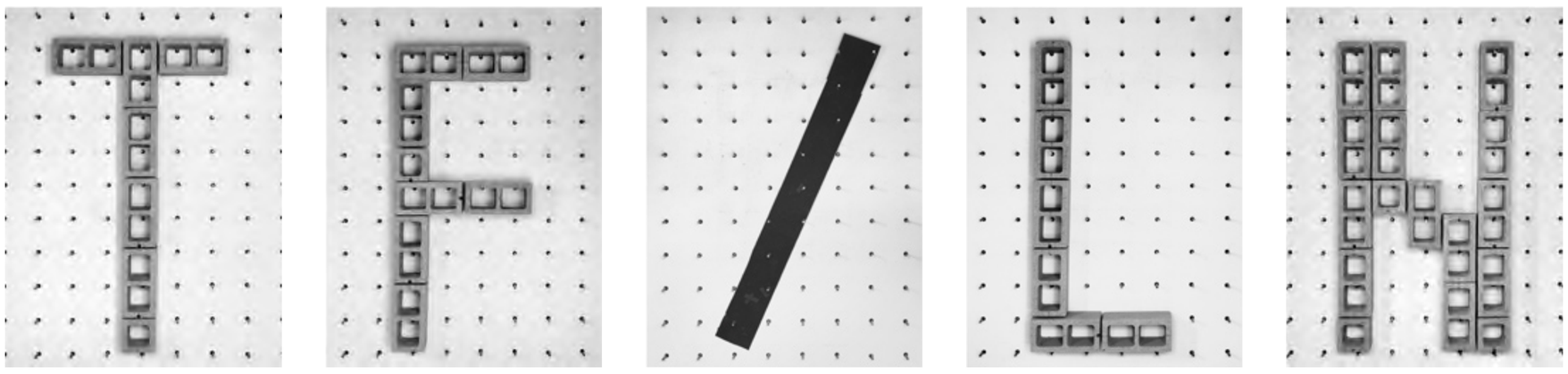
# SINISTER TO ESTABLISH "FIRST/LAST" NEWSPAPER AT PORT AUTHORITY

PORT AUTHORITY — Recently described as "wheat paste," DEXTER SINISTER are set to produce a newspaper twice a week for three weeks this fall under the umbrella of PERFORMA 09, New York's well-regarded bi-annual festival of performance art. Together with a hastily assembled staff of international writers and photographers, the Lower East Side "pamphleteers" will occupy a disused, street-level space in New York's Port Authority bus terminal on the corner of 8th Avenue and 41st Street, directly opposite the new *New York Times* building. According to sources close to Sinister, *The First/Last Newspaper (TF/LN)* will be "as much about the current state of news media as anything else." Last night, they hosted a public opening of the workspace on from 6 – 8pm and screened *Farewell, Etaoin Shrdlu*, a 1980 documentary narrated by *Times* Linotype operator Carl Schlesinger. Schlesinger offered a brief introduction. *TF/LN* will appear twice a week for the next three weeks, to be distributed in "various formats" yet to be announced. Likewise, events open to the public will be arranged during their three-week operation. In Sinister's own characteristically melodramatic words: "You don't want to start quantifying things or you're dead." ■



THE FIRST/LAST NEWSPAPER — PORT AUTHORITY, 641 8th Avenue, New York City, NY 10036 4 NOVEMBER 2009 — DEXTER SINISTER


*Still from* Farewell, etaoin shrdlu, *a 1980 film chronicling the last day of hot metal typesetting at* The New York Times.


# NEWSPAPER TAX LEVIED: FEW CAN AFFORD DAILY 6 PENCE

NEW YORK CITY — Text takes time. It takes time to read, it takes time to write, and it takes time to reproduce. Throughout the history of text production, people have been searching for ways to distribute the costs of producing text — financial, temporal — more evenly across a system. This search led former goldsmith Johannes Gutenberg to develop and refine his system of moveable type by the 1450s, which eliminated the laborious book-copying process used previously by monastic scribes. And with Gutenberg's system in place, Venetian publisher Aldus Manutius was able to quickly popularize printed books by the late 1400s.

As text becomes easier and cheaper to produce, more copies of it get made. While Gutenberg's Bible was printed in a small edition of 180, Manutius's books were printed by the thousands. More copies need more readers and most readers like their text to be portable. While Gutenberg's heavy Bible was best read at a library table, Manutius's slim editions could be easily slipped in a saddlebag or vest pocket. You went to Gutenberg's books, but Manutius's books went with you. As increasingly numerous and increasingly portable copies of texts found their way into the world, they found new readers to buy them and they spread literacy with them.

In the next two hundred years, text continued to get swifter, more portable, more widely distributed, giving rise to a new form by the late 1600s and early 1700s: the newspaper. By now firmly established in Europe and North America, the newspaper's growth was spurred by a flowering of global trade. Access to time-sensitive political news and financial information was increasingly important, and publishers strived to invent new technologies to meet demand. By the early 1800s, as a result of the industrial revolution, the *Times of London* boasted a press that could print a daily broadsheet at 1100 pages a minute, with a circulation to match. By 1830, presses could print on both sides, saving paper, and the "penny press" was born, offering a product that cost 1/6 of the competition's price. Once again, more copies, cheaper copies, smaller copies meant better distribution of costs, and, as a result, ever more readers.

As the cost of mechanically reproducing text fell, the cost of circulating printed texts fell. According to historian N.N. Feltes, the fruits of the industrial revolution — "paved roads, fast coaches, canals, and, eventually, railways" — made it easier to deliver printed texts to their intended audiences. Around the same time, firms that were known as "booksellers" shifted away from selling each other's books and instead re-established themselves as something more like the publishers we know today, wholesaling their own books, but not, Feltes points out, "anybody else's." This concentration of efforts along a single product line did the trick. After all, it does no good to deliver more printed texts to readers if the demand from those readers isn't stimulated at the same time. Some of these same fruits of industry that cheapened the cost of circulating text were used to drive up demand: traveling salesmen were dispatched bearing cheap printed prospectuses and catalogs to hawk a publisher's wares to a more geographically dispersed audience. On those same trains and ferryways were newspapers, streaming from the center of cities and featuring paid advertisements for books and, increasingly, the free publicity of literary reviews.

Books were cheaper than ever to print, and they were cheaper, faster, and easier to distribute. Readers were increasingly aware of new books on the market, and, because of the new industrial age, they were increasingly able to find leisure time to read them, all of which set the stage for a flourishing of the Victorian appreciation and consumption of literature. Costs fell, distribution climbed, demand grew, but one variable was not improving. It still took authors a long time to produce a text, and, even given their best efforts, there was no guarantee to publishers that an author's work would ignite the passions of an ever-widening public.

Again, it was the newspaper to the rescue — or, rather, the technology developed for the newspaper industry. When a greedy and disapproving British government levied a tax on the newspaper industry starting in 1712, it grew over the next century to 4 pence. Printers began producing pamphlets instead. Through a loophole in the tax law, pamphlets, which were larger than newspapers, weren't taxed and were only marginally more expensive than newspapers to print. While few people could afford the daily cost of 6 pence for a 1- or 2-page newspaper, the occasional cost of a 12-pence (1-shilling) pamphlet of 48 pages seemed justified. Printers naturally gravitated toward pamphlets and began filling the additional space required with more advertising, fiction, and other miscellaneous content.

Some printers realized that this new content was more popular than their news coverage and began recruiting proven authors to publish exclusively in the pamphlet format. Generally these small booklets were called "numbers" or "serials," but more specifically they evolved into a range of forms including the part-issue, the three-volume, the bimonthly, and the magazine-serial. Effectively, the serial unbound the singular book, reformulating it into a series of installments. In doing so, it instantly appealed to publishers and booksellers by lowering risk. If an author's work did not appeal to the public, at least publishers had not put all their eggs in one basket. But the serial also increased demand: not only were serials more reasonably-priced than newspapers, but they were far less expensive than books. The serial was a book on an installment plan. They were wildly collectable — and more portable, too. Best of all, the serial kept a writer in the public eye for months, even years, at a time, as a story's suspense built chapter by chapter. Now, the time it took an author to compose a text was not a liability, but an asset.

Charles Dickens was an author who'd proven himself in the newspaper trade. Starting in 1833 with his first story, "A Dinner at Poplar Walk," his short essays, or "sketches" of everyday life, had proven popular with the general public. Dickens's first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, debuted as a part-issue in 1836, around the same time the House of Commons voted to reduce its tax on newspapers to just 1p. With this final regulatory barrier minimized, all the elements needed for a vigorous mass media were in place: it was time for a runaway hit.

Dickens delivered. The first part-issue of *The Pickwick Papers* was a modest edition of 1000, but, with the introduction in Chapter 10 of Sam Weller, Mr. Pickwick's servant, demand exploded. Working-class Londoners couldn't get enough of Sam's Cockney wit and wisdom. By the end of the serial, Dickens's circulation had expanded 40-fold. The author was a bone fide literary star, and the Victorian appetite for "novels in numbers" was raging. (RG) ■

http://imomus.livejournal.com/496511.html

*Review*

# MUSEUM PIECE

*Farewell etaoin shrdlu*, by David Loeb Weiss. The Museum of Modern Art Circulating Film Library, 1980. 16mm color film. 29 minutes.

July 1, 1978, may have been a ho-hum newsday at *The New York Times* — fighting in Lebanon, a Manhattan explosion, plans for the upcoming Fourth of July — but in the paper's composing room, things were far from routine. On that summer Saturday evening, the next day's early editions of the *Times* were being printed for the last time from hot type cast from molten lead; before the night was through, the changeover to cold type set by electronic computer was final and complete. David Loeb Weiss, a member of the New York Typographical Union and a former proofreader at the *Times* had the foresight to record that historic transition on film, and to ask Carl Schlesinger, a typesetter and an authority on the printing trades who retained *Times* printers in the operation of the new equipment, to narrate the story. This sensitive, unsentimental document is the result.

With the clock on the wall sweeping all too quickly through the fifty-six minutes to the first edition's 9pm deadline, the camera observes the sixty old reliable Linotypes on their final job, revealing in loving detail how molds of letters are cast from 530-degree liquid to form a solid slug of type; how the lines are spaced and spread into columns of full-page newspaper forms on steel tablets, or "printers' stones"; how engravings, cuts, and headlines are made by hand; how page plates or stereotypes, are placed on nine identical presses that reverse the lead image and print right-reading words on the newspaper page; how corrections for the next edition are fixed on the "stones"; and, not least, how typesetting errors are signaled to the proofreader by striking the first twelve keys of the Linotype keyboard, "etaoin shrdlu" — a convention that gives the documentary its title of fond farewell.

The process began with Gutenberg, the narrator reminds us — indeed, the machines at work, soon to be auctioned and cannibalized for parts, are of a kind that has for the past hundred years remained virtually unchanged — and on this night, when the Linotype operator discards the last lead line at the end of the last story and gives his old machine a final pat, when he turns out the lights and closes the door on the suddenly silent room, an era comes to a close. All of the knowledge acquired by the operator in a lifetime of work is now locked in a computer.

But the film is more than an appreciation of the mechanical past, it is also a celebration of the electronic future. Briskly, the camera moves on to the next edition, being put together in lab-like, noise-free, temperature-controlled quarters, where seasoned printers (who have been retrained) orchestrate buttons and magnetic tapes, magically transferring paste-ups to flexible plastic plates on high-speed presses via electronic impulses in a laser beam. If the process seems cold in more ways than one, perhaps it is because the more memorable scenes of personal connection — the page editor and layout man with heads together, coaxing the type into the form; the shop's many deaf printers speaking to one another in sign language; the pride of the operators and "makeups" in meeting the deadline one last time — have come before. Certainly, the leap in production is hot enough: 1,000 lines of type a minute, or more than seventy times the speed of the process it replaced.

Even now, though, in its state of technical obsolescence, the genius of the Linotype concept is no less astonishing than that of its automated successor. And to witness the end of one revolution and the beginning of the next is to be struck anew by the awesome reach of human inventiveness in our urge to communicate. (GC) ■

*This article first appeared in the Columbia Journalism Review, July/August, 1982.*

Something funny I have noticed, perhaps you have noticed it, too. You know what futurists and online-ists and cut-out-the-middle-man-ists and Davos-ists and deconstructionists of every stripe want for themselves? They want exactly what they tell you you no longer need, you pathetic, overweight, disembodied Kindle reader. They want white linen tablecloths on trestle tables in the middle of vineyards on soft blowy afternoons. (*You* can click your bottle of wine online. Cheaper.) They want to go shopping on Saturday afternoons on the Avenue Victor Hugo; they want the pages of their *New York Times* all kind of greasy from croissant crumbs and butter at a café table in Aspen; they want to see their names in hard copy in the "New Establishment" issue of *Vanity Fair*; they want a nineteenth-century bookshop; they want to see the plays in London, they want to float down the Nile in a felucca; they want five-star bricks and mortar and DO NOT DISTURB signs and views of the park. And in order to reserve these things for themselves they will plug up your eyes and your ears and your mouth, and if they can figure out a way to pump episodes of *The Simpsons* through the darkening corridors of your brain as you expire (ADD TO SHOPPING CART), they will do it.

From "Final Edition" by Richard Rodriguez, *Harper's magazine*, November 2009

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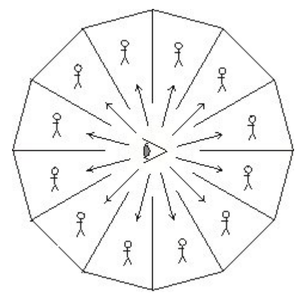
*How Media Masters Reality #1*

# PICTURE AN IMAGE OF A PHOTOGRAPH

TIVOLI, NY — Picture a man caught in a dispute between drug gangs in Mexico. This image appeared in *Time* magazine, August 28, 2008. He is lying dead in the street, surrounded by a group of onlookers. Bystanders are taking photos of the body with video, digital, phone-cameras. The number of people in the picture taking a photo of the body almost outnumbers those who are not. To understand the economy of this image requires knowing that a piece of information (a photograph) is a unit of exchange in which our attention, and the attention of others, is accorded value. We don't know the fate of these pictures but some likely have been posted on the Internet to become tokens of exchange on blogs, on-line communities and chat lines. We are all involved in an information economy each time we log on to MySpace, send an e-mail of wherever the circulation of information heightens our visibility. The image-economy is founded on our activity as self-performing subjects, feeding back and exchanging information in order to improve our stake within this media feedback loop — "the social studio".



In 1785 the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham designed the panopticon, a prison that allowed an observer to observe all prisoners without the prisoners being able to tell whether they are being watched. Although many were built as prisons Bentham envisioned many other uses for the panopticon, as French Philosopher Michel Foucault suggests: "[Bentham] thought that the panopticon apparatus could be used to construct metaphysical experiments on children. Imagine taking foundlings, right from birth and putting them in a panoptic system, even before they have begun to talk or be aware of anything . . . different things could be taught to different children in different cells; we could teach no matter what to no matter which child, and we would see the result. In this way we could teach children in completely different systems, or even systems incompatible with each other; some would be taught the Newtonian system and then others would be got to believe that the moon was made of cheese . . . and then we could wait again until their twentieth year when they would be put together for discussions."

Bentham's idea of the totally engineered subject (and engineered society) didn't come out of the blue, the notion that the blank slate of the human soul could be inscribed with any number of designs had been posited by Aristotle — and the notion of the *tabula rasa* was re-inscribed into Christian society by the Christian philosopher Thomas Aquinas.

The figure of the "foundling," the individual picked from obscure poverty or feral isolation to be formed or re-formed as an economically valuable unit, can also join the ranks of experimental subjects in the social studio. Linnaeus introduced the term *Homo Ferus* in his encyclopaedic work *Systeme Naturae* in 1758. Taking his cue from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he observed that children raised by animals take on the social characteristics of their foster parents (wolves, bears, sheep etc.) If a child raised in the society of animals assumes the attributes of that society, children raised in different human societies will assume the attributes of those humans. It was in the enlightenment that the notion that an individual could be radically fashioned reached the level of *the social experiment* in which study of a particular case, removed from its defining context, can provide insights into the operations of the *general*.

The battleground for this concept was, in one instance, the body of Kasper Hauser (1828) who until the age of sixteen had been chained to the wall of a windowless cellar near Nuremburg. Following Hauser's discovery, this child untouched by any civilizing influences of society, was taken into the patronage of the kindly rationalist Feuerbach and subjected to an enlightened education, and was later passed on to the aristocrat Earl Stanhope, who displayed him as a remarkable instance of the *civilized* man, the blank slate of Hauser, it would seem, could be inscribed with the most genteel script.

The emphasis on the importance of learning runs from Benthem's panopticon, through the behaviorism of John Broadus Watson who proclaimed to the *Psychological Review* in 1917, "The time has come when psychology must discard all reference to consciousness [ . . . ] Its sole task is the prediction and control of behavior; and introspection can form no part of its method." Prediction and control now become dominant figures in the social studio, the emphasis centered on the performance of the organism maximized through *learning*.

But Bentham's proposed experiment resembles the modern social psychology experiment in another key respect: it involves the containment of its subjects within controlled conditions (the *mis en scene* of the experiment) a characteristic which was transferred effortlessly to the famous experiments of Stanley Milgram (in his infamous Obedience to Authority experiment) and Philip Zimbardo (with the Stanford Prison experiment) and later still these modalities provided the structure, and were transferred wholesale, along with the teams of psychologist advisers, to the inheritor of the behavioral psychology experiment, the reality TV show.

Bentham's notion of the panopticon as a prototype-behavioral laboratory brings together a number of ideas which were *awaiting their experiment*, ideas that would become axiomatic in the 20th century's positivist, scientific understanding of itself — that social reality (and reality per-se) is constructed, that society creates (forms and reforms) the subject, that the reformed subject could increase efficiency and utility within society (achieving the greatest good for the greatest number on the one hand and giving maximum economic performance on the other) and that the subject has no *innate* characteristics.

Bentham also provides the prototype for a cybernetic view of society. The education of Bentham's hypothetical children, in which radically *different systems* could be taught, resembles a program in two respects: in common parlance as an education program, but also, as a program of computation in which the children receive information and exchange information with other programmed subjects. Bentham's children can be understood as information machines operating within an information network — the shared knowledge they produce and reproduce depends on the data put into the machine — (the moon is made of cheese, $2 \times 2 = 5$). In line with cybernetic thinking Bentham's social studio is an information ecology. It is the feedback between the individual parts of the system within the social studio that maintain the system.

The term *cybernetics* (the study of feedback systems) was coined by Norbert Wiener, author of *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and Machine* (1948). Wiener joined MIT in 1919 and was one of the founders, along with Julian Bigalow and Vannever Bush, of the Radiation Lab, or Rad Lab, at MIT (a facility which provided the model for MIT's famous Media Lab). Just prior to The United States' entry into World War II Wiener worked on the development of the "anti-aircraft predictor" from which he developed a notion that feedback systems are the organizing system for the universe itself. From 1940, and with a staff of over 3000 researchers from across a number of disciplines, the Rad Lab developed a number of military projects, including (SAGE) Semi-Automated Ground Environment, an anti-aircraft system, and the Atlas and Polaris missile systems. What is remarkable about the Rad Lab, particularly in relation to our subject, the social studio, is the manner in which this research was conducted. The Rad Lab used a non-hierarchical management style, an epistemological trading zone in which knowledge across disciplines such as chemistry, mathematics, and physics was exchanged. The Rad Lab became the model for interdisciplinary research projects in commercial and academic institutions.

This notion of a non-hierarchical research environment was itself a cybernetic model. As Ted Turner has observed: "Wiener believed that biological, mechanical, and information systems, along with the emerging digital computers, could be seen as analogs of each other. All controlled themselves by sending and receiving messages and, metaphorically at least, all are simply patterns of ordered information in a world otherwise tending toward entropy and noise." By the early '50s such decentralized, system-oriented forms of thought were being played out as artistic experiments at Black Mountain College in North Carolina by John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, and their students.

Experiments which Allan Kaprow, who had studied with Cage at the New School for Social Research, was to christen Happenings in 1958. The happening is a system in which artists, audience, and environment worked together to produce a work, shifting the emphasis away from the action of the action painters to the artistic production of the social studio, and also transforming the work of art into the modalities of the experiment, into the logic of the network.

It was from the same milieu that events like the Trips Festival emerged in the mid-sixties. Here the technologies of electronics and LSD served as tools to expand human potential. Echoing media theorist Marshall McLuhan's idea that each technological innovation represents an extension of human potential, here we see the body itself as part of a media ecology. Ant Farm's *Enviroman*, (1969), always with a dash of irony, used image technology and something called the "alpha computer" within a simulated environment to direct their subjects to an "electronic oasis." This project, strobing the figure and ground of the social psychology laboratory and the hippie commune, might be understood as a staging of the human being as sensory information node, where the technologies of electrification and computation pursue the same ends as the technologies of mind expanding drugs.

Counterculture yellow-pages *The Whole Earth Catalog*, was inspired by the cybernetic theories of Norbert Wiener, and, like the Trips Festival, was initiated by Stewart Brand. The catalog served as a resource with which commune members in the 1960s could build a network (70,000 people in the U.S are estimated to have done so between 1967 and 1970). All over America people renounced the system in order to conduct their own experiments in their own social studios, keen to make a new start in re-programmed societies.

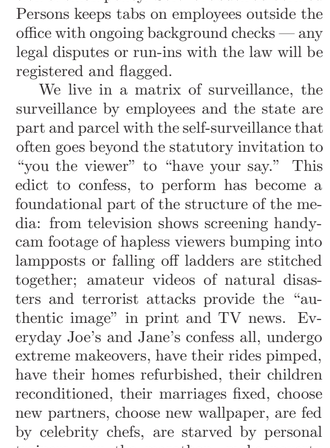
It was out of *The Whole Earth Catalog*, and the network that grew around the publication that the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link, or WELL, emerged. WELL, an early BBS — and one of the first social networking sites, was one of the first instances in which a community was sold to itself as a commodity, exchanging information with itself — a media ecology, a system as servomechanism, self-regulating its behavior through feedback.

It would also seem that "the society of the spectacle" has given way to a society of self-performance, in which surveillance is no less real but is this time non-scopic forms of surveillance (GPS systems, credit card checks, the code of DNA used to mark identity, etc.) and much of the surveillance relies on self-surveillance and self-regulation.

In 2005 the WELL's contemporary equivalent MySpace was sold to News International for $580 million. Murdoch was buying a constituency of self-performing subjects in the feedback loop of an online community. Evidence of the blurring with the corporate and the personal abound: Xero, for instance, is a software program that tracks workers through GPS technology in company phones, (so if you phone in sick and head for the beach, make sure you don't take your mobile with you). A recent survey by the Center for Business Ethics at Bently College (U.S.) found that 9 out of 10 employers observe their employees' electronic behavior, and a recent study by the American Management Association and ePolicy Institute ascertained 76% of employers watch employees surf the web and 36% track content, keystrokes and the time spent at the keyboard, and 38% of employees hire staff to sift through email. A report by Forrester Research and Proofprint found that 32% of employers fired workers between June 2005 and June 2006 for violation of email policy. Software such as Verified Persons keeps tabs on employees outside the office with ongoing background checks — any legal disputes or run-ins with the law will be registered and flagged.

We live in a matrix of surveillance, the surveillance by employees and the state are part and parcel with the self-surveillance that often goes beyond the statutory invitation to "you the viewer" to "have your say." This edict to confess, to perform has become a foundational part of the structure of the media: from television shows screening handycam footage of hapless viewers bumping into lampposts or falling off ladders are stitched together; amateur videos of natural disasters and terrorist attacks provide the "authentic image" in print and TV news. Everyday Joe's and Jane's confess all, undergo extreme makeovers, have their rides pimped, have their homes refurbished, their children reconditioned, their marriages fixed, choose new partners, choose new wallpaper, are fed by celebrity chefs, are starved by personal trainers, run the marathon, make poverty history, bungee-jump wearing a red nose and clown's shoes. In this arena of the information economy we increasingly use media to police ourselves, maintain ourselves, judge ourselves against others, regulate our behavior, measure ourselves. In an era when direct government intervention is despised (I don't need handouts from Big Government!) new technologies of self-control grew up to replace them (I don't want to end up like the trailer trash on *Judge Judy*!). As a greater part of our lives is taken up with *the work of watching and the work of being watched*, it seems the feedback loop is tightening. (SR) ■

*A shorter version of this text first appeared in* Control Magazine *18, 2009. The phrase Social Studio is taken from the title of an exhibition by artist Artur Zmijewski at BAK, Utrecht. November 2008.*




# PUBLICK OCCURRENCES BOTH FORREIGN AND DOMESTICK

BOSTON — IT is designed, that the Countrey shall be furnished once a moneth (or if any Glut of *Occurrences* happen, oftener,) with an Account of such considerable things as have arrived unto our Notice.

In order hereunto, the Publisher will take what pains he can to obtain a *Faithful Relation* of all such things; and will particularly make himself beholden to such Persons in *Boston* whom he Knows to have been for their own use the diligent Observers of such matters.

That which is herein proposed, is, First, *That Memorable Occurrents of Divine Providence* may not be neglected or forgotten, as they too often are. *Secondly*, That people every where may better understand the Circumstances of Publique Affairs, both abroad and at home; which may not only direct their *Thoughts* at all times, but at some times also to assist their *Businesses* and *Negotiations*.

*Thirdly*, That some thing may be done towards the *Curing*, or at least the *Charming*, of that *Spirit of Lying*, which prevails amongst us wherefore nothing shall be entered, but what we have reason to believe is true, repairing to the best fountains for our Information. And when there appears any *material mistake* in any thing that is collected, it shall be *corrected* in the next.

Moreover, the Publisher of these *Occurrences* is willing to engage, whereas there are many *False Reports*, maliciously made, and spread among us, if any well-minded person will be at pains to trace any such *false Report* so far as to find out and Convict the *First Raiser of it*, he will in this Paper (unless just Advice be given to the contrary) expose the Name of such person, as *A malicious Raiser of a false Report*. It is suppos'd that none will dislike this Proposal, but such as intend to be guilty of so villainous a Crime. ■

A Reconsideration of the Newspaper Industry in 5 Easy Allusions

*Trying to find a comfortable position (from* Air Made Visible: A Visual Reader on Bruno Munari*, Verlag Lars Muller, 2001)*


Tamara Shopsin

# CIRCULATION + 2.7 % / - 0.2 %

MID-ATLANTIC — My 5-ft. 7.5-in., 126-lb. frame is being carried at 566 mph at an altitude of 45,000 feet, in a 231-foot-long Boeing 747 flying from London to New York. I am buckled into a 45 cm wide international economy class seat, watching a movie on the 13 × 20 cm seatback in-flight entertainment screen in front of me. The movie is called "State of Play," a thriller starring Ben Affleck, Russell Crowe, and Rachel McAdams. The plot: old-school *Washington Globe* journalist (Crowe) and new-school *Washington Globe* blogger (McAdams) investigate links between squeaky-clean congressman (Affleck) and dirty corporate murder. Old print newshound is skeptical of young blogger's skills as journalist, but together they crack story.

I reach the closing scene, in which Crowe is typing up his copy, blowing the lid on the whole affair. He finishes his final sentence, and in a symbolic gesture of new-found respect for his blogging sidekick, puts her name next to his in the by-line, and asks her to hit the "enter" button on the keyboard that will send their piece to print. The credits roll over a slow, elegantly shot sequence following the subsequent journey of this front page, above-the-fold story: the plates being made, rollers inked up, paper taken from the stack and fed into the press, the news printed, the day's edition being cut, folded, bundled and shipped out across the country.

I enjoy this sequence. It's as if all those movies of journalists and newspapers have been boiled down into one scene: *Citizen Kane*, *The Front Page*, *Deadline USA*, *Scandal Sheet*, *Big News*, *Copy*, *I Cover the Waterfront*, *Confirm or Deny*, *Foreign Correspondent*, *Sweet Smell of Success*, *Night Editor*, *All the President's Men*, *The Killing Fields*, *Salvador*, *The Pelican Brief*, the final season of *The Wire*. I am a sucker for their romance; the romance of the tenacious journalist writing through the night to file his copy on time; the hardworking, ink-slinging printers tending the presses of freedom and truth; newspaper vans, emblazoned with the masthead, hurtling through the streets, delivering their paper bundles to newsagents and street vendors. The romance of ritual and education; of sitting at breakfast with the folks and listening to Dad grumble about the state of the nation as he reads the paper over his cereal and coffee. Or of reading it on the daily traipse to and from work — the ink on your hands, the fine art of folding a broadsheet so it can be read in the confines of a packed commuter train. Or maybe leafing lazily through the Sunday supplements in the snug of a quiet country pub, doodling in the corner of the crossword page, no screen glare or battery life to worry about. And then there's the romance of all those names, of worlds and times, suns and stars, examining, heralding, observing, guarding and posting news for us: *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Evening Standard*, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *El Pais*, *La Repubblica*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Times of India*, *Asahi Shimbun*, *International Herald Tribune*.

This is the subtext of sentimentality that tear-stains every report on the demise of print media — all those auto-obituaries, in which newspapers track their own descent into obsoletion with stats and sums. Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

*Washington Post* circulation down 2.7% to 751,871! *New York Times* up 0.2% to 1,136,433! What they're really yearning for is a world in which there's a physicality to news, where it is typed out from notebooks by Dustin Hoffman and Robert Redford, and brought to you by lovable street urchins in tweed newsboy caps. A world in which the news is finite and for consumption in one sitting; the *International Herald Tribune* is read over an espresso in Paris, not *The Huffington Post* scrolled through and refreshed every 30 seconds on a laptop, over a tall half-skinny latte-frappe-chino in Williamsburg.

The credits end and the 13 × 20 cm seatback in-flight entertainment screen in front of me reverts back to the Skymap, reminding me we're still somewhere high above the ocean. I look out of the window and down at the Atlantic. My mind drifts back to last year, to the South China Sea, heading north towards Taiwan.

It's mid-April 2008. My 5-ft. 7.5-in., 126-lb. frame is being carried at 23 knots at an altitude of approximately 20 feet, on the Ital Contessa, a 1096-foot-long container ship en route from Hamburg to Shanghai. I've been at sea for nearly five weeks, and I have never seen so many ships before — containers, coasters, ro-ros, reefers, bulk carriers, tankers of all sizes. The seas are as busy as motorways. Those heading east are high in the water, their containers empty. Those sailing west to Europe are sunk low in the sea, their cargo heavy with products from China, South Korea, and Taiwan.

I think about what's in those containers bound for Europe. I imagine the vessels laden with laptops, phones, desktop computers, mp3 players, and printers. I remember a news report, a few months previously, describing how two underwater cables in the Mediterranean were damaged —the 17,400 mile-long FLAG (Fiber-Optic Link Around the Globe) and 12,427 mile SEA-ME-WE-4 (South East Asia-Middle East-West Europe 4) cables — severing internet services for large parts of the Middle East and India. I've not had a mobile phone signal or internet access since I boarded the ship in the U.K. I think about the resultant dumb physicality of the phone and laptop I've carried with me, and how so much of the technology that allows online media to exist still has to rely upon inanimate lumps of plastic, steel, and wire for delivery and distribution. Back at 45,000 feet, I wonder if news only really moves at the same speed humans do; my 5-ft. 7.5-in., 126-lb. frame and 25 × 36 × 3 cm, 5.6-lb. MacBook, both hurtling along at 566 mph. I begin to think about the passionate futurist sentimentality of online news and ebook advocates. They have their own romance of reportage, that of a brave new first date with technology. Their romance is with a putative democracy of global IT accessibility allowing a world of citizen journalists to speak truth to power. Of Twitter feeds and smart-phones bypassing transnational boundaries, bringing instant news of election protests in Iran, or police brutality at anti-G20 rallies in London. Of a new form of journalist, as adept at constructing reports with the written word as they are with the latest digital A/V gear. Of direct interaction with readers shaping stories or a title's news agenda. Of lower overheads and full-spectrum syndication. Of not only news but whole books downloaded to a single e-reader device. It's as if all those science fiction tales about instantaneous global communication have come true: *When the Sleeper Wakes* (a networked world), *Men Like Gods* (wi-fi), *Things to Come* and *Star Trek* (mobile communications), *Earth* (citizen journalism), *Minority Report* (e-newspapers).

But like any good sci-fi yarn, there's a dark side. The blogger (and print journalist) Zone Styx Travelcard recently wrote: "I sometimes try to imagine a culture without artefacts — the endpoint of digital in which no-one prints a book, buys a newspaper or magazine, presses a CD (let alone a record), and wonder when it will arrive. And how I will make a living. Then I remember that in climatechange a hundred years' time, humanity will be reduced to small pockets of hunter-gatherer-fisher-farmers, scraping out an existence on small temperate islands, as continents become uninhabitable, scorched wastelands. Assuming the climate stabilizes and these surviving communities start to send out sorties to the old hubs of civilization, as they gather together relics from the Old World there will presumably be a huge lacuna. The cultural fossil record will start to go blank from the turn of the century onwards, and with no internet, no electricity, the migration to digital will appear as a kind of universal amnesia. These survivor-explorer archaeologists from the future will find books, records, magazines, CDs, but they will be decreasing to a trickle as the years go by, while even if they manage to fire a computer up, there will be no distant Google server-farm to supply them. The newspaper auto-obituarists lament rather than capitalize on their own physicality. The online partisans run scared from theirs. (DF) ■


Quinton Oliver Jones

# CULTURE TODAY BECOMING MASS AFFAIR

MILAN — Today it has become necessary to demolish the myth of the "star" artist who only produces masterpieces for a small group of ultra-intelligent people. It must be understood that as long as art stands aside from the problems of life it will only interest a very few people. Culture today is becoming a mass affair, and the artist must step down from his pedestal and be prepared to make a sign for a butcher's shop (if he knows how to do it). The artist must cast off the last rags of romanticism and become active as a man among men, well up in present-day techniques, materials, and working methods. Without losing his innate aesthetic sense he must be able to respond with humility and competence to the demands his neighbors may make of him.

The designer of today re-establishes the long-lost contact between art and the pubic, between living people and art as a living thing. Instead of pictures for the drawing-room, electric gadgets for the kitchen. There should be no such thing as art divorced from life — with beautiful things to look at and hideous things to use. If what we use every day is made with art, and not thrown together by chance of caprice, then we shall have nothing to hide.

Anyone working in the field of design has a hard task ahead of him — to clear his neighbor's mind of all preconceived notions of art and artists, notions picked up at schools where they condition you to think one way for the whole of your life, without stopping to think that life changes — and today more rapidly than ever. It is therefore up to us designers to make known our working methods in clear and simple terms, the methods we think are the truest, the most up-to-date, the most likely to resolve our common aesthetic problems. Anyone who uses a properly designed object feels the presence of an artist who has worked for *him*, bettering his living conditions and encouraging him to develop his taste and sense of beauty.

When we give a place of honor in the drawing-room to an ancient Etruscan vase which we consider beautiful — well proportioned and made with precision and economy, we must also remember that the vase once had an extremely common use. Most probably it was used for cooking-oil. It was made by a designer of those times, when art and life went hand in hand and there was no such thing as a work of art to look at and just any old thing to use. (BM) ■

*This was one of a series of articles written by Bruno Munari about design that appeared in the Milanese daily paper,* Il Giorno.

# HEADLESS BODY, TOPLESS BAR

GLASGOW — David Simon, author of *The Wire*, lost no time getting to the point at a Senate Commerce Committee in May this year. Testifying on the future of journalism he pegged this slow death to the incestuous nature of the internet: "The internet . . . leeches that reporting from mainstream news publications, whereupon aggregating websites and bloggers contribute little more than repetition, commentary and froth. Meanwhile, readers acquire news from the aggregators and abandon its point of origin — namely the newspapers themselves."

The ongoing death of journalism debate has made us all aware, albeit slowly, of the economic damage inflicted on newspapers in recent times. The argument has been well made that the erosion of news collecting leads to the erosion of democracy. Investigative journalists are the watchmen of civil liberties and good models of practice in government. Those investigations require sustained financial resources and a sound infrastructure. In a report issued in October this year by The Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism — "The Reconstruction of American Journalism" — authors Leonard Downie, Jr. and Michael Schudson argue that "We would be reminded that there is a need not just for news but for newsrooms. Something is gained when news reporting, analysis, and investigation are pursued collaboratively by stable organizations that can facilitate regular reporting by experienced journalists, support them with money, logistics, and legal services, and present their work to a large public."

Simon, Downie and Schudson make worthy points and all of them go on to make the case for innovative economic models that will sustain news gathering. But this still begs a much more basic question — why do we read newspapers? What if the readers' primary concern isn't actually "news"?

Let's take a detour. This is an extract from *Ava: Life in the Afternoon* in which journalist Rex Reed records an interview with movie legend Ava Gardner:

"Ava, I sure loved you last night in *The Bible*. You were really terrific, darlin'."

"Crap!" Ava pours another cognac. "I don't want to hear another word about that goddam' *Bible*. I didn't believe it and I didn't believe that Sarah bit I played for a minute. How could anybody stay married for a hundred years to *Abraham*, who was one of the biggest bastards who ever lived?"

"Oh, darlin', she was a wonderful woman, that Sarah."

"She was a jerk!"

"Oh darlin', ya shouldn't talk like that. God will hear ya. Don'tcha believe in God?" Larry joins us on the floor and bites into a hot dog, spilling mustard on his tie.

"Hell, no." The Ava eyes flash.

"I pray to him every night, darlin'. Sometimes he answers, too."

"He never answered me, baby. He was never around when I needed him. He did nothing but screw up my whole life since the day I was born. Don't tell *me* about *God*! I know all about that bugger!"

Reed included the interview in his first book, *Do You Sleep in the Nude?* (1968). There is an energy and freshness to the work that still shocks. At the time, Reed's style was seen to overturn the carefully scripted scenarios of publicists protecting their stars. It was just one salvo in the style revolution that rippled through journalism (even *Time* magazine in 1968 felt able to report Jacqueline Susann's remark that "If I had an affair with Jack the Ripper the offspring would be Rex Reed.")

The point here is simple. Reed's interview is a blast. It doesn't matter whether we get the "news" on a second-rate movie or an update on a star doomed to mediocre roles. Instead, we get prose that pumps blood into the author's characters. There is a wildness in the dialogue and a ruthless eye directing the overall portrait of Ava Gardner that demonstrates just what great journalism can do. Ironically, it reads so strongly today because publicists have reclaimed the interview format and drained it of vitality. But it is that wit, energy and ear for language that we crave in journalism.

