published on Medium](#)), Grubbs reflects on their minimalist approach in *Concordance*, which he likens to their process with *WOODSLIPPERCOUNTERCLATTER*: "my decision to play the piano on this and have my contribution only be the piano really came from wanting to perform alongside in real time. [In many] of the other pieces that we've done, most of my contributions have been, for lack of a better term, electroacoustic sound—acoustic sounds that are processed, that I've gathered and composed to go with Susan's poem [... In *Concordance*,] I enjoyed something other than unmuting a sample or enabling a sequence of prerecorded sounds. Just as Susan performs with her reading, I wanted to perform with an instrument."

Concordance is Howe's fourth artist book published by The Grenfell Press, following [The Nonconformist's Memorial](#) (with six woodcuts by Robert Mangold, 1992); [Frolic Architecture](#) (with ten photographs by James Welling, 2010); and [TOM TIT TOT](#) (which was hand-printed at The Grenfell Press by Brad Ewing and Leslie Miller and published by MoMA in 2014). *TOM TIT TOT* is among Howe's most collaborative letterpress volumes, and features artwork by R. H. Quaytman, the poet's daughter. Each of these Grenfell editions subsequently appeared in a trade edition from New Directions and as a multimedia soundscape of selected and adapted passages via Howe's and Grubbs's studio recordings. In comparison with those previous Grenfell editions that place Howe's poetry in dialogue with visual art, *Concordance* gives us 62+ pages of Howe's linguistic prisms rotating in literal / littoral habitats plus a separate hand-sewn five-page letterpress chapbook of her poetic prose, "Envoi." Forty-six copies of *Concordance* were printed on Whatman, Somerset, and Japanese Tea Chest at The Grenfell Press, and were bound by Claudia Cohen.



Concordance is an open work of phanopoetic polyvocal murmurations collaging “mid-word [...] tension[s] or blurring[s]” of versification “thorough fluid, thorough” fire (52). The Grenfell, NDP, and Blue Chopsticks editions echo, emulate, and escape each other; their relationship is one of radical contingency and contiguity. Howe is a poet of reconfiguration; each of her works incorporates materials from earlier projects adapted anew. Her work is always changing, following converging and diverging lines of flight, asymptotes. The NDP text offers an introductory prose poem, “Since,” which elaborates upon and rearranges the letterpress chapbook, “Envoi,” that accompanies the Grenfell edition. (“Envoi” includes passages that are not to be found in the NDP edition, such as: “Are the planets visible? How blind are we to the solution of dreaming and other psychological phenomena. You are where you are steadfast tin word fortress” (np).) The NDP text then reproduces (with a few deft variations) the sequence of Howe’s “microscopic reduplications of desire [...] pieced together through grid logic” (9) from the Grenfell volume and concludes with a new poem, “Space Permitting,” which collages “drafts and notes Thoreau sent to Emerson and Margaret Fuller’s friends and family in Concord, while on a mission to recover Fuller’s remains from a shipwreck off Fire Island” (NDP, back cover). (Howe and Grubbs did not adapt “Space Permitting” for their studio recordings from *Concordance*.)

Howe composes her poems (and her essays too) via facing page relationships; the resulting contextual synergies among her DIY collages in *Concordance* are sometimes trembling amidst the disjunctive interstices between the Grenfell text of [“Envoi”] and the NDP text of “Since”—“Library canary hopping on twig[.] [C]caged peeps [cheeps, pips,] scratches” (18)—and at other times playfully trenchant: “Trusting that as a helpful reader you will respond in your rabbit self. I have composed a careful and on one level truly meant narrative and on another level the Narrative of a Scissor” (15). Howe’s incisive splicings echo her audio editing days with WBAI-Pacifica (c. 1977–1981) when she produced numerous poetry programs that may be heard via *PennSound*.

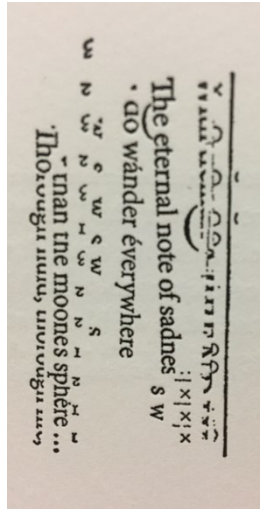


In response to Bernabo's question, "do you consider the performance of a poem when you're devising the poem?", Howe offers key details about her methods at the intersections of manuscripts, typescripts, haptics, sonics, and visuals: "Every single mark that you make on paper is an acoustic mark. Every dash, the shape of letters [...] I did do a lot of work on Emily Dickinson's manuscripts for years [...] But what I realized in the end [...] what I actually loved was the typeface letters. It was the letters, not [the] handwriting. I can always get an acoustic thrill from the look [...] There's a kind of wild rigor. Rigor and freedom at the same time." This astonishing reflection about her collaging process in *Concordance* echoes a kindred thread (220 n.380) from my conversations with Howe included in *Archive and Artifact* (2019) concerning her many years of dedicated attention to Dickinson's manuscripts and how *Spontaneous Particulars* (2014, 2020) documents instances of that deft attunement. In those conversations, Howe noted that she also enjoys "facsimile editions of poets whose manuscripts have a strong visual component; the editorial transcriptions are of particular interest [...] because they convey dogged efforts to translate into typeface what dictates the hand when it comes into contact with paper. It will always be imperfect. All the awkward typographical effects—letters, acrostic signals, strokes, cross-outs, changed meanings—can't match the hand's gestures, the human touch" (195). Howe's Dickinson notebooks at the [Beinecke Library](#) document her scrupulous manuscript transcriptions, which are brimming with abbreviated epiphanies, notes, and questions, including the essential insight (see the image above, from her deciphering of Dickinson's "With Pinions of Disdain") that "The stroke is a voice / but it is a voice" (220 n.380).

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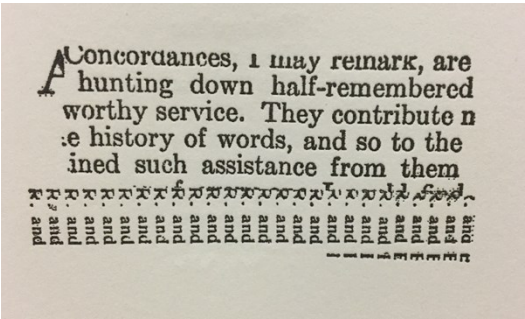
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Dovelike” or “skimming Flight” (13, 19, 28, 14, 80). Compared with the emphasis given to manuscripts in *Frolic*, Howe describes her more recent assemblages of typographic stichomancy as “transmitting chthonic echo-signals” (*Debths*, 11), and as “tiptoeing on a philosophical threshold of separation and mourning for an irrevocable past holding to memory, the death of memory condensed through concordance logic lit by a hidden terrain where deepest homonyms lie” (*Concordance*, 25).



Howe and Grubbs perform their recordings for *Concordance* in two tracks at the intersections of glyphs, glitches, and “phonological sparks” (16) escaping “phonological nets” (27) with Grubbs on piano throughout, accompanying Howe’s hauntingly scrupulous and kinetic typographical enchantments that “wander everywhere [... Swifter] than the moone’s sphere [...] Thorough fluid, thorough fire” (49). The promotional flyer from Blue Chopsticks offers a description of Howe’s and Grubbs’s collaborative process: compared with their previous studio recordings, “which feature the fragmentation and multiplication of Howe’s recorded voice—in a style akin to her celebrated text collages—with *Concordance* they’ve pared down their materials to voice and piano, aspiring to the hushed intensity of their live performances. After fifteen years of working together, the subtleties of inflection and interaction that previously resulted from Howe’s nuanced delivery and Grubbs’s composition using recorded materials now arrives as [an] unadorned duo performance.” Howe’s selected passages for her readings hopscotch through the figure-ground soundscapes in *Concordance* in the spirit of the work’s leporid allusions and puns, which include “rabbit-light” (12), “Scissor a stricken rabbit crying out” (16), and the “Rabbit-Duck illusion” (22)

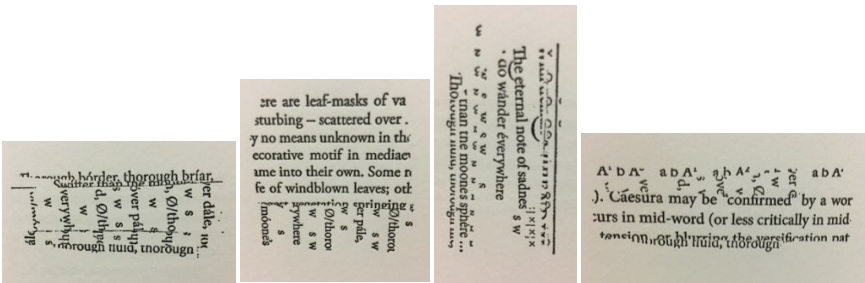
“speech bubble[s]” (13) as uncanny and as various as Howe’s library of source materials.



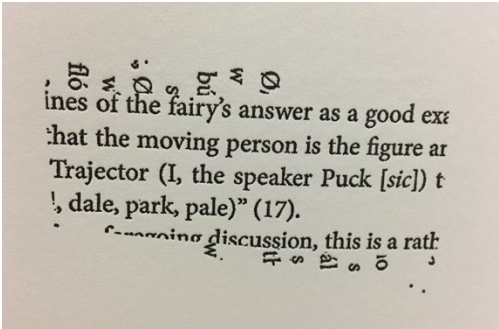
Concordance is a canopy of broken sonic slivers spliced from Howe’s “mid-word [...] whispered [...] Marginalia” (52, 69, 77) of allusions to and quotations from works by Epictetus, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Swift, Keats, Coleridge, Emerson, R. Browning, Emily Brontë, Dickinson, Arnold, Mallarmé, H. James, Yeats, Stevens, and Eliot among many others, including field guides (to birds, rocks, mushrooms, and trees), R. A. Stewart Macalister’s *The Secret Languages of Ireland*, the writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., and Richard L. E. Ford’s *The Observer’s Book of English Moths*. Each page in *Concordance* emerges from Howe’s DIY cut & paste collaging of telepathic transcriptions, “Recovering the lost [...] descending from the symbolic relation in cipher” (9, 17). Howe’s constructivist-intuitive methods collage those apposite materials—photocopying, scissoring, taping, folding unfolding over and through and over again—until the chance magic of dynamic cutting sparks regenerative “[s]epulchral Light” (39). Howe’s source materials also include a handful of concordances, including Mrs. Mary Cowden Clarke’s *Complete Concordance to Shakespeare* (1844–1845), Cynthia MacKenzie’s *Concordance to the Letters of Emily Dickinson* (2000), and Cameron Mann’s *Concordance to the English Poems of George Herbert* (1927) from which Howe cuts and pastes horizontal lines of text above a vertical meshing of ampersanding Rs and ands (all of which Howe enunciates precisely in the first track of her studio recordings with Grubbs).

In all of Howe’s volumes since *Souls* and *Frolic*, we encounter kinetic, helical skeins of astonishment, acousmatic architectures, and synesthetic soundscapes sparking inscape pareidolia. In the second track (Part Two) of Howe’s and Grubbs’s *Concordance*, one of those magical sequences happens during Howe’s reading from pages 45–50 and 52–56, beginning with the wordwhorl on page 45 that embodies lines, words, characters, and glyphs co-present in the collage poems on pages 46, 47, 49, and 52.

Those five intersecting wordwhorls (except for the collage poem on page 46) have already appeared in this essay; here they are again within that sequence (45, 47, 49, 52):



Howe's reading from this sequence ascends "Over mountain, over dale, / s w s w s w s / Thorough border, thorough briar, / s w s w s w sw / Over parking, over pale, / s w s w s w s / Thorough fluid, thorough fire, / s w s w s w s w / I do wander everywhere / s w s w s w s / Swifter than the moone's sphere [...]/ s w s w s w s," transfigured into song by the vitalist co-presence of stichomantic source materials and their indwelling tree and forest spirits. The lilting timbre in Howe's reading from these pages (45, 46, 47, 49, 52) underscores their importance to her and for *Concordance*. Howe's collage poem on page 46 offers a key into these embedded architectures and soundscapes, where we learn from the ["first five] lines of the fairy's answer as a good ex[ample]" [...] "that the moving person is the figure a[nd the places enumerated are the ground:] Trajector (I, the speaker Puck [*sic*] t[akes a path flying above the landmark (hill), dale, park, pale]" (Howe, 46, [Tsur, 173]). (Puck also appears in the NDP edition as "the only person acting Connecticut [who] puts on a paper hat— Åcorn" (10), returning anew on the front cover via R. H. Quaytman's photography and Leslie Miller's design.)



One of Howe's source texts co-present here (and in this sequence of wordwhorls from pages 45, 46, 47, 49, 52) is Reuven Tsur's *Playing by Ear and the Tip of the Tongue* (2012), which offers the culmination of Tsur's studies since the 1970s in the field of cognitive poetics. In this instance, Tsur's discussion of pre-categorical "emotional experiences, unique sensations, mystic insights and the like" (3) specific to poetic language turns to the Fairy's song for Puck (aka Robin Goodfellow) in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2.1: 2-7), the lines from which Tsur "corrupt[s] for a moment [...] so as to make [Shakespeare's verse] conform with the pattern from which the genuine lines deviate" (175). Howe's five collage poems in pages 45, 46, 47, 49, and 52 of *Concordance* relay the liminal capital O with a stroke (Ø, signifying the close-mid front rounded vowel) and the diacritical apex glyphs (above some of the vowels in the Fairy's song) directly from Tsur's scansion.