Another detour. *The Guardian*'s TV critic Nancy Banks-Smith reviews a documentary on an aging British bullfighter ("Frank, 66, with a quadruple heart bypass and a titanium knee") and the BBC's history drama, *The Tudors*:

"The bullring in Andalusia was like a fading variety theatre. Frank was on first, which suggested he was the juggler, not the crooner. The young bull was slim-legged and deep-bodied. Frank, sporty all his life, has the rangy build of a cowboy. After the first few flourishing passes, the bull, wearing a bleeding necklace of banderillas, stood foursquare and thought. Frank raised his sword and stopped being funny.

When I looked back, the bull had sunk down as if dreadfully tired. This seemed to satisfy the crowd, who waved anything white. Frank gave a bristling press conference. 'As long as I want to do it, leave me alone and let me get on with it.' Perhaps the questions had not been to his taste.

A new series of *The Tudors* was three times as long and 10 times as tedious. Henry now has a good queen and a bad leg, which make him very testy, but, luckily, his girlfriend is sympathetic: 'Poor you, your Majesty.' There was a lot of what I think of as sat-nav drama: 'Where is Salisbury?' 'Suffolk's not far from Newark.' 'Pontefract is the gateway to the south!' Peter O'Toole, who used to be Pope, seems to have jacked in the job, and who would blame him."

It might be hard to find a more ephemeral corner of journalism than TV reviews. Certainly, there is no news involved. Most definitely it bears little relevance to the high-flown concerns about the future authority of the Fourth Estate. But it is a moment of knowing pleasure and that shouldn't be underestimated.

It is a more complex transaction between writer and reader than it first appears. The review stands on its own and it doesn't matter whether or not we've seen the programs Banks-Smith is analysing (an implicit indictment of TV itself). The strength of the piece lies in the play of language and in the assumed communal knowledge of television's formulas. The writer's skill allows her to layer the review with elements of critique, observation, self-reflection, sympathy and wit. The reader responds on many levels to this particular piece and, within the context of *The Guardian*, on a more general level of anticipation and familiarity with this writer's frequent columns.

Perhaps ephemeral as it may seem, the review could only afford to float so lightly on the surface of popular culture precisely because of the wider economics of the newspaper. A freelance journalist could not take the chance of appearing so inconsequential in case the piece was mistakenly perceived as genuinely unimportant. Equally, a writer in the blogosphere could not write so knowingly because the sense of a regular, known audience would be absent.

Banks-Smith's piece relies to a much larger extent than it first seems on the entire edifice of *The Guardian*, the collective sensibility of all of the writers and editors involved. And the recognition of this may be what is missing in the current analyses of the plight of the newspaper. What if it's not the news that attracts us but the *writing*? What if it's the *collective* experience of audience and journalists rather than hard facts? And what if it's the supposed marginalia that creates reader loyalty rather than the big stories? (FM) ■

*Continued in the next edition of* TF/LN.

*Writing desk of Charles Dickens as found in the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature at the New York Public Library (Photograph Jason Fulford)*

# LARGE HADRON COLLIDER EXPECTED TO FAIL DUE TO BACKWARDS CAUSATION, MASSIVE ELEMENTARY PARTICLE PREDICTED PLUS STANDARD MODEL AND COLLIDING BEAM SYNCHROTRON PARTICLE ACCELERATOR EXPLAINED

GENEVA — If you've ever stood too close to the edge of a subway platform and deliberately turned to face the oncoming train as it hurtles into the station, then you understand the visceral thrill elicited by the prospect of mortal collision.

You also grasp the basic idea behind the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), located approximately 100 meters under the Franco-Swiss border near Geneva, Switzerland. In a ring-shaped tunnel 27-kilometers in circumference, scientists plan to accelerate atomic particles to velocities approaching the speed of light, then force them into head-on collisions.

Like you, particle physicists are interested in finding out what happens when things are smashed together at high speed inside of a tube. In scientific parlance, this is called an "event."

Unlike you, most of the physicists involved in the LHC project are not dissuaded from experimentation by the possibility of mortal consequence, which is generally considered relatively slight, compared, for example, with chance of death from high-speed convergence with a train.

Two well-respected physicists, Holger B. Nielsen of the Niels Bohr Institute, Denmark, and Masao Ninomiya of the Okayama Institute for Quantum Physics and the Yukawa Institute for Theoretical Physics, Japan, have put forth a theory in recent months that the failure of the LHC is inevitable, precisely because the universe cannot survive its success.

Nielsen and Ninomiya propose that the probability of backwards causation — that is, influence from the future — be tested by a simple card draw in which the probability of drawing a card combination that would require a restriction on the use of the LHC would be very low.

Nielsen and Ninomiya write, "Our proposal is to test if there should perhaps be such pre-arrangements in nature, that is pre-arrangements that prevent Higgs particle producing machines, such as LHC and SSC, from being functional. Our model . . . begins with a series of not completely convincing, but still suggestive assumptions, that lead to the prediction that large Higgs producing machines should turn out not to work in that history of the universe which is actually being realized."

Nielsen and Ninomiya argue that their experiment would be a success whether or not their theory of backwards causation is correct. If the draw of cards results in a "card combination of the most common type" and thus leads to no restrictions on the use of the LHC, this would be a successful outcome, indicating that the theory that the LHC could cause damage of such profound universal consequence that it would have to be thwarted by a force sent backwards in time, is wrong. If the restriction card combination is drawn, use of the LHC would not be fully implemented, but a theory of backwards causation would be proved, arguably a more significant discovery than those expected to be made from full implementation of the LHC. Furthermore, restricting the use of the LHC as a result of this experiment would perhaps be a more desirable outcome than a political or mechanical failure of the project, which may be inevitable if backwards causation is true, and which could lead to greater setbacks for physics research.

If the LHC might be sufficiently dangerous that it would necessarily be sabotaged by influence from the future, then why risk firing it up?

At stake is the possibility of proving the existence of the Higgs boson, the only particle indicated by the Standard Model of particle physics that has not yet been observed.

The Standard Model is the theory that comes closest to describing the behavior and interaction of all known matter and energy in the universe. So far, the Standard Model establishes common ground for three of the four known fundamental forces — the weak nuclear force, the electromagnetic force, and the aptly named strong nuclear force — and the twelve known elementary particles — six types of quarks and six types of leptons. (The Standard Model cannot be used to predict the mass of particles or to account for the gravitational force.)

A hadron (Greek *hadros* or "heavy") is a particle made of quarks, such as the proton and the neutron. Protons and neutrons comprise the nucleus of atoms, and thus most matter we see. Each consists of three quarks held together by the strong force — equivalent to 1039 times the gravitational force. Only a minute portion of the mass of a hadron is accounted for by fundamental particles, however. The rest of the mass of a hadron is quantified in terms of energy, as explained by Einstein's formula relating mass and energy: $E = mc^2$.

Einstein's equation shows that particles with zero mass, such as photons, must travel at the speed of light and that particles with any mass cannot reach the speed of light. If particles traveling at the speed of light are slowed down, they acquire mass.

Particle physicists predict that a force-carrier particle is responsible for the interactions resulting in the vast majority of the mass in a hadron. According to quantum theory, this particle, the Higgs boson, creates mass through interaction with other particles as they pass through the Higgs field the theorized lattice of invisible Higgs particles that affect different elementary particles in different ways. The Higgs boson, if it exists, would help to explain the origin of mass by helping to explain why, in space, some particles are slowed down from the speed of light, thereby acquiring mass, while other particles, such as photons, are not affected.

In order to detect the presence of the hypothesized Higgs boson, a particle accelerator is used.

Particle accelerator experiments test for the presence of some unknown matter by examining its effects on surrounding, known matter when particles are slammed together at high speed. To understand how this works in principle, imagine you find yourself in a room, blindfolded and restricted from walking. You have at your disposal a basket of tennis balls. By throwing the balls away from you, you can deduce the shape of objects in your surroundings based on how the balls bounce back. In a similar way, physicists detect quantum particles by using other quantum particles as probes.

As massive particles are accelerated to velocities approaching the speed of light, the wavelength at which the particles travel is significantly reduced. And, since matter at the quantum level exists in a wave-particle duality, a shorter wavelength means the size of the particle is effectively reduced. In other words, if you speed a particle-probe up to a very high speed, the wavelength will be made smaller and will register more precisely the effects caused by its slamming into a target.

High-energy particle collisions also result in the production of unstable particles that rapidly decay into other, constituent elementary particles. The presence and behavior of these particles will be detected through the experiments at the LHC.

The LHC is a colliding beam synchrotron particle accelerator. As such, it is designed to propel two beams of particles (either protons or heavy ions — namely lead in the case of the LHC) in opposite directions, towards one another, through circular channels. In a synchrotron accelerator, the force of the collision of the particle beams is compounded by the fact that they are both moving, rather than in a linear accelerator in which one beam is directed through a straight channel toward a stationery target.

The particle beams are accelerated via electromagnetic force conveyed by superconductors located around the tunnel. Other magnets control the direction of the beams, both to maintain their circular path around the tunnel and to direct them to target intersection points where the two beams converge. Here the desired sub-atomic particle collisions will occur.

When fully operational, the LHC will generate close to a billion particle collisions per second at an energy seven times greater than any accelerator previously built, in an underground environment that approximates interplanetary space — in each channel a vacuum of internal pressure ten times less than that on the moon is necessary in order to move the particles along at such high velocities. The channels are kept cool by superfluid helium, at a temperature close to absolute zero. Such extraordinary coolant is necessary, as the collisions, though quite small, generate energy that is 100,000 times hotter than the center of the sun, along with plausible cause for concern.

Is such cosmic alarm warranted?

Time will tell, and very soon. Last weekend, the first beam of lead ions was injected into the LHC since its failure and temporary closure over a year ago. According to the website of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), which built the LHC, "The first proton beam of the year is likely to be injected in mid-November . . . The first high energy collisions will most likely occur at a date after mid-December 2009."

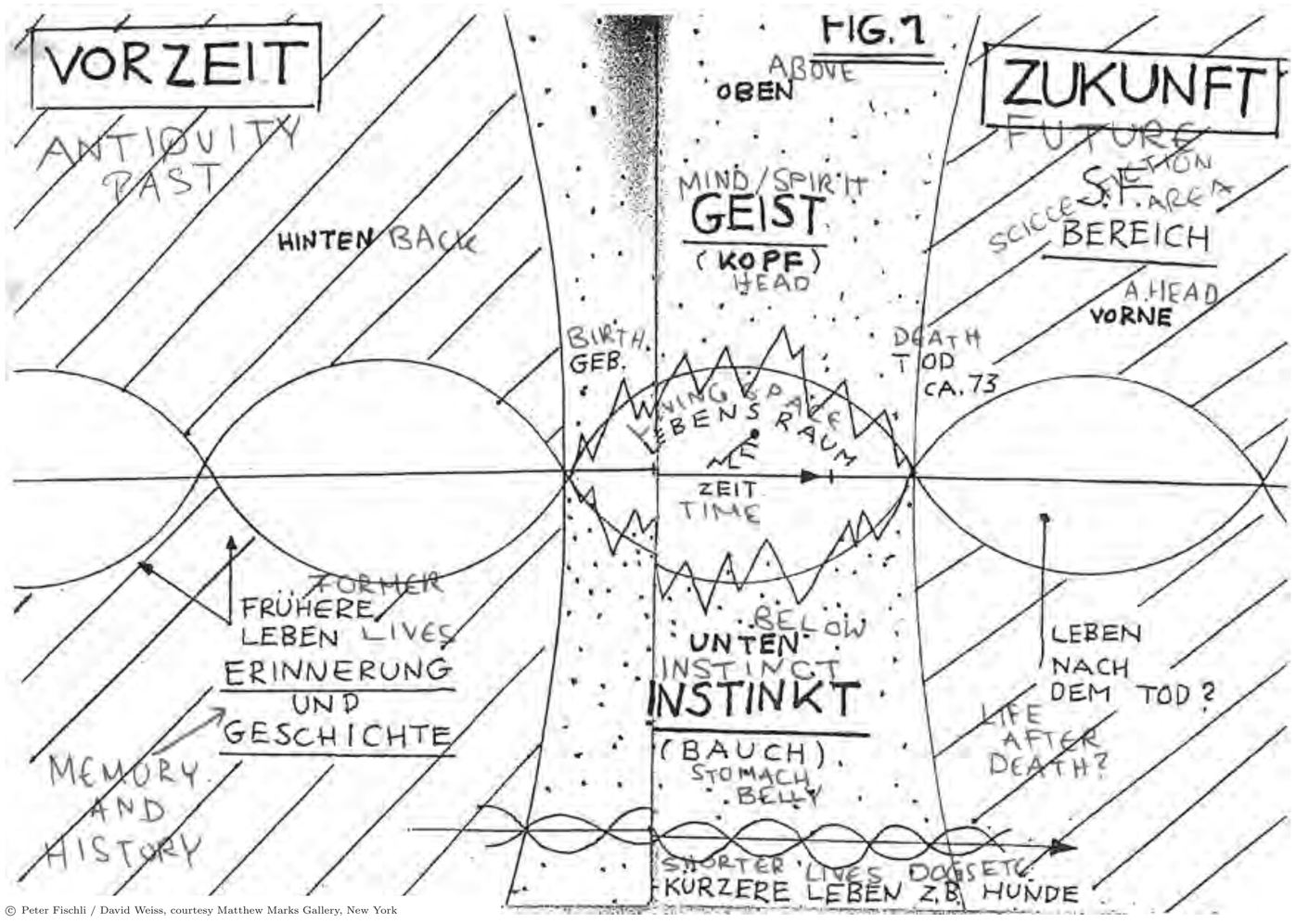
If the predictions of Nielsen and Ninomiya are correct, then we almost certainly have nothing to worry about. (AK) ■


"Well, now," the old man continued, "They seemed quite concerned with how to join one letter to another, as this is what they were taught to practise from an early age. Every written word produced in itself a different puzzle, and like any thing, the more you practised, the quicker it solved itself unconsciously. Some even made a point of never wanting to stop lear ning how to construct writing, as it were. Bit like how we've become conscious of not leaving gaps now that Will's here. Usually it goes without saying that usually we talk and leave out all that that we all know."

"Which is nearly everything, every thing that ever was or is or will be us."

"Hmmbut, well, now, someone arrives amongst us . . . from . . . without our Common Knowledge, and all of a sudden we realise how much we know and what goes unsaid in between. Dick, as the 'kids' you spoke of joined one letter to another, they weren't considering that someone may not share the same ideas as them, or not speak the language they wrote. Too young to realize. Never've picked up a pen to start with."

As the old man continued to tell us about joined-up writing (he called them something like "unbroken scripts") I became aware of the difference between the enthusiasm coming from Dick's mouth, which, though friendly, still made me feel like the stranger being shown around . . . eager . . . to tell me something new and explain everything, since I had allowed him to do so and this man's deep deadpan that passed these ideas on, that came from further back than his mouth. It resonated somewhere more than just in his own lungs and head, more like what you'd hear if you'd hear yourself thinking. (WH) ■




© Peter Fischli / David Weiss, courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

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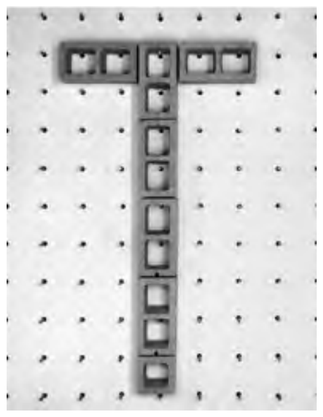
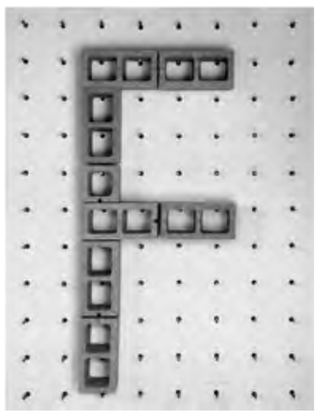
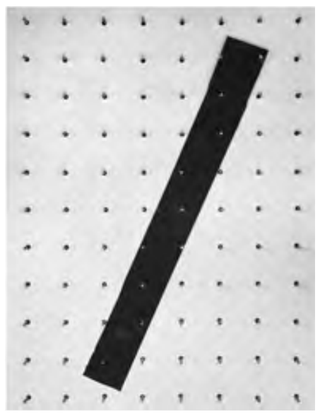
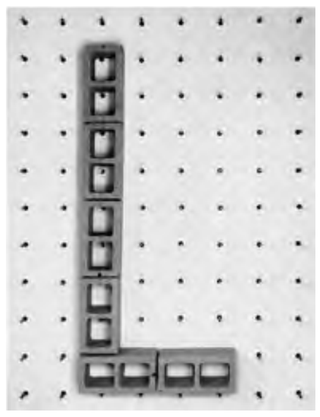
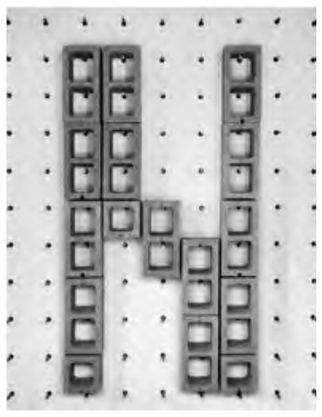
Masthead set in Strike Alphabet courtesy Shannon Ebner.

Performa, a non-profit multidisciplinary arts organization established by RoseLee Goldberg in 2004, is dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth century art and to encouraging new directions in performance for the twenty-first century.

PERFORMA 09



# TWO BLIND MEN DESCRIBE "BLOODY GOOD ELEPHANT"

PORT AUTHORITY — Yesterday's Berlin-based weblog imomus.livejournal.com ran a piece about this paper headed "Newspaper stalked and serenaded by a ghost of its true self." In an ensuing exchange with (Anonymous), iMomus concluded "we're basically two blind men describing an elephant here. The only difference is that I think it's probably a bloody good elephant."

A few days beforehand one of *TF/LN*'s regular correspondents pitched the idea of an interview with renowned sound engineer and polymath Walter Murch, making a case for his inclusion with reference to the following quotation:

"At the basic level, a transition is simply the process of changing from some state A to another state, B. What we should examine carefully is the degree of change, and our awareness of it. Change is happening all the time, though we are not always conscious of it. But without change there is no perception. This is somewhat of a paradox. If you are staring constantly at a static object you would think that nothing is changing, but it turns out your eyeballs are constantly moving, though the movements are so tiny you are unaware of it. You might be stationary, the object you are staring at might be stationary, but your eyeballs are rapidly scanning the image in what are called microsaccades, at the rate of around sixty per second. It is this slight vibration — the eyeballs are moving about 1/180th of a degree — that is keeping your perception alive, scrubbing the image across a slightly different set of rods and cones at the back of your eye. In a way it is kind of like the scanning electron gun in a video monitor. Fascinating experiments have been performed, neutralizing these microsaccades, and the result is that the vision of the subject quickly dims and then disappears entirely, even though his eyes are open and he is in a lighted room. At a very basic perceptual level, then, there has to be some kind of a transition, a change, for us to perceive the world at all."

This statement describes both the point and point-of-view of *TF/LN* with such alarming economy, that we urged our correspondent to follow the lead. As it turned out, she wasn't scheduled to meet Murch, only invited to a dinner that he would also attend.

"If I could ask Murch only one question," she wondered, "what would that be — ?"

"One designed to extract an exact replica of that quotation," we replied.

The after-dinner conversation reportedly lasted four hours. (DS) ■

# TIME CAPTCHA'D FOR GLOBAL GOOD?

PALO ALTO — In 2002, Stanford University launched a "community reading project" called Discovering Dickens, making Dickens's novel *Great Expectations* available in its original part-issue format and asking its alumni and other members of the Stanford community to read along, exactly as Victorians first did, with the serial version that appeared from December 1860 to August 1861. In 2004, as Discovering Dickens readers followed *A Tale of Two Cities*, Stanford joined the newly-formed Google Print Library Project, along with the University of Michigan, Harvard, Oxford, and the New York Public Library. A year later, the program would become know as the Google Books Partner Program, or, more simply, Google Books.

At the launch of Google Books, Google's intent was to scan and make available 15 million books within ten years. By 2008, just four years into the project, 7 million books had already been scanned. When books are scanned, words are automatically converted by Google's Optical Character Recognition software into searchable text. Occasionally there's a problem with the conversion, and Google's OCR software either can't recognize some text or it isn't confident about its conversion, having checked the results against standard grammar rules. The only way to convert these wayward words and phrases is to introduce human eyes into the system. This September, Google did just that with the purchase of reCAPTCHA.

ReCAPTCHA was invented by Luis Von Ahn, who also invented the CAPTCHA, a test that can tell if a user is a human or a computer. CAPTCHAs are effective at blocking spam, verifying accounts, and a variety of other online tasks. Von Ahn's original CAPTCHA presented a randomized set of letters warped in such a way that a computer could not read them, though humans easily could. A few years ago, Von Ahn began thinking of the time people were wasting filling out CAPTCHAs. It bothered him. About 200 million CAPTCHAs are solved everyday. Each one takes about ten seconds of time to solve; collectively people spend more than 150,000 hours a day solving the tests. What if this time could be harnessed for the global good? Von Ahn found a way: instead of random letters, his new system, reCAPTCHA, presents users with two English words, one known and the other unknown. The unknown words are pulled randomly from a pool of scanned words that OCR cannot convert. Users solving the new reCAPTCHAs require the same amount of time as before — ten seconds — to recognize and type these two words. But now, every test produces a human user's confirmation and the digitization of an unknown word. ReCAPTCHA digitizes 45 million words a day, or about 4 million books a year. In addition to the words reCAPTCHA digitizes for Google Books, reCAPTCHA's other significant source of unknown words comes from the archive of the *New York Times*.

The case of reCAPTCHA once again underscores the fact that text takes time. Even the seemingly insignificant act of parroting back some random letters or words occupies us for a collective 150,000 hours everyday. But while the typical production of text is made by one or a few writers producing words serially in sentences one after another, reCAPTCHA has millions of users producing text randomly, separating words from their proper context and syntax and presenting them to us based on their ambiguous form and unlikely transliteration instead. Rather than invention, reCAPTCHA's method is algorithmic. And rather than originality, reCAPTCHA's word generating rationale boils down to one thing: verification.

Verification is also central to the snarl of issues surrounding the legality of the Google Books project more generally. Many works it has scanned, like Dickens's writings, were already free of copyright and in the public domain long before the project started. (Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which entered the public domain in 1942, was first published in 1884. Dickens died in 1870.) However, many of the works Google Books has scanned are still under copyright, and Google has scanned them anyway in an attempt to make them more accessible — like a "card catalog," according to Google — however, authors' and publishers' rights groups have objected to this and sued Google to stop them from scanning works under active copyright. For another large segment of the books Google has scanned, the copyright status is simply unknown. So-called "orphan" works, under copyright but now out-of-print, are those works for which, after a "reasonable effort" has been made to locate a current copyright holder, no such person can be found. On one hand, Google must attempt to verify whether or not a current copyright holder exists. On the other, it must verify to the court that it has been exhaustive in conducting its search in order to make the book available to users of Google Books. And this two-part effort has led to what the *New York Times* described earlier this year as "A Google Search of a Distinctly Retro Kind." The article continues,

"Since the copyright holders can be anywhere and not necessarily online — given how many books are old or out of print — it became obvious that what was needed was a huge push in that relic of the pre-Internet age: print.

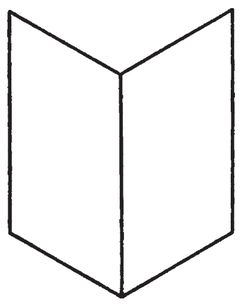
"So while there is a large direct-mail effort, a dedicated Web site about the settlement in 36 languages, and an online strategy of the kind you would expect from Google, the bulk of the legal notice spending — about $7 million of a total of $8 million — is going to newspapers, magazines, even poetry journals, with at least one ad in each country. These efforts make this among the largest print legal-notice campaigns in history.

"That Google is in the position of paying for so many print ads 'is hilarious — it is the ultimate irony,' said Robert Klonoff, dean of Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland, Ore."

Klonoff's comment is apt. In its attempt to digitize all the world's books, Google has not only been forced to search for what it cannot find, but the company, which made its billions by serving relevant advertisements to users of its search engine, must now spend millions placing similar ads in tiny publications that its Google Books service (and the scanning of books more generally) may ultimately render obsolete.

For the readers of Discovering Dickens, Google's hundreds of little text advertisments may seem reminiscent of the ads scattered throughout the original part-issues of Dickens's serial works, each of which included 16 pages of advertising flanking 32 pages of original text. The benefits of the "Invisible Spine Supporter" and "Dr. Lecock's Female Wafers" were proclaimed alongside entreaties urging buyers to purchase "Alpaca Umbrellas" and "Children's Frock Coats and Pelisses." It was a bazaar inside of *Bleak House*, a marketplace within *Martin Chuzzlewit*. For Dickens's publishers, his text provided a perfect vehicle for additional advertising revenue. But, with the aid of the recently developed idea of copyright, Dickens's text would soon become a commodity of its very own. (RG) ■

*From the New York Public Library Picture Collection: "Beijing. Reading the newspaper. The headlines announce good news: 'The Nationalist armies are advancing toward the South and gaining important successes.' On the same day the Communists reached the city gates."*



A Reconsideration of the Newspaper Industry in 5 Easy Allusions (1): *as you stare at this form, watch your perspective flip back and forth.*

# BLIND MAN IN DARK ROOM LOOKING FOR BLACK CAT THAT'S NOT THERE

HELLAS — Our story begins in Ancient Greece, with Socrates announcing, "I know that I know nothing." Clearly, confusion has always been at the heart of wisdom. Centuries later comes a statement many have attributed to Charles Darwin: "A mathematician is like a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that isn't there." As a scientist committed to cataloguing, explaining, and drawing a clear picture of nature, Darwin mocked the mathematician's inability to describe the physical world in anything but abstract and speculative terms. Artists also understand the world in these terms. With their help, we can learn to enjoy the experience of not-knowing and the playfulness of being in the dark.

*John Milton . . .*

EXPLANATIONS DON'T EXPLAIN

In 1831, Charles Darwin set sail and traveled to the Cape Verde Islands, the Falkland Islands, the South American Coast, the Galapagos Islands, and Australia. The notes he took in his journal led to our general understanding that life-forms develop in the context of how they adapt to various environments in their efforts to survive, and *not* in isolation. While mathematicians were in their dark rooms looking for abstract black cats that weren't there, Darwin wrote a theory of evolution that explained life on earth.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, the speculations of mathematicians began hinting at a far more complex explanation of nature. Non-Euclidean geometry allowed mathematics to take into account the reality of curved space, and the work of mathematician Henri Poincaré lay the foundation for chaos theory. Most remarkably, he suggested that "The life of mathematics not logic exists in *intuition*, not logic" puncturing science's long-standing obsession with *facts* and *truth*.

Poincaré ushered in a century of mathematical revelations: Max Planck outlines quantum mechanics in 1900, Albert Einstein presents Special Relativity in 1905, followed by his General Relativity in 1916, Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle in 1927, and Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorem in 1931.

Working alongside Einstein at Princeton, Gödel inherited a discipline that began to realize that the human mind is *not* a logic engine, but an analogy engine, a learning engine, a guessing engine, an aesthetics-driven engine, and a self-correcting engine. In his speculative mathematics, Gödel arrived at a proof revealing that "all axiomatic theories (top-down 'explanations') are necessarily incomplete and that 'truth' will always have a hole in it. In other words, all mathematics — even simple arithmetic — always relies on at least one assumption that cannot be proven within its own system."

To re-state this theorem (outside the language of numbers) would be to claim that it is fundamental to the nature of any explanation that it always contains an element that remains unexplained and not understood.

Re-stated again — all explanations *also* don't explain.

In the world of science — that fortress of logic, reason, and knowledge — not-knowing has inched its way into knowledge. Not to replace it, and also not to contradict it . . . but instead to become acknowledged as a necessary part of how knowledge works. The encyclopedic ambitions of the Enlightenment (the historical period leading up to Darwin) began losing ground, and Modernity set off with what John Keats called "negative capability" — the ability to tolerate, and even enjoy, the experience of confusion or doubt.

THE BLIND MAN

Marcel Duchamp was a devoted student of Poincaré's *Science&Hypothesis*(1905), which noted that "the aim of science is *not* things themselves — as the dogmatists in their simplicity imagine — *but* the relations between things; outside those relations there is no knowable reality."

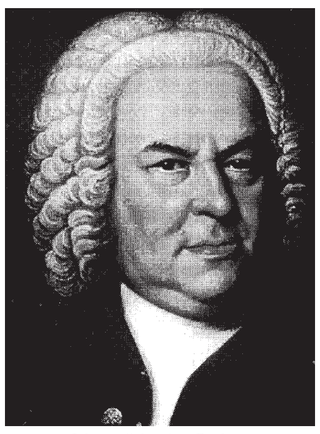
Creating an equivalent notion in the language of art, Duchamp formulated his famous algebraic comparison:

The ratio *a* / *b*
*a* = the exhibition, *b* = the possibilities
is in no way given by a number *c*
( *a* / *b* = *c* ) but by the sign ( / )
which separates *a* & *b*.

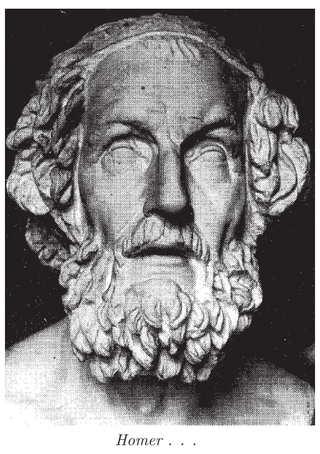
Fifty years before conceptualism, Duchamp disrupted the territory of art at its core, by asking, "Can one make a work of art that is not of 'art'?" Can there be an art that isn't? How can one invent an entirely other way of thinking and knowing? Can one imagine a new epistemological map, equipped with an additional dimension that reaches outside and beyond the familiar north/south poles of *knowing* and *not-knowing*?

The contemporary cultural theorist Sarat Maharaj has named this other epistemological dimension in his discussion of "xeno-epistemic" and proposal of "avidya":

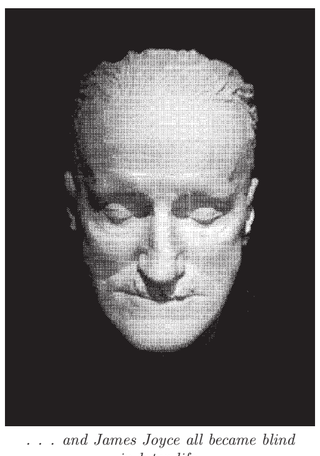
"In the provocative spirit of 'the work of art that isn't,' why not adopt the term 'non-knowledge' — despite pejorative connotations — for visual arts' cognitive processes? Non-knowledge, at any rate, is not at all the same as 'ignorance.' It refers to the knowledge system's 'other,' that indeterminate xeno-zone between 'knowledge/ignorance.' For this 'infra-thin' chink let's use the term Avidya. In sanskrit *vidya* means 'knowledge' as in the phrase 'to see-know': the Latin cognate is *video*, to see, and its modern English cousin is 'video.' The prefix 'A' signals the neutral gear, a semi-freeze: the idea is that 'systematic knowledge' is neutralized in 'Avidya' but not entirely annulled. Vidya/Avidya are not quite binaries."



*Johann Sebastian Bach . . .*



*Homer . . .*



*. . . and James Joyce all became blind in later life.*

As Duchamp explored and Maharaj recognizes, art can operate outside the linear or binary axis of ignorance/knowledge and introduce another epistemological dimension — nonknowledge, "avidya," or productive confusion — that itself represents a powerful form of knowledge, a way of knowing. Duchamp's way into this other dimension was by way of what he called the "infra-thin." This is the place of Poincaré's fourth dimension, Gödel's undecidability, Maharaj's avidya, art that isn't, and a work of art that is not "of Art."

Even Denis Diderot (the inventor of the Encyclopedia), did not consider confusion to be the enemy of knowledge. He saw — beyond good/bad — confusion as the condition that defines all of us. As a result, Diderot didn't seek to abolish it, but imagined that "confusion could lead us to a new realism!" and identified positive and productive forms of confusion. In *Letter on the Blind* (1749), Diderot embraced the confusion of the blind man, "for if understanding the world required breaking down any subject to its original, elemental components and then putting them back together again in an orderly fashion without skipping any steps, then the blind man — with his superior powers of abstraction and speculation — can do it best."

Returning to Duchamp: after his ready-made urinal was rejected by the 1917 Armory show, he co-published two issues of a small satirical magazine called *The Blind Man*, referring to the short-sightedness of the critical establishment and of the viewing public with regards to modern art. The articles in the journal were left anonymous, fueling more speculation.

This aphorism by Eric Dyckaerts perhaps best summarizes such playful acts of not-knowing:

"If there's a discrepancy between certainty and truth, the certainty of the discrepancy sabotages its truth."

CHILD'S PLAY

"The impulse to make a new language is a strong one," Matt Mullican tells us, "kids do this all the time." The potential of non-knowledge is often closely connected to the curiosity of children. Not only do children invent new languages all the time, but those languages form the basis for a pedagogical method used in kindergartens around the world. Soon after the Second World War, Italian schoolteacher Loris Malaguzzi started a child-care program near the Northern Italian city of Reggio Emilia.

What is now known as the "Reggio Emilia Method" sees children as little researchers who strive to understand the world, making their own theories to explain it. A teacher's responsibility is to guide their natural curiosity rather than replace it with a knowledge that is foreign to them. Each child has a particular theory in a particular language, making a school into a place of a hundred theories in a hundred languages. While traditional pedagogy tends to favor one of them and discourage the ninety-nine others, the Reggio method recognizes the value of keeping them all, allowing the child to insert a beautifully-impossible cacophony into the fabric of knowledge.

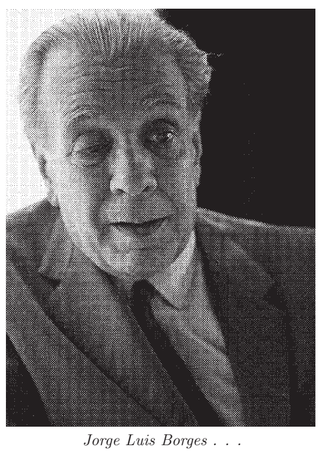
This line of thought culminated in 1987 with French philosopher Jacques Ranciére's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. In it, he argued how the traditional teacher-student relationship does nothing but reinforce inequality, stultifying the learner. A non-emancipated student "is the one who ignores that he does not know what he does not know and ignores how to know it. The master is not only he who exactly knows what remains unknown to the ignorance," [but] "he also knows how to make it knowable, at what time and what place, according to what protocol."

A student is held captive by his or her reliance on explanations, "But the child who is explained to will devote his intelligence to the work of grieving: to understanding, that is to say, to understanding that he doesn't understand unless he is explained to."

Ranciére insists on the equality of all intelligences and considers the central goal of education to be the revelation of an intelligence to itself, and not the gift of a preordained "knowledge." In his book, he discusses the emancipatory potential in teachers remaining ignorant of what they teach, and to act instead as enforcers and verifiers of the student's own will-to-learn. It is the experience of learning — the doing — that matters, not the knowing of teaching. Moreover, "the student of the ignorant master learns what his master does not know, since he does not learn his master's knowledge."

CHANGE WE CAN BELIEVE IN

In one of his metalogues with an imaginary child, Gregory Bateson wrote that "in order



*Jorge Luis Borges . . .*

to think new thoughts or to say new things we have to break up all our ready-made ideas and shuffle the pieces."

In his foreword to the well-titled exhibition *Things We Don't Understand*, curated by Roger M. Buergel and Ruth Noack, Diedrich Kramer notes that "It is not always easy to be confronted with situations that invalidate entrenched patterns of understanding. The value of this confrontation is directly proportional to our ability to convert the crisis of insecurity into the fertile potential of change."

With that in mind, let us recognize the importance of not understanding a work of art. A work of art opens up that world of non-knowledge and helps to make sure we don't lose sight of it, keeping us curious and actively speculating. "Artists don't solve problems, they invent new ones," (Bruce Nauman), "Art isn't here to explain things," (Joseph Beuys), "The artist has an unknowability: the ability to unknow," (Sarat Maharaj); Robert Rauschenberg said "I could not live without confusion"; and Bruno Munari is even more to the point: "Il piu grande ostacolo alla comprensione di un'opera d'arte e quello di *voler* capire." (AH) ■

# THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

He stood up from the bench and walked back into the inner space, towards the kitchen, raising his voice asking does anyone want some soup. Pumpkin. It was clear that he'd already prepared this courtesy, calling out more for the sake of speaking his own mind for his stomach, and provoking us into thinking about food and considering our own hunger. He lit the fire under the pan and lifted the lid. The sound of his words carried on and out to us, as he mashed the pumpkins, above the pans and cutlery. He turned around to open a cupboard door and take four deep, white glazed bowls, and four plates. These were stacked and placed on the sideboard. Turning towards a drawer under the sideboard next to the sink, he pulled out spoons, knives, a ladle and a longer serrated knife. These he laid on the plates together with the piled bowls and carried them out to us, laying them down in the middle of the table and then arranging four places for lunch. Facing me, still talking, he put the knives and forks down for his own point of view: knife and spoon right, fork left; then corrected the setting, "So now, after all these years," he laughingly scolded himself. Another trip into the kitchen, humming to the removal of paper wrappers brought back a square wooden board with a large loaf to one side, a selection of cheese and cold meats on the other.

"Help yourselves." (WH) ■

*How Media Masters Reality #2*

# THEY CAME TO SEE WHO CAME

TIVOLI, NY — You know the script: A politician and a military spokesperson mount the stage, each takes their place behind a podium. They face the ladies and gentlemen of the press and a bank of TV cameras. A line of flags provides an appropriate backdrop as the politician begins to speak. The politician reminds us of the necessity of the action they have taken. The politician reminds us that we did not want war, in fact we did everything in our power to prevent conflict, but if an aggressor willfully turns aside all overtures for a peaceful resolution, and if the aggressor continues to threaten the fundamental values of our society, then there is no choice.

The military spokesperson now points to a screen demonstrating the efficiency of the weaponry our forces have employed against the aggressor. It also displays evidence of the military capacity of the aggressor. It seems if they were given the opportunity they could inflict terrible harm on our forces, and to the way of life many have died to preserve.

But the press briefing is more than just a script; you also need the stage, the podium, the uniforms, the flags, the press, and the cameras if you want to *master reality*.

Simply through their performance, certain media events can have an effect in the world. In 2003, a military man mounted the stage and provided evidence of Weapons of Mass Destruction. What surprised many about this performance was the comparative ease with which it was exercised and the potency of its result — a war could be prosecuted despite any real "evidence" produced to suggest that such weapons did exist. It was as if the whole machinery of the press briefing was a feedback loop, which justified military action but also legitimized the press briefing itself. This is mastering reality.

For those of us raised with the notion that the press and TV news exist to somehow "get to the bottom" of things, and that the news media is a forum in which things can be proven or disproved, the ease with which transparent nonsense became a matter of fact that could justify fatal action came as a shock.

Whatever this thing we call "the news media" is, it is not in its nature to simply test matters of fact. The WMD incident demonstrated that the apparatus of the media actually has the ability to *produce facts*. The press briefing demonstrates two fundamental things about the structure of contemporary media: 1) It's a feedback loop that gives legitimacy and conveys narrative to its producers, 2) The incantation that "produced" WMD reminds us of French philosopher Michel Foucault's most valuable lesson — *discourse produces its object*.

Today I'd like to travel back to the beginning of the video revolution and reflect on two media events produced by Ant Farm in 1975: *Media Burn* — in which a customized Cadillac was driven through a pyramid of blazing television sets — and *The Eternal Frame* — a re-enactment of the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Twenty-two seconds of footage of the assassination, taken in Dallas in 1963 by Abraham Zapruda, was sold to *Life* magazine on the night of the shooting for $150,000. *Life* published stills from the film shortly afterwards. (Later, the Zapruda family would be paid $10 million by the US government for rights to the film). Stills were also reproduced in the Warren Commission Report of September 1964. The Warren Commission also used the film as the basis for a series of reconstructions that served as part of their investigation. The film itself was not broadcast until 1975. Perhaps more than any other, this moving image defined the turbulence of the 1960s for a wide American public during the 1970s.

Don Delillo's 1997 novel *Underground* captures the sense of this moment in a fictional account of one of the film's first public, or semi-public, viewings in the summer of 1974. The scene takes place in an apartment with television sets in every room. In each room a video of the same piece of footage plays, with a slight delay.

Delillo writes: "The event was rare and strange. It was the screening of a bootleg copy of an eight-millimeter home movie that ran for twenty seconds. A little over twenty seconds probably. The footage was known as the Zapruda film and almost no one outside the government had seen it. [ . . . ]

"The footage started rolling in one room but not the others and it was filled with slurs and jostles, it was totally jostled footage, a home movie shot with Super 8, and the limousine came down the street, muddied by sunglint, and the head dipped out of the frame and reappeared and then the force of the shot that killed him, unexpectedly the head shot, and people in the room went ooh, and then the next ooh, and five seconds later the room at the back went ooh, the same release of breath every time, like blurts of disbelief."

In this scene, Delillo combines multiple screens plus the delay techniques of Dan Graham's video pieces from that era (a technique also used by Gillette & Schneider in their highly influential *Wipe Cycle*). It merges the use of video as radical software — elements can be patched and re-configured in ways that were not possible with film — together with with an understanding that television has been around long enough to be regarded as *junk*. All this is blended with the shock tactics of art-media groups from the early 70s such as Ant Farm, Radical Software, TVTV (Top Value Television).

If the 8mm footage was created in the age of the news reel, it is mediated in the age of video, which operates under the economy of the feedback loop — to be re-recorded on to tape and repeated over and over again, to be set in the eternal frame, to cycle within the eternal return of "rolling news."

Ant Farm's re-enactment of the Kennedy assassination, *The Eternal Frame*, was made the year that Zapruda's footage became "publicly available." Ant Farm's copy of the film came from conspiracy theory sources and was originally bootlegged out of the *Life* magazine lab.

Ant Farm originally wanted to film early in the morning, to avoid the crowds, but it became evident to them that the light was not the same as the light on the Zapruda footage and they needed it to be as close to the "real thing" as possible.

Via the Warren commission, the Zapruda footage was already caught in a media feedback loop, forming a catalyst that generated the noise of speculation, folding back to create a conspiracy panic. Because it was not visible as a moving image for eleven years after the event, the footage became the absent center of the Kennedy assassination — 22 seconds of action stretching into eternity.

The re-enactment served as a response to the belief that the Zapruda footage could somehow reveal something that had been hidden and repressed. But maybe the footage is re-played and re-enacted so often precisely because it *fails to represent*. A failure of representation is, in psychoanalytical terms, the central characteristic of trauma, but the reenactment also fails to speak of something at the centre of the technology of non-scripted film: its promise to display evidence, its promise to *carry the burden of proof*.

Four years after Ant Farm's historic media interventions, Pope John Paul II staged his own media event when he visited Poland. The visit was described by writers Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz as a *shamanized media event*, which through its staging actually steered a course of events (the rise of the Solidarity movement and the eventual collapse of the Polish government). The event was a ceremony, but a ceremony of a particular sort. Like the incantation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, through its performance it established the meaning of the event and institutionalized it in collective memory. It is the moment of shamanistic feedback when a new definition of what is possible is established, and it is then that the next step is urged forward. The media event can be seen as a form of consecration because it gathers into itself a series of values that feed back to form a narrative of a state of affairs that requires action. The ceremony of the countdown (which is itself a media invention, introduced in Fritz Lang's *Frau im Mond*, in 1929) begins the narrative that ends with the moon landing. This event — staged for television from countdown to touchdown — inscribes a series of values through its performance. It speaks of an era of positivist triumph, when American know-how knew how, it represented the end of an era in which the vision of a murdered president was finally realized. It joins a string of images that are pre-scripted, including the 22 seconds of the Zepruda footage and the televised funeral of Kennedy, which folds back into its self to make a narrative of reality.

*Media Burn* was performed on July 4, 1975, a few months prior to *The Eternal Frame*. A modified 1959 Cadillac El Dorado Biarritz (The Phantom Dream Car), piloted by two drivers guided only by a video monitor, was driven through a pyramid of blazing television sets. As in *The Eternal Frame*, *Media Burn* featured the Artist-President, John F. Kennedy, played by Doug Hall. He gives a content-less speech that sets the stage for the main event. Indeed, the speech highlights the degree to which a media event needs to be ritualized. The speech is one of the support structures that need to be put into place in order to constitute a "real" pseudo-event. The President speaks:

"Who can deny that we are a nation addicted to television and the constant flow of media, and not a few of us are frustrated by this addiction. Now I ask you, my fellow Americans, haven't you ever wanted to put your foot through your television screen?"

The artist-president is the rhetorical shell of politics itself, his speech collapses past, future and present as the ghost of politics past reports on the significance of what is about to happen.

"Today, there stand before us two media matadors, brave young men from Ant Farm who are about to go forth into the unknown, and let me say this, these artists are pioneers, as surly as Louis and Clark when they explored uncharted territory, they are pioneers as surly as Armstrong and Aldrin when they set foot on the moon . . . "

Ant Farm's Chip Lord, speaking on the subject of *Media Burn* in 2002, cited Michael Shamberg's seminal book *Guerrilla Television* (1971) which inspired various initiatives combining the collectivist ideals of the 1960s with the potentially democratizing (new) technologies of video, closed-circuit TV, and cable of the 1970s: "[Using TV to destroy TV] was consistent with the *Guerrilla Television* position, to destroy the monopoly of centralized television. There was a lot of rhetoric about how cable TV was going to democratize production."

Ant Farm's media critique can be understood as a critical response to the promise of video, and perhaps more than any other artists they articulated its contradictions. Released from the monopoly of the networks and accessed by ordinary citizens, the Portapak video camera promised personal and social empowerment — make your own social and technological networks, make and distribute your own programs, construct your own social software, democratize artistic practice. But, as we will see in subsequent issues of *How Media Masters Reality*, the values of self-empowerment could easily be accommodated within a media feedback system in which our performance becomes not only a commodity that we sell to ourselves but also a means by which the media could narrativize and legitimize itself.

In 1962, Daniel Boorstin coined the term "pseudo-event" to describe events designed solely to be reported: presidential debates, press conferences (and media burns). But Andy Warhol understood better than anyone else that the media event isn't something you simply consume. Describing the unfolding hallucination of the factory, Warhol said, "They came to see who came." The people who come to see the party become the party, the figure and ground become a single flowing image. In the same way, the figure and ground of the press shifts backwards and forwards from the press as they arrive to report the event and to the press as their bodies provide the props for the event. In the next installment of this series we will look at why we, as performers in the media feedback loop, are losing the script and picking up the format. (SR) ■

*Ant Farm:* The Eternal Frame *(1975) and* (overleaf) Media Burn *(1975)*

# ICONS GOVERN ACTION

MANHATTAN — "There is nothing funny about the urinal," Peter Fend insists. Perhaps not. Nor is there anything particularly funny about the deteriorating state of our global ecosystem. Nevertheless, several hundred otherwise sober attendees at a recent summit held at the New York Public Library laughed heartily as Fend showed a sequence of Powerpoint (TM) slides leading directly from Marcel Duchamp's iconic urinal, *Fountain*, through Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, to a drawing of the globe in which the world's oceans appear to be spiraling down the tubes.

Fend was on his way to Germany from New Zealand, where he divides his time, with a stopover of a few days in New York to appear at the summit. There, he was allotted seven minutes to present the work of Ocean Earth, the corporation he founded in 1980, which has been the focus of his considerable energies for the last thirty years. Fend cited Duchamp's *Fountain* to illustrate what he sees as the profound influence of icons in the development of political and social institutions: "Icons govern action. The urinal, like Morton Shamberg's *God*, which is just a piece of plumbing, governs subsequent action. Throughout much of western culture, the notion of the state has been embodied in the leader, the hero, the standing figure. If an icon is terrain, or surroundings, instead of a role model or hero, then it causes a different orientation of social activity — we come to see the ideal as our surroundings, not a leader. The surroundings are whatever bowl we happen to be in."

For Fend, Duchamp's *Fountain*, albeit a urinal on a pedestal, is the obvious metaphor to effectively lead society in the direction of topological priorities, toward a radical reorientation of values. While his audience may be laughing, Fend is not. He is taking it all quite literally, and he has a point. After all, if wars are fought over imaginary lines, then icons — the images we project onto the world — would seem to govern action, indeed.

Ocean Earth was formed by Fend in partnership with fellow artists Colen Fitzgibbon, Jenny Holzer, Peter Nadin, Richard Prince, and Robin Winters as the legal entity *Ocean Earth Construction and Development Corporation*. Over three decades, the company's trajectory has extended from satellite imagery and media programming to the development of alternative energy resources and a nationwide school curriculum with a hands-on pedagogical agenda for sustainable ecology. According to the 1981 Corporate Statement, "Ocean Earth Construction and Development Corporation develops regional plans and other architectural programs that promote those means of energy production which in no way contribute to ecological breakdown of the planet." Instead, Ocean Earth would pursue development of solar-generated energy in a variety of forms, including sea-based biomass, degradable chiefly to methane — the project to which Fend and Ocean Earth are primarily dedicated today, and which is in pilot development for the exhibition *Ruhr 2010*.

To be clear, Ocean Earth, by Fend's own account, is an architectural firm that only happens to "use art ideas and arise from art practices." It is a corporation formed by artists, built on the legacy of Gordon Matta-Clark and others who embraced unconventional architectural practices, envisioning the reorganization of physical space according to ecological priorities. In a culture in which contemporary art practice is often oriented towards observation and critique, and art quietly, if disdainfully, seats itself somewhere towards the back of the academic or the media-entertainment bus, Fend makes an extraordinary claim for art, which resonates with his take on *Fountain*. As Fend puts it, "Art is the best way to approach the problem [of ecological production] because it is a modeling of what the material values are."

Since its inception, Ocean Earth has initiated a variety of projects using technological means to see and render landscape and potential energy resources in unorthodox ways. The group developed a television program with Paul Sharits in 1981 called Space Force, which — in the spirit of Stewart Brand or Buckminster Fuller, though with a decidedly darker tone — was intended to disseminate information from satellite observation of the earth to the public in order to "show the public what endangers it, be that pollution, soil exhaustion, mineral depletion, climactic changes, or hostile military preparations. *Space Force* exposes the public safety dangers to public view, with state-of-art advances in video and film, in photography and television, most dramatically and most instantaneously on television."

The extension of Ocean Earth's ventures into mass media reflects Fend's belief that "media is essentially territorial," and therefore an aspect of architecture. In the 1980s, using publicly-available satellite imagery captured by Landsat, a U.S. civilian satellite, members of Ocean Earth worked with NASA experts to analyze these images and thus produce commercially-viable information which they then sold to major news organizations, including NBC and the BBC. Although the civilian satellite images were of inferior resolution to more sophisticated military satellites, weather permitting, Ocean Earth could see enough to identify air bases and troop movements in hot spots of conflict, including Libya and the Falklands. In the context of the Cold War, the market for images of war zones was greater than that for prospective project sites related to conservation, ecology and land use.

By the end of the 1980s, most of Ocean Earth's founders and early collaborators, including artists Dennis Oppenheim, Paul Sharits, Wolfgang Staehle, Kirsten Mosher, and Taro Suzuki had moved onto other pursuits. Meanwhile, Ocean Earth renewed its energy-focused work. In 1994, a proposal to begin methane production from algae extraction and fermentation in Wellington, New Zealand, which had been many years in development, fell through. Subsequently, Heidi Mardon, a New Zealander who had been a spearhead in the Wellington project, turned to the public school system, becoming director of a program called Enviroschools, with a pilot group of three schools. From this beginning, in 1999, Enviroschools has grown over the past ten years to enroll 213,000 students today — roughly 5% of the entire New Zealand population.

Unlike the utopian proposals put forth by Cedric Price, Archigram, and other visionary architects, the proposals of Ocean Earth have taken the form of viable solutions for mass communications, education, and energy production. In many cases, Ocean Earth's work has entailed re-conceptualization of social and political territories along completely different lines, as well as a rethinking of labor. The work sits in unfamiliar territory, somewhere in-between established paradigms for art, business, and science, projecting a worldview somewhere in-between capitalism and anarchist utopia.

Fend is tall and thin, apparently averse to palaver. Conversations with him begin as if they might be ended at any moment by forces beyond immediate control. Until then, there is a great deal of ground to be covered and not enough time to cover it. To a meeting during his recent trip to New York, he brought an oversized suitcase, full of drawings and papers, from which he procured plans and documentation from Ocean Earth as he spoke. Files were opened. Xeroxes were made. Photographs were taken. The air in the room was bated. In Fend's company, one has the palpable sense that the clock is ticking on civilization.

Fend expresses frustration with the economic disempowerment of artists. "I have long argued that the art world is corrupt. It is not transparent and not financially or legally honest. The power structure wants art to be disempowered." It does not want the changes that result from new thought, i.e., art. As a result, the art world has engendered a religion of disbelief. "Whatever is shown or said is supposed to be disbelieved, and it is supposed to not become real. It is supposed to not work."

He calls for artists to assume political and economic power to realize their ideas, particularly because he believes it is the role of artists to conceive of new solutions to address deteriorating ecological conditions. He laments, "artists are often afraid of taking their art to its architectural or mediaspace possibilities." As historical reference points for the influential practice he envisions, Fend cites Renaissance artist-engineers Le Nôtre and Vauban, who developed new strategies for political control of space. Vauban designed a pentagon-shaped fortress for Louis XIV that clearly influenced the design of the U.S. Pentagon building, and Le Nôtre is well-known as the designer of the landscape of modern France, which eventually influenced the city plan of Washington, D.C.

While Fend's models for practice are servants of the state, his agenda for art is cultivation of territory. He explains, "Rather than talk of money, one could use the broader term, from French, of *la Richesse*. Or abundance. Our task is to assure that the territory where we are has abundance, that it can support the healthy and long lives of the native animals and plants, and also support people." Thus considered, wealth is territorial. When people reduce wealth production to commodities, with earnings gained from sales to consumers, then society takes a depletive approach to wealth. It plunders the land. The French word for a site of *richesse* is *patrimoine*.

What are we doing about our patrimony? What are we doing, to use Duchamp's model, about our urinals? He called them *Fontaines* — that is, they would be sources, or fountains, of more richesse and abundance.

With characteristic impudence towards an academic status quo, Fend reaches beyond the widely accepted reading of the urinal — that the meaning of a cultural work is unstable, and is more or less an effect of the social and political space in which it exists — to emphasize instead the significance of its physical, formal qualities, in which he sees a new paradigm for thought and action.

Marco Roth of *n+1*, who met Fend during his recent trip, perhaps best describes the work of Ocean Earth as "the hopeful spirit of Situationism (*soyez raisonnable, demandez l'impossible!*) grafted on to the technological imagination of Futurism. If those Italians hadn't been fascists, they would've been a bit like Ocean Earth. It seems like a grandiose project, but it's grandiosity for the sake of the community, not for the individual artist. He strikes me as the most thoughtful kind of anarchist, someone who really asks what it would take to break the state or corporate monopolies on the means of control, surveillance and speed, and then sets about trying to realize it." (AK) ■

*Part 2: Headless Body, Topless Bar*

# MORE NEWS FROM NOWHERE

GLASGOW – Listen.

"She thought fleas beautiful. Gazing at their stained sections through the microscope, she once said, gave her a feeling as ecstatic as smoking cannabis. In her bedroom she kept them in cellophane bags, in order not to miss a thing that they were doing . . . A lifelong atheist. She admitted that she had been tempted to believe in a creator when she discovered that the flea had a penis."

It's an obituary for Miriam Rothschild by Anne Wroe for *The Economist*, in 2005. According to the journalist, Rothschild's father "was a flea man" and that was the genesis of the passion that led her to discover the flea's jumping mechanism. This obituary ranges from the eccentric to the strangely poetic as Wroe notes, "The smell of a very gently squeezed ladybird, she once said, will stay on your hands for days."

The obituary column is another of the many glorious cul-de-sacs to be found in the best newspapers. It demands a discipline from its writers that rivals that of the haiku. All the basic biographical information should be included — date of birth and death, family, career etc. But it thrives on the telling detail and on anecdotes that would make a novelist weep in despair. Neil Gaiman, for instance, cites *The Telegraph*'s tribute to Colonel Michael Singleton as his favorite obituary. A prep school headmaster, Singleton was Spartan in his regimen.

"Long walks, cold dormitories and regular hymn-singing were also an integral part of the education, along with cricket nets and Latin prose. Despite a brisk code of discipline, Singleton took a laissez-faire approach out of the classroom. Every November 5 the smallest boy in the school was sent down a tunnel to light the very core of the bonfire. None, so far as anyone can recall, was ever lost."

This is not just life from another, vanished world but also writing that understands the tone needed to delineate it precisely:

"What central heating there existed was not always effective, or even switched on. Boys were permitted to capture owls and keep them in the fives court, provided they caught enough sparrows to feed them. One boy recalls being given the task of rearing a lamb to which he developed some emotional attachment. The animal, called Lottie, disappeared shortly before the school's Christmas feast, and the boy realised what had happened only when he was the first to be summoned for second helpings."

Humour and eccentricity certainly help an obituary along and often it's the more obscure candidates who provide this while the famous dead bore us with their historical achievements. Sometimes, though, an obituary can shed an entirely new light on a tired subject as in the case of Lady Bird Johnson. Keith Colquhoun describes a moment in her life like this: "November 22nd 1963 started in a drizzle, but soon turned bright. The sun shone on Dallas, the breeze was light, and Lady Bird Johnson enjoyed the drive in the open limousine, even when the Secret Service man thrust her husband down to the floor, even when the car screeched so violently round the corner by the hospital that she feared they would be flung out of it. Looking towards the first limousine, she saw what looked like 'a drift of pink blossom' on the back seat. It was Jackie Kennedy lying across her dying husband."

Colquhoun, like his successor Ann Wroe, wrote for *The Economist* one of a few select papers that have transformed the obituary into a minor art form (*The Telegraph* and *The Independent* are the others). At their best, obituary writers can sketch a moment of life that reveals something of an entire culture. Colquhoun, for instance, implies far more about empire, race, and human curiosity that he states in these lines on a deceased monk:

"The achievement of Karl Kehrle, a Benedictine monk, was to breed a very decent British bee. Wherever in the world apiarists meet they speak in awe of Mr Kehrle's sturdy bee, which produces lots of honey and is reluctant to sting. Like the British themselves, it is a mongrel, combining the virtues of the native bee with those of worthy bees from elsewhere. Mr Kehrle once heard of a promising bee said to be found only in central Africa. Although in his 80s, in poor health and carried on the back of a friend, he tracked the bee down on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro."

These columns negate the idea of news, exposing current affairs and history itself as the crude curriculum vitae of the rich and powerful. Trading on the ostensible reason for their existence — the reporting of a death — they instead broadcast lives well lived or otherwise, replacing the order of intelligence information with the random chaos of the everyday.

This element of chaos characterizes many byways of a newspaper, undermining its more strategic aims. If obituaries are death letters that surreptitiously celebrate life then press photography only comes into its own when it stumbles on a corpse. Photography is perhaps, for editors, the lowest permissible form of journalism (it eschews words entirely, circumventing reason to rush directly towards our nerve centers). But in the face of disaster, photography will overturn words.

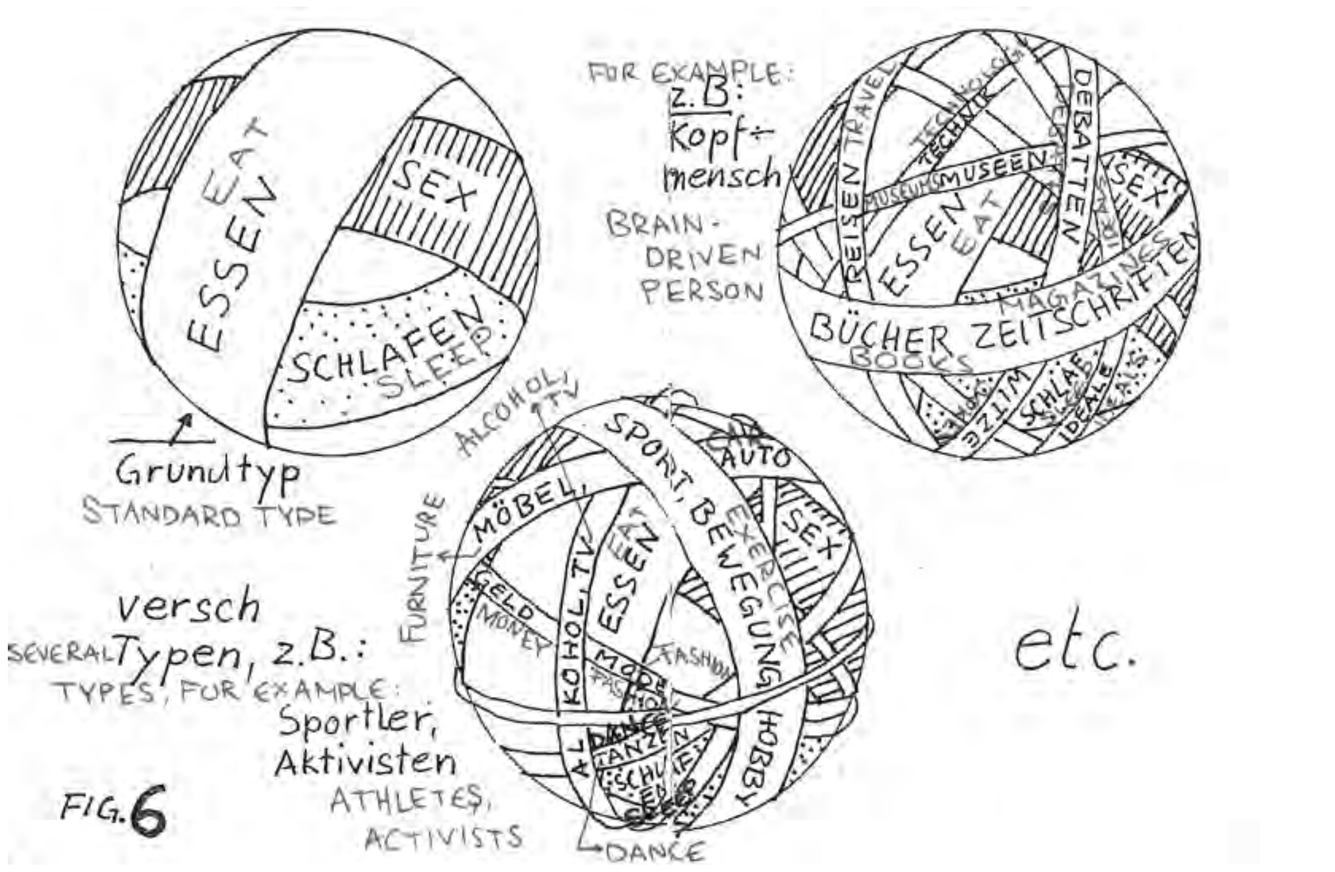

On Friday 13th, January 1928, the *New York Daily News* ran just such a front page. Under a headline reduced to one word — "DEAD!" — there was a full cover picture of a masked woman strapped to an electric chair in Sing Sing prison. Ruth Snyder, a housewife from Queens and Judd Gray, a corset salesman and Snyder's lover, had murdered her husband Albert, the editor of *Motor Boating* magazine. Thomas Howard, a *Daily News* photographer, was present as a witness to her execution and, unknown to the guards, had strapped a camera on his ankle to capture the image. The original shot is pitched upwards at a near 45-degree angle, showing Ruth Snyder beyond the shoes of the surrounding witnesses. The image printed on the front page of the Friday 13th *Daily News*, however, is a straightened and cropped close-up of Snyder strapped to the chair. At the bottom of the page runs a meta-caption, commenting as much on the publication of the image as on the story itself:

*RUTH SNYDER'S DEATH PICTURED! — This is perhaps the most remarkable exclusive picture in the history of criminology. It shows the actual scene in the Sing Sing death house as the lethal current surged through Ruth Snyder's body at 11:?? last night. Her helmeted head is stiffened in death, her face masked and an electrode strapped to her bare right leg. The autopsy table on which her body was removed is beside her. Judd Gray, mumbling a prayer, followed her down the narrow corridor at 11:11. "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing!" were Ruth's last words. The picture is the first Sing Sing execution picture and first of a woman's electrocution.*

That *Daily News* front page overturned all sense of "news." The power of the image went far beyond the story of Ruth Snyder and Judd Gray's crime and far beyond any treatise on criminology. It thrust readers into deeper issues of ontology, compelled the newspaper to publish an additional 750,000 copies to meet demand and confronted the population with an incomprehensible vision of the world.

Newspapers appear to offer us intelligence that will help us decipher a changing world. In fact, they repeatedly rupture and flood across their boundaries into realms of nonsense, where our true reading pleasure lies.

Obituary expert Nigel Starck pinpoints just such a moment in his brief account of a British military man: "Major Digby Tatham-Warter, of Britain's Parachute Regiment, carried an umbrella into battle at Arnheim in 1944. When a brother officer questioned its value in the face of an artillery bombardment, the major replied: 'But what if it rains?'" (FM) ■




© Peter Fischli / David Weiss, courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

# GONZO PRAGMATISM

BERLIN / LOUISVILLE — The fundamental beauty of a manner of thinking — and philosophy of design — that recognizes the value of making well-considered decisions in highly contingent situations lies in its avowal of optimistic practice.

This is the intuition that many situations which seem irresolvable when described in general theoretical terms (ideological, metaphysical, etc.) can actually be resolved, somehow, when you dare approach them with a readiness to listen, learn, negotiate, and improvise. This insight is at the center of pragmatist thought; it is its wit.

*"By God! You old bastard! Good to see you, boy! Damn good . . . and I mean it!"*

There's been a lot of talk about pragmatism recently, but the re-articulation of its wit is a tricky proposition. Divested of its philosophical humor, pragmatism is reduced to an ideological travesty when it appears in its current dominant form: the imposed pressure to improvise under all circumstances, to the best of your abilities.

This is epitomized by the knee-jerk optimism of a "Can-Do" culture, whose attitude of "scrape by and keep smiling" seems requisite for the increasing numbers of people working under precarious conditions. Does pragmatism as proposed in the philosophy of William James cease to be a creative act — an act of freedom — when precarious living conditions leave you with simply no other choice? How do you set the emancipatory spirit of pragmatism apart from the ideological farce that the "Can-Do" imperative makes of it? How can you re-animate its inherent humor and wisdom? Its *soul*?

It's a question of intention: how to approach a given situation? The political, emotional, and artistic prudence of pragmatism resides in the realization that the specific context of the situation in which one does or says something will determine the meaning and effect of one's actions and words. Pragmatism is defined by the capacity to grasp that context and react honestly to the specific challenges that it presents. Witty pragmatism is the art of responsive and responsible reactions.

*In the air-conditioned lounge I met a man from Houston who said his name was something or other — "but just call me Jimbo" — and he was here to get it on. "I'm ready for anything, by God! Anything at all. Yeah, what are you drinkin'?"*

But what if that situation is rigidly governed by questionable or intolerable laws? In this case any response that is practically possible within the given situation will abide by those laws and therefore confirm them. Pragmatists who content themselves by "working with whatever possibilities" under oppressive conditions become conformists — by default rather than conviction, it's true, but the result is the same. The tacit acceptance that we simply grin and bear the lives we lead, that radical change is not an option, affords pragmatism a fatalist tinge. Traditionally this fatalism is expressed, compensated, and cloaked by jovial irony, as per the British stereotype: Carry on Seargant, Teacher, Constable, Nurse, Doctor, England . . . Don't make a fuss! Carry on regardless!

A pragmatism that might defy this fatalist bias would have to wed its responsiveness with a spirit of non-reconciliation. This stance would invoke *discontent* as a motivating force (rather than a side effect in the form of the begrudging and complaining that typically accompanies "making do"). In this spirit, the pragmatist engages with the given not on the premise that "the given" is all there is to life, but with an awareness that things could be otherwise. When facing specific problems, the possibility of radical difference remains in view.

*"What's wrong with you, boy?" He grinned and winked at the bartender.*

Often it is precisely an underlying sense of irreverence that allows people to act in a situation at all, simply because this irreverance loosens the grip of the rules established in that context. Is that not the originary rebellious spirit of pragmatism? Its disregard for the rules, laws, traditions — "truths" — that impose standards of what *de iure*, by the book, cannot be done (when, as the pragmatic person will *de facto* demonstrate, of course it can)? This critical edge is what can enable pragmatism to cut through the Gordian knots created by false beliefs. When it casts "the given" in a different light and dispels imaginary constraints, pragmatism enables people to act, causing small insurgences. Irreverence makes pragmatism a liberatory force.

*"Who you work for?" I stared at him again. "Don't you read the newspapers?"*

No matter how emancipatory it sounds, this proposal still has a peculiar ring to it. After all, any self-help book or motivational trainer will also aim to teach you techniques to dispel imaginary constraints . . . but only to turn you into a happier, healthier, more productive slave to a competitive work culture that, deregulated as it is, knows neither rules nor impossibilities anyway. In which case to "take it and run" may just be downright reckless.

So, while the contrarian kernel of pragmatism needs to be disassociated from the fatalist Carry On Conformism that it is traditionally prone to collapse into, it equally has to be set apart from its current conflation with the Can-Do culture of compulsive buoyancy and reckless competitiveness. If these two mutations of pragmatism seem like caricatures of postwar British- and contemporary U.S.-American culture, that's because these two countries have historically been the vanguards of both formulating pragmatism as a philosophy and implementing it as an ideology.

*I leaned closer to him, half-whispering: "Look . . . how would you like a job?" He backed off quickly. "What? Come on, now. What kind of a job?" "Never mind," I said. "You just blew it."*

But this conversion is not conclusive; the relation between the originary philosophy and its ideological version is an ongoing struggle carried out in the arena of everyday culture, politics, and ethics. As such, it seems important to highlight instances of people who perform the adversary ethos of pragmatism in their work and wit. To write the history of this antagonism is to support those who have taken sides *with the philosophy* and *against the ideology*.

Against this backdrop, the optimistic practice of "good manners" amounts to a similar defiance of both the backslapping pragmatism of the Carry-Ons and the coercive no-holds-barred pragmatism of the Can-Dos. Good manners demonstrate a degree of consideration, a refusal to simply accept the rules of an imposed, false game, instead insisting on the time, right, and freedom to consider one's terms of engagement in a given situation. This is crucial, because neither of the two ideological versions of pragmatism grant anyone this time, right, and freedom. Both construe a scenario of economic pressure (the phantom threat of eternal postwar scarcity, or the bottomless fear of precarious futures) in which taking time to consider terms seems out of the question; only immediate action appears appropriate. Doesn't an insistence on good manners, then, effectively contest economic pressure as the *ultima ratio*, the gold standard, in relation to which everything else must be measured and justified?

*But what the hell? Anybody who wanders around the world saying, "Hell yes, I'm from Texas," deserves whatever happens to him. And he had, after all, come here once again to make a nineteenth-century ass of himself in the midst of some jaded, atavistic freakout with nothing to recommend it except a very saleable "tradition."*

This insistence is inherently anti-economical. In a scenario of all-out economic pressure, ruled by deadlines, time spent considering the preliminaries of how to engage will always seem like wasted time, or at least time that noone can afford. To take that time — indeed to show that it even exists — in a culture governed by the economic imperative, makes good manners the closest you might get to civil disobedience.

The danger of embracing "good manners", however, is its tacit espousal of conservatism. It certainly doesn't *sound* like civil disobedience. It seems crucial again, therefore, to switch tracks and re-emphasize the irreverent wit at the heart of pragmatic philosophy. (And to note that the ability to maintain a constant awareness and balance of the two — the good-mannered and the irreverant — seems to be what we're after here.) Let's take another example.

Conducting pragmatic negotiations in difficult situations usually requires one to act as a (good-mannered) moderator in order to make people talk and listen to each other. However, this doesn't mean that a pragmatic style of engagement is moderate by definition. On the contrary, in a situation where there appears to be no possibility of discussion, to politely, categorically insist on discussing possibilites nonetheless implies an irreverent disregard for how the situation is being portrayed — and that can hardly be called moderate. When there is no proper way to solve a problem, because how that "proper" is construed by the book is part of the problem, the pragmatic way to sidestep the whole scenario *must* seem improper. Acts that testify to pragmatic philosophical wit will therefore always have something improper and immoderate about them. To recoup the philosophy from the ideology, then, means embracing the immoderate consideratedness of an irreverent, improper, *gonzo* pragmatism.

This gonzo pragmatism, alive and critical with its irreverent, improper, immoderate wit ought to find itself perpetually at odds with the order of ordinary ways and conventional procedures. The apparently good-mannered mode of "quiet conversation," for example, may well still be the perfect medium for negotiating pragmatic solutions to contingent problems, but we should be careful to dissociate this ideal from a conservative nostalgia for gentlemanly customs.

*"You'll know him when you see him; don't worry about that." Creeping Jesus, I thought. That screws the press credentials. I had a vision of some nerve-rattling geek all covered with matted hair and string-warts showing up in the press office and demanding Scanlan's press packet. Well what the hell? We could always load up on acid and spend the day roaming around the clubhouse grounds with big sketch pads, laughing hysterically at the natives and swilling mint juleps so the cops wouldn't think we're abnormal. Perhaps even make the act pay; set up an easel with a big sign saying, "Let a Foreign Artist Paint Your Portrait, $10 Each. Do It NOW!"*

The traditional site for quiet conversations about important decisions is the drawing room, to which powerful upper class men withdraw (after dinner) to do politics and business, in private, excluding women specifically, and the public generally. In order to disavow this dubious legacy, then, quietly spoken gonzo pragmatists may have to radically resituate the quiet conversation outside the drawing room, in noisy places, central locations, right where problems present themselves and where participation is not just possible but inevitable, simply because people are all around, passing by. Following this thought to its illogical conclusion, then, it would be most appropriate for the negotiations between gonzo pragmatists to take place in loud, populated places, where they are absurdly inappropriate. Given that all the inevitable noise and interruption will make staying focused on any conversation all but impossible, what else could it be? Nothing less than a mockery of the idea that there was ever a "proper" way — by the book — of handling such situations. (JV) ■


*Ryan Gander,* Banner for Europe, *1999. A banner on the building site for the commonwealth games swimming pool, Oxford Road, Manchester, UK.*

# THE PITS

NEW YORK — Walking or riding along the avenues, you can imagine the storefronts without tenants. Bank branches, juice bars, shops selling electronics and scarves: all of them gone, unable to make the rent, and the landlords, verging on default, unable to lure replacements. It's a feasible scenario, if you consider the consumer-confidence and consumer-price indices, the wealth destruction, all the layoffs and trickle-down effects, and the allegedly unrelated possibility, as the *New York Times* reported last week, that "something funny is happening on the dark side of the universe." ("A better and more enticing explanation for the excess is that the particles are being spit out of the fireballs created by dark matter particles colliding and annihilating one another in space" — and here we were blaming Alan Greenspan.) A friend who worked in Southeast Asia in the nineteen-nineties, during the recession there, recalls visiting Bangkok and Jakarta to see the abandoned high-rises of the preceding economic boom. He found ranges of half-finished buildings, derelict superstructures occupied by tent shanties and with squatters gathered around fires. It may be no great leap from there to a vision here of burning garbage cans and jerry-rigged cardboard in Washington Mutual's cashless vestibules or the bare aisles of Circuit City.

"What will it look like?" is a question of the hour, as people try to visualize the ways in which life will change in New York as a result of the financial and economic crisis. In the mind's eye, we tend to populate our recessionary streets with squad cars painted green, cat's-eyed ambulances, and other anachronisms — "Fort Apache, the Bronx: The Remake." But, really, the city will probably just look the way it does now. After an extraordinary era of construction and renovation, demolition and replacement, there will almost certainly come a long period in which little to nothing gets built. Putting aside the long-discussed public projects that are endangered or doomed (the Second Avenue Subway, the West Side Railyards, Brooklyn Bridge Park, Moynihan Station, etc.), dozens of private undertakings have stalled or died. The calls go out to the architects: pencils down. We have inherited, from the good years, a glut of housing, almost all of it of the unaffordable kind — condos galore — and an increase in office space amid a sudden, steep decrease in the need for it. Throw in the high cost, or total unavailability, of capital, owing to the credit freeze, and you have a New York that may be frozen in time. The skyline, which has been very dynamic recently, like a stereo's equalizer display, should sit still for a while. The clothes in our closets today will be the ones we're wearing when we're old.