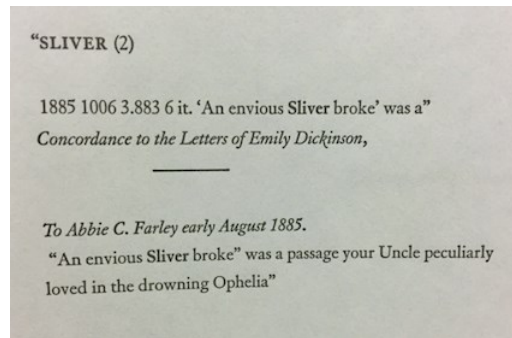
Following neurolinguistic insights from Daniel Heller-Roazen (35-38, 139-145), we could thus entertain the possibilities that these spliced typographic refrains of smooth and rough breathers—"Ø/thorough"—transmit the phonetic spirits of the Fairy and of Puck moving through this sequence (in their forest nearby Athens); that the phanopoetic reconfigurations across these five sonicimagetexts limn a network of vitalist transcriptions and re-transcriptions; and that Howe's stichomantic palimpsests visualize embodied articulations of sound forms in time "through concordance logic lit by a hidden terrain where deepest homonyms lie" (*Concordance*, 25). In a 2019 interview, when asked if typography and fonts are important for Howe's methods, she said: "Yes, of course. They're crucial. And the margins and spacing. My poems are like grids. The breathing spaces are so important [...] something flies out of the grid. When using watercolor—perhaps because of its transparency—you can destroy an expensive piece of paper with one wrong dollop of color. But another would work like magic" (*Archive and Artifact*, 233). Howe's early bird drawings and watercolors at the Beinecke Library illuminate these abiding attunements to acousmatic architectures and synesthetic soundscapes. In that 2019 interview, Howe also reflected that since her work with *Pierce-Arrow* (1999), she has used rainbow pencils to annotate her typescripts for readings, especially her scripts for performances and studio recordings with David Grubbs: "The rainbow effect is crucial. These odd prismatic marks—sometimes singular and clear, sometimes smudged—create a sound-sign territory of accidental purpose. I enjoy the way the colors *float* on the page" (205-206). Following the many birds in *Concordance*, Howe's collaged murmurations alight from "Sound clusters passing through phonological nets called names but opening as if by magnet to myriad elected affinities" (27).



In addition to Tsur's volume and Shakespeare's *Midsummer*, some of the other stichomantic inter-/intra-texts at work in Howe's collage poems from pages 44 through 53 include *The Shakespearean Forest* by Anne Barton, Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," and Anton Ehrenzweig's *Psycho-Analysis of Artistic Vision*. Compared with the Grenfell Press edition of *TOM TIT TOT*, which provides a bibliography of Howe's numerous source materials, *Concordance* relays those details through allusions & elisions, reflections & references embedded in the work's pages and paratexts that include accompanying notations, which may be found via the Grenfell, New Directions, and [Drag City](#) websites. Howe's methods in *Concordance* are as various as her palimpsests; the [Grenfell Press webpage for Concordance](#) offers an intriguing passing reference that Howe's cut & paste assemblages were "inspired in part by the wonderful flower collages of the eighteenth-century British artist Mrs. Delany."

The co-presence of Shakespeare's language in so many passages in *Concordance* underscores Howe's enduring fascination (especially with *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest*). During her early years, Howe acted in Shakespearean productions, and her text of *The Liberties* ([across all of its editions](#)) includes an adaptation of selected scenes from *King Lear*. Howe's and Grubbs's choice of the collage poem from page 47 as the cover image for their studio release amplifies these manifold Shakespearean synergies in *Concordance* that also include brief quotes from Emily Dickinson's and Otis P. Lord's correspondence concerning their shared passion for Shakespeare. Howe sounds and resounds those echoes through two of her key resources: Mrs. Mary Cowden Clarke's *Complete Concordance to Shakespeare* (1844-1845), and Cynthia MacKenzie's *Concordance to the Letters of Emily Dickinson* (2000).

Through MacKenzie's concordance, Howe's *Concordance* documents this telling passage from Dickinson's August 1885 letter to Judge Lord's niece, Abbie C. Farley: "'An envious Sliver broke' was a passage your Uncle particularly loved in the drowning Ophelia'" (vi). Howe reads this epigraph from the NDP text of *Concordance* in the first track (Part One) of her studio recording with Grubbs between passages from *The Quarry* (as noted above). In the Grenfell Press edition, this page appears last, in the position of a pastedown endpaper preceded by a semi-opaque flyleaf, which intimates a ludic disclosure of one of the book's animating secrets. The NDP edition places this page (without flyleaf) in the text's front matter, which effectively translates one of the artist book's shaping esoteric mysteries into the paperback's exoteric homage to Dickinson's relationship with Lord, highlighting their shared enthusiasm for Shakespeare's plays.



Beyond these collaged moments in Howe's pages and recordings that echo the co-presence of Shakespeare and Dickinson, *Concordance* energizes countless synechistic assemblages following the legacies of kindred spirits, including Margaret Fuller, Mary "Minny" Temple, Marian "Clover" Hooper, and Fanny Dixwell (among others), whose stories intersect with Howe's longstanding dedication to women's rights, Transcendentalism, and nineteenth-century American women artists, educators, mystics, and reformers within contexts that also include Thoreau, Emerson, H. James, Boston literary circles, and (concerning Fanny Dixwell) shared family histories: Howe's father clerked for Oliver Wendel Holmes, Jr., who was married to Fanny Bowditch Dixwell Holmes. *Concordance* also invokes a handful of early modernists (such as Jonathan Swift, Esther Johnson, Dean Delany, and Lawrence Sterne among others), and collages several inter-/intra-textual connections with the works of John Milton (14, 40, 43, 58, 64, 65, 66), shaping through those passages (and the studio recordings) some of Howe's deepest meditations yet on *Paradise Lost*.

Howe's stichomantic palimpsests throughout *Concordance* subvert origins and endings, engendering divinatory encounters in the spirit of her sister Fanny's oft-cited essay from *The Wedding Dress*: "bewilderment is like a dream: one continually returning pause on a gyre [...] the shape of the spiral that imprints itself in [the] interior before anything emerges [...] For to the spiral-walker there is no plain path, no up and down, no inside or outside. But there are strange recognitions and never a conclusion" (9). Howe's DIY cut & paste assemblages resemble Umberto Eco's notion of *open works in movement* that "display an intrinsic mobility, a kaleidoscopic capacity to suggest themselves in constantly renewed aspects" (56). Indeed, Howe's *Concordance* may be encountered through an ever-expanding field of the works' swerving multifaceted manifestations: the Grenfell edition, which includes the accompanying chapbook, "Envoi"; the NDP edition, which transforms "Envoi" into "Since" and reprints all but one of the 62+ collage poems; the Blue Chopsticks studio recordings, each format of which provides a different sequence of Howe's readings and Grubbs's music; and via the Internet, a hyperlinked cosmos of web searches for Howe's source texts (most of which exist in the public domain). Concerning virtual worlds, Howe acknowledges "brilliant alluring virtuositities both strange and terrible [...] Faster better technologies non-real reality— 'O brave new world that has [no paper] in it,'" echoing Shakespeare's *Tempest* (*Concordance*, 15). At one moment, Howe self-identifies as a "relic of the typewriter generation" (15); and yet, in another instance, she playfully imagines a "speech bubble coming out of [the] head [of Noah Webster] contain[ing] the words, 'I live in Divinity'" (13).