Keep an eye on the construction pits that developers dug to make way for the foundations of new buildings. The town is pocked with them. The real-estate boom fostered grand schemes, which, though they are in many cases now stillborn, began with holes in the ground. The expiration, earlier this year, of a tax-abatement law, 421-a, encouraged residential builders to dig quickly, to achieve grandfather status and thus better financing. Hence a sudden spate of new pits, some that builders may have had no intention of filling soon anyway. In some cases, if a developer hasn't already paid for the steel, he will be inclined, or forced, to walk away. Buildings that are halfway built tend to get finished, although they may wind up being what are called "see-throughs." What will become of the pits? Can we turn them into half-wild swimming holes, like the granite quarries of New England? Ring them with barbed wire and convert them into debtors' prisons or internment camps for the culprits who structured synthetic C.D.O.s? They'd make excellent ha-has, for livery horses or livestock. Corn mazes. Extreme-cockfighting arenas. Or perhaps they could serve, over time, as urban tar pits, entrapping and preserving in garbage and white brick dust the occasional unlucky passerby for the scientific edification of future generations, if there turn out to be any. Or they could become parking lots.

Vacant space tends to remain vacant, in anticipation of an upswing. Tax policy, inertia, and the eternal belief that things will get better (profitable) again usually trump civic dreams of pocket parks or stickball fields. Whoever ends up owning it all, after the foreclosures and the workouts are done, holds out for the big payday. The greatest pit of them all is at Ground Zero, where the squabbling among constituents and stakeholders, as well as the usual big-city incompetence, even before the financial meltdown, has kept the hole a hole for years. Now it's hard to imagine a way out of it. (NP) ■

From *The New Yorker*, December 8, 2008

## IN BRIEF

Size-wise, the largest newspaper published in New York State was an issue of *The Constellation*, issued in New York City on July 4, 1859. The press, designed to accommodate the single sheet opening to 100 × 70 inches, broke down during the first print run. ■

The second First/Last Newspaper was assembled by DEXTER SINISTER with contributions by Steve Rushton, Angie Keefer, Rob Giampietro, Will Holder, Francis McKee, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Ryan Gander, Jan Verwoert, Nick Paumgarten, Snowden Snowden, and Jason Fulford. Produced under the umbrella of PERFORMA 09 and presented in partnership with Times Square Alliance. Edited in cooperation with Defne Ayas and Virginie Bobin.

Masthead set in Strike Alphabet courtesy Shannon Ebner.

Performa, a non-profit multidisciplinary arts organization established by RoseLee Goldberg in 2004, is dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth century art and to encouraging new directions in performance for the twenty-first century.

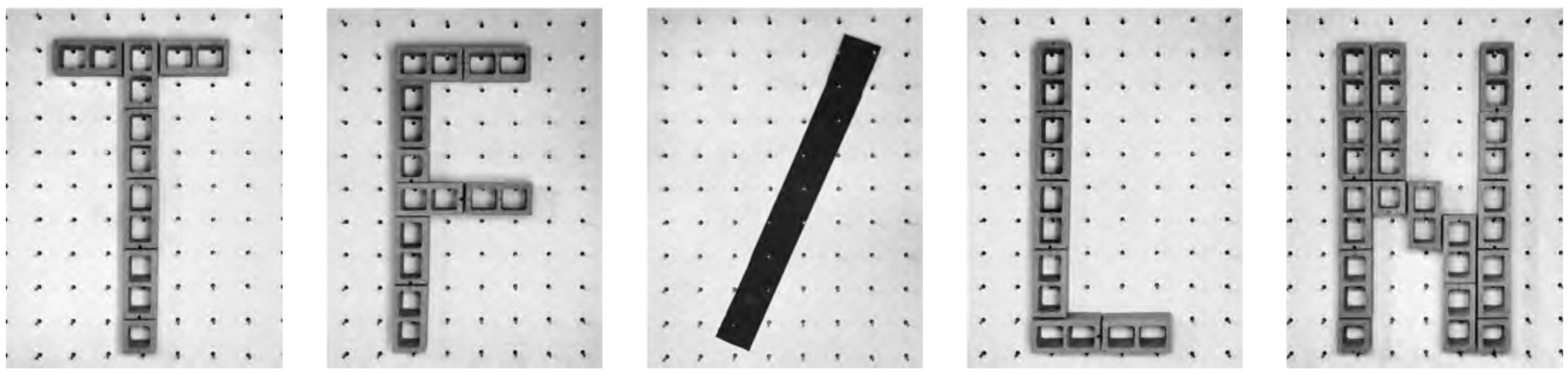
PERFORMA 09

# FIFTH WALL OF FIFTH ESTATE COLLAPSES

PORT AUTHORITY — An everyday euphemism for "The Press," itself a widely-used yet increasingly semantically-outdated title that refers to news media in general and journalism in particular, *The Fourth Estate* was originally coined as a supplement to Clergy, Nobility, and Commoners, respectively the First, Second, and Third Estates in certain parts of Middle-Aged Europe, and generally considered more important than all three; not to be confused with *The Fourth Wall*, an imaginary plane between actors and audience in such as a theatre or soap opera, that has since come to refer more broadly to the gap between fiction and reality often breached by art forms that adopt an authorial distance in which this "wall," or suspension of disbelief, is "broken" by the work's reference to its own artifice in order to "alienate" or "estrange" an audience and foster a more critical perception; not to be confused with *The Fifth Estate*, a floating term that refers to certain social groups outside the four traditional "pillars," such as trade unions, organized crime, or, more recently, the blogosphere and similar realms that consider themselves counter to mainstream media; not to be confused with *The Fifth Wall*, a second-remove boundary of reality separation applied to a performance where a character within one fictional world refers to a previous character played by the same, typically a typecast actor in a totally unrelated fictional world.

"How many members of a certain demographic group does it take to perform a specified task?"

"A finite number: one to perform the task and the remainder to act in a manner stereotypical of the group in question." (DS) ■



THE FIRST/LAST NEWSPAPER — PORT AUTHORITY, 641 8th Avenue, New York City, NY 10036 11 NOVEMBER 2009 — DEXTER SINISTER

Lost Astronaut *by Alicia Framis (2009). Instructions by Marina Abramovic. Photo by Nacho Alegre. Courtesy of the artist and Performa*

# NEW LEGISLATION COMBATS CHICKEN-EGG PROBLEM

LONDON — British literary historian N.N. Feltes has said that "Readers are made by what makes the book." Meaning, the system that produces a text also produces the readers who read it. In Charles Dickens's case, that system was serial publication. But, in Dickens's case, that system was also the nascent industrial revolution, which involved the shift from what Feltes describes as the "petty-commodity production of books," with books produced in small quantities by artisans, to the "capitalist production of texts," where books were produced in mass quantities by professional printers and publishers. In a very short time, the book production system went from something like that which produced a homespun quilt to something like that which produced bolts of industrially-woven fabric. While the machines made the fabric cheaper and easier to make, its weavers owned nothing but their labor in making it. And while presses made books cheaper and easier to make, their authors in turn owned nothing but their power to conceive them.

The comparison of writing to weaving is not lost on Feltes, who uses it to recall Marx: "While the condition of early 19th-century writers could never decline to that of their wretched contemporaries, the hand-loom weavers, nevertheless Marx's comment on the weavers' predicament in the face of the new relations of industrial production is illuminating." Marx noticed that workers in a capitalist system are estranged from the work they make. Since their work is no longer their own, the concept of labor arrives to take its place. This yields, as Marx says, "the conditions of labor and the product of labor." The book, which was once the work, is now the product; its text, which was also once the book, is now the labor. Its author's right is not to the product but to his or her individual labor. In one stroke, the "professional author," and the "commodity text" were born, along with the mass-consuming public to support them.

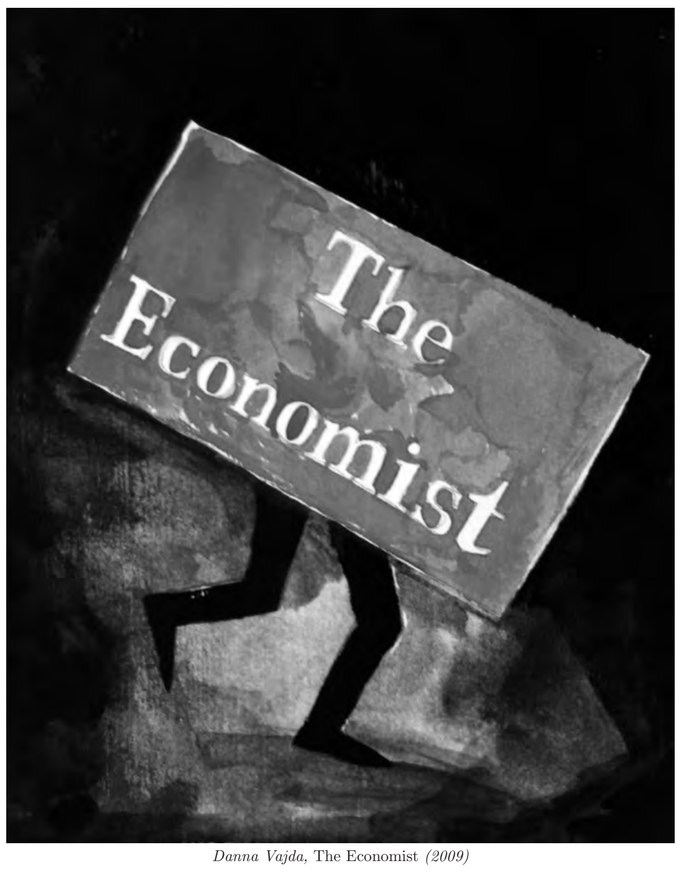
With the serial, all three were perfected. "Rarely has a literary form been so driven by the dictates of economics," explains writer Shawn Crawford in his essay "No time to be idle: the serial novel and popular imagination." And Dickens's success became the gold standard. Crawford: "Along with his writing talents Dickens possessed an acute business sense that made him a ruthless bargainer. He recognized the power an author could wield if used wisely. He often negotiated royalties of up to 75% of the profits, received [large] advances, and commanded an allowance whenever in the midst of publishing a new work. In addition, he ran or owned other serial magazines during his career and received both a salary as editor and a share of the profits." Dickens, in other words, was a savvy capitalist as well as a crusading journalist and writer. Along with his compassion for the poverty and exploitation of workers, he possessed a uniquely Victorian attitude for bootstrapping and achievement. "Personal development became something of an obsession for the Victorians," writes Crawford, "and serials mirrored the belief that personal and cultural progress was gradual, positive, and inevitable."

Piracy, then, was not progress: it was rampant, adverse to cultural interests, and, eventually, criminal. It was also a byproduct of industrial capitalism: before Gutenberg, the amount of time required to copy a text in any sizable quantity was comparable to the amount of time required to produce the original. Once copies are easier to make, however, more of them get made, and this has an effect: more books mean more literacy, and more literacy means more readers from one generation to the next, most of whom want cheaper and cheaper books.

But piracy and copyright are a chicken-and-egg problem. Which came first? Because in order to restrict piracy, as copyright does, you must first have pirates to restrict. But in order to have pirates, you must first believe that some have a right to copy a work and others (namely, pirates) do not. In a way, one creates the other: piracy creates copyright and copyright creates pirates. In another, perhaps more accurate way, a disruptive technology, the printing press, created them both.

Twenty-five years after the publishing of René Descartes's *Discourse on Method* had signaled the start of the Enlightenment, the Licensing Act of 1662 required printers in good legal standing to notify a trade association called the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers, or Stationers' Company, of their intent to set up a printing press. Once they had, the Act legislated the printing of "seditious treasonable and unlicensed Bookes and Pamphlets" by requiring licensed printers to deposit copies of their printed materials with the Stationers' Company for review. Printers who did not conform to these rules were subject to fines and potential imprisonment. Though the Licensing Act of 1662 law made censorship by the government easier and more centralized, it also established certain types of printing as legitimate and other types as illegitimate. The Stationers' Company had an official monopoly on the copying of text. Having sold a work to the Company, an author relinquished any claim to it in perpetuity.

When the Statute of Anne passed in 1709, things changed. First, the idea of a "copyright" was expanded from narrowly applying to the Company to broadly applying to the public. Second, and critically, the monopoly on a work resided now with the author of a text rather than its printer. Third, that monopoly was now finite: 21 years for books in print, 14 for books not yet published, with an option for 14 more as an enticement to prospective authors by a society hungry for new texts. With the Statute of Anne, as Feltes has observed, "For the first time in statutory law there came to exist a property right in the text itself and that right was alienable," meaning it could be transferred from one person to another. He continues, "If the publisher is to profit, he must be able to acquire from the author an exclusive right — and so the author must be able to grant it." For writers like Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope, and Isaac Newton, all of whom published works soon after the Statute had passed, this meant that getting a text printed no longer meant relinquishing their legal claim to it. But for writers like Jonathan Swift, the future was more ambiguous. The Statute protected England, Scotland, and Wales, but it did not extend to Swift in Ireland or to the British Colonies in North America. In both places, pirates flourished. (RG) ■




*Danna Vajda,* The Economist *(2009)*

# EXCEPTION THAT PROVES RULE, WRONG

Scientific Method considered via *The Meaning of It All: Thoughts of a Citizen-Scientist* by physicist Richard Feynman:

DEFINE THE QUESTION — The rate of development of science is not the rate at which you make observations alone but, much more important, the rate at which you create new things to test.

GATHER INFORMATION & RESOURCES — Science is a method of finding things out. This method is based on the principle that observation is the judge of whether something is so or not. All other aspects and characteristics of science can be understood directly when we understand that observation is the ultimate and final judge of the truth of an idea.

FORM HYPOTHESES — But if a thing is not scientific, if it cannot be subjected to the test of observation, this does not mean that it is dead, or wrong, or stupid. We are not trying to argue that science is somehow good and other things are somehow not good. Science takes all those things that can be analyzed by observation, and thus the things called science are found out. But there are some things left out, for which the method does not work. This does not mean that those things are unimportant. They are, in fact, in many ways the most important.

PERFORM EXPERIMENT & COLLECT DATA — "The exception proves that the rule is wrong." That is the principle of science. If there is an exception to any rule, and it can be proved by observation, that rule is wrong. . . . The scientist tries to find more exceptions and to determine the characteristics of the exceptions, a process that is continually exciting as it develops. He does not try to avoid showing that the rules are wrong; there is progress and excitement in the exact opposite. He tries to prove himself wrong as quickly as possible.

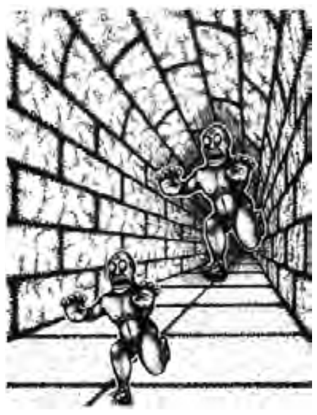
ANALYZE DATA — It turns out that the tiny effects that turn up always require the most revolutionary modifications of ideas.

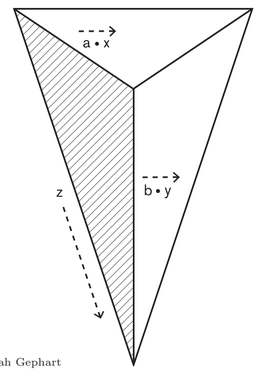
INTERPRET DATA & DRAW CONCLUSIONS TO SERVE AS STARTING POINTS FOR NEW HYPOTHESES — It is necessary and true that all of the things we say in science, all of the conclusions, are uncertain, because they are only conclusions. They are guesses as to what is going to happen, and you cannot know what will happen, because you have not made the most complete experiments.

PUBLISH RESULTS — Scientists, therefore, are used to dealing with doubt and uncertainty. All scientific knowledge is uncertain. This experience with doubt and uncertainty is important. I believe that it is of very great value, and one that extends beyond the sciences. I believe that to solve any problem that has never been solved before, you have to leave the door to the unknown ajar. You have to permit the possibility that you do not have it exactly right. Otherwise, if you have made up your mind already, you might not solve it. (AK) ■

# CLASSIC PYRAMID INVERTED

Undergirding any news item in any medium is a skeleton of facts. The visible outside might be a glassy feature treatment, a cantilevered opinion piece, or — bringing the bizarre to this metaphor — the classic inverted pyramid. (This term refers to the age-old hard-news presentation that perches the weightiest details at the top of the story, with increasingly less important details in the subsequent paragraphs.) The facts are the basis of the story, and through judicious combination of accumulated facts, the reporter adds dimension to a story.






Sarah Gephart

In the mathematical field of linear algebra, three words from the last sentence are terms of art: *basis*, *combination*, and *dimension* (strictly speaking, it's really *linear combination*, but if you're the sort of person reading this paper, you'll probably grant me the latitude). All three apply to the discussion of vector spaces. A vector space is a set of mathematical objects — call two of them x and y — where for any x and y, x + y is also in the vector space, and for any real number a, a + x is also in the vector space. The objects can be anything — numbers, vectors, matrices. It could be cheese if you could define addition and multiplication over cheese rigorously. A familiar example is the vectors described by coordinate pairs, like (a, b), in a two-dimensional plane.

A linear combination is a sum of several vectors, each of which is multiplied by a real number. So, take a real number a and multiply it by the vector x, making a · x. Lather, rinse, repeat for something like a · x + b · y. Now suppose you're playing a linear-combination game with Darryl Difficult, who asks you to pick the real numbers in your linear combination so that it calculates out to the vector z. A basis is a set of vectors that you can use in your linear combination to supply Darryl with any z he can come up with. With the sample linear combination above, x = (1, 0) and y = (0, 1) are a basis in the two-dimensional plane; if Darryl wants z = (a, b), you give him the numbers a and b. (1, 0) and (2, 0) are not a basis. If Darryl wants (1, 1), you can't get there from here. The dimension of a vector space is the number of elements in the space's basis — 2 for a two-dimensional place and 3 for 3-D.

Now, take these concepts back to the formula stated in the last sentence of the first paragraph, and plug and chug. A reporter collects facts and forms a basis to a story. When she writes the story up, she chooses some way to combine these facts, maybe scaling up fact x by putting it in the lead or scaling down fact y. The number of facts in the story gives it dimension — the more facts, the more depth the story takes on.

Writers of editorials or second-day analysis often work from the breaking-news stories produced by the on-the-ground reporters, recombining them into their own news vectors, adding a new slant or bringing a few days' stories together. But in the vector space of news, the new vectors these second-day writers produce do not increase the dimension of the space. Combine as many vectors of the form (a, b, 0) and (c, d, 0) as you like; you'll never get (0, 0, 1). Only the addition of new facts to the pool of reporting adds to the story.

(This is not to devalue day-after work. The numbers carry no judgment. If (a, b, 0) and (c, d, 0) are day-one work and (e, f, 0) is day-two work, how could anyone say (0, 0, 1) is better?)

A hungrily-expanding public record swallows up the facts shoveled in by the truckload from the global media hordes. The dimension of the public record is mammoth — billions? trillions? — but it is still less than the dimension of all reportable facts. Some burglaries make the news; some don't. Many deaths prompt obituaries; some will remain forever John Doe.

As journalists are laid off, the gap between the public record and all reportable facts grows. Fewer people collecting facts means fewer facts collected, the dimension of the public record expanding more slowly. As it approaches infinity, layoffs mean the inevitable, permanent loss of dimension. Stopping the film, slicing off all but the painting's edge, or squashing the sculpture flat. (GM) ■

*How Media Masters Reality #3*

# HOW TELEVISION STOPPED DELIVERING PEOPLE AND PEOPLE STARTED DELIVERING TELEVISION

TIVOLI, NY — Today's installment of *How Media Masters Reality* begins with two quotations. Situated at opposite ends of a media revolution, both describe the medium of TV as a feedback loop, but with apparently different ideas of how that loop works. I will suggest that these perspectives have more in common than we might at first suppose.

In the video *Television Delivers People* (1973) artist Richard Serra makes the bold statement: "You are the product of TV. You are delivered to the advertiser who is the customer."

This statement came at a time when any number of artistic and critical projects suggested alternatives to the mainstream media described by Serra, ranging from Michael Shamberg's seminal book *Guerrilla Television* (1971) to initiatives that combined the collectivist ideals of the 1960s with the potentially democratizing (new) technologies of video, closed-circuit TV, and cable. The new breed of art-activists included media collectives such as TVTV (Top Value Television), Raindance, Radical Software, Videofreek, and Ant Farm. These TV Guerrillas helped provide the conditions that make the current media feedback loop of self-performance possible.

The second, and more recent, perspective comes from a statement made by Chris Short, the head of Interactive Media at Endermol U.K., the producers of the reality TV franchise *Big Brother*. In 2002, Short was happy to report: "We're creating a virtuous circle that excites the interactive audience about what's going on in the house, drives them toward the TV program, the TV program will drive them to the Internet, the Internet to the other ways they can get information, and the other ways back to the TV."

Both Serra and Short understand the TV audience, for better or worse, as a *performative commodity*. In both cases, the audience performs as an agent in the production. The more recent case differs from the earlier, however, because the actions of the audience directly determine the actions within the *mise en scene*, or template, of the non-scripted TV show. In the *Big Brother* formulation, an array of media outside the TV show itself provides the support structure that allows the TV show to air.

Back in 1972, the TV audiences described by Serra were distracted by scripted entertainment or by information (news and quiz shows for instance) while advertisers smuggled messages into their consciousness. The model for the TV economy (in the U.S. at least) traditionally worked on the principle that the networks would lease programs from production companies and pocket the advertising revenue.

In contrast, Short describes a media economy in which the advertiser is no longer necessarily linked to the show's production, because it is replaced, at least in part, by income from telephone calls and text messaging to the show. In 2005, Endemol's combined U.S. productions took money from 300 million calls and messages. The same year *American Idol* registered 500 million votes (63 million during the final) each at 99 cents a pop. More recently, shows without on-screen contestants such as *Jackpot TV*, *Get Lucky*, and *Gala Games* (bargain basement U.K. shows in which people play at home over the phone) are proving profitable; product placement in these shows has risen from a negligible share to 10% of their total income in the U.S.; and further revenue is generated by the sale and export of formats in which both "playbook" and "coach" are provided on a franchise basis. Although still providing a comparatively small proportion of these shows' budgets, such funding methods are growing fast within TV's non-scripted sector, allowing production companies to compete at increasingly tight margins in an industry where four out of five new shows fail.

There are many reasons why non-scripted TV shows have grown from the margins of television programming into primetime. Over the past decades, and across the globe, the industry has seen deregulation, technological changes, radical changes in working practices, an increase in the number of channels and ways of accessing them, and the fragmentation of audiences.

The radical change to the network-advertisers system that served the industry for decades is well demonstrated by the reality TV hit *Survivor*. In 2002, CBS agreed to share the advertising revenue from *Survivor* with its producer, Mark Burnett, who also agreed to pre-sell the sponsorship. Burnett secured eight advertisers who each paid $4 million per show for a package of product placement, commercial time, and weblink. By contrast, the last season of *Friends*, which was produced by Warner Brothers for NBC, cost $7.5 million dollars per episode, with $6 million of that going to the six principle actors.

*Survivor* wasn't only cheap to produce (a reality TV show cost $700,000 – $1,250,000 per hour at the time) and effective at generating advertisement revenue, it was also popular, even outperforming NBC's highly popular, and hugely expensive, *ER*. *Survivor* was able to demand $445,000 for a 30 second spot, compared to *ER*'s $425,000. The success of the new model represented a tipping point for the broadcasters, and by 2005 20% of primetime program hours consisted of non-scripted content. TV's wild west is currently characterized by this increasingly rich mix of commercial funding, alongside increasingly sophisticated techniques for analyzing the effectivity of advertising that result in more diverse and nuanced targeting strategies by advertisers, and so on and so on.

Given that viewers are currently providing shows with both funding, via their phone calls, and content, via on-screen and online participation (typically deliberating and polling the fate of a contestant), it's ironic that the abolition of the space between production and consumption was one of the goals of the critical, self-initiated media architects that grew out of the 1960s counterculture. They wanted to see an end to the grip that the networks and advertisers held over the industry. Central to their critique was the notion that in order to break the circuit of monopoly of production it was necessary to dive into the feedback loop of self-production.

*Portapak camera (1968)*

In other words, they called for the rise of the participant — the self-performing subject in an economy where visibility itself becomes a commodity.

In the July 1968 supplement of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, Ant Farm published "Cowboy Nomad" in which they cast themselves as cybernetic, cowboy prophets of the future technological revolution: "YET THERE ARE COWBOY NOMADS TODAY, LIVING IN ANOTHER LIFE STYLE AND WAITING FOR ELECTRONIC MEDIA, THAT EVERYONE KNOWS IS DOING IT, TO BLOW THE MINDS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS AMERICAN SUBURBANITE. WHILE THEY WAIT, THE COWBOY NOMADS (OUTLAWS) SMOKE LOCO WEED AROUND ELECTRIC CAMPFILES."

Michael Shamberg, in *Guerrilla Television* (1971), wrote about how the feedback technology of TV might be used to break the stronghold that networks and their advertisers held over the minds of viewers back in the early 1970s: "[strategies] might include tactics like going out to the suburbs with video cameras and taping commuters. The playback could be in people's homes through their normal TV sets. The result might be that businessmen would see how wasted they look from buying the suburban myth."

For both Ant Farm and Shamberg, the subject ready for change is the corporation man — the individual conditioned by the commodity-centered media to accept his hollow existence and throw in his lot with the commodity. This is the endpoint of spectacular media: the message (the advertisement) stops when it hits the consciousness of the consumer, who, intoxicated by the spirit of bad faith, will go forth and buy stuff. Both Ant Farm and Shamberg understood that to break the hold of monopoly it was necessary to include the viewer in the feedback loop of production — to make the viewer visible to themselves, and thus create a shift in the economic logic of the media. The understanding of TV as a feedback mechanism that could reform an individual's behavior had already been appreciated and demonstrated by social psychologist Stanley Milgram, who conducted the infamous "Obedience to Authority" experiment in 1961. Milgram was greatly influenced by Allen Funt's *Candid Camera* — the TV format perhaps closest to that of present day shows.

When John Lennon and Yoko Ono staged *Bed In for Peace* (1969), Lennon described the act as an "advert for peace." This carries with it the assumption that the TV has the power to influence directly, that it's a "radical software" so powerful that anything — even peace itself — could be repackaged as a commodity. In this way peace found its natural equivalence with the commodity status of the pop star.

So how do we explain the schizophrenia of a radicalism that mistrusted technology and a radicalism that looked to technology for the solution? Fred Turner's book *From Counterculture to Cyberculture* talks about two distinct trends that emerged during the 1960s which can be broadly categorized as the New Left and the Counterculture. The New Left emerged from the civil rights and anti-war movements. This group understood the world as driven by the material realities of class, race, and labor. The second group, the Counterculture, emerged from a heady blend of beatnik literature and cybernetics which understood individuals and systems (including ecological systems) as comprising networks that exchanged information with others. In this scheme the media could be understood as a media-*ecology*, the evolution of which could be redirected. LSD experimenters understood the drug as a technology of the self, a form of software that could change the program of a group or individual.

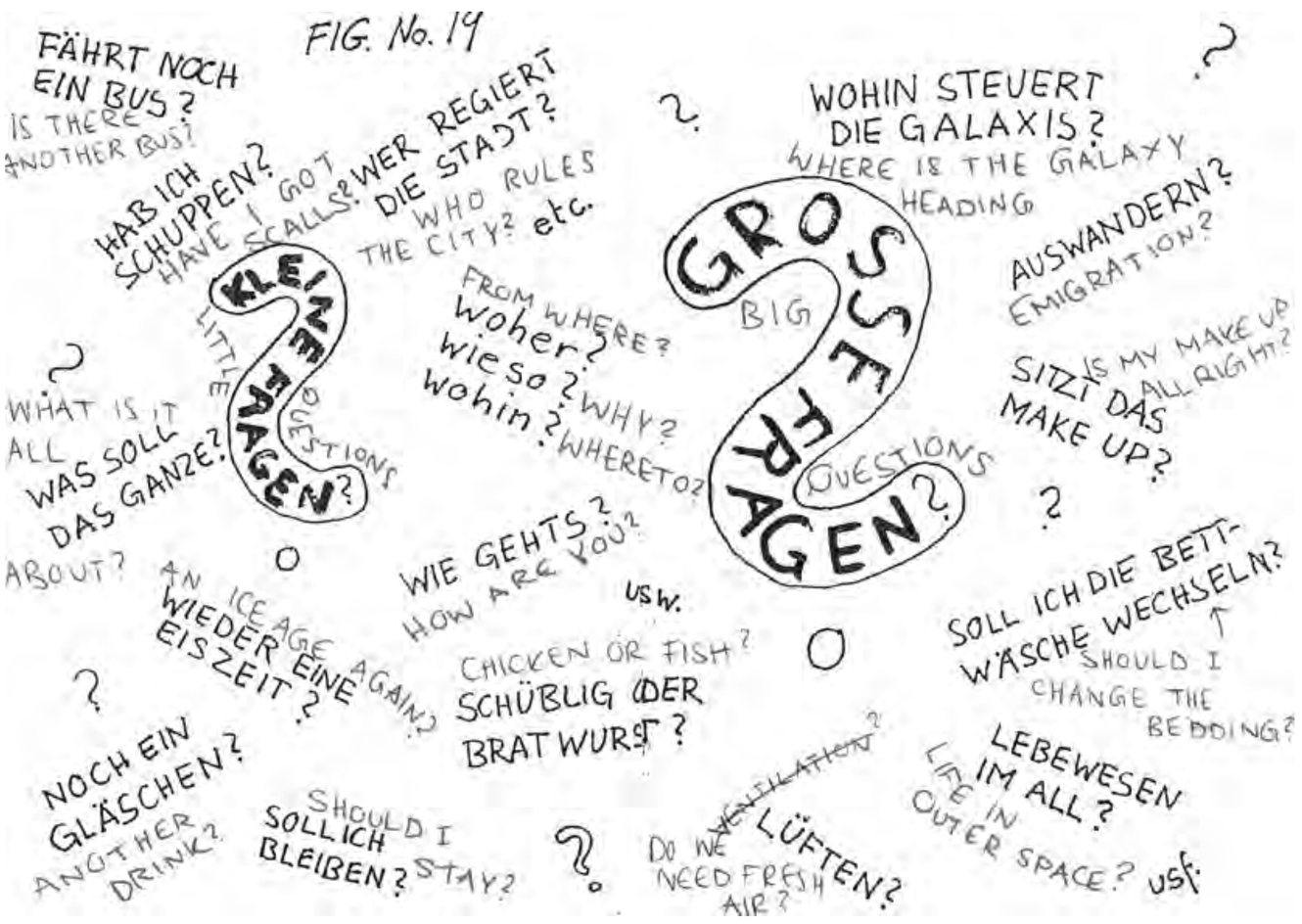
The underlying philosophy of *the network* was also a major inspiration for the 700,000 individuals who set up alternative communities throughout the U.S. between 1967 and 1971. By the early 1970s, cybernetic ideas had become axiomatic amongst the media-activists who had grown up through the counterculture of the 1960s. The Portapak camera and video represented new tools to extend the scale of human potential, just as every other new technology had done before. As Ant Farm put it, riffing on media theorist Marshall McLuhan's idea of the Global Village: "ALL I WANT TO DO IS EXPAND MY MIND THINK IN TERMS OF AN AGE-SHARING GLOBAL FEELING SCALES EXPANDING TO A GLOBAL NETWORK / VILLAGE MCLUHAN'S MESSAGE, MEDIUM RARE. HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE THE LAG IN OUTLOOK AND CONSCIOUSNESS TO WHIPLASH FITTING THINKING/IDEAS TO TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITIES?"

Shamberg, in *Guerrilla Television*, made the radical distinction between a materialist left and a cybernetically-inclined left, saying: "True cybernetic guerrilla warfare means restructuring communications, not capturing existing ones." Timothy Leary, championing the new technology of mind-expanding drugs, stated: "[People should] drop out, find their own center, turn on, and above all avoid mass movements, mass leadership, mass followers." And this imperative for the individual to reprogram him or her self, rather than the masses to revolt, reached its technocratic extreme with Buckminster Fuller's assertion that "revolution by design" will mean "politics will become obsolete."

During the 1960s and 70s, media critique grounded in Marxism tended to emphasize the alienation engendered by the mass media — the distance between the viewer and the shining world of the commodity. As the French radicals of the Situationist International put it, "Reality, the culminating point of the spectacle's offensive escapes from all concrete usage, from all real communication, behind the shop window of an inaccessible spectacle."

In the U.S., by contrast, a network of activists, architects, artists, and critics experimented with a different understanding of the medium of TV. Freed from the stranglehold of the networks and accessed by the people, TV could become a technology that could *make* reality, not just mirror it. Art media groups such as Ant Farm and Radical Software tested the possibilities of a medium that would indeed produce a participating network, which would collapse the difference between performer and producer, but what could not easily be foreseen was how the feedback loop of TV could make the commodity and the commodity-performer the same thing. In the feedback loop of non-scripted TV shows, the contestant and the prize are equivalent; the figure and ground that defined the old mass media is now replaced by a constant oscillation between producer and consumer.

"EVENTUALLY WE WILL ABANDON PHYSICAL MOVEMENT FOR TELEPAPHIC/ CYBERNETIC MOVEMENT (TELEVISION) AND OUR NETWORK WILL ADAPT TO THE CHANGE." (*Ant Farm, Truck Stop Fantasy One*, 1971) (SR) ■

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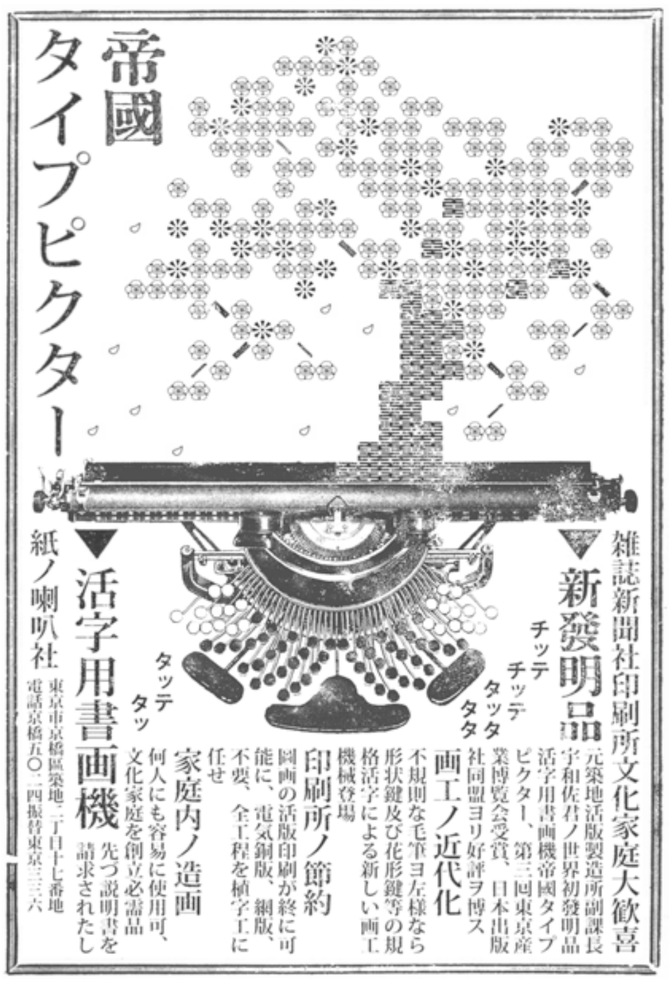


*Part 3: Headless Body, Topless Bar*

# WILD TIME IN FLORIDA

GLASGOW — It kicked off when the March Hare pointed out that "you should say what you mean." Alice replied, "I do, at least — at least I mean what I say — that's the same thing, you know."

This exchange still resonates through the arcane world of crossword compilers. One of the first of the breed, Torquemada, delighted in torturing solvers with unorthodox clues. After his demise a fellow compiler, Afrit, cited *The Book of the Crossword* on such matters, stating "I need not mean what I say, but I must say what I mean." Of course, *The Book of the Crossword*, authoritative though it may have sounded, was only a fiction invented by Afrit who was worried that another Torquemada might emerge with rogue clues (one did — Araucaria, named after the monkey-puzzle, and he continues to create delicious mayhem). For a while, however, Afrit's dictum created order and this was reinforced when the compiler Ximenes laid down his rules on the principles of "square dealing" in *The Art of the Crossword Puzzle* (1966). Yet another compiler, Azed, helpfully summarized these principles, identifying three crucial elements:

1. a precise definition
2. a fair subsidiary indication
3. nothing else

With a little less clarity, Alfred Jarry had already noted in *Les Minutes de Sable Memorial* (1894) that a text ought "to suggest and not to state, creating a crossroads of the all the words in the highway of sentences."

That's a potent statement when applied to crosswords. They lie at the heart of a newspaper, a crossroads of words in the midst of columns, classifieds, headlines, and obituaries. Despite Afrit, Ximenes, and Azed, the rules that dictate their form are continually broken (never more so than by Araucaria), while both clues and solutions to cryptic puzzles push the boundaries of sense far beyond the rational. The crossroads has always been a place to summon the devil. In blues mythology it is the place where Robert Johnson went to sell his soul in return for supernatural skills. In a newspaper, the crossword is a crossroads where the voodoo breeds disarray, the devil takes language apart and shows us how to build alternative worlds with its components.

Alfred Jarry describes something akin to this in his outline of 'Pataphysics:

"Pataphysics is the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments.

"[It] is the science of that which is superinduced upon metaphysics, whether within or beyond the latter's limitations, extending as far beyond metaphysics as the latter extends beyond physics.

'Pataphysics will examine the laws governing exceptions, and will explain the universe supplementary to this one: or, less ambitiously, will describe a universe which can be — and perhaps should be — envisaged in place of the traditional one, since the laws that are supposed to have been discovered in the traditional universe are also correlations of exceptions, albeit more frequent ones, but in any case accidental data which, reduced to the status of unexceptional exceptions, possess no longer even the virtue of originality."

This is dubious magic and all the more seductive for that. Rufus, the most prolific crossword compiler today, likens the process of creating a crossword to that of the stage illusionist. It is essentially an act of "misdirection." Rufus, who used to appear in nightclubs under the name El Squalido, has long been a member of the Magic Circle (he is also the first to discover "Britney Spears" in "Presbyterians").

The only way to solve these quasi-quantum linguistic dilemmas is to fracture language along spatial principles. Hugh Stephenson, author of *Secrets of the Setters*, explains:

"It also seems that the mind has much more difficulty reading a word that is written vertically than one that is written horizontally. If, therefore, you have some letters in the grid for a Down clue, jot them horizontally in the margin or on another bit of paper. Most people find it hard to see that

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-
R
-
-
E
-
T
-
A
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might lead to ORCHESTRA, but much easier to see that - R - - E - T - A is heading in that direction."

This weird physics of the mind goes further: "In particular, many people find it helpful to write out the letters that are candidates for an anagram in a circle backwards with one letter in the middle:

```
      O
   R     R
C     A     T
   H     S
      E
```

The mind's eye is now much more ready to see that the letters also spell CARTHORSE."

Perhaps headline writers travel in such exotic dimensions. That may excuse "Drunks Get Nine Months in Violin Case," or "Man Struck by Lightning Faces Battery Charge," or "Typhoon Rips through Cemetery; Hundreds Dead" all of which read more like cryptic clues than news headlines.

This open field of letters inverts the urban order of the newspaper. It is at heart dyslexic, turning alphabets into ciphers, quering the pitch for writers. Adrian Bell, an anthologist of crosswords, argues that this visual dimension is key to the cruciverbalist's art: "The setter's mind is more like a cinema than a reservoir. It is a sort of continuous performance of surrealist (though rigorously pertinent) imagery, related only by the interlockings and juxtapositions of orthography."

Even Afrit, keeper of the flame, feels able to defend a cryptic compiler in the following terms: "He may attempt to mislead by employing a form of words which can be taken in more than one way, and it is your fault if you take it the wrong way but it is his fault if you cannot logically take it the right way."

It might not be entirely coincidental that the cryptic crossword flourishes most keenly in the English language. The metaphor of the crossroads seems made for English which has absorbed words from approximately 350 other languages, spread throughout the world and, under the pressure of politics, economics and empire, has begun to wipe out other tongues. And, like a virus, crosswords devour the sense that surrounds them in newspapers, regurgitating it in gobbets of absurdity. The cryptic clue is the true code of the intelligencer. It depends on the ever-shifting, adaptive nature of language that is restless, insatiable, and positively feral. (FM) ■

# NO VALUES

ORANGE COUNTY — In 1981 I got a lot of key vocabulary words from punk rock records, basic words but weighty terms: apathy, hypocrite, society, poseur. A pubescent self- and class-consciousness took root with the help of Black Flag's *No Values*, and the lesser-known *Home is Where* by a band named Middle Class. I skipped school to read *1984* (only three years 'til the nightmare is realized?) and I hated the rich, although I hadn't met any yet. In 1991, I was signing loan papers to get into art school where I finally met the rich, and I didn't hate them so much as simply want to be more like them. Now the century has turned, and in light of my recent reading expedition, the last two decades have been constantly in the back of my mind, frustratingly hovering on the precipice of dialectical climax.

During a routine time-killing spree, I spotted *The Managers: Corporate Life in America* (1979) in a pile of discarded books, outside a library. Not just any library, but a library in an art school, and not just any art school, but the art school that has me $75,000 in debt of a bill which allows me to be simultaneously very like and very unlike the rich. In any case, I picked up *The Managers*, along with the similarly obsolete *Megatrends* (1991). While a perusal of the latter did not manage to pique my interest, mere seconds into the former had me practically reading aloud to passersby. (I get like that.) My eventual and total immersion in this book felt vaguely like a double feature of *The Stepford Wives* (1975) and *Over the Edge* (1979), two films suggesting that white middle class paradise is actually a barbarous wasteland. Only it was sociology, not cinema.

The sociological study was based on almost a hundred in-depth interviews with managers and their wives, from a corporation suitably named Global Products, Incorporated. Diane Rothbard Margolis argues that these managers were a class of people created by the corporation that did not "enjoy the benefits that came with success and affluence." They had "the price of admission into the middle class," yet their lifestyles were distinctly different from the more established middle class comprised of independent businessmen and professionals. Confining her research to one locale, she studied both managers and town committee members in the same town, and saw a clear distinction between the two. Basically, what it came down to was the distinction between the Gesellschaft (society) and Gemeinschaft (community), or "world-users" versus "world-makers": guess who was attracted to the strong community characteristics of a Gemeinschaft, yet rarely got involved in the social responsibilities that were responsible for creating it? Guess who the world-users were? That's right, the managers of Global Products, Inc. The findings of the study seem, at this point, to be truisms at the heart of every advanced consumer's internal ironic-distancing mechanism. So I may as well confess that this book was so interesting to me because my mother was a manager in a big corporation. That should explain my confused class-consciousness. Probably most of the people I've been calling "rich" are actually middle class too. The managers in her study, she claims, exhibited indifference, held no values deeply, as opposed to the other non-managerial middle class who were world-makers and value cherishers. "Values" was a big word for my mother. In the '80s, she wasn't so happy with my prefacing "values" with "no"; in the '90s, once I began prefacing it with "revaluation of all," we finally got to know each other. That's when I learned what she was doing in management. She told me that in the early '70s there was a dramatic shift in business values once people started pouring in from MBA programs. Apparently, she and a few of her colleagues, knowing full well that corporations were giant super-human citizens, felt compelled to attempt to build a "soul" into them. In doing so, she was up against a gaggle of careerists and finally, a corporation that wasn't interested in becoming spiritually animated. But forget about that if you can, because it's time to move on to the next phase of the reading expedition after which it'll be high time to put at least one middle-class value on the table.

In *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (1989), Barbara Ehrenreich admits "it is easy to conclude [ . . . ] that the professional middle class has no place in social change [for it is] too driven by its own ambitions, too compromised by its own elite status, and too removed from those whose sufferings cry out most loudly for redress." Her book follows the middle class from the '50s to the '80s and could probably be very helpful to anyone who would like to fine-tune his or her class consciousness. One middle-class value she pointed out is the elusive "freedom to direct one's own work according to inner principles." What exactly does this mean? I was at a party recently and began talking with a couple of people, one of whom I knew was making a ton of money producing TV commercials. The other one was a former "production assistant" in the same business, who had decided to search out different work, because the hours were entirely too consuming. "I just had to quit doing that because there are much better things I could be doing with my time," she said. "LIKE WHAT?" blurted out the successful one, and then before she could answer he added, loudly, "and don't say spending time with your cat!" The ex-production assistant and I quickly jumped to the defense of doing something so nothing, and then things got tense.

Inevitably the conversation begged the integrity question: art versus advertising. "The professionalism and academicism of art supported by the upper classes had the effect of estranging it from the common people. The result was an immoral art, an art that had forgotten its social obligations!" Was this my successful former artist friend talking? Well, actually it's Tolstoy, but my friend was pretending to move in that direction, albeit with a twist. "Not only is spending time with cats a ridiculous waste of time, loving a pet is utterly delusional, and furthermore the domestication of animals is wrong! Listen cat lady, don't tell me making car commercials isn't as good as making art — art is farce, you asked for your insolvency!" Well, that's your opinion, I thought. "Opinion" said Sartre, "is the word a hostess uses to bring to an end a discussion that threatens to become acrimonious." It equalizes all points of view and consoles us by reducing ideas to the level of tastes. "All tastes are natural; all opinions are permitted. Tastes, colors, and opinions are not open to discussion." So everybody, shhhhh. (Very quietly, I'll pass on this last note from Ehrenreich: "If there is any connection between the gross excrescence of wealth and the indisputable spread of pauperism, it is discreetly left in mystery.") (FS) ■

*Statue of a newspaper vendor at the Texas Press Association in Austin, Texas*

feeling, is much better than wading through tiresome rubbish patiently replacing all the meaningless terms by "blabs." Certainly it is much less trouble. I have applied my technique with outstanding success to BBC talks and "news." By selling my wireless set I have not only raised the level of intellectual honesty and purity of speech in my home, but I have got a few pounds in cash, and shall save ten shillings a year on the license.

But I do not share Mr. Chase's conviction that the principal function of words is to convey meanings. He does not seem to realize that different sorts of people emit different sorts of blab and that therefore the study of blab is important in the diagnosis of personality. By their blab shall ye know them. My own technique here is never to listen to anybody's blab long enough to get tired, but to take samples of it by listening carefully for short periods. Then I go away and savour it in silence. I find this tells me much more about people than the cut of their clothes or the lines of their features, and blab-sampling is indeed one of my favorite recreations. I would not live in a world that had been semantically purged of blab.

Yesterday evening, for example, I bought a publication from a bookstall, which is blab from start to finish. It is called *Rising Tide* and it is full of photographs of young men and women with uplifted expressions and permanent smirks, who have got "God Control" by "having a quiet time" (with God) in much the same way as the British workman mikes off now and then for two puffs and a spit. I am grateful to the Oxford Group for "God Control." It must be very nearly the ultimate blank of all semantic blanks, but it makes me want to live. While the human menagerie contains hundreds of thousands of people ready to sop up "God Control" and go about with uplifted expressions, I don't want to die. I ain't seen nothing yet. And when Sir Samuel Hoare talks about "The Good Companionship of British Democracy," I can't help smiling inanely and feeling happy.

No! I am not going to subscribe to any movement for purging public utterances of semantic blanks. But there is one measure of reform I would propose. Experience is slowly teaching me that all utterances are really meaningless except in reference to the persons who make them. I used to imagine, for example, in looking through the pages of print in *The New English Weekly*, that all the different pieces in it were the product of some equal human mind, functioning in various repositories, but all contributing to one whole in some abstract and perfect world of mind and spirit. I no longer see it that way: when I happen to know the writer of a particular piece I say "Oh, he's saying that, is he? Now that tells me a little more about him." And when I don't know the writer, I at once begin to conjure up some imagination of what he must look like from the evidence of what he says; and I am more prone to guessing how he gets on with his wife than to weighing his words on fiscal reform in Transputamia, however important that topic may be. It all makes a microscopic addition to my minute understanding of the infinitely wonderful human race. But I protest that I get too little help. An article, or story, by an uncaught young man of twenty-five may be published next to the work of a comfortably prosperous, or much-married, man of forty, and these essential clues to the interpretation of the writing are not given.

For my part the adoption of a semantic discipline in the usage of words, *à la* Mr. Chase, may remain a matter of personal taste. There will always be people who write decently and people who write badly. The latter will always predominate, and the letting loose of a new jargon about "semantics" and "referents" will never make blabbers write good English. The reform I propose is that every published bit, lick, or morsel of writing should bear under it, in an appropriate code, the following essential information concerning its author: (a) Sex, (b) Age, (c) Annual income from all sources, (d) What sources, (e) Married or otherwise, (f) Weight in stones, and (g) Height in inches. There is a lot of other information, of course, that I should like to have, but the provision of this simple data would do for a start. Given them, the worst blab would be of interest. If anybody wants to know what it matters about the weight of an author, I would explain that I've never yet met a fat man who talked like a thin one. (ECL) ■

*This review first appeared in the* New English Weekly, *vol.13, no.6, 19 May 1938.*

*Review*

# THE SEMANTIC DISCIPLINE

The elegant word "semantics" means, according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, simply "semasiology." This has nothing to do with the history of the Jews, earthquakes, copulation, or the rites of Osiris. It is best to think of "semaphore" and signalling with flags, for "semantics" has to do with communications, it is a branch of philology concerned with meanings.

It is important to get this clear, for in his *The Tyranny of Words* (London: Meuthen, 1938), Mr. Stuart Chase warns us that we are going to hear a good deal about "semantics" in the approaching future; and he puts forward a pretty fair case for what he calls the semantic discipline in using and listening to words, as a possible way out of prevailing confusion of thought and its attendant social and personal woe.

One of the most attractive parts of the semantic discipline is the deflation of all words and all statements the meaning of which cannot be established by reference to operations and events in the world of tangible things. Thus, all high-order abstractions, and words which are mere emotional noises, are to be replaced by semantic blanks or the word "blab." About half the present vocabulary of politicians, clerics, philosophers, economists, and others afflicted with proselytizing zeal will thus be swept away as so much meaningless noise. Absolutes will be removed from our language as they have been removed from the physicist's conception of the universe by the theory of relativity. And all such terms as "God," "Democracy," "The Proletariat," "Truth," "Justice," "The Logos," "Communism," "The Just Price," "Fascism," "Collective Security," and the like — terms as to the meaning of which there is and can be no possibility of common agreement amongst mankind, and which are, therefore, useless for purposes of communication — these will all uniformly be replaced by the word "blab" and nothing else will become audible until somebody begins to talk about particular men and women, or an identifiable group of men and women, and their bread and onions. To borrow an example from Mr. Chase:

"The Aryan Fatherland, which has nursed the souls of heroes, calls upon you for the supreme sacrifice which you, in whom flows heroic blood, will not fail, and which will forever echo down the corridors of history."

Would be translated:

"The blab blab, which has nursed the blabs of blabs, calls upon you for the blab blab which you, in whom flows blab blood, will not fail, and which will blab echo down the blabs of blab."

. . . If, however, a political leader says:

"Every adult in the geographical area called Germany will receive not more than two loaves of bread per week for the next six months."

There is little possibility of communication failure. There is not a blab in a carload of such talk.

In this, we can readily agree with Mr. Chase, but he does not by any means single out Aryan blab; most of his horrible examples are drawn from much nearer home. The speeches of our own politicians lend themselves admirably to semantic deflation. Substitute the "Mother Country" or the "British Commonwealth of Nations" for the "Aryan Fatherland" and you get exactly the same result.

As no reasonable person could be expected to risk his life in the defense (blab) of the great blab blab of our priceless blab; or to defeat the emotional-adjectival blab blab blab of any other blab, the adoption of the semantic discipline would seem very desirable in the cause of peace (blab of blab).

Naturally, in this business of replacing emotional and abstract terms by "blabs" it is easy to go too far. Abstract terms are necessary for communication amongst all men of greater mental development than savages, but the abstract terms must have "referents" in experience and observation; they must not be products of mere cerebration and fervor. They must be capable of definition in terms of the how, the when, and the where. For the ins and outs of all this, which Mr. Chase makes entertaining, his book should be read. It is a sportive, and pleasantly light and jaunty treatment of a subject which has, it appears, received much heavier treatment by Count Alfred Korzybski in *Science and Society* and by I.A. Richards in *The Meaning of Meaning*.

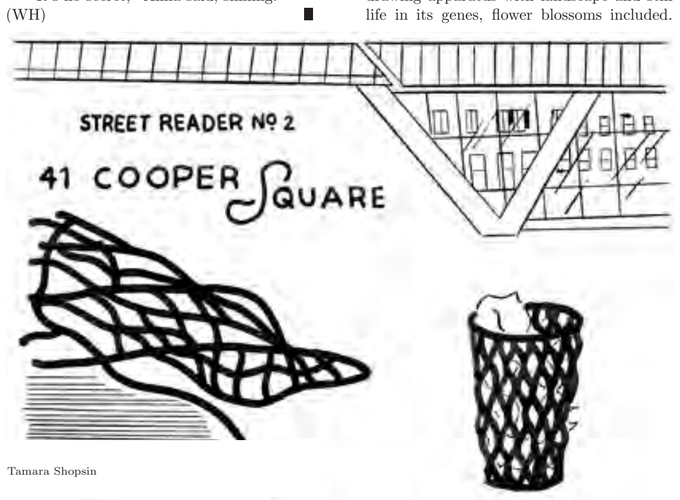
The danger of going too far with the "blab" business is exemplified by my personal reaction to the title of this last named work. To me it just means "The blab of blab," and semantic discipline or no semantic discipline it would take a lot of moral "suasion" to make me read it. The book may be an excellent one, but the title puts me off. I am not at all sure that my native intelligence has not led me towards a better way of dealing with vague generalizations and abstract verbiage, than the semantic discipline. I tend not to read such stuff at all, and this, I cannot help


Reaching over with his right, taking the ladle from the wooden board, and plunging it into the pan, Dick ladled soup, into the first bowl in his left hand. He then put the bowl down and left the ladle in the pan to pick up a small jug of cream (which I had not noticed) and poured a small amount into the thick orange soup. "Ladies first," as he passed the bowl to Anna, then went through this action three times, for the old man ("age before beauty"), myself, and himself, and we began. Dick drank his soup in rapid spoonfuls. Although he made no excessive gestures, although he held his spoon quite properly and swallowed the liquid without making any noise, he seemed to display, in this modest task, a disproportionate energy and zest. The old man quietly cut off a slice of bread, dipped and stirred his soup swallowing the mixture with a self-satisfied hum. Humming louder, in agreement in company, I asked what was in it.

"One small pumpkin, butternut squash, a large onion, half a teaspoon of cumin, knuckle of ginger, a pint of vegetable stock bay. Chop the onion fine, and soften it in the pan with butter. Chop the pumpkin and squash into small cubes; add to the onion, with the stock and bay. Add ginger later, 'n' lastly: lots of ground black pepper. Oh, and I almost forgot his dash of apple juice," said Dick. "It's funny you should ask."

"Funny YOU should tell me, seeing as you and I were walking along the seafront when it was being made."

"It's no secret," Anna said, smiling.
(WH) ■




Tamara Shopsin

*trans: THE IMPERIAL TYPEPICTER: REJOICE! MAGAZINE AND NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS, PRINT SHOPS, AND CULTURED HOUSEHOLDS. A NEW INVENTION. Invented by former vice-manager at the Tsukiji Type Foundry, Mister Uwasa. The world's first typographic drawing machine. Third Tokyo Industrial Exposition Prize Recipient. High Praise from the Japan Publishers League. MODERNIZING PICTURE CRAFT. Farewell to the irregularities of the brush. Introducing a picture machine using form keys, pattern keys, and other standardized type. ECONOMIZING THE PRINT SHOP. The letterpress printing of images is at last possible. Electrotype and half-tone screen processing are no longer necessary. The entire printing process is put in the hands of the compositor. MAKE PICTURES AT HOME. Easy operation for anyone. A welcome addition to the cultured household.*

# IMPERIAL TYPEPICTER

LOS ANGELES — Exact dates are unknown. Nonetheless, it is probable that history's lone typedrawing machine, the Japanese-born and marketed Imperial Typepicter, inhabited the 1910s. After all, its sole print advertisement speaks in the graphic idiom of that pivotal Japanese decade. Its copy, orderly and Ming-faced, bears the stolidness of Meiji. Whereas small Gothic type, sitting just below the keyboard, sounding the chitter chatter of its operation, beckons TAISHM with its buoyant modernism. At top, a typedrawn cherry tree narrates what skill with the machine, once blossomed, might achieve. Beneath it, at center, root of this artistic spring, is the Typepicter itself. It is in essence a retrofitted typewriter. No extant machine is known. But from the small archive of drawings made with the device, a basic understanding can be had of its workings.

A typedrawing is segmental. It is made of discrete graphic units. Usually, individual units stand side by side, spaced. This, the default tracking of the Typepicter, is not in all cases observed. Occasionally, units are contiguous; at times, even overlapping. Dots, dashes, hooks, carets, circles, spirals, triangles, squares, rectangles, and diagonals, as well as units of repeating pattern. This was the Typepicter's type set. It aimed to provide the basic building blocks for rendering form, mass, and surface texture in the creation of images. An upper and lower case is evident. Some forms come in varying orientation. Some in both fill and outline. I count one-hundred-and-eighteen different individual typographic units. As with the typewriter, each would have been cast upon the head of a hammer, with upper and lower case paired on one, making fifty or sixty-odd type sorts organized in the machine's housing. This array necessitated many more keys than the alphabet had letters, so a doubled keyboard was devised. It can be seen, fulsome and spiny, in the ad.

Most units of the Typepicter's type set are geometric, derived from the morphological economy of mechanical reproduction. On the other hand, some are calligraphic, indicating devotion to formal conventions of the ink-loaded brush. Unsurprising, then, that dominant amongst available typedrawing samples are landscapes of East Asian inspiration. All of those known appear in the pages of a pamphlet, designed as a graphic and aesthetic tutorial for the novice typedraftsman. Here too, continental forces are manifest, for the model book is modeled in no small part on that continuing standard for aspiring amateurs of the brush, the late seventeenth-century *Mustard Seed Garden Manual*. How so? First, with its dragon peaks, withstanding pines, and shimmering inland seas. Second, by telling you not just how to draw, but also who it was that made that "how" a *should*. It names forefathers and upholds precedent, even while its text, its examples, and the plain fact of its existence, insist on embracing modernity. And third, with its atomism: its reduction of form to discrete and indivisible graphic elements. The *Mustard Seed Manual* rested upon a related principle, particularly in its lessons on rocks, flowers, and foliage. Form is cataloged in typologies of shape and stroke. Pictures, in turn, is taught as the combination and variation of these types. The Typepicter makes of these practical suggestions material preconditions. Types are set in a finite type set, making possible the most perfect reiterations.

Most Typepicter units are not, in themselves, free morphemes. Meaning comes only in combination with others. In this, typedrawing is like freehand drawing. It is progressive, moving from atom to molecule, from graphic mark to grapheme. In such a scheme, the instantaneous creation of a semantically meaningful unit is not possible — printing changes things. With it, marking and meaning can be made co-temporal. For sorts and plates et cetera store not just parts but wholes. With them, free morphemes can be printed with a single pressing, a single stamping, or a single stroke, as is the case with some of the keys of the Typepicter. But a handful of its type units are morphemically complete. A drawing apparatus with landscape and still life in its genes, flower blossoms included. Others offered greater polysemy: patterns, based largely on classicizing textile prints, but easily reappointed for use in rendering other sorts of textured things, including, but not limited to, stucco, wicker, wire mesh, sand, raked gravel, drizzling rain, pounding rain, falling snow, rippling water, falling water, rushing water, wood grain, tree bark, slicked hair, tousled hair, the body fur of forest animals and Europeans, pubes, fuzz, and stubble. And so on and on, especially for the advanced user of the machine who had mastered the arts of typographic stacking and overlapping.

A fragment of lore circulates regarding the inventor of this contraption, but its details are obviously embellished, making it the stuff more of the *raconteur* than the historian. His name was Uwasa Masato. Despite regular penury, he was an extravagant man. He dressed himself in European cotton fineries, pressed sharp and punctuated with a lacy pink cravat. The breast pocket of his suit jacket nested an English timepiece, which he never wound, but would often remove and inspect — through a monocled squint — in a public performance of civilization. He wore a moustache in the Bismarckian style and took to eating beef when his coffers allowed. But beneath this outer display of westernization, he wrapped his loins with a fundoshi made of the finest Japanese silk (whitest striped in richest cinnabar). He was a man of superlatives in every direction.

Uwasa had collected a large number of typewriting machines. Though committing most to research, he cannibalized a few for a peculiar sartorial indulgence. He fancied his fingers with a set of self-fashioned rings, the keys of a Western typewriter extracted from the machine and bent around the phalanges of the second through fifth digits of his right hand, such that each knuckle was crowned with alphabetic type. Miniaturized embodiments of the Western world's industrial deflation of the word, he wore them as a sort of souvenir of conquest over alien encroachment into native aesthetic common sense — Japan still wont to give up manuscript. An ironic statement, of course, for few advocated type as he had. His jewelry served also a martial purpose: a mean drunk prone to early morning fisticuffs, Uwasa could stamp the face of his foe with a puzzle. Upon sobering, the beaten would find typed upon his brow a syntagm of scabs that spelled in Roman alphabet a telltale infinitive: *kaku*, Japanese for both "to write" and "to draw." The lower and upper case of a letter being cast on each key, the mark would read double — *KAKU* and *kaku* — leaving the punched to ponder a rich combination of semiotic relations through the haze of lingering shochu. (RH) ■

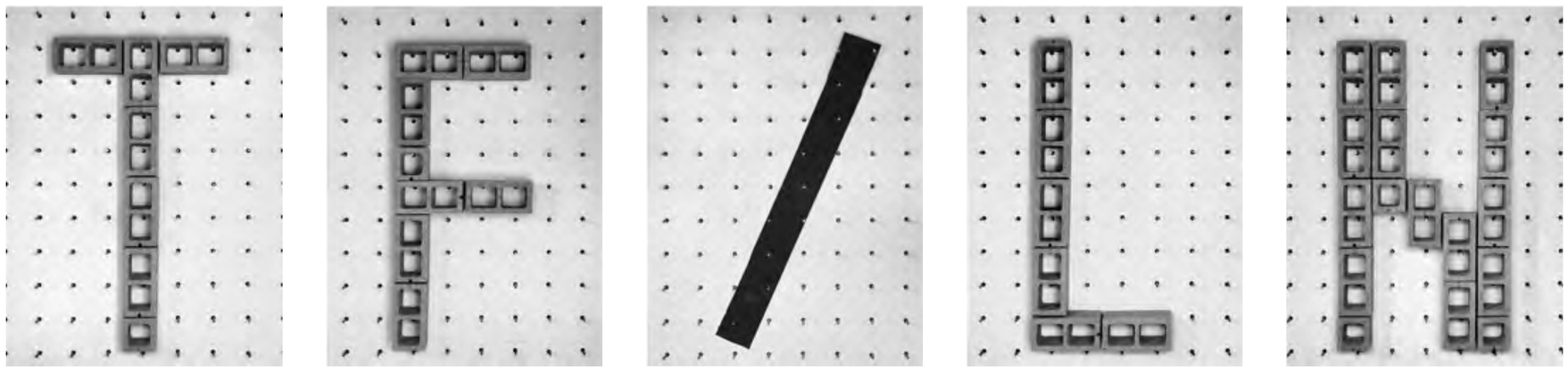
*"In both places, pirates fluorished."*
*http://themoment.blogs.nytimes.com/author/nick-currie*

The third First/Last Newspaper was made by DEXTER SINISTER (David Reinfurt: M; 38; $60,000; designing, writing; married; 8.9; 67 / Stuart Bailey: M; 36; $24,000; designing, writing; involved; 10.7; 68) with contributions by Steve Rushton (M; *; *; involved; 13; 74), Angie Keefer (F; 32; $24,000; various; single; 8.7; 67), Rob Giampietro (M; 31; $80,000; designing, writing; engaged; 12.3; 74), Will Holder (M; 40; *; designing, teaching; married; 13.2; 70) Francis McKee (M; 49; $35,000; curating, teaching; separated; 12.5; 64), Graham Meyer (M; 30; $42,000; editing, writing; married; 9; 67), Ryan Holmberg (M; 33; $44,000; teaching, writing; married; 13; 73), Frances Stark (F; 42; $35,000; art sales, teaching, prize money; involved; 8.7; 63) and E.C. Large (M; 36 in 1938; *; *; married; *; *); with additional contributions by Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Danna Vadja, Alicia Framis, and Sarah Gephart. Produced under the umbrella of PERFORMA 09 and presented in partnership with Times Square Alliance. Produced with the assistance of Brendan Dalton and Anne Callahan. Edited in cooperation with Defne Ayas and Virginie Bobin.

Masthead set in Strike Alphabet courtesy Shannon Ebner.

Performa, a non-profit multidisciplinary arts organization established by RoseLee Goldberg in 2004, is dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth century art and to encouraging new directions in performance for the twenty-first century.

PERFORMA 09

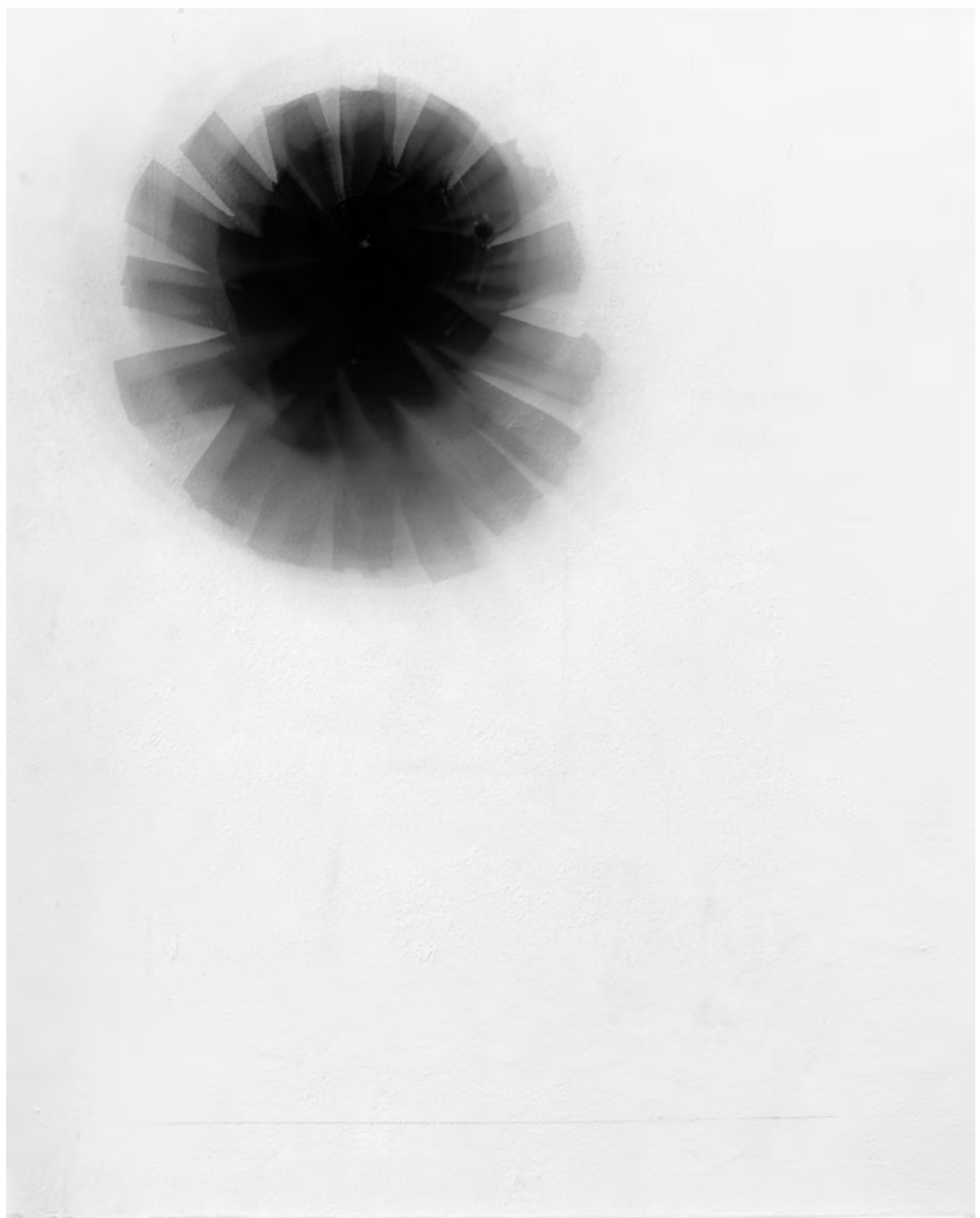




# ENGINEER & TINKERER CAUGHT IN BRICOLAGE

PORT AUTHORITY — Structural anthropologist and New York-o-phile French writer Claude Lévi-Strauss died two weeks ago, one month short of his 101st birthday. As Larry Rohter in last Sunday's *New York Times* concisely describes, Lévi-Strauss's writings thrive on binary oppositions: "hot and cold, raw and cooked, animal and human. And it is through these opposing 'binary' concepts, he said, that humanity makes sense of the world." In the short piece, Rohter usefully translates the French term *bricoleur* as The Tinkerer and opposes it to The Engineer. In chapter 1 of *The Savage Mind* (1962), Lévi-Strauss describes the *bricoleur*:

"Consider him at work and excited by his project. His first practical step is retrospective. He has to turn back to an already existent set made up of tools and materials, to consider or reconsider what it contains and, finally and above all, to engage in a sort of dialogue with it and, choosing between them, to index the possible answers which the whole set can offer to his problem. He interrogates all the heterogeneous objects of which his treasury* is composed to discover what each of them could 'signify' and so contribute to the definition of a set which has yet to materialize but which will ultimately differ from the instrumental set only in the internal disposition of its parts." (DS) ■



** "Bricolage" also works with "secondary" qualitities, i.e. "second-hand."* The Sun as Error*, Shannon Ebner, (2009)*

# "PUISSANT GOD" REVIEWED; "MAN, AFTER ALL"

UNITED STATES — One of America's first pirates was a Philadelphia printer named Benjamin Franklin, who was born in Boston three years before England's passage of copyright protection with the Statute of Anne in 1709. At 15, Franklin watched his brother James establish the colonies's first independent newspaper, *The New-England Courant.* Franklin ran away two years later and soon found himself in London as an apprentice typesetter. By 1726, he had returned to America and found employment in Thomas Denham's print shop.

For Franklin, piracy was a win-win: money for him, along with revolutionary ideas for a young republic. The scarcity of books in the colonies led Franklin to establish a book-sharing conversation group known as the Junto (or Leather Apron Club), and, later, the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1731. According to the U.S. State Department's *Outline of American Literature*, which is available as a free PDF from america.gov, "The unauthorized printing of foreign books was originally seen as a service to the colonies as well as a source of profit for printers like Franklin, who reprinted the works of the classics and great European books to educate the American public."

Soon after establishing the Library Company, Franklin published the first edition of his *Poor Richard's Almanack* without copyright protection, and he continued serially updating the book until 1758. At its height, print runs of the *Almanack* swelled to 10,000 copies a year. It attracted that kind of mass attention, in part, because it began with a literary stunt that Franklin had poached from Anglo-Irish writer Jonathan Swift. During 1708–9, Swift's fictional character Isaac Bickerstaff had predicted the date of quack author John Partridge's death and then convinced the public to believe he'd died on that date despite Partridge's rather vital assertions otherwise. Franklin's fictional alter ego Richard Saunders, for whom the *Almanack* is named, did the same to Franklin's rival publisher Titan Leeds. Swift, who published in Dublin, was, of course, not under copyright. Later, in the 1739 edition of the *Almanack*, Franklin "borrowed" heavily from an English translation of François Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel.* In essence, Franklin pirated material even in works he actually authored.

"Printers everywhere followed [Franklin's] lead," *The Outline of American Literature* continues. "Matthew Carey, an important American publisher, paid a London agent — a sort of literary spy — to send copies of unbound pages, or even proofs, to him in fast ships that could sail to America in a month. [. . .] Such a pirated English book could be reprinted in a day and placed on the shelves for sale in American bookstores almost as fast as in England." More than 80 years after the Statute of Anne, the great lexicographer Noah Webster would finally draft America's first copyright law in 1790, but its protections extended only to American authors, and piracy spread further and faster through the colonies than ever before. "The high point of piracy, in 1815," according to *The Outline*, "corresponds with the low point of American writing."

By 1842, when Charles Dickens had published his fifth novel, *Barnaby Rudge*, the British had strengthened the protections created by the Statute of Anne to better protect it and novels like it from piracy. Dickens — with the help of his friend, the dramatist Thomas Noon Talford — had been lobbying Parliament for copyright reform since the publication of his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, in 1836. (*The Pickwick Papers* is dedicated to Talford.) Though their first effort at reform had failed, the two finally succeeded in 1842. The current statutes were amended to forbid anyone from importing foreign reprints of any British copyrighted work to Britain or any of its colonies. Further, the British government began actively working with other governments to cultivate reciprocal agreements. With that, Dickens set sail to America.

As Professor Phillip V. Allingham recounts in his article "Dickens's 1842 Reading Tour: Launching the Copyright Question in Tempestuous Seas," Dickens's crusade to inspire Americans to embrace copyright reform did not go well:

"Americans, expecting him to be grateful for their warm reception, were staggered when this young British goodwill ambassador, at the beginning of 1842, at a dinner held in his honor in Boston, dared to criticize them as pirates while urging the merits of international copyright, which at that point in American history would have seen vast amounts of Yankee capital heading overseas with little reciprocation. He did not back down. A week later, in Hartford, he argued that a native American literature would flourish only when American publishers were compelled by law to pay all writers their due."

Between visits with author Washington Irving and President John Tyler, Dickens assailed Americans eager to meet their literary hero with the wrongheadedness of their ways. Allingham continues, "That he had not mentioned this issue in advance meant that his adoring audiences, taken by surprise, felt chagrined by the criticisms of this obviously mercenary young upstart who had come to their shores to take their money at the theater door and again in the bookshop." Dickens visited America again in 1867–8, at the end of his life. Though seriously ill — he complained of catching a "true American catarrh" — he nevertheless managed to solicit the support of writers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and give 22 readings at New York's Steinway Hall through the dead of winter.

In the audience one cold January night was a 33-year old journalist and budding author named Mark Twain, who'd worked as a printer in New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Cincinnati while educating himself at public libraries in the evenings. After making a comfortable living as a steamboat captain, Twain had found his way westward and reviewed Dickens's reading for the San Francisco newspaper *Alta California*, writing of his idol, "Somehow this puissant god seemed to be only a man, after all. How the great do tumble from their high pedestals when we see them in common human flesh, and know that they eat pork and cabbage and act like other men." Around the same time, Twain's first book, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*, appeared in print, though many of its 27 stories had, like Dickens's, been previously published in newspapers and magazines throughout the country. A travel collection, *The Innocents Abroad*, was published the following year. It would become Twain's best-selling book during his own lifetime.

But while his literary stardom would soon rival Dickens's, he would not enjoy much of his idol's financial success. Twain squandered his immense fortune on a string of bad investments, sinking the equivalent of millions into a frequently malfunctioning invention called the Paige typesetting machine, a rival and eventual casualty to Ottmar Mergenthaler's far superior Linotype. Anxious to recoup his losses, Twain penned a letter to Columbia University Professor of Dramatic Literature Brander Matthews in 1888 on the subject of copyright reform. Later published as a pamphlet called "American Authors and British Pirates" by the American Copyright League, the letter concludes,

"I think we are not in a good position to throw bricks at the English pirate. We haven't got any to spare. We need them to throw at the American Congress; and at the American author, who neglects his great privileges and then tries to hunt up some way to throw the blame upon the only nation in the world that is magnanimous enough to say to him, 'While you are the guest of our laws and our flag, you shall not be robbed.' All the books which I have published in the last 15 years are protected by English copyright. In that time I have suffered pretty heavily in temper and pocket from imperfect copyright laws: but they were American, not English. I have no quarrel over there. Yours sincerely, Mark Twain."

Three years after Twain's letter was published, in 1891, the Chace Act — the first legislation to introduce copyright protection to the works of foreign authors in the United States – would pass. Americans, who had enjoyed copyright protection on their own works for more than a century, had finally joined the rest of the world. (RG) ■

# WHERE DOES YOUR MONEY COME FROM?

NEW YORK — As an artist I am often asked: "Where does your money come from?" The question comes in two variations. The first is largely innocent and occurs whenever my relatives or members of the nonart public, having in my presence come across an artwork I have made, genuinely wonder how it can be possible to get paid for having made it. When I explain that there are many people who like to look at artworks and compare them to other ones over time, and a few in that group who are even willing to pay extraordinary amounts of money (relative to materials and labor) for what they feel are the more interesting examples, my nonart friends squint their eyes a little and cock their heads at me, as if something nefarious was going on. When I resort by way of example to the goings on at craft fairs or *The Antiques Road Show*, they brighten, because they all know someone who earns a living making handbags or whose *Star Wars* paraphernalia was appraised at fifty thousand dollars. After they tell me about someone who has been similarly fortunate, I nod and say, "Yeah, art's just like that." Unfailingly, their heads straighten and their squints dissolve. They still know nothing about art, but at least they understand how it works, and how something works is always a more nagging question than what something means.