Howe's diverse interests and nonconformist methods travel through time via multimedia. The acousmatic architectures and synesthetic soundscapes of *Concordance* have also appeared as a virtual installation during September 2022 in an exhibition curated by Daniel Muzyczuk and hosted by [Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin](#). The virtual installation, *New Viewings #36*, also included works from Ivan Seal, Tomasz Kowalski, and Barbara Kinga Majewska and facilitated digital encounters during the

ongoing precariousness of pandemic circumstances. In his curatorial notes, Muzyczuk reflects: "The resemblance is a matter of fidelity, but there is another thing going on in these shows. Can these objects be somehow conjured, activated? A vocal incantation places it in a narration. It is assigned with a position in time and a role within a larger performance. Mandelstam posed a seemingly absurd question: 'What is the difference between a book and a thing?'. Can a speech bubble appear and return voice to these objects?" Muzyczuk built a virtual model of the gallery's rooms (walls and walkways, skylight windows and track lighting, wood floors and reflections) and installed the first seven pages of collage poems from *Concordance* as if "the letters [would] look like [they] were pressed directly onto the walls." Muzyczuk also included selections from Howe's and Grubbs's studio recordings of *Concordance* "so that the experience of seeing that space on the screen of the laptop or mobile phone would use something more than just images" (e-mail to wsh). Daniel Muzyczuk also curated an installation of selected pages from Howe's *TOM TIT TOT* and passages from Grubbs's book-length poem, *Now that the audience is assembled* (2018), at the Christine König Galerie, Vienna during October 2018. In his curatorial notes from that installation, "Speak in Order That I May See You Or Whistle And I'll Come To You," Muzyczuk invoked acousmatic architectures and synesthetic soundscapes as a shaping theme: "*On things that are not visible and not audible [...]* The plea expressed in the title sets in motion a paradoxical mechanism that claims to be able to uncover the visible through the sonorous."

When I visited with Susan Howe during January 2015 for the conversations that would eventually appear as an interview in *Archive and Artifact* (2019), I asked: "In recent years, your work has engaged collaboratively with digital sound and video, open-access web cultures, and galleries. How are these media—these differently charged spaces—informing or suggesting what's next for your work?" At that time, Howe was reading (among other materials) a recent book by Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (2014). In reply to my question, she reflected that Kane "begins with a meditation on a mysterious noise coming from deep underground in Moodus, Connecticut. Nobody can explain its source. Scientists have offered theories, First Peoples had their explanations, settlers had theirs, current residents have theirs, but really, it's simply unknowable. It's a sound unseen. Like the Oracle, or the *akousmatikoi* and Pythagoras's veil" (207).

From her early minimalist paintings, landscape pasteups, watercolor bird collages (c. 1965-72), and word drawings (first exhibited in 1971 at the Kornblee Gallery) to her archive of radio programs for WBAI-Pacifica (c. 1977-81) and her 35+ books of poetry and prose since *Hinge Picture* (Telephone Books, 1974); from her transporting studio

recordings and performances with David Grubbs since 2005, residencies (Gardner Museum, 2012) and exhibitions (Yale Union 2013, Whitney Biennial 2014) to the multimedia adaptations of *TOM TIT TOT* and *Concordance* discussed in this essay, Susan Howe's generous and collaborative spirit transfigures her materials and audiences. In December 2022, a choral performance of Howe's "Periscope"—composed by Brendan Champeaux—was recorded at Kings Place, London. That recording, which was broadcast Christmas eve on BBC Radio 3, may be heard via the composer's [SoundCloud](#) site.

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Magritte's Pipe and the Honesty of Images

An Ontological Riddle

There are, arguably, a handful of artworks from the first half of the last century that seem to articulate or foreshadow the preoccupations of the intellectual life of the twentieth century and beyond. Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* fragments the object of perception and with it, the unitary self-understanding of the perceiving subject; Duchamp's *Fountain* and other readymades set out to erase the line between the work of art and the everyday, and undermined the normative idea that beauty should be a necessary condition for the artwork; any one of de Chirico's metaphysical paintings of 1909-1919, with their narrative logic deliberately dissolved into the enigmatic categories of mood, read like postcards from a country already in the throes of the postmodern crisis of reason. René Magritte's 1929 painting *Trahison des images*, perhaps better known as *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, has a place among works like those. In both its title and its content it prefigures the related critiques of representationalism and metaphysics associated with poststructuralism. For, in highlighting the ambiguous status of the image in order to assert what a pipe is not, it implicitly raises the question of what a pipe is. Or, more subtly, it provokes us to ask the basic question, "What are the conditions that make possible our experience of the pipe-that-is?" More than a painting, it is an ontological riddle, a riddle whose answer rebounds and holds implications for the image that is itself an important component of the riddle.

In its visual composition, *Trahison des images* isn't very complicated. It depicts a pipe, a very ordinary bent billiard pipe, in a full-on side view, isolated against an otherwise empty background done up in a bland, neutral color. The pipe is rendered in a flat manner; its illusionism—its capacity to make us think that the object before us is real—is minimal; while providing a faithful image of a pipe, it is no *trompe l'oeil* painting. Magritte's pipe seems more proper to an illustration than to a work of art; it would be perfectly in place as, say, a sign hanging above a tobacconist shop. Or better, as an illustration appearing in a dictionary or encyclopedia under the entry "pipe," which is to say that taken by itself, its purpose would appear to be to declare, in unmistakable visual terms, "this is a pipe, this is what a pipe looks like, this is what we refer to when we use the word 'pipe.'" Which is why the inscription just beneath the pipe, neatly lettered in a carefully impersonal, cursive hand, is jarring. It plainly declares "ceci n'est pas une pipe"—this is not a pipe. It is a statement of ontological difference: that this is

not what it appears to claim it is. The painting seems to contradict itself, since the image is of nothing other than a pipe. Hence the riddle, but what can its meaning be?

In his well-known essay *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, Michel Foucault rejected what might seem to be the obvious meaning of the painting—that it comprises an image and a label, with the latter declaring that the image is not the object that it represents. Foucault asserted instead that the painting is in fact a secret calligram—a verbal work in which words are set out on the page to form a picture of what the work is about. Although the words “ceci n'est pas une pipe” are not arranged to take the shape of a pipe, the painting counts as a calligram for Foucault because as he describes it, a calligram “aspires playfully to efface the oldest oppositions of our alphabetical civilization: to show and to name...to imitate and to signify...” (p. 21). A kind of hermaphroditic mode of representation, the calligram erases the distinction between word and image, between showing and telling.

To be sure, Foucault's reading is subtle and ingenious. Magritte appears to have rejected it, but even so, its elegant rhetoric can seduce us into believing that the painting is in fact a calligram that doesn't appear to be a calligram, all the while directing our attention away from what seems obvious about the painting: that it contains an explicit denial, in writing, that the image of the thing is the thing. But this most obvious reading of *Trahison des images* is not for all its obviousness a reading to be ruled out of bounds. And not only because Magritte himself was very much interested in using his paintings to explore the philosophical questions concerning the relationship between the representation and the represented. For the obvious reading—the reading of ontological difference, which starts by dis-identifying the thing and its image--opens a way that raises questions beyond questions of representation. To find the answers we have to confront the sensible thing to see what it is that, often hovering just below the threshold of awareness, tells us “this is a pipe.” Once we've done this we find that we can move dialectically from the image to the thing, and then back to the image—which now will appear as a richer form of signification. But first we might address Magritte's title and ask, “How is this image treacherous? What does it appear to betray?”

From Index to *Eidolon*

“This is not a pipe” is a simple declarative statement of negation. “This” is an indexical, a word ordinarily used to point to something present, something ostensibly here--an ostensive pronoun, an indication that this “this” is an example of what it is. But in this case it points away. The “this” is negated immediately by the “is not” that follows it;

"this" is not what it purports to be. If this sentence were to appear in the hypothetical dictionary or encyclopedia entry Magritte's painting seems to parody, the lesson would be: "This is not what a pipe is. This not-pipe you see is just an image of a pipe." And therein, we might reasonably conclude, lies its treachery.

But how could the image be treacherous? For something to be treacherous something must be betrayed—and what does the image betray? At a fairly obvious level, it appears to betray the object it portrays. The object it portrays is not there, its place has been taken by an impostor. The image is the impostor, it is not the object, and to put the image in its place is to negate the object—to posit something other than the thing that is not the thing, but simulates the thing nevertheless. By virtue of its simulation, the image is what it is not and is not what it is, it is a nothingness disguised as a thing. It is an *eidolon*.

Eidolon (εἶδωλον) is a term for "image" that goes back to Homer. Its earliest surviving occurrence is in the *Iliad*, where in Book 5 Apollo creates a phantom copy of Aeneas to substitute for the real Aeneas (5.449-50), and in Book 23 the deceased Patroclus' *eidolon*—his ghost—requests burial (23.64). The *eidolon* is a phantom or a seeming likeness, and in either case an illusory double. In Plato it is the untruthfulness of the *eidolon* that is stressed. It is a simulation that is other than the real, an image as the not-true, the not-real. A similar notion of the *eidolon* as an unreal simulacrum comes to us by way of the lyric and dramatic poets. Both Stesichorus and Euripides, possibly drawing on an old tradition, produced works in which the Helen who was abducted and taken to Troy was revealed not to have been the real Helen but instead was a phantom (εἶδωλον) Helen—an image crafted out of a cloud. The real Helen was in Egypt, where she was sequestered during the war. There were thus two Helens, the true Helen and the untrue simulacrum. Truth and untruth here became a matter of fate since, as Plato says in referring to Stesichorus's poem, it was "ignorance of the truth" of the untruth of the *eidolon*-Helen that caused the war (*Republic* 9.586c). It was a war literally over nothing. In this variation on the abduction story the betrayal of the image literally takes on epic proportions. It isn't only the Greeks and the Trojans who are betrayed by the simulacrum-Helen; the real Helen is betrayed by having had thrown onto her the responsibility for the war the phantom Helen caused.

The *eidolon* is an ontologically ambiguous entity with a qualified mode of existence. It is an imitation whose claim to being is parasitic on that which it imitates, and so has a kind of dependent existence, one that can, as in the Helen-as-*eidolon* narrative, potentially set a train of events in motion by virtue of its substitution for the object it

simulates and on which it depends for its efficacy. And yet for all that it is not that object at all. The image as *eidolon* can only be a negation of its model, a nothingness that in the end is the absence of the real thing, of which it is the insubstantial semblance. In its power of resemblance is potential for betrayal and dissemblance.

Turning back to Magritte's image of a pipe, we can say that it is not a pipe because it is merely an *eidolon*, a simulation and an untruth no matter how true to life it is as a likeness. As an *eidolon* its betrayal takes place at an ontological level, since the ontological difference it signifies is had by way of an untruth rooted in, and inseparable from, resemblance.

The Sensible Pipe

If the image of the pipe, understood as its *eidolon*, is not a pipe—as clearly it isn't—the question then naturally arises: What is the pipe? The answer would seem to be easy enough. It is the pipe I see before me and pick up and turn over in my hand. This would seem to be the pipe in its ordinary sense, which is to say the pipe in the way that we experience it in our basic, unreflective, everyday manner of making our way in the world. That seemingly ordinary manner of encountering the pipe would give us this intuitive answer to the question—the pipe is the sensible pipe, the pipe given to our senses. In other words, the pipe as present to us in some ostensibly direct and unproblematic way.

Presence in this usual, everyday sense rests on the implicit intuition *that* there is a world, *that* it contains objects, and *that* these objects project themselves into my field of perception. Presence in this naive sense consists in the unselfconscious grasp of the contingency of the world as it is encountered *here*, under *these* circumstances, in *this* situation. Presence is a mode of our being-in-relation-to-things that takes for granted that things really exist and that they are really here before us in some immediate way. This naive sense of presence, this natural attitude toward things, rests quite comfortably on the assumption of the existence of the sensible thing—the contingent thing that projects into my field of perception at this moment. On this assumption—unthought and perhaps in some sense unthinkable--the sensible pipe that I see and turn over in my hands is a pipe, this and nothing else. And that would seem to be the implicit message of Magritte's painting: "This (image) is not a pipe, but the sensible pipe, of which this merely is the image—now, *that* is a pipe. This image is only a pseudo-presence, a simulation of the real presence that only the sensible pipe itself can assert."

The contrast here is between the phantom-like, dependent being of the image *qua* *eidolon* and what we might think of as the thatness of the sensible pipe—the fact *that* it is. It is a quality that makes itself known by its impinging on our perception and consequently making us say that it *is*. The thatness of the sensible pipe strikes us as a pure positivity in that in its physical plenitude—the solidity of the material it's made of, the grain of its wood, the projection of its volume into space, the weight and density we can feel in our hands—it seems a pure manifestation of what is. Its implicit claim is that it is what it is, and nothing else; it is this thing that I can see and can hold and thus commits no treachery. It has the honesty of real existence. By contrast, its image is a negativity, a substitute for what is that obscures at the same time that it substitutes or replaces what is. Its image is its phantom, its *eidolon*, a shadow that overshadows the thing that throws it off--an abyss of being that opens up between us and the pipe and separates it from us.

"Perceptual Faith"

But what if there is more to presence than just the plain thing plainly seen? What if there is something else that lays the groundwork this otherwise naive encounter between us and the sensible thing? Because when we look into it, we find that this natural, unthinking attitude rests on a set of assumptions, unarticulated though they may be. This naive notion of presence, in other words, rests on something Merleau-Ponty aptly described in *The Visible and the Invisible* as a "perceptual faith." "Perceptual faith" is the unreflective acceptance of the perceptible as the manifestation of the world as it actually is, with or without us. As Merleau-Ponty describes it, perceptual faith assumes that there is a "pure gaze, which involves nothing implicit" as it directs itself to "something that would be before it without restriction or condition." The pure gaze takes it on faith that it meets the thing as it really is, by virtue of the thing's being immediately and fully present. But, Merleau-Ponty claims, this faith ultimately is unsustainable and "unjustifiable" once we begin to question it. For the sensible thing, the visible thing, is intertwined with what he calls "the invisible"--a latent structure that, while existentially inseparable from our experience of the thing seen, is logically differentiable from it. It is this something beyond perception that is the basis of the thing's seemingly simple presence to us through perception; there is, in other words, something implicated in the encounter with the perceptible that is not perceptible but on the basis of which the perceptible presents itself as presence. In sum, it is on the basis of the invisible that the visible makes itself visible. If the perceptual faith is

founded on the promise that the real is exhausted by the visible, it is a promise that necessarily will be broken. Call it the Treachery of Things.