The second variant of the question about my money is usually posed by graduate students or architects, and is much more angry and troubling. It is intended to undermine my authority as an invited speaker or to expose a conceit I clearly have, a brickbat hurled from behind the stanchions of real-life drudgery that is the domain of architects and graduate students. That doesn't bother me. My veins are already coursing with the homeopathic toxins of commerce, so I'm immune to such naïve humiliations.

What does bother me about total strangers being concerned with my money, though, is the presumption that making a living is not an acceptable motivation for an artist. To me, for better or worse, all art is nothing if not a proposal for how the current situation might be altered at a profit. That that profit is often not immediately apparent to us is nothing against an artwork or its maker, and I, for one, refuse to live in a society where skilled individuals cannot earn a living however they please. If my best chance at making a living entails drawing snowflakes with a compass and gouache, then I can only hope that a liberal capitalist democracy such as ours will afford a niche in which to ply my trade; otherwise, the philosophical pillars of our society would be revealed to be not as liberal or democratic as they seem. For this reason, nothing is more impressive or politically reaffirming than an artist who is gainfully self-employed.

The confluence of energies that have produced this romantic, earnest climate are complex and quite unintended. Scholars and commentators tend to assert that digital technology is responsible for making our atomized world of independent contractors more viable than old-fashioned, centralized workplaces. That may be true, but it doesn't explain how such a broad appreciation for being self-employed came about in the first place. Having grown up near Niagara Falls, New York, a region of the country that is only now recovering from the recession of 1991 and embracing the *infotainment* casino economy, the current spate of self-reliance is the natural fallout of four decades of corporate merging, downsizing, and outsourcing. The initial shock of so many people losing their jobs and having their livelihoods disrupted has been more than offset by our bedrock mistrust of any institution or corporation that promises to look out for our well-being when profits are at stake.

During my youth, many of my parents's friends had no choice but to capitalize on whatever they were good at as a means of making a living, turning their avocations for crocheting afghans or restoring cars into legitimate business enterprises. Over time, self-pity evolved into self-survival evolved into self-actualization as entrepreneur. Today, entrepreneurship is a state of mind that is ideally suited (if not in material, then in spirit) to the cottage industry that is the Internet. Recent IRS statistics report that one in every five working Americans is an independent contractor, and some economists, counting people like commissioned salespersons who are technically employed but whose livelihood is self-generated, put the ratio as high as one in three. Thus, the more the necessity of having a unique and profitable skill permeates our culture, the more the business of being an artist is appreciated, and the more young people can aspire to be like John Cage or Vija Celmins when choosing a livelihood.

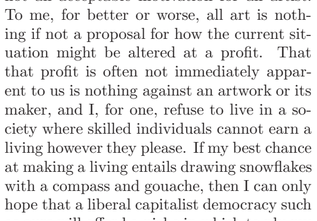
Now, if you are like my relatives and nonart friends, at this point you will be completely satisfied with the legitimacy of my profession, and even go so far as to wish me well at it since, given our shared belief in the aforementioned principles, it would be unpatriotic not to do so. And if you share the same chemistry as graduate students and architects, you will first need to square my philosophy with that of a figure from history in order to bring it under control. Which usually means you will cite Warhol.

It may surprise you to learn that when I say artists are the epitome of independent contracting, I do not have Andy Warhol in mind. I admire Warhol's enterprise, it was impressive in its day and all, but I think there is little about his methods or his oeuvre that is of use to independent artists now. The idea of art being made in a factory might have been a radical concept in the 1960s, but we do well to remember that corporations at the time were already in the process of rendering Warhol-type factories obsolete. Factories mean overhead, and if art and independent contracting share anything it is the desire to minimize overhead costs. Even if I were to assume that Warhol's Factory was important in some absolute sense, the fact remains that Warhol still didn't make anything of greater intrinsic interest or better quality than what could be found in the nonart world of his time. And that may have been his point. Indeed, that lack of distinction was perhaps Warhol's most important contribution to the then broad (and earnest) assault on art and life. Warhol meant to rely on the category of Art to distinguish his sameness from the sameness of the rest of the world.

Naturally, that category no longer holds once we begin to lump artists in with all other people in trade. Except, of course, when the activity of an artist is truly unrivaled by anyone else in the world, at which point it doesn't matter whether that person is an artist at all. He or she is simply "the best," and it is on the basis of that often highly profitable status that the value of any activity rests.

Take Agnes Martin. Although she died in 2004, her work still dominates the market for imperfectly-ruled pencil lines on unprimed canvas, even though her materials were inexpensive and her technique can be performed by anyone with a work surface and a yardstick. No one does. Martin so thoroughly wove her endeavor into herself as to make it seem impossible to impede on the terrain of her invention. In fact, her paintings — stripes and grids of graphite on canvas whose interstices were sometimes filled in with thin washes of color — can be seen as poetic evocations of the absolute distinction in relation to all other art that her work itself has come to represent. Despite her best efforts (or perhaps because of them), every line, space, and intersection that she delineated is different from every other, due to the weave of canvas, the pencils dragged across it, and the fact that Martin herself pulsed and breathed. The sublime residue of precise imperfection that resulted is unmatched by anyone, in any field.

The lesson, of course, is that it's much easier to be the best at doing something if there are as few other people as possible also doing it. Where Warhol's thousands of imitators continue to burn money and resources imitating a mainstream culture with which they can never compete, the real growth opportunities are in obscure enterprises where competition is low and materials cheap.



A Reconsideration of the Newspaper Industry in 5 Easy Allusions (3): *Which pile of money is equal in height and width?*

Just as Marshall McLuhan once observed that people didn't know they wanted television until television was invented, how can the audience for art know what it wants until we, as artists, invent it for them? Given that opportunity, how can any of us believe that it's in our long-range interest to constantly rearrange a product (such as popular culture) that our customers already know and have? In the end, and quite ironically, so-called "difficult" artists like Agnes Martin and David Hammons have turned out to be much better business models than their more celebrated counterparts could ever be. Their arcane interests, unique skills, and often restrained production methods epitomize such concepts as personal branding, value adding, and "just-in-time" production philosophies, state-of-the-art business innovations they and other artists have never gotten credit for. Until now.

The avant garde lives! Not because it's more meaningful or radical than any other activity, but because it fills a legitimate market niche. (JS) ■

# RECORD BITES DUST

BERKELEY — As I tend to love a bargain, this year I followed my usual pattern of waiting until the new year had run well into its normal course before even beginning my annual shopping expedition for a calendar, a process I have followed for many years now because it cannot help but assure me that I will find, at a bargain price, a calendar that, though necessarily chosen from a lesser selection than that available to those who purchase before the start of the year, nevertheless serves its purpose as well as any calendar purchased earlier except that the first month or two of the year has already passed, a condition that, although the pages devoted to the days of these winter months are available for use as scrap paper or even for the fabrication of paper airplanes and cannot be used for the specific purpose for which they were intended, in no way precludes all the remaining pages — ten or even 11 months worth with a separate page for each day of the year — from being used in exactly the manner for which they were intended; that is, in addition to telling you the day of the week and the month and date, to record both the date and the hour of future activities such as doctors's appointments, luncheon engagements, office parties, vacation trips, et cetera, and to record reminders of important dates throughout the year such as your son's birthday and your parents's anniversary; and I have, therefore, for all these many years accepted the loss of January and part or even all of February so as to garner the economic benefit and psychological satisfaction that accrue to one upon having gained a small measure of victory in the marketplace by purchasing an item of necessity at a bargain price — a bargain of particular magnitude this year in that for a mere 99 cents, less than the price of a prune danish and a cup of coffee, I was able to purchase a spanking new 1985 calendar put out by the Sterling Publishing Company, which is entitled "According to Guinness" and which is a calendar arranged so that each page representing a day of the year has upon it, in words and in cartoon pictures, a world record from the famous *Guinness Book of World Records*, which, although the calendar is not nearly so well organized as the book, nevertheless gives me a daily world record upon which to reflect, to be amused or disgusted or intrigued or fascinated or even challenged, as I was when I read the entry for Wednesday, the 13th of February, which, above a cartoon of a man seated before a video display terminal, says that "the longest sentence recorded ever to have gotten past the editor of a major newspaper is one of 1286 words in *The New York Times* by Herbert Stein in the issue of Feb. 13, 1981," a date that, not by coincidence, one would assume, is exactly four years to the day before the date on my calendar upon which is presented the publication of Mr. Stein's very long sentence, a sentence of impressive length but nevertheless not as long as this sentence, which, by being published this day, June 16, 1985, in this newspaper, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, breaks the record established by *The New York Times* and Mr. Herbert Stein (who, incidentally, is an economist who was once the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors under both presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald Ford and whose 1286-word article in *The New York Times* was a reflection on White House operatives based on his experiences in the administrations in which he had served and his recollections of other administrations, going back to the New Deal days of Franklin Delano Roosevelt) because this very sentence that you are reading at this very moment has 1404 words (having been reduced from an even higher number after I decided it would be unfair to pad the word count by spelling out large numbers in words, so that, for example, "1404" would read "one thousand, four hundred and four"), and, although a run-on sentence such as this does not easily make a whole lot of sense and will probably win no literary or journalistic awards for the eloquent manipulation of the English language, is nevertheless longer than Mr. Stein's that was published in *The New York Times* in 1981, a sentence that, being a sentence almost as long as this sentence, is also a cumbersome run of words that is difficult to read and, in the long run, not very satisfactory as an expression of the ideas of the writer, presented as they are in a manner that is neither simple nor clearly understandable by the average reader; and, that being the case, one cannot help but wonder why Mr. Stein wrote a sentence containing almost 1300 words when he could have reorganized what he had to say and almost certainly presented the same ideas more clearly if he had instead chosen to divide that world-record sentence into two sentences of 600 or 700 words each or three sentences containing 400 or so words and still have expressed himself in sentences that were very long and, as a result, very complex and that, being very long and complex, make Mr. Stein appear intelligent and clever, which, I assume, is the only reason one would choose to write a sentence of such grotesque length unless, of course, one were deliberately trying to write a sentence even longer than that which Mr. Stein had published in *The New York Times* so as (1) to see if one could indeed write a sentence of such an absurd length just to exercise the writing muscle (an exercise the value of which I can now attest is debatable), (2) to publish a sentence of, if not Joycean, at least Steinian, proportions, (3) to earn the additional few bucks a sale brings to a freelance writer and (4) to get one's name in the *Guinness Book of World Records* from the comfort of one's own home without risking life, limb, or sanity by keeping a motorcycle in non-stop motion for 500 straight hours or by eating a pound of gherkins in less than 44 seconds, and to do all this while still producing a sentence that, despite its great length, is nevertheless able to make at least a modicum of sense and that is not an obvious cop-out (such as would be the case with any sentence that stated something like, "The longest sentence ever published in a major newspaper to date was one by Mr. Herbert Stein in the Feb. 13, 1981 issue of *The New York Times*, which said. . . " and then proceeded to quote the entire Stein sentence; or a sentence that was merely a long list, such as "The first 1000 names in the Salt Lake City phone book are . . . " or even a straightforward run of simple sentences connected with conjunctions, such as "Tom went to the store and then he went home and there he met his sister and then they went out to play but then their mother came home and . . . "), but is rather a legitimate sentence with a complex sentence structure with clauses and sub-clauses and parenthetic statements, but that, despite being longer than the Stein sentence, is at least sufficiently readable as to be publishable by a major newspaper, which, with the publication of the sentence, would establish a new record for the *Guinness Book of World Records*, and as a result, the next edition of the "According to Guinness" calendar that the Sterling Publishing Company puts out would not have a February 13 entry that reads, "The longest sentence recorded ever to have gotten past the editor of a major newspaper was one of 1286 words in *The New York Times* by Herbert Stein in the issue of Feb. 13, 1981" but would instead have a June 16, 1985 entry that reads as follows: "The longest sentence recorded ever to have gotten past the editor of a major newspaper was one of 1404 words in *The San Francisco Chronicle* by Albert Sukoff in the issue of June 16, 1985." (AS) ■

*This sentence originally appeared in* The San Francisco Chronicle*, 16 June 1985.*

*How Media Masters Reality #4*

# "YOU ARE NOT A VERY NICE GIRL . . . "

TIVOLI, NY — In previous installments, I've described contemporary media as a feedback loop that follows a particular logic — collapsing the distance between producer and consumer. As a performer on a reality TV show I improvise the script around the pre-established format. When I log on to MySpace I give value to a commodity owned by News International. Incredibly, MySpace then turns around and sells the commodity of the community back to itself.

These days, we don't sit passively at home waiting for the TV to tell us what to go out and buy. Each of us is an individual — *above all an individual* — who increasingly uses the different media at our disposal as *technologies of the self.* By this I mean we use various media products that transmit a series of statements and make a series of demonstrations against which we test our own behavior and conduct. These media products allow us to judge what is right and wrong, and above all who is normal. Because we prize our individuality, we are suspicious of anyone, especially the state, telling us what to think. We can think for ourselves, thank you very much.

MySpace is precisely *my space.* It is that part of the network in which I am particularly me. The space of public discourse is no longer the space of the public sphere, that classic bourgeois space of the "good conversation," in which the good of the many holds sway over the selfish desires of the individual. Instead, an online space such as MySpace is privatized in two senses. First, it is a public space where I can talk about my world to the people I choose to communicate with: MyPublicSphere. Second, the space is owned by a multinational media empire, and its value accrued by the constant activity that occurs within it. Therefore, when we have fun on MySpace, we are working online to produce a space lively enough to attract advertisers. If we were all to migrate to SpaceFace or MyFace or FaceSpace, MySpace would evaporate like the morning mist. The amazing thing is that we actually pay to work for these guys.

In 1985, one of the first electronic networking spaces appeared — the WELL (an acronym reverse shoe-horned to hold Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link). The name WELL yet carried connotations of a communal space, the space of public concord, even if it was one of the first instances in which a community was sold to itself as a commodity. MySpace is a little less apologetic about collapsing the social space into the individually sized space of the self-directed, self-motivated, self-performing individual. When I am on MySpace it's easy to forget that the information I put up about myself isn't actually owned by me; I somehow manage to transform the goals of the corporation into my own choices.

How is such a deft move possible?

Toward the end of his life, French philosopher Michel Foucault became fascinated with how the state, during the seventeenth century and after, became increasingly preoccupied with the care of the individual citizen. It is particularly curious that when the state was at its most violent, it made its greatest investment in the care of its citizenry (the French Revolution or World War II, for instance). It's almost as if a paradoxical contract had been agreed upon — if you would die for your state then the state would owe you your well-being. The antinomy arises when, as the state apparatus constructs large destructive mechanisms (land armies and weapons systems), it simultaneously constructs technologies of care (culminating in the social democratic welfare state in the twentieth century). Foucault characterizes the antinomy with the phrase: "Go get slaughtered and we promise you a long and pleasant life."

It was in this period that the state was formed as the state per se, that it made it its business to make a political object of human happiness.

It was in the seventeenth century that the state formulated the notion of police, not in the sense of a force that would fight and prevent crime, but as a form of statecraft that would oversee the health of its citizenry, viewing (and constructing) the citizen not only through their judicial status, but also as working, trading, living beings. By the nineteenth century, German universities taught *Polizeiwissenschaft* — describing, defining, and organizing the new technologies of state power. It was in this period that the happiness of individuals was seen as a requirement for the survival and development of the state, and it also became axiomatic that positive intervention in the behavior of individuals was the state's task. It was during this period that the political rationality arose that, as the individual had an effect on society (either positively or negatively) it was beholden on the state to compile information about the fitness and aptitude of the individual. This political technology, Foucault argues, provides the basic reason for the existence of the modern state and is therefore more important than any arguments about ideology, because whichever government is in power, the needs of the state prevail. The state can govern directly, through legislation, or indirectly, by formulating values of individuality that the individual will seek to preserve.

We now see the emergence of two seemingly contradictory values within contemporary society: the state produces the individual and the state sets itself the task to care for that individual. At the moment the individual is defined, however, he or she seeks autonomy from the state and, in order to foster their independence, pays close attention to better self-management (forgetting perhaps that a well-managed and efficient individual is precisely what the state desires). But how might this individual gain knowledge about better self-management? How does this individual know they have made the right choices?

*Judge Judy: ". . . you are actually not a very nice girl."*

The values of self-reliance and independence, along with the techniques of self-management, are central to the structure of the non-scripted TV show. In the non-scripted TV show the subject is repeatedly placed in the judgement of their peers, or instructed by someone with greater experience, or guided by a mentor, or counselled by counselors. Parents display their errant children before experts who measure their delinquency and give feedback. The family, after undergoing the examination of the audience, takes up the challenge of a regime of self-improvement. An overweight actress, whose weight has yoyoed over the years, confesses her lack of self-discipline on a talk show; she renews her promise to lose weight and invites a film crew to chart her progress.

It is in the arena of the non-scripted TV show that the mechanisms of self-management are played out. It is here that things are measured, tested, evaluated, examined, recorded, and judged (ticking all the boxes you need to make a surveillance system). This is the way we are governed — not by following *orders* or meeting *obligations* but by taking up *challenges* and exercizing *choices.* (SR) ■

*Big Bird turned 40 this week. Bird's pre-birthday announcement (and founding of the Children Television Workshop) was front page news in* The New York Times *on March 22, 1968.*

# MAY NEED REWRITE

NEW YORK — An editor, they say, should be a writer's ideal reader. They can give time to a writer's work. They can offer advice and suggest possible ways to improve a text. *Have you considered this from another perspective? How about we re-phrase the sentence like this?* A bit of trimming here, some burnishing there, they are nevertheless supposedly sensitive to the authorial voice. An editor is a go-between, matching a writer's ideas to an audience's interests, but they are, to quote the late art critic Stuart Morgan, "on nobody's side but their own." The editor is a writer's ideal reader, but not necessarily their friend.

(Yes, but who edits the editors?)

Lately, the role of the editor has changed. No, make that *genetically altered.* Like a comic book character overexposed to radiation in the blinding atomic blog explosion, the editor's DNA has been rewired and reproduced. In the fallout, the editor has become simultaneously author and audience, dividing, growing, regrouping, dividing, growing, regrouping. The editor is you, the editor is me. The editor has become a state of mind.

(Metaphor's bit overstretched, no?)

The comment threads that dangle beneath blogs — cheering or jeering, constructively criticizing or snarking — have become the main channel of communication for this new editorial polis. For personal blog pages, the comment function provides a way of linking up to a network of (mostly) like-minded readers, but for traditional media outlets, they relate to the old letters pages of newspapers. Having a letter published in a national newspaper used to be a big deal; that your opinion might be read over breakfast by thousands of citizens across the country meant something, a sign that your thoughts were considered to be of national importance, even if most of them were along the lines of "Sir, why oh why must my six-year-old pet rhesus monkey continually be subjected to the kind of din that young people deem 'pop music' these days. In my day . . . etc." In their older print form, letters to newspapers were carefully pre-selected and edited for content, clarity and concision. (I remember the giddy excitement and nervousness I felt as a teenager at receiving a phone call from a stern sounding woman at *The Times*, calling to tell me that a letter I'd written to them was going to be published. It was a defence of the artist Chris Ofili, and I was informed that my painstakingly-worded missive was going to be cut down to a single sentence.) In a bid to encourage traffic through their sites, and in order to help them market research their audiences, many newspapers introduced comment boxes for readers to respond to Op-Ed pieces. This not only took the shine off the sense of achievement at getting a letter printed in the paper, but ushered in the era of the citizen editor: opinionated, self-selecting voices responding to articles as fast as a title can publish them.

(Is the *Times* letter relevant? Or are you showing off?)

In theory, the idea that anyone with internet access can voice their opinion in reaction to a published text, and bounce their ideas off other readers in healthy debate, is a good one, and in many cases new communities of writers and thinkers have grown around certain blogs, which have generated large amounts of interesting material that might not otherwise get published elsewhere. However, there has been a broader effect of this access and excess of opinion, on writing both personal blogs and pieces for online publication — an effect more psychological than many initially supposed. Types of comment range from pleasant thanks to the writer, through courteously added further points of interest, into spirited debate, and all the way to pedantic unpicking of holes in an argument, bellicose ripostes, and flat-out abuse. Little by little, and in fear of intellectual stripes being torn off them by their commentators, writers have started to feel obliged to nuance their texts until their rhetorical spirit is completely ironed out, or their argument has become a convoluted mess of caveats, digressions, and sub-clauses.

(Interesting point, but the problem is that you give no examples which suggests that you're writing more about yourself than anyone else.)

Writer Mark Fisher, on his k-punk blog, has recently started compiling a "bestiary" of the main types of respondent found in comment threads. There is the Troll, for instance, who revels in nit-picking critique and wears with pride an inability to commit to any position. They see this "posture of alleged detachment, this sneer from nowhere" as "a virtue, a sign of their maturity." Then there is the Grey Vampire, who on the outside is friendly and sociable, but on the inside, like the troll, cannot commit themselves to anything. Both "are subordinated to The Fear and its demand that we be irreverent, that we constitute ourselves as ironically self-deflating subjects (I'm the sort of person who . . . )." Fisher contrasts this with the enthusiastic Fan writer, often the victim of the Troll or Grey Vampire because "It's always other people who are 'fans': our own attachments, we like to pretend, have been arrived at by a properly judicious process and are not at all excessive." His point about irreverence is key: the dominant pose cultural commentators are expected to affect at this present moment is that of the "everyman," a "common-sense" approach that allows for no flights of fancy, or evidence of rarefied intellectual or aesthetic tastes. Any demonstration of interest in complex ideas or cultural esoterica is acceptable only when couched in "I'm just an ordinary guy" terms, lest the trolls jump you for pretentiousness or the vampires slowly suck from your soul any enthusiasm you had to share your ideas with anyone.

(There's always someone, somewhere, with a big nose who knows . . . )

Whether Trolls, Grey Vampires, or Fans, the domain of blog commentators is collectively coalescing into a picture of sorts. It is that of a nebulous, but nonetheless highly reactive, popular front, a digital chorus of anonymously signed or pseudonymic opinion that exerts a kind of peer pressure on those who publish online. It may be a chimera, but it's an intimidating one. Filmmaker Adam Curtis identified its curious power when he described bloggers as "the new censors": writers now second-guess responses, they self-police themselves for fear that their biases, elisions, or inclusions will be shot down in flames by the invisible inquisition. Writing becomes an act done while looking over your shoulder. (DF) ■

*Part 4: Headless Body, Topless Bar*

# SOME DIE, SOME GET HURT, SOME GO ON

GLASGOW — "Sports journalism is the last refuge of purple prose." That was the view of one sports writer, Kevin McCarra, who covers football for *The Guardian.* Honing his own skills, he'd been checking out old champions — A. J. Liebling, Roger Kahn, George Plimpton, Thomas Hauser, Hugh McIlvanney . . . (On reflection, Hauser and McIlvanney might want to dispute any sense of the past in that list, as they are both still in the arena). Most recently, McIlvanney introduced a mighty anthology of Budd Schulberg's boxing reports. In one of those pieces, "Fighters and Writers," Schulberg recalls the boxers of his youth in a roll call of rough poetry:

"And there I was, the wide-eyed 11-year-old at ringside with his devoted fight fan of a father when our Olympic gold medalist, Fidel La Barba, won the flyweight championship from Frankie Genaro. All those nifty little flys and bantams of my childhood, Newsboy Brown and Corporal Izzy Schwartz, with those six-pointed stars on their trunks, and all the Filipino battlers: at night instead of counting sheep I'd be murmuring their magical names — Speedy Dado . . . Young Nationalista . . . Clever Sencio. Since boxing was a shamelessly ethnic sport, we root for our local Jewish champions Mushy Callahan (Morris Scheer), Jackie Fields (Jacob Finkelstein), and the Newsboy (David Montrose), but as loyal Californians we cheered the Eastern campaigns of La Barba, who was holding his own with future Hall of Famers Kid Chocolate, Battling Battalino."

The names are sweet but Schulberg isn't overcome by sentimentality as he pinpoints race as one of the most powerful factors that define boxing. The other factors are money and ferocity itself, the sheer brutality of the sport and the fascination it inspires in its followers. McIlvanney nails that one in a report on the defeat of British champion Lloyd Honeyghan by Marlon Starling in 1989:

"Standing by Honeyghan's chair in a bare room off the Sports Pavilion at Caesars Palace Hotel, watching helplessly as he huddled forward almost into the fetal position while excruciating pain spread out behind his closed eyelids from the hideously swollen right side of his face, at least one reporter who has found boxing irresistible all his life wondered not for the first time if he had the right to be so captivated by it. Is it, I was obliged to ask, mainly the fear of being dismissed as an ageing hypocrite (of being bracketed with those bores we all could name who find it easy to turn sourly moralistic about sex as soon as their own juices start to dry up) that keeps the misgivings sufficiently in check to let me go back to the ringside?"

It's that uneasiness that stops many people even contemplating boxing as their sport of choice and it's the same dark ambivalence that makes it the most vital sport for a journalist to report on. Boxing is not clean in any sense of the word. Matches are scored with a lack of logic that makes it clear the best man does not always win. In fact, boxers are more often chosen as fodder for champions than to offer any true challenge. The worse that gets, the greater the slump in the game (boxing fans do not talk of the "end of boxing as a sport" but rather they take the long view and acknowledge a series of "slumps" when real contenders are scarce and the game turns to corrupt pantomime). In 1959, when the journalist George Plimpton decided to step into a ring with the formidable Archie Moore, he began to receive a series of anonymous calls offering advice. Once the caller suggested Plimpton hire the services of a spellcaster named Evil Eye Finkel. According to the caller, "Evil Eye's got a manager. Name of Mumbles Sober. The pair of them can be hired for fifty dollars to five hundred dollars depending — so it says in the brochure — on the 'wealth of the employer and the difficulty of the job.' " It's advice that has stayed true through time, as Evil Eye and Mumbles continue to prosper.

It also makes boxing the natural sport for newspapers. It is at times indistinguishable from crime reporting. It reflects the seams of corruption that run through society, class structures, and race relations. At times, it rises to unprecedented levels and reflects national traumas, never more so than when Muhammed Ali was handed a three year ban for repudiating the Vietnam War and the draft. As a sport, it regularly implodes, leaving writers to describe scenes of absolute absurdity, falsity, or, in the best of times, blood-stained victories and appalling defeats.

Writers rise to such situations. A recent Muhammed Ali reader contains articles by authors Tom Wolfe, LeRoi Jones, Norman Mailer, Hunter S. Thompson, Wole Soyinka, Joyce Carol Oates, and Guy Talese. The attraction for these writers is far from simple and may be entangled in a question of style. It's said that Jonathan Swift was a boxing fan and it's recorded that he watched the first British champion, James Figgs, in action. For an anatomist of human savagery such as Swift this could easily have been another step in his education.

Joyce Carol Oates makes an interesting comment on style and language in an observation on Mike Tyson in 1986:

" 'I want to punch the bone into the brain' . . . Tyson's language is as direct and brutal as his ring style, yet as more than one observer has noted, strangely disarming — there is no air of menace, or sadism, or boastfulness in what he says: only the truth."

Jonathan Swift could happily accommodate this definition of style as brutal and objective. Sports writers, though, can come at the same point with a variety of shimmies and half-steps. Oates, for example, analyzes the raw aggression of boxing with great intellect:

"The psychologist Erik Erikson discovered that, while little girls playing with blocks generally create pleasant interior spaces and attractive entrances, little boys are inclined to pile up the blocks as high as they can and then watch them fall down: 'the contemplation of ruins,' Erikson observes, 'is a masculine specialty.' No matter the mesmerizing grace and beauty of a great boxing match, it is the catastrophic finale for which everyone waits, and hopes: the blocks piled as high as they can possibly be piled, then brought spectacularly down. Women, watching a boxing match, are likely to identify with the losing, or hurt, boxer; men are likely to identify with the winning boxer."

A.J. Liebling makes a similar point describing Rocky Marciano's demolition of the legendary Joe Louis and the impact of the scene on a fan and his girlfriend:

"In the eighth round, as you probably read in the daily press, Marciano, the right-hand specialist, knocked Louis down with a left hook that Goldman had not previously publicized. When Louis got up, Marciano hit him with two more left hooks, which set him up for the right and the pitiful finish.

"Right after Marciano knocked Louis down the first time, Sugar Ray Robinson started working his way toward the ring, as if drawn by some horrid fascination, and by the time Rocky threw the final right, Robinson's hand was on the lowest rope of the ring, as if he meant to jump in. The punch knocked Joe through the ropes and he lay on the ring apron, only one leg inside.

"The tall blonde was bawling, and pretty soon she began to sob. The fellow who had brought her was horrified. 'Rocky didn't do anything wrong,' he said. 'He didn't foul him. What you booing?'

"The blonde said, 'You're so cold. I hate you, too.' "

Perhaps only sports journalism could produce two such valuable passages from such different points of view. This tangle of language, style, and drama is essential to the writer's art and it's the sports pages that allow that secret to be aired. Schulberg considers this issue in relation to boxing and comes to this conclusion:

"Why this affinity of writers and fighters? Where one has a promoter, the other has a publisher. One has a manager, the other has an agent. One has a trainer, the other has an editor. But when the bell rings, it's sort of interchangeable. You're out there under the bright lights feeling naked and alone. And what you do or fail to do out there can make or break your reputation for life." (FM) ■

# SOCRATES: GUARD UP, PANTS DOWN

NEW YORK — Around here we like to do things *properly.* Haphazard work and half-baked ideas won't cut it. Really, if you don't care, why should we? Uncaring, unfeeling, unthinking people tend to have little more to share than their own inappropriate sense of self-importance. And we've seen enough of that. Let's do things differently from now on. Let's do them properly.

So how do we do this, do things *properly*? Write properly, for instance? Is there a proper way of saying things in print? How would we know what's appropriate? What standards might we apply to check for inappropriate modes of writing? If I spilled my guts to you right now, telling you all about what's going on in my head and heart, would you want to read it? Or would it be inappropriate? Wouldn't you want to read it precisely because it is? After all, the one form of communication that will always be eagerly consumed is the one that arguably remains the most inappropriate of all: gossip. It travels fast. Before you know it, everyone knows. And they want to know more. Isn't that the kind of demand that any writer, any paper, would like to meet, whether appropriate or not?

That's assuming gossip can be steered. As if this were possible! Inappropriate forms of communication, like gossip, are hydra-headed. They tend to be unmanageable. In my experience, the best way to handle a hydra is to raise one yourself. Meaning: one proper tactic for countering gossip is to provide too much inappropriate information. It'll keep the gossipers busy speculating and, as long as they're kept busy, they won't realize that there never was anything to speculate about. Because they've already been told all there ever was to know. And more.

So there you have a proper argument for choosing inappropriate modes of writing, a most effective survival stragegy for writers: your guard is up when your pants are down.

Does this mean, then, that being inappropriate is proper to writing? You could argue that it is. Because who could ever claim to have appropriate reasons for putting things in print? Yes, it's true, there's news that needs to be aired if our society is to remain informed, open, and critical. This news consists of facts, but what about voices? What are proper reasons for trying to get your voice heard? What are proper motives for cultivating a voice over years of writing (apart from an inappropriate sense of self-importance)? Isn't becoming a spokesperson for a community, social group, or generation a proper reason? Unfortunately, such groups have a habit of not materializing when called upon to bestow a mandate to those prepared to speak for them. Of course, back in the day when the book of books was written, God was careful in his choice of writers, and made sure they had the chance to prove the authenticity of their vocation. Through some form of martyrdom or other. These days it's not so easy for a writer to authenticate your proper mandate. The possibility of suffering for your art is perhaps less appealing now when, in principle, a happy life is something you might still insist on leading as a writer slash citizen slash human being, even if it means renouncing the (lingering romantic) claim to a proper authentification of your presumed vocation.

What the hell does *proper* mean, anyway? Greek philosophy has an answer: what is proper to someone or something is what fits their characteristic properties. For example, it is proper for fish to be in water. It suits them. What equivalent state would be proper to writing? To appear in print? To writers? To be in a state of grace? Or perpetual crisis? What if both print media and writers were in crisis? Were they ever not? Greek philosophy also states that criticism is derived from crisis. The *critique* in Greek jurisprudence and medicine was understood as a votum passed on an undecided situation that determined the point of *crisis* at which it would decide itself (the climax of a juristical dispute, or the turning point of an illness). The proper place for the critique to determine the crisis was the *criterion*, the court of law or site of medical inspection. In its original sense, then, crisis is to criticism what water is to a fish. It is its proper medium. The proper task of critical writing and publishing is to navigate situations in which preconceived ideas of what is proper no longer seem appropriate. When it wiggles like a fish through an eddy of crisis, a critical voice or a critical medium comes into their own. Philosophically speaking, then, the "inappropriate" is the only form proper to critical writing and publishing.

Where might the criterion be properly sited today? Where can we take the crisis to decide its outcome? It's hard to say whether a proper place for solving inappropriate matters still exists. Big institutions will maintain that they provide it. And true, who would want to deny that, next to the parliaments, the fourth estate has been, and continues to be, the crucial criterion for modern democracies. Without it the topology of the democratic political sphere would lose a central arena for determining and resolving its crises. *So let's hear it for a free press . . . !* and yet, we shouldn't take it as given that only institutions can properly host the criterion. It could be any site where crisis can be made discernible. Some say that the web is well suited for this purpose. Maybe. But I can't help thinking that critical voices have bodies that inhabit the physical world. And I'd like to see these embodied voices be housed, hosted, and honed in actual places. The politics of place implied in siting a criterion continues to be a material matter.

When space and visibility in the city are so blatantly governed by the dictates of a capitalist property market, the only institutions able to occupy property in the city are those that promise to generate capital. Yet, the proper reason for a criterion to exist is not to generate capital but to discern crisis. By the standards of the property market, its existence can therefore hardly be justified. As such, to appropriate material space toward such ends, however temporary, is to insist that it is proper for a city to contain criteria.

The art of inappropriate critical thought has a very particular site set aside for it in the topology of the Greek city. This is the *stoa*, the park in front of the house or just outside the city. It is a zone where the laws neither of the house, the *oikos*, nor of the market, the *agora*, properly apply. One comes to the *stoa* to practice philosophy. Here Socrates could be found any day, walking about aimlessly, talking to anyone willing to talk to him. Socrates embodies the spirit of philosophy as an art of asking inappropriate questions. Unsettling their beliefs through irony, he would pull down people's pants by exposing that few of the things we say make proper sense, plunging the belief in the proper into crisis. It is then proper to this art of dislodging beliefs that it should be lodged in a site that is itself unsited, the zone of the *stoa* as a criterion for crisis where the laws of house and market won't properly apply.