The Structure of "The Invisible"

Taking Merleau-Ponty's claim as a starting point, we can come to understand the invisible as a complex structure or aggregate of two complementary components: the eidetic and the significant.

"Eidetic" derives from "*eidos*" (εἶδος), often rendered as "idea" or "ideal." The general sense is of essential form, or that on the basis of which a thing is knowable as the thing it is. The eidetic thing is the intelligible, as opposed to the sensible, thing. As such, the *eidos* is the thing as the thing that it is, independent of any particular instance of its appearance.

To understand the eidetic, we need to back up and look again at the thing in its physical presence. What this presence is is a contingency—an accident of situation, a product of the circumstances under which the thing is encountered and the perspective through which it is apprehended, and of the actual physical thing itself with all its individual peculiarities, flaws, and irregularities. This physical presence can never be more than a partial presence; given the limits inherent in the contingent situation in which it is encountered, the perceptible thing is the thing grasped in a state of incompleteness. To grasp the thing as what it is, something beyond the merely perceptible is necessary; this is where the *eidos* comes in. The eidetic thing, in contrast to the physical thing encountered in a given situation, is the thing in its completeness and not subject to the variations and accidents of contingency. It is the thing as ideal, as perceived from all perspectives, and as such is the thing as imaginary.

This notion of the eidetic as imaginary owes more to Husserl than to Plato in that it understands the eidetic, to the extent that it is a product of the imagination, to be a relation embedded in an act rather than a picture or quasi-object in the mind or a transcendent entity of some sort. Nor do I claim that the *eidos* is a natural category or structure out there in the world "as it really is," existing prior to and independently of the mind, and passively and transparently grasped by the mind. Rather, it is the product of the mind or better yet, of many minds; the eidetic as a concept or category is something shared, to a greater or lesser extent given idiolectal variations, across members of a given life-world and can be expected to be, at least to some extent, parasitic on language, given language's capacity to categorize things in the world (and

hence to help create the eidetic structures through which the visible world is grasped in its invisible dimension). The *eidōs* in this sense is the ideal, spelled with a lower case "i." It is ultimately, in Richard Kearney's formulation, a "fiction[] of the imagination," with the understanding that the imagination is a properly cognitive faculty at least in part shaped by the shared conceptual structures and possibilities of a given language community, rather than something completely arbitrary and productive of nothing but solipsistic fantasy. And as a fiction it is a necessary fiction, without which the sensible thing, and by extension the surrounding world, would make no sense.

As an imaginary fiction, the eidetic thing would seem to negate the real thing in the way that what we ordinarily think of as the imagination, in positing that which is not or that which is not yet, negates the real. And yet if indeed it does negate the real it does so by affirming it, since it is the criterion in relation to which the sensible can disclose itself. It doesn't invalidate the physical presence of the sensible thing but instead validates it, while at the same time negating any ostensible claim it may have to being the sole determinant of what it is. It is, in other words, the negation of the illusion that presence is something that is perceived directly, and in negating this illusion, it opens a space for what is ultimately an affirmation. This physical pipe is not by itself a pipe, but rather is the occasion for the pipe to disclose itself—to imagination as well as to perception. And to that degree, to be present.

Because it presents the thing in its invariance and independence of the contingent situation in which we perceive it, it is the eidetic thing, or rather the eidetic dimension of the thing, that informs and underwrites our ability to grasp what the thing is when we do perceive it. The *eidōs*, in other words, is something implicated in the encounter that is not perceptible but on the basis of which the perceptible presents itself as presence. It fills in what sensible experience hides or obscures but is inseparable from—one might say co-present in--the sensible experience and affords it. Maurizio Ferraris captured this inseparability when he described the eidetic as "sensation saved in its ideality" (p. 96).

The second component of the invisible is the significant. At the same time that the sensible presence of the thing implicates an eidetic dimension, it implicates the significance the thing holds for us. This second component of the invisible is, in effect, the third dimension of the thing's presence, the other two dimensions being the sensible and the eidetic. This third dimension—the significant—involves a complex interplay of imagination, which discloses the way in which things hold out possibilities for us in relation to our various concerns, needs and desires, and of our affective

attitude, which discloses the emotional meaning and associations of the thing as it relates to us, to the extent that it does relate to us. This second component of the invisible reflects the fact that the things we encounter in the world aren't simply neutral bits of matter but instead are things that matter to us, potentially if not actually. Just as the way we actually experience the sensible thing is inextricably bound up with, and implies a prereflective grasp of, the eidetic thing, so the way we actually experience the sensible-eidetic thing is permeated by a sense of its significance for us, as grasped through, e.g., the affective state through which that significance is signified, or in the way that the thing may trigger associations rooted in our past and situated within our "unconscious" or sub-liminal structures of experience. Simply put, the thing as meaningful has a place within the thick and often tangled network of affective associations and correspondences, memories, desires and so forth, through which we encounter and understand the world. (Indifference is an affective response as well; the thing to which we are indifferent is the thing of no significance, as signified by our indifference. It matters to us as not mattering to us.) As with the sensible and the eidetic dimensions, the affective dimension isn't the product of an obscure metaphysic but rather simply belongs, as Merleau-Ponty put it in *The Visible and the Invisible*, to "the very sphere of our life," a sphere we inhabit more or less unthinkingly.

Presence, After All

From the above, we can conclude that the originary experience of the thing, its basic presence, does not consist solely in the brute physical fact of the thing—the sensible thing—or even of the sensible thing made intelligible by the eidetic dimension of the thing, but also includes its significance or meaningfulness, as disclosed by our attitude or affective orientation to it. If the image of the pipe as *eidolon*--as simulacrum, substitute and phantom--is not the pipe, neither is the sensible pipe alone, nor the sensible pipe intelligibly grasped. The pipe, the real pipe as it is for us, is the sensible pipe we recognize as a pipe and that we encounter in an opening cleared for us by an implicit, interpretive experience underwritten by the associative structures we bring to the encounter. The pipe that appears in that opening, the pipe in its various dimensions, is the pipe as it is present to us. *This* is a pipe not only because it is a physical thing projecting itself into my perceptual field, a thing that, in addition, I recognize as having certain features and qualities beyond those I immediately perceive, but because it holds out the possibility that I might use it (or avoid it if I am a non-smoker), or calls up some memory or other association or otherwise holds some meaning pertinent to me. It has a place, in other words, within the network of concerns, needs, aversions, affective associations, and so on, that binds me to the world and its furniture—the things,

events, people, institutions, and so forth that make up the contents of my world—, and that is largely woven and maintained below the threshold of awareness.

The invisible dimensions of the thing are an integral part of our experience of the thing when we encounter it; they are the invisible basis of its visible presence. For the brute fact of the sensible thing isn't enough; without the eidetic and affective dimensions, it is just an inert opacity—present to perception, to be sure, but in a mute way. "Presence" reaches beyond this opacity and locates itself through the disclosure of the visible through the invisible and vice versa. The so-called "metaphysics of presence" wouldn't then consist in the (presumed) immediate contact with a really existing thing, but instead would consist in the meeting of the thing and the person encountering it through the faculty—"metaphysical," if we want to call it that, because it involves intuitions that overflow the physical given—that is the cognitive/affective imagination. It is an imagination that is always at work covertly, always operating in even the most unthought-about experiences—an ongoing activity taking place beneath the threshold of awareness, although there is nothing to prevent it being made available to awareness through reflection. It is this double-sided imagination, together with perception, that provides the conditions that make possible our experience of the thing-that-is. Of the pipe-that-is.

And this gives rise to the ironic thought that the physical thing, no less than its image, is in the final calculation itself an *eidolon* of itself—a simulacrum of the thing as it actually is present to us in all three dimensions, both visible and invisible.

From *Eidolon* to *Agalma*, From Image to Symbol

When we come back to Magritte's painting, after having solved the ontological question it implicitly poses, we can begin to see that the image of the pipe may turn out to be more than a phantom-like thing pretending to be something it in fact isn't. If the real pipe has revealed itself to consist of multiple dimensions, so too now does Magritte's image of the pipe, and it is no longer enough to see the image simply as, or only as, the *eidolon* it first appears to be. It still is not a pipe, but it discloses a deeper relationship to the real pipe now. It becomes a visual sign of a different order and complexity that reveals a depth or heft of signification that goes beyond simply not being what it depicts, although that ontological difference, and the corresponding conceptual gap that opens up between what it is and what it is not is, remains a necessary, if only initial, step in its articulation.

By virtue of the accompanying text having declared it not to be the thing it appears to be, the image diverted our attention away from itself. To this extent, as we saw, it is an anti-index, a pointing away rather than a pointing toward. Or better, a pointing away from one thing—itsself--and toward another: the thing it represents. Which is to say that by asserting that the image of the pipe is not a pipe, Magritte engaged in an exercise of redirection. His image, together with its disclaimer text, pushed us away from the visual sign and down the path of inquiry that lead to the real pipe—that complex of sensible, eidetic, and associative dimensions that constitutes the pipe as we actually encounter it. We needed the *eidolon*, we needed the image Magritte both provided and warned us off from, to see this. To see that *that* is a pipe, because *this* is not. And now that we return to the image we see it in a new, complexly shaded light. It no longer appears to be merely an *eidolon*, but instead takes on the function of a different kind of image: an *agalma*.

The core meaning of *agalma* (ἄγαλμα; plural ἀγάλματα [agalmata]) is a cult statue or a likeness with an honorary function. It occurs often in Plato to denote a figurative image of some sort, such as the puppets throwing shadows onto the cave walls in the *Republic*, or in the *Symposium*, where Alcibiades compares Socrates to a hollow statue of an ugly Silenus hiding within it beautiful statues of the gods. But it is its later sense, deriving from the eight book of Plotinus' fifth Ennead, that is of interest here. There, Plotinus asserted that

The wise men of Egypt...when they wished to signify something wisely, did not use the forms of letters which follow the order of words and propositions and imitate sounds...but by drawing images (ἀγάλματα) and inscribing in their temples one particular image (ἄγαλμα) of each particular thing, they manifested...that every image is a kind of knowledge and wisdom...and not discourse or deliberation.

The *agalma* that Plotinus describes here is a purely ideogrammatic symbol depicting in a concise visual form the *eidos* of the thing represented. As such, it shows an understanding that reflects the Classical Greek conception of Egyptian hieroglyphs as, in Erik Iversen's concise formulation, a "synthetic system of writing in which abstract notions and ideas could be represented by concrete pictures of natural objects" (p 49). Whether or not the wall carvings Plotinus was referring to were in fact hieroglyphs or belonged to some other system of iconic depiction (as his translation Armstrong suggests), and whether or not the Egyptians considered them writing *per se* or a form of visual art, as Assmann asserts, the important point is that they, as *agalmata*, were

understood to represent the intelligible dimension of the things they pictured, through their non-discursive picturing of the things' appearances.

Stripped of the Neoplatonic mysticism in which it is couched and adapting it to our own usage, Plotinus' *agalma* is a symbol representing a type of which the individual depicted by the visual sign is a token. It is a symbol that isn't based on a superficial correspondence of appearance vis-a-vis the thing it represents or a relationship of substitution, but rather serves as the visual sign of the essence of the thing—with "essence" being understood here as the idea produced by the cognitive imagination. It is a kind of eidetic shorthand from which the thing can be inferred not only in its appearance, but in the full reality of its qualities and possibilities. Like an *eidolon* an *agalma* is an image, but one that symbolizes the thing it depicts in a way that exemplifies it in a condensed, non-discursive form; an *agalma* is a visual sign as a paradigm as well as an image. In a sense, the *agalma* is analogous to the thing it exemplifies in that it represents an invisible concept similar to the way a sensible thing "represents" the *eidos* that corresponds to it.

(And the symbol as *agalma* would seem to refute the assertion that the real resists symbolization. Instead, the real makes itself known through the symbol, and it is by virtue of symbolization that the real is made apprehensible.)

A central feature of an *agalma* consists in the fact that its content overflows the visual sign through which it is conveyed. In an echo of the way the invisible informs and overflows the visible object at the moment the object is apprehended, the image-as-*agalma* transcends itself and expresses more than what lies on its visible surface. Like the perceptible object, the visible symbol implicates a complex, invisible meaning lying beneath the perceptible image. In this regard the *agalma* in its structure mirrors the structure of the thing it represents.

With one exception. The *agalma* only represents two of the three dimensions of the thing as it is present to us. As a visual sign, it represents the thing's appearance; as a symbol it represents the eidetic thing as exemplary of its type. This isn't to say that it can't give rise to a sense of the represented thing's affective or other meaningfulness in the viewer, but only that such a sense would be a secondary or emergent meaning that goes beyond the *agalma's* proper function, which is to represent, in a visual and non-discursive form, the thing as appearance and exemplar.

Unlike the physical object, whose invisible dimension is grasped in everyday encounters through an interpretive event that is spontaneous and without explicit thought, the interpretive event through which the meaning of the symbol-as-*agalma* is revealed may require reflective inference. It may, and even perhaps must, require such reflection for the visual sign to be grasped precisely *as an agalma*. (Can there be instances of the spontaneous apprehension of a symbol's latent meaning?) While this inference is far from presupposing the initiation into arcane knowledge or mystical illumination that Plotinus speculated was behind the apprehension of the meanings of Egyptian temple carvings, it may nevertheless call for a close reading of the visual sign in its proper context. In the case of Magritte's painting, this context is provided by the textual disclaimer beneath the image. The text compels the kind of reflective attention that has as its logical endpoint the understanding of the image as an *agalma*.

The Treachery of Honesty

Of course not every image is a symbol, and not every symbol is an *agalma*. Magritte's pipe counts as an agalmatic symbol because of what it does, and how it appears at the end of the process it puts in motion. It raises the question of the ontological difference between image and thing and consequently provokes the follow-on question of what it is for the thing to be present in its reality. It is by seeing that Magritte's pipe is not a pipe that we can see what *is* a pipe and, returning to his image of the pipe, can now apprehend it as representing the idea of a pipe--"pipe" as a type of which individual pipes are instances. In raising these questions, and provoking their answers, Magritte's pipe invokes the invisible—both in relation to the pipe and to itself—and allows the viewer no longer to see it simply as an *eidolon*, but rather to reinterpret it as an agalmatic exemplification of what it depicts.