In the end, though, gossip killed Socrates. People spoke badly of him, saying he was corrupting the youth with inappropriate thoughts, and he could put up no defense because gossip cannot be taken to court. It remains disembodied, spread by too many people, none of whom can really be taken to task. This is why gossip is so power- and painful. Invisible eyes are on your body. What better way is there to return this gaze but to authorize this situation by making that body visible — materially — as a body of thought in a form of publishing proper to its enduring inappropriateness?! (JV) ■

*"In both places, pirates flourished."*

# RIDER FOUR SEVEN COMMUNICATE

You're goin in via the cafeteria the cafeteria I believe is on the second floor / Ten A D two seven oh four ten A D two seven oh four / four one nine Bridge Street / Ten four

Oh six fifteen confirmed / Oh six sixteen the time I am at forty one / Heavy fire arrival / Forty five returning / Three six ten four / Oh six eighteen the time / Bronx don't have full address / Six nineteen ten twenty six apartment eleven charlie over / Oh six twenty / E forty fourth street ten four / Oh six twenty four one hour and three minutes there is no three eight five on this avenue one seven ten four / Six twenty eight two one nine five ten ninety two / Stand by / Ten four call to the six thirty stand by / Ten four / Unable to give an eta / Ok ten four / Respond to the command post / Six thirty one ten four / Oh six forty two second alarm at box three six five one / Five story p d twenty by fifty / Bronx don't have full address / Oh seven twenty E two nineteenth street over / That's the one, thanks / Does anyone know if forty four engine is between first and second or second and third? / On seventy fifth street? / Nevermind, got it / oh six forty nine November the eleventh / Oh six forty nine Bronx fire is now under control / Leave a message to notify that you're coming / Oh six fifty three two seven three / Two seven three continuing on a ten twenty / Ten four oh six five three hours / Ten four oh six five three hours / Rider one one seven / Very good thank you one one seven / Ok / Rider one one seven ten eight forty one zero / Very good thank you rider one one seven / Oh six five six one twenty / Central Park South six fifty seven the time at two five eight / ten four / Ok going back to the city / Williamsburg section / Ten four / Oh well / Do you want us to stay? / Ok roger / See what they wanna do / Yeah go ahead / Oh seven oh oh roger second alarm / Thanks / Thirty five two one five thirty five two one five seven oh one the time / Hamilton Bridge with a disabled vehicle / Ok / Rider four seven communicate / Seven division communicate / Seven / Shut down gas and electric at seventeen and nineteen / Both seventeen and nineteen you say? Ten four / Three six five one we are returning do you understand? / Right ten four / Stand by ok twenty two? / Seven oh six the time / E M S just notified that we have a total of six ten forty five code fours all refusing treatment over / Rider two six / Six ten forty five code fours all refusing treatment that what you say Division seven? / Ten four / Location Park Place at Flatbush Avenue on the North bound side of the station / Smoke North bound side of the station / Brooklyn to Battalion three one / Ok we're on our way / Station Park Place at Flatbush Avenue / Smoke North bound side of the station / Battalion three one / We're departing / Oh seven oh hours / Go ahead / Yes we are / Six ten forty five code fours all refusing medical attention / Ten four Bronx citywide dispatcher one three one, seven seventeen the time / Four six / E M S states they can't get in the building the lobby is locked / Yeah they just gave the message / Ok forty six / Ten four / Ten four forty six seven twenty one / Brooklyn of Ladder one one oh / Special one three nine / Brooklyn of Ladder one one oh

Luigi Sono, Matins, November 11 (PE) ■

REËDITED

10 GOTO althusser bioptic re-verb-bed
20 PRINT "systematic disavowal of all *New Yorker* umlauts"
30 END

(TK) ■

From *The Economist*, August 24, 2006: "In his book *The Vanishing Newspaper*, Philip Meyer calculates that the first quarter of 2043 will be the moment when newsprint dies in America as the last exhausted reader tosses aside the last crumpled edition." ■

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNI2Chjzr1M ■

Fri, 13 Nov 2009 12:19:49 -0500 (EST)
– "Significant amount" of water found on moon, NASA says. (CNN) ■

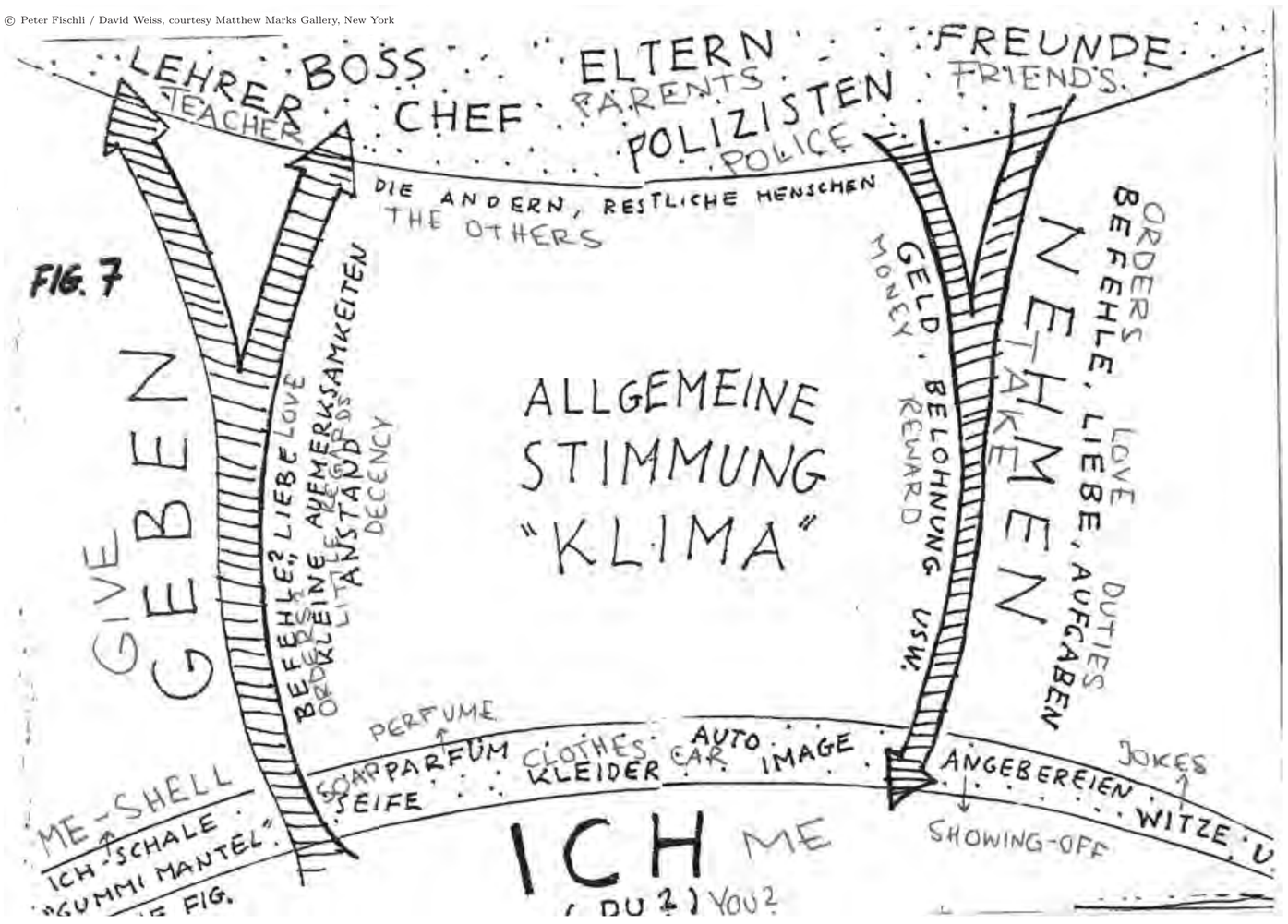
The fourth First/Last Newspaper was assembled by DEXTER SINISTER with contributions by Steve Rushton, Angie Keefer, Joe Scanlon, Francis McKee, Rob Giampietro, Will Holder, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Jan Verwoert, Shannon Ebner, Albert Sukoff, Snowden Snowden, Dan Fox, Quinton Oliver Jones, Paul Elliman, Seth Price, and Tom Kraft. Produced with the assistance of Brendan Dalton and Anne Callahan. Presented under the umbrella of PERFORMA 09 and in partnership with Times Square Alliance. Edited in cooperation with Defne Ayas and Virginie Bobin.

Masthead set in Strike Alphabet courtesy Shannon Ebner.

Performa, a non-profit multidisciplinary arts organization established by RoseLee Goldberg in 2004, is dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth century art and to encouraging new directions in performance for the twenty-first century.

PERFORMA 09



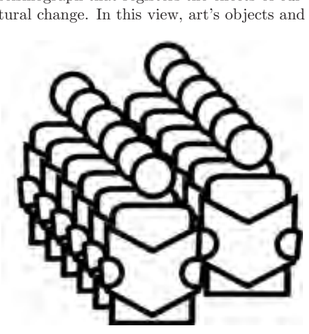



# FIRST/LAST TAKEN FROM COMMONS

NEW YORK — People keep trying to get a handle on what's happening. There's a fear that others are hastening to make startling connections among the raw material, tracing lines between points we didn't even know existed. Exacerbating this anxiety is the fact that, despite its supposed insistence on the consolidation of knowledge and the worth of information, the Internet produces *ritualized unknowing.* You could say, however, that this is a good thing, for it provokes a desire to remystify the frenzy of technological change through ritual, through a personal and allegorical rehearsal of what is perceived to be a manic and distorting increase in density, a compression exponentially telescoping in reach and magnitude.

To tame this frenzy we are offered the calming linearity of lists. While the persistence of the list as a constraint on the Internet's data-cloud may simply be due to the persistence of small rectangular monitors, the list is clearly one of the chief organizational principles of the Internet. Search engines return lists; news is funneled into aggregations of that which is most flagged or emailed; blogs garnish their teetering stacks with the latest entries; a Web page itself typically extends downward in a scrolling, implied list.

Art is sometimes taken to be a kind of seismograph that registers the effects of cultural change. In this view, art's objects and gestures yield distanced reflection and insight: from the frenzy, a distillation. But the term "ritualized unknowing," used above in reference to the Internet, could also describe a response to the banal condition of trying to understand *what's happening* that one finds in art discourse, which seeks to explain how art explains, to show how art shows, to suggest what art is trying to suggest.



There is a paradox in the very attempt to understand an unfamiliar art practice, which today is usually initiated through the medium of two-dimensional or screen-based images. Initially you grapple with a nebulous apparition in your mind's eye, a suspicion that something hovers beyond with no name forthcoming, but this sense of looming energies and meaning often shrinks when you finally inspect the actual artworks, which reveal themselves to consist of mere objects or gestures, as do all artworks. No matter how powerful the work, you're tempted to say: "But this is just?" *Just* an object, *just* a gesture. It would be a mistake, though, to think that your disillusionment upon scrutinizing the "actual" art is a bad thing. A gap has surely opened in your experience of the work, but art depends on this split between the fragile interiority of speculation and the more public and bodily activity of looking, which partakes of space. Your first impression, rare and valuable as it is, is only richer for the betrayal.

Frenzy might in fact be homeopathic, its anxiety-producing presence a spur, although rather than encourage the articulation of meaning, it encourages existing chains of associations to fold in a strange and unanticipated way, aligning incompatible ideas and holding them in awkward proximity. For example, a human body subjected to frenzies of processing is an aggressive and disturbing alienation, but the threat is also fascinating; like a gif-compressed headshot, a Cubist portrait recalls the ancient ritual gesture of donning a mask or hood, and the ambivalent pleasures of othering oneself. Fashion also hunts this path.

*We were trying to get to this place — it was me and you, I think, and some other people — and it was a little like my house? Although, well, it was my house, but it didn't look like my house, somehow. And we were trying not to be seen.*

Why does this stumbling sentence so clearly represent a dream in the telling? (SP) ■

# "END OF QUOTE"

I hesitated to respond to this remark with yet another silly question, though I hadn't really had the chance to speak to Anna yet, and hear her out. (Like the old man, her quiet manner made me more eager to listen than Dick's enthusiasm, of which I had grown a little tired. No offence, Dick.) Till now any of their explanations were less helpful than what they intended. Once again I decided that it was best if I just sat back and observed, though I was, of course, conscious of what Dick called the "funny" nature (like "funny bone") of this situation. My presence altered their usual setting, with the result that I was, I imagined, still receiving a distorted view of things. For example: Anna had finished her soup. The orange streaks at the bottom of her white bowl testified to this. But all I could recall was a slight image of a few movements of her right hand and her lips, though in actual fact it seemed she had moved — but without attracting any attention, on the other hand, by an abnormal immobility.

Then there was the old man's jumper: I could not think how I hadn't noticed the cuffs before. Once you paid attention to them it was as if they were there for all to see: the ends of the sleeves had obviously been worn by the wrists's regular movements, a long while ago. These had then been slightly clumsily mended with wool — a few shades darker than the blue of the the jumper — pointing out how bright that deep dark blue actually was. As clear as night and day. But not. (WH) ■

# NON-EXISTENCE NEITHER PROVED NOR DISPROVED

GENEVA—Full implementation of the Large Hadron Collider has been delayed yet again after another highly improbable chain of events resulted in a malfunction in above-ground electrical equipment on Tuesday, leading to failure of the LHC cryogenics system. Temperatures in the superfluid helium-cooled tubes rose to a near sweltering 8° Kelvin before the failsafe systems responded, shutting down the world's largest particle accelerator for a period of several days. Dr. Mike Lamont, LHC Machine Coordinator, blamed "a bit of bag-uette on the busbars," believed to have been dropped there by a bird.

The unlikely incident neither proves nor disproves the controversial prediction made by physicists Holger B. Nielsen and Masao Ninomiya that "a large Higgs-particle-producing machine such as the LHC should somehow be pre-arranged so as not to come into existence." In their much-contested *Test of Effect from Future in Large Hadron Collider; A Proposal*, Nielsen and Ninomiya suggest that a particle collider with a combination of luminosity and beam energy — seemingly sufficient to change the fate of the universe on a macroscopic scale — would be thwarted by backwards causation, or universe-preserving influence from the future.

The idea is hardly farfetched in the realm of quantum physics. While macroscopic phenomena have not previously been observed to occur in reverse, the notion that "all physical phenomena are microscopically reversible" was put forth by Richard Feynman and John Wheeler in the Wheeler-Feynman absorber theory as early as 1941, in an attempt to explain the movement of energy waves backward and forward in time. Wheeler later coined the term "wormhole" to describe a hypothetical connection between two topologically distant locations in space-time — a conceivable conduit for time travel. (AK) ■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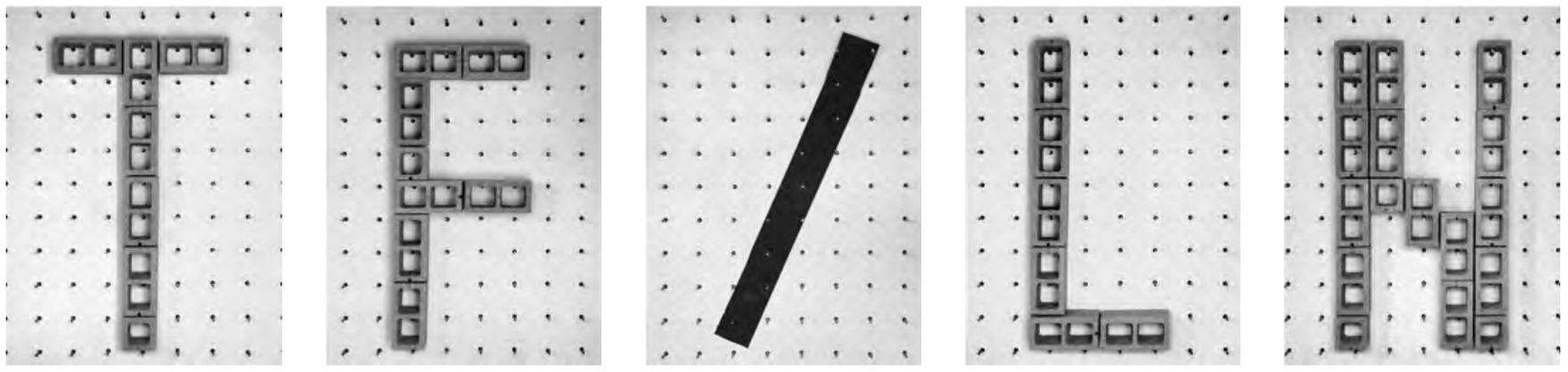


THE FIRST/LAST NEWSPAPER

PORT AUTHORITY, 641 8th Avenue, New York City, NY 10036 18 NOVEMBER 2009

DEXTER SINISTER

# MASS INNOCULATION AGAINST BACTERIA OF DOUBT

PORT AUTHORITY — In late 1977, New York's favorite gonzo-rock journalist, Lester Bangs, wrote a three-part serialized account of touring with English punk / new wave band The Clash for British weekly *New Musical Express*. The assignment found Bangs in a funk, saying *things started going downhill for rock about 1968, culminating in the ascendance of things like disco and jazzrock, which are dead enough to suggest the end of popular music as we know it,* to the point of *thinking about giving up writing about music altogether.*

But Bangs was pried out of resignation by a sudden demand for coverage of the U.K. punk scene which, within one year of its initial explosion, was merely repeating *the very attitudes it copped (BOREDOM and INDIFFERENCE)* — a sorry state which amounted to capitulation rather than construction. Instead, Bangs was on the trail of a *persistent humanism* in spite of the fact that *one of the most uncool things you can do these days is to be committed about anything.*

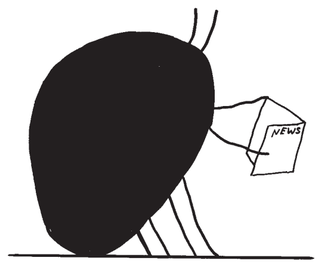
Joining the tour jet-lagged and combative, with a friend's advice to *ask 'em just exactly what their political program is, what they intend to do once past all the bullshit rhetoric*, Lester begins his relationship with the band by unleashing a battery of questions along the lines of *Blah blah blah depersonalization blab blab blab solipsism blah blah yip yap Blah blab no one wants to have emotions anymore blab blip human heart an endangered species blab blare cultural fascism blab blurb etc. etc. etc.* which is immediately met with laughter, then disarmed by the offhand response: *If it bothers you so much why don't you do something about it?*

In a telling incident, one of the band asks Lester, *my room is full tonight; can Adrian stay with you?*, gesturing at one of the fans. Bangs is outraged, makes a scene, then discovers, to his considerable amazement, that indeed the band regularly houses acquaintances and fans on tour. At which point he is forced to consider the degree to which his own attitude is shaped by his standard experience of large-scale U.S. bands' tours, i.e. *involving goddam pigs who have the usual burly cops of hired thugs to keep the fans away from them at all costs.* By contrast, *the way the Clash treat their fans falls so far outside the normal run of things as to be outright revolutionary.*

From here on, Bangs realizes why *it wasn't necessary to do any boring interviews about politics or the class system or any of that — because here is a band which not only preaches something good but practices it as well.* The way the band interact with their audience, *instead of talking about changes in social behavior puts the model of a truly egalitarian practice in their own conduct.* Even better is the band's response to his telling them as much: *Oh, so that's gonna be the hook for your story then?*

Which it is, along with the unanswered question he lets hang: how long the group can *continue to practice total egalitarianism in the face of mushrooming popularity?*

Well-aware of his proclivity to rant, generalize, polemicize, Bangs concludes anyway, saying *you may say I take liberties, and you are right, but I will have done my good deed for the day if I can make you see that the whole point is YOU SHOULD BE TAKING LIBERTIES TOO. Nothing is inscribed so deep that a little eyewash won't uproot it, that's the whole point of so-called "new wave" — to REINVENT YOURSELF AND EVERYTHING AROUND YOU CONSTANTLY.* (DS) ■




David Shrigley

# CAP'N SELLERS'S PEN NAME STOLEN

HARTFORD, CT — Like many of his books, Mark Twain's 1883 travelogue *Life on the Mississippi* was published simultaneously in England and the U.S. in an attempt to ensure against piracy on either side of the Atlantic. In it, Twain recounts — among other stories from his young life on the river — the origin of and his decision to use the pen name "Mark Twain" instead of his given name, Samuel Clemens.

Chapter 50 introduces a captain Twain writes is "now many years dead. He was a fine man, a high-minded man, and greatly respected both ashore and on the river." But he's a two-sided figure: an able sailor on one hand, but a competitive storyteller on the other. His tales were designed to outdo all the rest. As older pilots bragged about their experiences on the river to newer men, Twain writes, "the stately figure of Captain Isaiah Sellers, that real and only genuine Son of Antiquity, would drift solemnly into the midst." Captain Sellers "dated his islands back to the misty dawn of river history; and he never used the same island twice; and never did he employ an island that still existed, or give one a name which anybody present was old enough to have heard of before."

Twain continues, "The old gentleman was not of literary turn or capacity, but he used to jot down brief paragraphs of plain practical information about the river, and sign them 'Mark Twain,' and give them to *The New Orleans Picayune*. They related to the stage and condition of the river, and were accurate and valuable; and thus far, they contained no poison. But in speaking of the stage of the river to-day, at a given point, the captain was pretty apt to drop in a little remark about this being the first time he had seen the water so high or so low at that particular point for forty-nine years; and now and then he would mention Island So-and-so, and follow it, in parentheses, with some such observation as 'disappeared in 1807, if I remember rightly.' "

In an effort to impress his fellow young pilots, Twain signed his first article, a parody of the captain's style, for *The New Orleans True Delta*, with the name "I. Sellers." When he found out, Sellers "did me the honor to profoundly detest me from that day forth," Twain recalls.

"He never printed another paragraph while he lived, and he never again signed 'Mark Twain' to anything. At the time that the telegraph brought the news of his death, I was on the Pacific coast. I was a fresh new journalist, and needed a *nom de guerre*; so I confiscated the ancient mariner's discarded one, and have done my best to make it remain what it was in his hands — a sign and symbol and warrant that whatever is found in its company may be gambled on as being the petrified truth; how I have succeeded, it would not be modest in me to say."

Like Jonathan Swift's Isaac Bickerstaff or Benjamin Franklin's Richard Saunders, Clemens used a pen name to antagonize a competitor. And like Dickens's Boz — which came from "the nickname of a pet child, a younger brother, whom I had dubbed Moses, [ . . . ] which, being pronounced Bozes, got shortened to Boz" — Clemens kept a pen name not out of spite but as a memento of his youth, a souvenir. Mark Twain represented the best storyteller of them all, casting a long shadow over the young Clemens. Clemens's *nom de plume* was not a mask, but a goal; it created another, separate author inside himself. Finally, like copyright, the serial format, and the printing press, Twain's pseudonym was a text-generating tool: with it, he could make more text and better text at a faster rate than he ever could as Samuel Clemens.

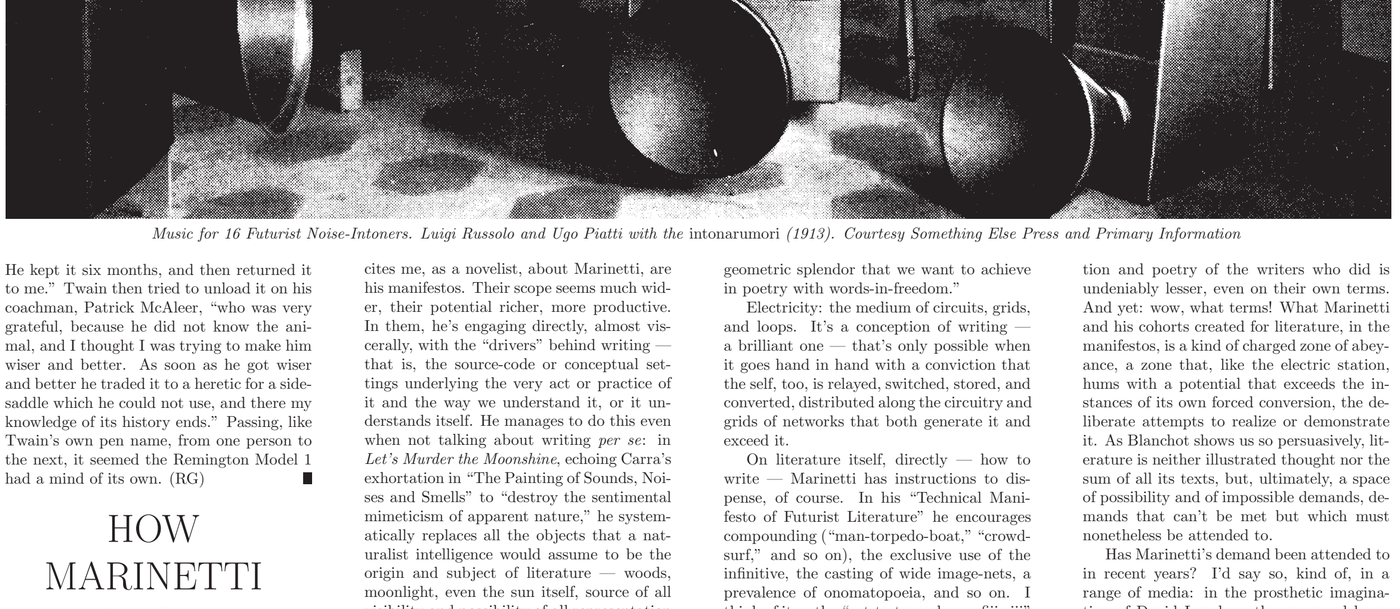
Beyond revealing the origin of his name, however, Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* was unique for another reason: it was the first manuscript to be composed entirely on a typewriter, the Remington Model 2. The typewriter was Twain's second. He had purchased a Remington Model 1 in 1874, just seven years after Christopher Latham Sholes, working with Carlos Glidden and Samuel Soule, had invented it. Sholes described his contraption as "a cross between a loom and a jack-in-the-box, but it could operate faster than a man could with a pen, and all the letters were legible." Sholes's typewriter was not the first — British inventor George Mill had filed a patent for a "writing-machine" shortly after the passage of the Statute of Anne in 1709 — but it was the first to be industrially produced.

Since the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, the famous firearms manufacturers E. Remington & Sons had turned their wartime production line to the production of domestic goods, like sewing machines. Remington's engineers felt many of the same technologies developed for the sewing machine could be applied to the typewriter. Their version of Sholes's machine sat on a stand "similar to a sewing machine table," according to a 1977 IBM press release on the typewriter's history, and "the carriage was returned by means of a foot-treadle." Remington's advertising noted that the typewriter was "the size of a sewing machine, and an ornament to an office, study, or sitting room."

The similarity to the sewing machine may explain why society was so quick to train women to use the new technology. By 1878, the year the Remington 2 was introduced, schools in New York offered typing courses for students, and soon after that the New York YWCA began offering secretarial instruction to young ladies. Female stenographers would soon be found in better hotels and office supply shops throughout the country, and it was just such a woman who first cast a spell on Twain with the new machine and prompted him to buy it. In his unpublished autobiography — a set of sheets dictated, of course, to a secretary with the aid of a typewriter — Twain recounts his purchase:

"Nasby and I saw the machine through a window, and went in to look at it. The salesman explained it to us, showed us samples of its work, and said it could do fifty-seven words a minute — a statement which we frankly confessed that we did not believe. So he put his type-girl to work, and we timed her by the watch. She actually did the fifty-seven in sixty seconds. [ . . . ] She did her work on narrow slips of paper, and we pocketed them as fast as she turned them out, to show as curiosities. The price of the machine was one hundred and twenty-five dollars. I bought one, and we went away very much excited. At the hotel we got out our slips and were a little disappointed to find that they contained the same words. The girl had economized time and labor by using a formula which she knew by heart."

But Twain's Remington Model 1 was "full of defects — devilish ones," and he was eager to get rid of it. He gave it first to his friend Howells, who "was reluctant, for he was suspicious of novelties and unfriendly towards them, and I got him to believe things about the machine that I did not believe myself. He took it home to Boston, and my morals began to improve, but his have never recovered. He kept it six months, and then returned it to me." Twain then tried to unload it on his coachman, Patrick McAleer, "who was very grateful, because he did not know the animal, and I thought I was trying to make him wiser and better. As soon as he got wiser and better he traded it to a heretic for a side-saddle which he could not use, and there my knowledge of its history ends." Passing, like Twain's own pen name, from one person to the next, it seemed the Remington Model 1 had a mind of its own. (RG) ■



*Music for 16 Futurist Noise-Intoners. Luigi Russolo and Ugo Piatti with the* intonarumori *(1913). Courtesy Something Else Press and Primary Information*

# HOW MARINETTI TAUGHT ME HOW TO WRITE

LONDON — I'm going to start in the most un-Futurist of places: in the Renaissance, on a hillside in Spain. In Book One of *Don Quixote*, the novel's manic hero and his sidekick, Sancho Panza, listen to a group of fulling mills, the grinding and clanking of whose machine-parts Don Quixote mistakes for the groaning and snarling of monsters. Unlike the famous "windmill" scene to which Picasso would later give such iconic visual form, this episode is characterized by a complete lack of vision: in the pitch black of the night, only sounds and rhythms carry to the characters, and hence the readers. The episode is also marked by a pungent olfactory undercurrent: Sancho, desperate for the toilet but loath to abandon his misguided master, spends the scene fighting a losing battle with his bowels, resulting in a foul odor permeating the night air.

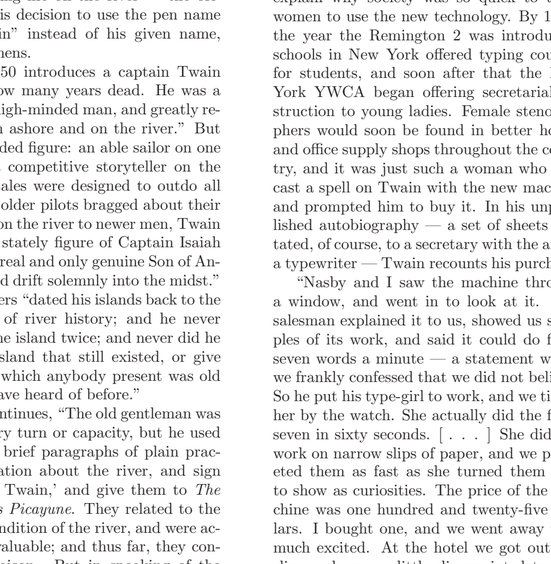
Sancho's master, of course, is wrong: what they are hearing is not monsters but machines. Then again, he's right, completely right, in the profound, intuitive way that only madmen can be: through the white noise of his delusion, he's picked up a signal forming in time's static, and tuned into an announcement, not yet officially delivered, of the age of mechanized industry lurking in the night of the future. What's being transmitted to him, in the looping procession of broken syllables, the clashing meter of compounded phonemes, is a logic and aesthetic of technology — a technologics — which his uralist intelligence would assume to be the origin and subject of literature — woods, moonlight, even the sun itself, source of all visibility and possibility of all representation — with sulphur, potash, silicates, exploding crucibles of barite, aluminum, and manganese, as he proclaims the "fusion of a new solar orb that soon we shall see shine forth." Compounded and synthetic struggle is at once the medium through which the world reveals itself to us, the thing revealed (the thing our art should represent), and the mode in which our art should do this. In an ultra-literary moment halfway through the tract, Marinetti gazes down from his blue aeroplane and, seeing a flock of sheep that woollily embody the pastoral origins and history of poetry, admits he "loved them once" but, renouncing his former "insipidity," exclaims: "The reeds that once we shaped to shepherd's pipes now make the armor of this plane!"

Which brings us to war. It seems to me that to write off Marinetti's evident love of war as an aberration on the part of an otherwise brilliant thinker, or to explain it away as an unfortunate symptom of a violent epoch, is to miss the point. War — as a practice or experience or environment — is central to his whole aesthetic. The "religion-morality of speed" of which he anoints himself high priest is, he writes in 1916, "born this Futurist year from our great liberating war." But what is war, essentially? For Marinetti, it's not a means for a state to acquire power or for one ideology to confront another, but rather a trigger for the breaching of the limits of that stolid humanist and bourgeois bastion, the self. When he writes that "blood has no value or splendor until it is freed from the prison of the arteries," he's envisaging a type of subjectivity that runs beyond the borders of that bastion, spilling over into space. "I" don't end where my body or my thoughts end; rather, I continue through trajectories of ordnance, flight-paths of bullets. Man, properly conceived, doesn't even begin until he's "multiplied" (a favorite term of Marinetti's); his flesh and muscles aren't what cling to his frail skeleton but rather the twisting tunnels and arching bridges of a landscape through which armored cars and locomotives course.

In war, man becomes networked, and is thus revealed to himself as what he always already was, or should have been. In war, space becomes *haptic*: close-up, tangible, and geometric, which is how we should have seen it in the first place. In his manifesto on "Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation," Marinetti instructs followers to gesticulate in a "draughtsmanslike, topographical" manner, synthetically creating in midair cubes, cones, spirals, and ellipses, like so many fighter-planes; in his "Manifesto of Futurist Dance," he envisages one dancer emulating the parabola of shrapnel and another, playing the role once more of aviator, moving above the grid-squares of a map. In "Manifesto of Aeropainting," he goes one step further: after starting out imagining what painting from an aeroplane might consist of, he ends by realizing that the act of flying is painting in-and-of itself, an "aerosculpture" formed through a "harmonious and signifying composition of colored smokes offered to the brushes of dawn and dusk, and long vibrant beams of electric light."

Painting, or writing. This is mark-making in its most literal, material form: a trace with an electric glow. Electricity figures prominently in Marinetti's thinking on writing: in *Geometric and Mechanical Splendour and the Numerical Sensibility*, he praises electricity's "lyric initiative," claiming that,

"Nothing is more beautiful than a great HUMMING central electric station that holds the hydraulic pressure of a mountain chain and the electric power of a vast horizon, synthesized in marble distribution panels bristling with dials, keyboards, and shining communicators. These panels are our only models for the writing of poetry. For precursors we have gymnasts and high-wire artists who, in their evolutions, their rests, and the cadences of their musculature, realize the sparkling perfection of the precise gears and the



R.O. Blechman and Nicholas Blechman

cites me, as a novelist, about Marinetti, are his manifestos. Their scope seems much wider, their potential richer, more productive. In them, he's engaging directly, almost viscerally, with the "drivers" behind writing — that is, the source-code or conceptual settings underlying the very act or practice of it and the way we understand it, or it understands itself. He manages to do this even when not talking about writing *per se*: in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, echoing Carra's exhortation in "The Painting of Sounds, Noises and Smells" to "destroy the sentimental mimeticism of apparent nature," he systematically replaces all the objects that a natgeometric splendor that we want to achieve in poetry with words-in-freedom."

Electricity: the medium of circuits, grids, and loops. It's a conception of writing — a brilliant one — that's only possible when it goes hand in hand with a conviction that the self, too, is relayed, switched, stored, and converted, distributed along the circuitry and grids of networks that both generate it and exceed it.

On literature itself, directly — how to write — Marinetti has instructions to dispense, of course. In his "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" he encourages compounding ("man-torpedo-boat," "crowd-surf," and so on), the exclusive use of the infinitive, the casting of wide image-nets, a prevalence of onomatopoeia, and so on. I think of it as the "rat-ta-tsang-boom-fiii-siii" side of Marinetti. From a formal point of view, it's interesting — but it's not, for me, the most interesting thing he has to say on the subject of writing. The real money, in that manifesto, comes a little later, when he attacks what he calls "psychology" — that is, the "I" of logic and of reason. "We must," writes Marinetti, "drive [this 'I'] from literature and finally put MATTER in his place, matter whose essence must be grasped by strokes of intuition, the kind of thing that the physicists and chemists can never do."

Maybe, just maybe, all the rat-ta-tsang-boom-fiii-siii stuff is a distraction; maybe even Marinetti got distracted and, in acting out his own instructions, missed the most incisive part of them. If I'm right (and I may well not be), then the great Futurist novel is certainly not *Mafarka*, nor is it *Crash*: the great Futurist novel is *Ulysses*, the epic whose true heroes are vibrating tram-lines, jingling bedposts, and a bar of soap; whose cosmic vision is of spinning gasballs and frozen rock, of "existences concealed in cavities of the earth, beneath removable stones, in hives and mounds, of microbes, germs, bacteria, bacilli, spermatozoa"; whose episodes, like Marinetti's car crash or Quixote's night, are permeated by the smell of excreta. Perhaps it's no coincidence that the bulk of *Ulysses* was written in Trieste, the city Marinetti called "our beautiful powder-keg"; nor, perhaps, that its inciting incident involved a gun being discharged over Joyce's head in a Martello tower, a bunker for the military surveillance of space's vectors and approach-lines, whose middle floor consisted of a gunpowder magazine and on whose roof a cannon sat: a gun inside a gun.

The paradox here is that Joyce never considered himself a Futurist. And that the fiction and poetry of the writers who did is undeniably lesser, even on their own terms. And yet: wow, what terms! What Marinetti and his cohorts created for literature, in the manifestos, is a kind of charged zone of abeyance, a zone that, like the electric station, hums with a potential that exceeds the instances of its own forced conversion, the deliberate attempts to realize or demonstrate it. As Blanchot shows us so persuasively, literature is neither illustrated thought nor the sum of all its texts, but, ultimately, a space of possibility and of impossible demands, demands that can't be met but which must nonetheless be attended to.

Has Marinetti's demand been attended to in recent years? I'd say so, kind of, in a range of media: in the prosthetic imagination of David Lynch or the vanguard bombast of Einsturzende Neubauten, for example. But in contemporary writing, much less. To the question of what a genuinely Marinettian current writing might look like, I can only answer litotically — in other words, by defining it as the negative of its opposite. What it's not is what dominates current literary fiction: a humanist, psychological writing in which everything proceeds from a self that's never put in question, in which man is unbreached and unmultiplied — a writing that serves as a vanity mirror for liberal culture to reflect itself back to itself in the way that it wants to see itself. Any editor at any major publishing house will tell you that they're largely expected to take their bearings from, and shape their editorial policy around, the feedback that they get from reading groups, whose members want nice, rounded characters they can imagine sharing thoughts with over a glass of Chardonnay. Well, fuck that. Literature begins where identity and knowledge are ruptured, multiplied, transmitted along chains of language and the vectors of the world, passing through switch-points that flip them over into something else. The Greeks knew this: look at Clytemnestra's beacon-telegraph speech in the first act of *Agamemnon*, or Cassandra's strange linguistic jump-cuts in the same play, or the vast switchboardery of oracles and signs that govern Oedipus's transit through both space and time (a play which also, incidentally, revolves around a violent highway incident). We've always known this — but it needs restating sometimes. And Marinetti's manifestos are the most lucid modern statement of it I can think of. (TM) ■

*This is an abridged version of a talk Tom McCarthy gave at Tate Modern, London, in June 2009.* ©*2009 by Tom McCarthy*


*John Russell at* Barefoot in the Head *futurological poetry reading, 12 November 2009. Photograph by Mark Beasley. Courtesy of the artist and Performa*

A Reconsideration of the Newspaper Industry in 5 Easy Allusions (4): *Sitting Duck or March Hare?*

*How Media Masters Reality #5*

# SPIDERMAN IN WORLD WIDE WEB

TIVOLI, NY — 26,000 newspaper workers lost their jobs in the U.S. between 2008 and the first half of 2009; *Newsday*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Baltimore Sun*, and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* have closed their foreign bureaus. Revenue from newspaper advertisements declined 28% in 2009. *The Boston Globe* is currently losing more than $50 million per year. Classified ads, once described by press baron Rupert Murdoch as "rivers of gold," are losing an ever-greater proportion of their income to the Internet. In April, *The Christian Science Monitor* stopped its presses and became the first national newspaper to switch exclusively to the web.

Those nostalgic for ink point to the Internet, the parasite sucking the lifeblood (advertising money and editorial content) from the newspaper industry. It seems people no longer want to pay for their news. *The New York Times* recently offered a pay-for-view online service, but then quickly discontinued it. The hard-copy newspapers and journals that make money online tend to cater for specialist markets. *The Financial Times* online service, for instance, makes money because their customers can't afford not to have it — it effectively serves to augment and extend an existing medium.

Public sphere philosopher Jürgen Habermas reminds us when all this started: "In England, France, and the United States, the transformation from a journalism of conviction to one of commerce began in the 1830s at approximately the same time." It was in the 1830s that newspapers funded solely by advertising were established and it was then that journalism's real crisis began. In the shadow of a fourth estate — which must, finally, meet the interests of capital — there grew an anxiety about the legitimacy of the press itself. The press took on a dual form — the well-informed Dr. Jekyll cast the shadow of the popularist Mr. Hyde — the "paper of record" mirrored the "yellow press." And along with this divided self came a class division: the tabloid versus the broadsheet; the mass versus the elite. The masses are led mindlessly toward the spectacular and sensational. Their sensibilities are easily affected; they believe what they are told. The "gullible herd" are set against the "informed individual," master of his own destiny — as rational, as reasoned, and as balanced as his opinion.

But today, the anxiety about the legitimacy of the press — born on the morning of capital's monopoly of opinion — has traveled effortlessly from the ink clinging to pages of *The Washington Post* to the electron interface of the news blog *The Huffington Post*.

*The Huffington Post* even recently created an award for online journalistic excellence, similar to print's Pulitzer Prize — the press continues the wrestle its own shadow. Joseph Pulitzer, following the logic of the Other dwelling within the Self, both instituted the practice of sensationalist "yellow journalism," and established the world's first school for journalism. It seems that the press must feed back its pitch for legitimacy again and again; this is how it mythologizes the story of how fair, balanced, and rational it is.

While hard-copy papers nose dive, news blogs like *TPM* (*Talking Points Memo*), *The Daily Dish* and *The Atlantic* are attracting advertisers and hiring staff. *The Atlantic* received 13 million page views in June 2009; *The Huffington Post* is able to sustain a Washington bureau with seven reporters and editors (including Dan Froomkin, formerly of *The Washington Post*). And this at a time when some newspapers (including *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*) have pulled their correspondents out of Baghdad. This fall-off has been picked up, in part, by the blog *The Global Post*, which was kick-started with a $10 million investment package at the beginning of 2009. They plan to take over the business that the nationals are finding it hard to sustain.

The account of the blogosphere as parasitical nemesis of the fourth estate becomes less credible because we seem to be seeing the formation of a different kind of news service. The fact that people can get information free online hasn't only changed the financial dynamic it has also the shifted the dynamic of legitimacy — do I trust *The New York Times* or *The Daily Dish*?