Beyond this, Magritte's decision to depict the pipe in isolation and in the style of an illustration gives the image an appearance that lends itself to being read as an example of a type—like the dictionary figure it seems to parody. (Is it too absurd to suggest that an illustration in a dictionary is the contemporary near-equivalent of those eidetic carvings on Egyptian temple walls that fascinated Plotinus?) In being rendered in the way it has—removed from any surrounding context and put on display in a simple to grasp, unangled side view--Magritte's pipe seems more appropriate to showing the form or idea of a pipe rather than to depicting an individual, contingent pipe in the world.

When we grasp it as an *agalma*, Magritte's pipe isn't simply an image of a pipe but instead is a fully symbolic, visual analogue of a pipe. It is an analogue that knows itself

to be an analogue; it is an analogue whose sense is dependent on an acknowledgment of the ontological difference its textual disclaimer explicitly signals. And as we have seen, it is the ontological gap between the image and the thing it represents that provides the context of an opening out of which the interpretive moment can arise, a moment whose result is the bringing together of the symbol and the thing symbolized. It is a movement that, in reconciling the visual sign and thing in this way, retrieves the meaning of the word "symbol"--the "sign by which one infers"--from its origin in the Greek for "bringing together."

Where then is the treachery of Magritte's image in all of this? In its self-betrayal. By not being the thing it represents the image of the pipe doesn't commit treachery against the pipe so much as it betrays its own status as an analogue. It isn't deceit that makes for the image's treachery, but honesty.

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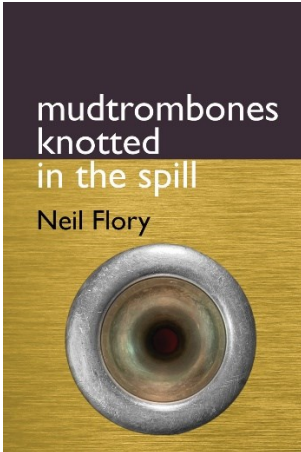
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Christopher Munde

**"a landscape of flesh and pure determination:" A Review of Neil Flory's
mudtrombones knotted in the spill (Arteidolia Press, 2023)**



In this book, apprehension only arrives in the wake of ruin: The speaker careens, from the very start, straight through the rippling tension of torn encounters and earth, though, even then, it's clear the destination will be somewhere other than chaos. Sure enough, Flory's first poetry collection reveals its intentions early on: The poem "process" demonstrates well the book's notion that innovation requires self-destruction, and that the very act of moving forward must inevitably involve mourning for the remains of failed, abandoned attempts. In its own way, *mudtrombones knotted in the spill* is sonder's choir of anxieties, even when those anxieties lean close to the euphoric. "Communication" develops this worldview further, as it distills the worry inherent in small talk down to the realization that

life
is one big damn glorious
and most incredible improvised
solo[,]

and "was" documents, in halting, splintered lines, erosion and thaw, and casts these as the primary motions in an emotional descent from cohesion into the present. That the present moment would be "slush rivulets open less this to renderless yes" shows that these poems push beyond disillusionment with time's (and humans') tampering, and

toward an unnerving celebration (and crystallization) of the ever-accruing voices in the landslide.

In this worldview, the pastoral is inverted, with dirt, stone and flora raining from all sides, as though in the aftermath of a gas line explosion. At times, machinery and the delirious natural world tear through one another, like in the excellent opening poem, "beansproutgrasses:"

his fixless suddenly, intuition snap

ping clean steeringwheel sparkplugs battery all
tumblingscreaming teakettle out to cliffs and sea while the wind points
and mocks an acid jig[.]

In other pieces, such as "deadbolt," the natural world encroaches on (and mimics) the speaker as the latter fumbles with keys and wrestles with the notion of barriers:

The rain continues. The forest, albeit in prime year's
green, has not moved. His shelter at the edge of it, near
the road.

[...]

The shining beetle, choosing to stay instead on
this side of the tiny twig. Every scorched inch once again
dissonant this soundless gulf. Closed and locked.

Yet, as a result of this clatter, the effect is ecstatic; terror ascends in rhythmic churn, as ("dissonant") music invades, even in the form of a pregnant silence, even when the nature of this pregnancy is tumultuous, or uncertain.

So, even without the mudtrombones of the title, and even without the knowledge that Flory is an accomplished composer, it's clear that music propels the formal choices and guides the book's content. Portmanteau words ("airslabs," "kitschbliss," "subwhisper"), held together by their sonic patterns and their uncomfortable implications, control the rhythm and echo the hefty, double-stressed natural words ("stalwart," "smoke-wisps," "shipyard"). Adverbs grasp wildly for verbs, only to then be assailed by a brutalist string of hammering verbs and raw stone. In the poems "salt-grains" and "ears," onomatopoeia stretches out cacophony like a discordant Russell Atkins. When music makes its way into the content, it often upturns soil and gouges

skin, though, at times when narrative cuts through, as in the following excerpt from “flutes,” its instruments perform the same survival work of other items we call instruments:

well if you did decide to go
that way he said I think what
you’d want to do would be to take
these instruments
with you
handing
him four Geiger counters and a flute[.]

It is these moments, plentiful as they are, that allow *mudtrombones*... to act as an instrument for locating submerged/invisible chaos, and for unraveling and comprehending the consonance in that terror; it is these moments, then, that allow the book to perform as both Geiger counter and flute.

As such, Flory’s “variegated gelatin of uncertainty” (from “not the words”) is endlessly intriguing, and is at its best when it is at its most (formally) concrete; these are the points when the typography refuses easy verbalization, as letters cascade and brackets, parentheses and forward slashes jar the syntax, while nonetheless piecing the fragments into a cohesive, resonant whole. In “vs,” the war between common, conversational phrasing and odd, chipped fragments is riddled with typographical shrapnel:

isn’t
]what we
/split /heavy of he
built] what we
leviathan /clipped]forallintents[.]

It’s also important to note that these poems work so well, in part, because they are sparsely included among the more image-oriented pieces, which allows one the breathing room to engage with this less-than-orthodox material. Pacing, then, is well-handled on both micro and macro scales.

This plunge toward consonance makes *mudtrombones knotted in the spill* an impressive debut. The role of dissonance in both form and content is always tempered with

genuine insight, and leads one, in this rare case in poetry of such kinetic energy, toward cohesion, and a quiet that weighs and expands. Or, as “not the words” demonstrates,

but not the words,
elusive intonation,
 enchanting
 invocation
of a possibly theoretical
 enveloping
 equilibrium[.]

Contributors' Notes

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D. E. Steward writes months like "Distinctly Cyan." There are more than four hundred with more than two-thirds published. The earliest, from 1986 through 2016, further appear as *Chroma* (Volumes One through Five, Avant-Garde Classics/Amazon, 2018). Most are published as poetry, with enough autobio to make them nearly the enemy of the verity of remembering, of course what good writing must do.

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