Whether I take my news over breakfast or over the wireless connection, I still, somewhere in the back of my mind, believe in the superhero reporter. It's no coincidence that Superman and Spiderman both work for the press. Clark Kent is its witness (the reporter) and Peter Parker its forensic department (the photographer). Both work for truth and justice, but in order to protect their secret identities Clark sometimes has to bear false witness and fake stories, and Peter has to tamper with the evidence and fake pictures. I'm still waiting for the first blogging superhero, but when he or she does appear, what media myths will they carry over to the blogosphere?

Since its birth the modern media has been living with the contradiction between private (corporate) interests and the model of the public sphere. The liberal model teaches that information should be accessible and "public." This expectation was carried over to the Internet where the demand for freedom of speech is tempered by the anxiety that the "checks and balances" that might apply to the established media might not apply to the web.

However, the notion of the media as the forum in which things can be tested for their truth and exposed as false, or the notion of "objectivity" within the press, is something that passed over from scientific discourse into the world of journalism — blogs and newspapers, despite their differences, both preserve the regulative fantasy of press freedom and objectivity.

What we can say for certain is that blogs and newspapers are sites for the production of truth claims. Lots of blogs exist to propound the standpoint of a particular government, NGO, or special interest group — and the vast majority make links to like-minded people. Claims as legitimate truth-speakers come not just from "objective" journalists, but from "vested interest groups" and maybe even "conspirators." The issue isn't whether the press is more reliable as a news source than the TV or Internet, but whether the press is still regarded as *the legitimizing agency.* There is evidence that people are more likely to trust a particular journalist or blogger over a particular newspaper and readers are certainly as mindful of vested interests within the newspaper industry as they are on the World Wide Web.

Histories of journalism show there never was a stable state in which the scientifically-objective truth could be told. Those histories are actually histories of legitimacy being contested — "popular," "yellow" journalism existing alongside the "journal of record." How to deal with "illegitimate" voices that are, in fact, structural parts of the discursive space of "the media" will continue to be the real issue at stake. (SR) ■

# QUICK CROSS WORD

The hands extending from the blue sleeves pushed the white bowl away from them. Withdrawing across the tabletop to their original position, without lifting, he crossed his arms above his stomach, leant as far back as the window would allow, lifted one ankle onto a thigh (so that his blue slipper was now visible to me, big toe tapping the underside of the table) and turned at his waist so that his shoulder could press flat against the glass with his head facing along the length of the window and his eyes looking out through it, past the oak to the horizon beyond. "Bloody warship. Haha (he said it not me). Hairbrush-whack! Bike pump. Whack!" He smiled to himself and let out his breath, the last of it forming the next "One too many 'the's there, if you ask me. So now, then, not to worry, nothing that can't be mended. Small adjustments and readjustments. Proceed step by step, carefully comparing the results expected with the results achieved. Factual limitations impress the piecemeal engineer. Hundredninety words. Mind your P's and Q's. Haha. Ha ha. There we are." (WH) ■

*Part 5: Headless Body, Topless Bar*

# THE BASTARDS ARE MAKING IT UP!

GLASGOW — It takes some nerve to make it up and serve it to the public as if it was straight from the eyes to the fingers, punched out before the smoke has even settled. Readers, though, have a high tolerance for grifters, if they can pull it off with style.

One of the first was one of the boldest. Daniel Defoe published his firsthand account of the 1665 Plague of London in 1722:

"It was about the beginning of September, 1664, that I, among the rest of my neighbors, heard in ordinary discourse that the plague was returned again in Holland . . . We had no such thing as printed newspapers in those days to spread rumors and reports of things, and to improve them by the invention of men, as I have lived to see practiced since. But such things as these were gathered from the letters of merchants and others who corresponded abroad, and from them was handed about by word of mouth only; so that things did not spread instantly over the whole nation, as they do now. But it seems that the Government had a true account of it, and several councils were held about ways to prevent its coming over; but all was kept very private."

Defoe would have been five when the outbreak occurred but he had access to his deceased uncle Henry's journals and the published account is signed with the initials H.F., signaling the odd collaboration. In a few lines, he manages to cover two of the key elements in a good feature article — a national trauma and a government cover-up. He also makes it clear that the usual role of the journalist was to provide "hard news," facts gleaned from traveling merchants reported for traders planning their next investment. It is not a coincidence that one of the most successful Internet newspaper firewalls today exists around *The Financial Times*, where readers are willing to pay for reliable analysis of national situations.

If news prose is stripped to the bone, it's because time is precious and the process has to be repeated each day. The feature article, however, defies gravity. It offers wide-open expanses — maybe as much as 40,000 words — and that kind of space allows for character, detail, setting and mood, detours . . .

There are writers who've taken this freedom and run with it; too often this has been defined as "new journalism." Tom Wolfe, who made the phrase famous with his anthology of potential "new journalists," argued that there'd been some indication of previous attempts by earlier writers to fuse style, factual reporting, and adventurous prose. His list, from Defoe through Dickens, Thackeray, Twain, and Orwell really proved that there was nothing "new" going on, simply that the opportunity for such writing surged and ebbed with the economies of the news and publishing industries. There was something emerging from the '60s onwards that positioned itself against the very idea of "news." Heretical as it may seem, the roots of this turn may lie beyond journalism in the wider world of the human sciences, in anthropology, for instance, where Clifford Geertz advocated a new examination of culture through what he termed "thick description":

"Looked at in this way, the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse . . . As interworked systems of construable signs (what, ignoring provincial usages, I would call symbols), culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly — that is, thickly — described."

Roland Barthes had already demonstrated what such a "thick" description might be like in *Mythologies* (1957) when he analyzed the current issue of a leading French magazine.

"And here is . . . another example: I am at the barber's, and a copy of *Paris-Match* is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolor. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naïvely or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any color discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system."

What Barthes proves is that the revolution that occurred in writing features was not just a question of writing an abbreviated neo-realist novel for a magazine. It was about writing that took apart orthodox beliefs in what constituted the news and what the news was really telling us. There may be the occasional novelistic gracenote in the long feature but it is often used counterintuitively, to undermine the cult of information. In the lead to "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream," for example, Joan Didion begins the account of murderer Lucille Miller with the following paragraph,

"This is a story about love and death in the golden land, and begins with the country. The San Bernardino Valley lies only an hour east of Los Angeles by way of the San Bernardino Freeway but is in certain ways an alien place: not the coastal California of subtropical twilights and the soft westerlies off the Pacific but a harsher California, haunted by the Mohave just beyond the mountains, devastated by the hot dry Santa Ana wind that comes down through the passes at 100 miles an hour and whines through the Eucalyptus windbreaks and works on the nerves. October is the bad month for the wind, the month when breathing is difficult and the hills blaze up spontaneously. There's been no rain since April. Every voice seems a scream. It is the season of suicide and divorce and prickly dread, wherever the wind blows."

It's both crime scene and long-range weather forecast. Didion keeps the details of murder at bay here because she knows that a "news" piece would rush through the facts towards a hasty conclusion, missing something darker and elliptical along the way.

Other feature writers have used their freedom to wreak havoc on the sobriety of reporting protocols. Michael Herr whipped across those rules in Vietnam, pulling language out of its sockets with such ferocity that Fredric Jameson cited his passage from *Dispatches* as evidence of a new, postmodern world order:

"As long as we could have choppers like taxis it took real exhaustion or depression near shock or a dozen pipes of opium to keep us even apparently quiet, we'd still be running around inside our skins like something was after us, ha ha, La Vida Loca.

"In the months after I got back the hundreds of helicopters I'd flown in began to draw together until they'd formed a collective meta-chopper, and in my mind it was the sexiest thing going; saver-destroyer, provider-waster, right hand-left hand, nimble, fluent, canny and human; hot steel, grease, jungle-saturated canvas webbing, sweat cooling and warming up again, cassette rock and roll in one ear and door-gun fire in the other, fuel, heat, vitality and death, death itself, hardly an intruder. Men on the crews would say that once you'd carried a dead person he would always be there, riding with you."

This new language or methodology often reflects the tremendous burden of the story on the storytellers themselves. Recalling his landmark article tracking the rise of AIDS ("The Plague Years"), David Black admits:

"I'd thought about the impact the piece might have on the magazine's readers. But not about its impact on me.

"Researching and writing about any subject was always an education — but what I was learning while doing the AIDS article was less about the subject than about myself: my own fears, biases, paranoias, and assumptions.

"AIDS first challenged, then shattered, the journalistic distance I usually kept from a subject. I have not written an extended piece of journalism since."

Other writers, though, point out the dangers of not pushing themselves. Remembering how he became a *Rolling Stone* correspondent Joe Eszterhas writes:

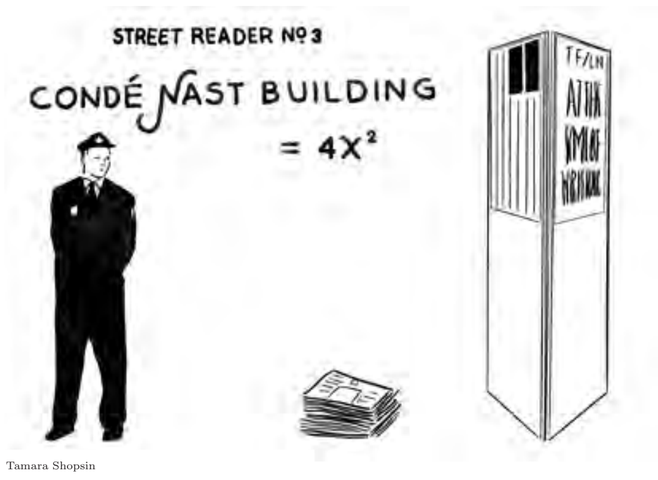
"Most of the reporters I was working with were dead. Oh, sure, they did their daily breathing, and at one time in their lives they may have had ambitions, but over the years their ambitions had reduced them to their weekly paychecks. I wanted to write . . . And I didn't want to die . . . "

Ten years earlier a youthful Tom Wolfe had looked out across the city room of *The Herald Tribune* for the first time and experienced an immediate revulsion:

"The place looked like the receiving bin at the Good Will . . . a promiscuous heap of junk . . . Wreckage and exhaustion everywhere . . . All the intestines of the building were left showing in diverticulitic loops and lines — electrical conduits, water pipes, steam pipes, effluvium ducts, sprinkler systems, all of it dangling and grunting from the ceiling, the walls, the columns. The whole mess, from top to bottom, was painted over in an industrial sludge, Lead Gray, Subway Green, or that unbelievable dead red, that grim distemper of pigment and filth, that they paint the floor with in the tool and die works. On the ceiling were scalding banks of fluorescent lights, turning the atmosphere radium blue and burning bald spots in the crowns of the copy readers, who never moved."

It turns out that these restless feature writers, sensing their freedom, were never making it up, they were tearing it all down.

Burn. (FM) ■




Tamara Shopsin

# ITSELF FEELS LIKE THE LAST OF SOMETHING

Prisoner: Where am I?
Number 2: In The Village.
Prisoner: What do you want?
Number 2: Information.
Prisoner: Which side are you on?
Number 2: That would be telling. We want information, information, information . . .
Prisoner: You won't get it.
Number 2: By hook or by crook we will.
Prisoner: Who are you?
Number 2: The new Number 2.
Prisoner: Who is Number 1?
Number 2: You are Number 6.
Prisoner: I'm not a number. I am a free man.
Number 2: Ha, ha, ha, ha . . .

JULY 17 — I decide to check into the Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles because the heat and disarray of my apartment became too distracting for me to complete two overdue essays I am working on. The three nights are a birthday gift, accepted out of desperation and justified by the cheapness of the reservations (procured via Priceline, $75 / night). It seems the Bonaventure has some difficulty filling its enormous structure. The hotel is a thirty-five-story, glass-enclosed cylinder with four smaller cylindrical towers around its periphery. The complex comprises 1354 guest rooms, 94 suites, and 41 hospitality suites. Its entrances are scattered at several levels, and once one is inside, it's unclear which is ground level. A mug in the shape of the hotel can be obtained from the rotating bar on the top floor. While I imagine spending a couple evenings up there consuming drinks from the commemorative mug, I never make it. The whole place feels like a 1980s furniture store: black and purple carpeting is accented by gold-chromed fittings. Events on this particular weekend include the "International Youth Competition," and middle-aged parents can be seen shepherding groups of children around the building with small national flags clipped to their backpacks. When I check in, preteens are wandering around the lobby wearing ballerina outfits, marching band uniforms, sequined tuxedos, and the like. One child is dressed as a puffy metallic dinosaur; I try to imagine what competition he might be a part of and what his chances are of winning.

Cultural critic Fredric Jameson famously used the Bonaventure as an example of "the cultural logic of late capitalism." I'd read that Jameson essay while an undergraduate at the previously mentioned small liberal arts college. His descriptions offered a mental respite from the humid, mosquito-infested, not air-conditioned, gothic melancholia of upstate New York in the summertime. They made me salivate. I dug up the book in preparation for my trip and found the passage underlined in ballpoint pen:

*The Bonaventure aspires to being a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city (and I would want to add that to this new total space corresponds a new collective practice, a new mode in which individuals move and congregate, something like the practice of a new and historically original kind of hypercrowd). In this sense, then, the mini-city of Portman's Bonaventure ideally ought not to have entrances at all (since the entryway is always the seam that links the building to the rest of the city that surrounds it), for it does not wish to be part of the city, but rather its equivalent and its replacement or substitute. . . . The Bonaventure . . . is content to "let the fallen city fabric continue to be in its being" (to parody Heidegger); no further effects — no larger protopolitical utopian transformation — are either expected or desired.*

Rereading this passage prompted me to extend my stay. Further, I decided to bring no provisions and to avoid setting foot outside of the hotel.

JULY 18 — The hotel towers are coded red, yellow, green, and blue. This makes me think of Rodchenko's monochrome paintings, *Pure Red Color*, *Pure Yellow Color*, and *Pure Blue Color*, of 1921. These were Rodchenko's "last paintings," and the building itself feels like the last of something. There's a plaque in front of the red elevator that informs the visitor that *True Lies* was filmed here, but it is unclear whether or not it is referring to the lobby, the hotel, or this particular elevator. *True Lies* was shot when Schwartzenegger's career had hit its plateau; failures like *Eraser* and his transformation into a Green Republican governor were still years off. The hotel itself feels like this late version of Schwartzenegger: overtanned, with overly-taut skin whose plasticine quality speaks to its age and a physique inappropriate for a sixty-year-old.

Later, I decide to go back downstairs to avoid the cost of room service. I get off on a fourth-floor landing where I remember seeing a coffee shop. It looked as though the shop was on this floor, but I was wrong. The elevators stop only on odd-numbered floors below six. From my vantage point, the coffee shop is only a short distance away, but getting there requires a counterintuitive walk through several zigzagging stairways. From one of the third-floor landings, the coffee shop is again visible, and after some time I find my way to it. Again, I think of Jameson:

*Here the narrative stroll has been underscored, symbolized, reified, and replaced by a transportation machine which becomes the allegorical signifier of that older promenade we are no longer allowed to conduct on our own.*

Thinking of the building as a massive onanistic machine gives me some comfort. He goes on:

*I am more at a loss when it comes to conveying the thing itself, the experience of space you undergo when you step off such an allegorical device into the lobby or atrium, with its great central column, surrounded by a miniature lake, the whole positioned between the four symmetrical residential towers with their elevators, and surrounded by rising balconies capped by a kind of greenhouse roof at the sixth level. I am tempted to say that such space makes it impossible for us to use the language of volume or volumes any longer, since these last are impossible to seize.*

I had thought I might write about the hotel, but Jameson was right — it's indescribable. The building itself feels like watching an old movie about a future time that happens to be the time when you're watching it. Exhausted by the book, I leave it at the Italian Coffee Express. The coffee is awful.

When I return the next day, the book is still on the table where I was sitting, as is my empty cup. The shops located on the third and fourth floors feel half-abandoned; the fourth is in better shape in part because it has the only recognizable chain restaurant, a Subway sandwich shop. The majority of the other lunch places serve an odd mishmash of food — falafel, Chinese, pizza — and all have these strange cheese sandwiches wrapped in cellophane. There is one lunch counter with a sign that says it offers smoothies, but it never seems to be open.

JULY 19 — I'm glad my copy of the Jameson was still at the table. He writes:

*This diagnosis is, to my mind, confirmed by the great reflective glass skin of the Bonaventure, whose function might first be interpreted as developing a thematics of reproductive technology. . . . The glass skin achieves a peculiar and placeless dissociation of the Bonaventure from its neighborhood: it is not even an exterior inasmuch as when you seek to look at the hotel's outer walls you cannot see the hotel itself, but only the distorted images of everything that surrounds it.*

I wonder if Jameson's seen Frank Gehry's Disney Music Hall, located a few blocks away. Instead of reflecting its surroundings, Gehry's brushed-metal surface reflects only blinding light. This is why it has become so popular for photo shoots; the building acts as an enormous reflector, guaranteeing even lighting to the models and cars positioned in front of it. It makes me think of George Bataille's *Solar Anus*, a blinding vortex, a massive pucker. Gehry's building sits at the intersection of First and Grand, and people have complained that it blinds drivers moving through the busy intersection and that cooling costs have gone up in the adjacent office buildings.

JULY 20 — At about 4:00 in the morning, I wake up to an episode of *Star Trek* ("Spectre of the Gun"), part of a marathon on TBS. I switch it off and turn back to Jameson as he descibes one possible beginning-ending, a "zero point":

*Towards the end of art, of course, and the abolition of the aesthetic but itself and under its own internal momentum, the self-transcendence of aesthetic towards something else, something supposedly better than its own darkened and figural mirror — the splendor and transparency of Hegel's utopian notion of philosophy itself, the historical self-consciousness of an absolute present (which will also turn out to be that selfsame allegedly prophetic notion of the so-called "end of history") — in short, the shaping power of the human collectivity over its own destiny, at which point it founders (for us here and now ) into an incomprehensible, unimaginable, utopian temporality beyond what thought can reach.*

*. . . marching as they do from the only obscurely and unconsciously figural, through the assumption of the sheer autopoeisis of the play of figuration as such, towards the sheer transparency of an end of figuration in the philosophical and the historically self-conscious, in a situation in which thought has expunged the last remnants of figures and tropes from the fading and luminous categories of abstraction itself.*

It seems no coincidence that just as Marcel Duchamp brought the foundational theatricality of art objects to the fore, the "zero point" of painterly materialism would surface thousands of miles away as a theatrical backdrop. In 1913 Kazimir Malevich was asked to contribute costumes and set designs for the Cubo-Futurist play "Victory over the Sun." Aside from the almost unwearable costumes, Malevich produced a series of concept drawings for the sets which, in stark black and white, appear like preparatory sketches for the Suprematist canvases he would begin producing just a year later. When asked about his tautologically-titled *Black Square* (1914/15) and its placement at 45 degrees in the top corner of the room of the 1915 exhibition "0.10," Malevich referred back to these set designs as its origin. The monochrome was thus situated as both the material negation of the painterly image (an object that operated by pictorial resemblance) and the symbolic negation of the very thing that made vision possible.

But what of Malevich's zero point, and its proposed transcendence? With the climate in postrevolutionary Russia progressing into Stalinism, the proposition of materialist abstraction had become a symbol of bourgeois elitism. Malevich returned to his pre-Suprematist foundations, producing canvases that aped his antecedents, first Cubo-Futurism and, at its most extreme, Impressionism. Stranger still, Malevich backdated these works, so that his Suprematist works remained the forgone conclusion of these styles, turning his own progression into an ellipse, doubling back on itself. He was trapped in his own origin story. Since he held to the conviction that he had reached the endpoint of painting, the height of purism in form, there was nowhere to go but backward.

My own zero point would come at L.A. Prime, the steakhouse on the top floor of the hotel. There, a surprise party awaited me, a crown on the birthday excursion. I realize I've gone days without having a face-to-face conversation lasting more than a minute. (WB) ■


© Peter Fischli / David Weiss, courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

# TWO TEMPORAL LOGICS TRIED, TESTED

RICHMOND / NEW YORK — Henry Ford didn't have the views in mind in 1926, when he selected the waterfront site for the branch assembly plant he built in Richmond, California. He chose the 50-acre parcel of land northeast of San Francisco, overlooking the San Francisco Bay to the south, for its logistical appeal. The Ford Richmond Plant was designed to metabolize parts shipped from Dearborn, Detroit, and Long Beach into fully-assembled Model A and Model AA automobiles. Components and sub-assemblies would enter by barge at a docking facility on the south end of the plant, and finished products would exit on the north end soon after, either by barge or by the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroad spurs which were part of the infrastructure extended to the site at the expense of the city of Richmond, per Ford's stipulation.

By then, Henry Ford had long been in a position to make such stipulations. When the Ford Richmond Plant began operations in August of 1931, it housed the largest assembly line on the West Coast. Richmond could employ up to 2600 line workers and produce 400 cars per shift at full capacity.

The Richmond plant was designed by Albert Kahn, architect of numerous other Ford factories, including the Highland Park Plant, which was Ford's first assembly line facility, and the mile-long River Rouge Complex in Dearborn. Although the romance of an astonishing sunset surveyed from Richmond's westernmost point may not have driven Henry Ford's interest in the site, available light was a crucial consideration in the design and operation of the plant. The factory floor at Richmond was lit entirely by natural light emanating from enormous windows and skylights — a design innovation that had established Kahn's international reputation in the burgeoning field of industrial architecture. Kahn's design for the Richmond plant also included a two-story craneway that extended over the water on the south end of the building. Parts were delivered via the craneway and transported by conveyor to the second floor through an opening in the ceiling.

In 1926, the year he purchased the land in Richmond, Ford described the system of mass production he had pioneered as a matter of "focusing upon a manufacturing project the principles of power, accuracy, economy, system, continuity, and speed." Ford's insight had been that efficiency in manufacturing could be achieved by moving resources for assembly, rather than finished goods, closer to points of distribution and consumption. Similarly, in Ford's factories, assemblies and sub-assemblies would pass through a plant while workers's bodies remained stationary. Complex manufacturing tasks would be broken down into many single, simple actions, each of which would be repeated incessantly by individual workers, whose jobs would then require them to adapt physically and mentally to extraordinary tedium. The social impact of widespread adoption of assembly line manufacturing and its effective lowering of the price of consumer goods would be incalculable. Ford is often credited with creating consumer culture.

The Richmond plant's period of productivity extended just over two decades. During World War II, when President Roosevelt called a halt to the production of civilian vehicles, the Ford Richmond Plant temporarily became the Richmond Tank Depot, a military manufacturing plant operated by Ford Motor Company under contract to the U.S. Army Ordnance Department. From 1942 – 1945, Richmond produced jeeps and finished tanks for overseas shipment. After the War, the plant reconverted to civilian production, which continued until Richmond ceased operation as a Ford facility in 1955.

Merce Cunningham was 12 years old at the time the Richmond plant opened. He had already begun his formal training in dance, which would lead him within a few years's time from his hometown in Washington to New York, into the company of Martha Graham, and eventually to the founding of his own company in 1953. During this time, Cunningham met John Cage, who became his long-time collaborator and partner, from the occasion of Cunningham's first solo concert in New York, in 1944, until Cage's death nearly fifty years later. Although their points of reference were formulas for determining chance operations derived from the *I Ching* and the autonomist procedures of the avant garde artists, Cage and Cunningham, like Ford, were interested in the systematic control of movement through time and space. That is, *logistics*.

In 2004, a private developer purchased the Richmond plant building from a city redevelopment agency. Since then, Ford's former factory has served mostly as office space for an assortment of companies, including a manufacturer of solar panels, which now populate the roof of the building. The surrounding land is a park designated in honor of Rosie the Riveter, as women comprised a considerable portion of the Richmond plant's wartime workforce. Kahn's craneway is now transformed into an event venue. The expansive former factory space with magnificent waterfront views built on some of the most coveted real estate in the country is now available to rent for performances, trade shows, weddings, and various other, short-term uses.

In 2008, Ford Motor Company experienced the most significant losses in its history, and by early 2009, teetered on the brink of dissolution, like the other two of the so-called "Big Three" American automotive manufacturers. All together, Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler have closed 22 major domestic plants since 2004. This year, divisions of Ford were sold off, an additional measure to supplement the company's previous plan to eliminate 25% of its workforce and close 14 facilities by 2012. Representative Thaddeus McCotter of Michigan was recently quoted as saying, "The plants, whether they're still standing or reoccupied, are always going to be a haunting reminder of what we were, what we've gone through, and where we still need to go."

Late last year, November 2008, Tacita Dean produced a 16mm film in the craneway over a four-day period as Merce Cunningham and his dancers rehearsed for a performance to take place there. Dean's 108-minute *Craneway Event* is as attentive to the surroundings glimpsed through the windows of the craneway as to the choreographer and his dancers moving within it. In fact, the waning sun is a far more explicit presence in Dean's film than the back story of automotive manufacturing recorded at Richmond over the preceding decades. In Dean's words, "It was stunning light." Yet, in *Craneway Event*, as in the architectural shell of the retired Richmond plant recently rechristened Ford Point, the production system Ford created resonates clearly, particularly in certain movements of Cunningham's dancers — from the orderly way they file into the space at the beginning of the film, positioning themselves at regular intervals along the steel supports of the south-facing wall, to the occasionally brutal turning and stomping of the dance that brings to mind the workings of both gears and pistons. And, not to mention the complex, sometimes fraught relationship between bodies and technology which repeatedly factored in Cunningham's work, as in Ford's.

In *Craneway Event*, Cunningham's dancers are seen moving throughout the vast craneway, across three stages, while Cunningham observes from a wheelchair, noting adjustments to be made to the dancers's positions and orientations. The dancers's bodies take the place of the auto parts and assemblies that formerly passed through the craneway on their way to becoming Fords. Only the choreographer remains relatively static, as the plant's line workers once did, while his company moves around him.

*Craneway Event* is a quiet film, and its pace is concentrated. Cunningham's dancers rehearse at Richmond without musical accompaniment. They count time. The ambient sound of boats and birds, dancers's footsteps and the occasional verbal direction given by Cunningham or Trevor Carlson, the executive director of Cunningham's company, are the only soundtrack. The film's sound was recorded on magnetic tape, a separate reel from the image stock, and the two remained physically distinct during editing — a fitting, if coincidental, analogue to the independent roles Cage and Cunningham conceived for movement and sound in performance. Dean edited the seventeen hours of footage she filmed in Richmond by hand, at a cutting table. In her completed film, any fraction of footage might resemble another, in terms of narrative content, but the sum experience of watching Cunningham and his company in the craneway during what seems to be a single, endless sunset would be impossible to convey in the shorthand documentation of clips and stills. The cumulative effect of *Craneway Event*'s one hour and 48 minutes is of time suspended, paradoxically, while bodies move.

Dean's *Craneway Event* premiered in New York last week as part of Performa, at St. Mark's Church on the Bowery, exactly one year since Cunningham and his dancers occupied what was once one of Ford's largest branch assembly plants. In Richmond, a factory had been converted into a stage. For the screenings in New York, a church was temporarily converted into a cinema. Connecting this spectrum of secular cathedrals, the concurrence of Dean's *Craneway Event* with the Ford Motor Company's near-demise added to the sense of requiem already implicit in the film, the final in a decades-long series of Cunningham's collaborations. (AK) ■

*Ford Richmond Plant, Richmond, California, c. 1935*

*Part 5: Headless Body, Topless Bar*

# LOOKING FOR MALE BLUE JEANS BLACK JACKET

Bowery and grand / Navy blue jacket blue jeans blue and white sweater / White sweater / Bowery and Grand / Headed for the airport / Twenty third street one and two / Seven five thirty eighty three / Five three / Ten four / West forty six twenty five / South bound one oh five / Seven one one / Might be occupied in an elevator / Three ten east 14th between second and first / One two oh / We have an unconfirmed EDP at two five eight York avenue / Ten four / One oh one / South bound VOP has been reopened / West lane of the north bound VOP will be open in about two seconds / Ten four / three oh seven / Bowery and Grand / Did you get the make of the vehicle? / A red car / Two cars / A red car / One oh three oh four / Seventy five directed two four two Broadway / Ten four / One oh three ninety four / Suspicious suitcase / Twenty eight fifty two Broadway / Blue suitcase leaning against the wall / Confirm the address / Two eight five two Broadway between Parkway and West one eleventh street unconfirmed / Nine thirty two / Seven nine we have an unconfirmed at nine thirty two Myrtle no further / One two three we have an unconfirmed EDP at one eighty three alley lane / One oh four oh eight one oh four oh eight / Two zero six / I am going to be back and two oh eight is going to be straight up for the remainder / Ten four / We have an eighteen month old / One four four apartment six / One hundred eighteen one hundred eighteen / We have an eighteen month old having trouble breathing with candy stuck in her throat / Thirty to one oh one / Looking for male blue jeans black jacket five nine on the downtown C line / Forty five / We have unconfirmed shots fired / One oh seven / Male assaulted / Black jacket blue jeans / I have nothing further at this time / Ten four / Attempted robbery / Male assaulted bleeding from his face / End of the bridge closest to Manhattan on the Staten Island side / One oh five seven five / Attempted robbery male bleeding from the face / Southbound platform / Two zero six / East bound / Stay to the right / Two oh one / Your phone dead / Yeah you hear me / Don't worry about that / East eighth street unconfirmed / Northbound / Sixth avenue at west fourth street / Unconfirmed / Nitrogen gas / Unconfirmed suspicious package / Nitrogen tank / Copy that / You need the numbers / Ten four / The first one was a suspicious package at Sixth Avenue and West Fourth street and the second was a nitrogen tank Liberty street / Ten seventy five Rockaway / Two shots heard / Unconfirmed / Shots fired / Shots heard / Unconfirmed alarm at Citibank / Eighth avenue and west fourth street / One ninety eight / Cancellation in regards to the unconfirmed EDP missing / Cooper street / West bound / We have a man sitting on the shoulder with a flat tire / Unconfirmed EDP / Male seventeen years old locked in the bathroom with scissors / Unconfirmed suspicious package / Red SUV / Emergency service / Fifty four rescue male fell down an elevator shaft / Two shots fired unconfirmed / One one zero three one

Luigi Sono, Compline, November 12 (PE) ■

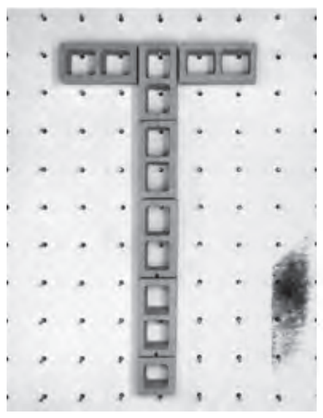
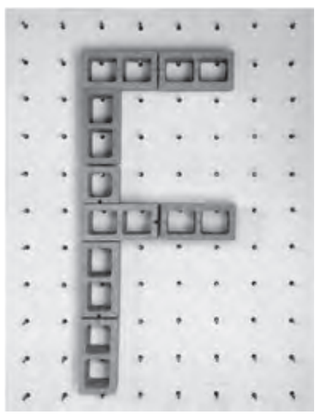
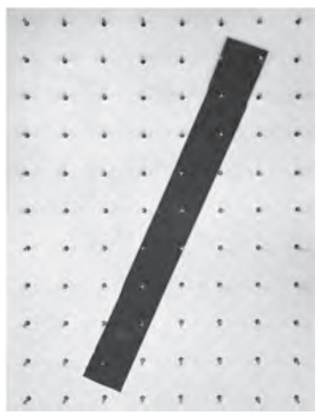
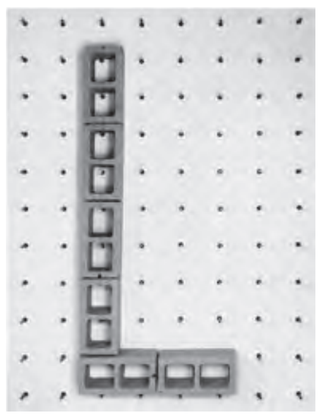
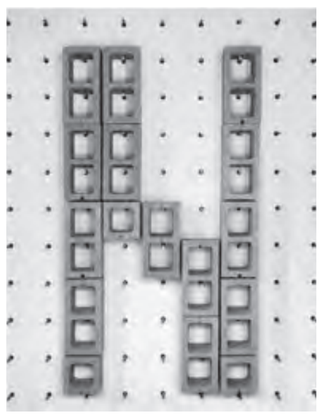

THESE FORMS are arranged in a straightforward orderly way, the effect of which is to encourage an orderly habit of thought in the minds of those using them.

The fifth First/Last Newspaper was assembled by DEXTER SINISTER with contributions by Steve Rushton, Angie Keefer, Rob Giampietro, Francis McKee, Will Holder, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Paul Elliman, Tom McCarthy, Tamara Shopsin, Walead Beshty, John Russell, Sarah Gephart, R.O. Blechman, Nicholas Blechman, Snowden Snowden, Mark Beastley, and David Shrigley. Produced with the assistance of Brendan Dalton and Anne Callahan. Presented under the umbrella of PERFORMA 09 and in partnership with Times Square Alliance. Edited in cooperation with Defne Ayas and Virginie Bobin.

Masthead set in Strike Alphabet courtesy Shannon Ebner.

Performa, a non-profit multidisciplinary arts organization established by RoseLee Goldberg in 2004, is dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth century art and to encouraging new directions in performance for the twenty-first century.

PERFORMA 09

THE FIRST/LAST NEWSPAPER

PORT AUTHORITY, 641 8th Avenue, New York City, NY 10036 21 NOVEMBER 2009

Dexter Sinister

# PRIOR TEMPORAL LOGIC, TIRED

PORT AUTHORITY — "Take the statement 'I am tired,' for example. While its meaning does not change, it is sometimes true and sometimes less so, and a person acts differently depending on the extent of tiredness — going to bed versus going on a hike."

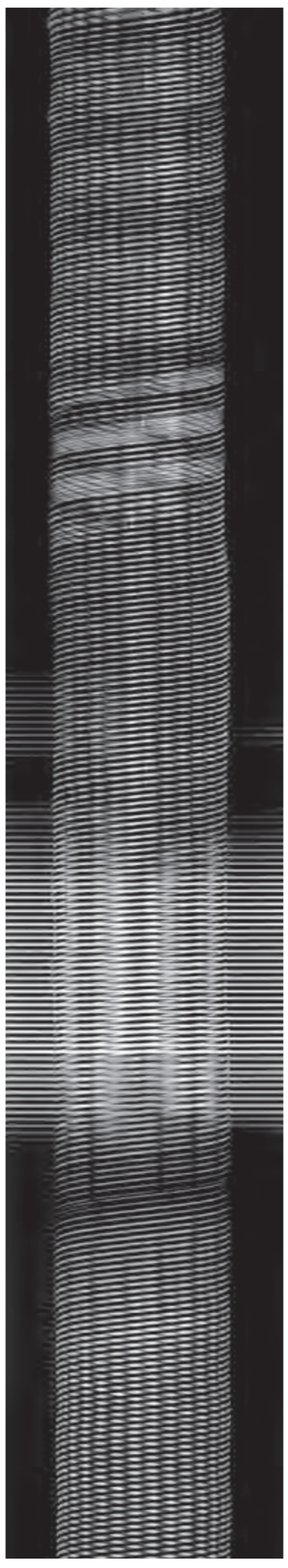
This example of Temporal Logic is borrowed from last Sunday's *New York Times* obituary of computer scientist / philosopher Amir Pneuli. Temporal Logic is a formal system of logical reasoning used to evaluate statements whose truth changes over time. Dr. Pneuli did not invent this branch of logic, but he was the first to apply it to the operation of computer systems, with his fundamental 1977 paper, "The Temporal Logic of Programs."

Before Dr. Pneuli, self-taught Oxford professor Arthur Norman Prior rigorously articulated Temporal Logic and gave the subject its name. Of course, the multi-part problem of truth as it varies over time sits at the root of the basic philosophical problems of determinism and free will. However, Prior's Temporal Logic specifically distills the fundamental concepts of a truth which is negotiated over time into a mathematically rigorous logical language whose formality and abstraction allows it to address an infinitely wide scope of truth claims, and to remain specific in its conclusions.

Prior built his temporal logic on the work of nineteenth-century philosopher-mathematician Charles Sanders Pierce. Pierce, who also coined the philosophically-proper term "Pragmatism," argued for a logic which makes accommodation for the changing truth of a statement over time. As within the wider scope of Pragmatism, Pierce argued that truth must be determined fully contingent on the present situation and that truth is actually *produced* by this negotiation, or "back and forth with the world."

When he started teaching logic at Canterbury University and publishing his work, Prior knew only modest mathematics and was almost entirely self-taught in logic. He published his first logic paper at age 38, a remarkably late debut in mathematics where the best thinking is said to be all done by age 28. Prior published his seminal book fully articulating Temporal Logic just two years before his death — *Past, Present, Future* (1967).

The practical value of Prior's Temporal Logic is being able to speak concretely, precisely, of the past, present, and future at the same time — at the only time that it is ever possible to actually bring an idea into the world — the (continuous) present. I am tired. I have been tired. I will be tired. I have already been tired. I will probably not always be tired. Then, to bed, for now. (DS) ■



*Gareth Spor's Dreammachine at 45 rpm as described by HP Scanjet G3110 at 600 dpi. Photograph by Walead Beshty*

# REMINGTON LAUNCHES GHOSTWRITER

HARTFORD, CT — Shortly after buying his Remington Model 1 typewriter, Mark Twain dashed a letter off to his brother in 1875. In his note, he seems equal parts addled and satisfied with his new purchase:

"I am trying to get the hang of this new fangled writing machine, but am not making a shining success of it. [ . . . ] I believe it will print faster than I can write. One may lean back in his chair & work it. It piles an awful stack of words on one page. It don't muss things or scatter ink blots around. Of course it saves paper."

Knowing they had a notable writer for a customer, Remington's salespeople contacted Twain to see if he'd vouch publicly for their Remington Model 2, which he'd purchased as soon as it was released. In a typed note of all caps he declined, signing off not as Twain, but with his given name, Samuel Clemens:

"Please do not use my name in any way. Please do not even divulge the fact that I own a machine. I have entirely stopped using the Type-Writer, for the reason that I never could write a letter with it to anybody without receiving a request by return mail that I would not only describe the machine but state what progress I had made in the use of it, etc., etc. I don't like to write letters, so I don't want people to know that I own this curiosity breeding little joker. Yours truly, Saml. L. Clemens."

It's easy to speculate as to why Twain might've signed his note as Clemens. He routinely signed "Sam" to friends and used Clemens both in business and for personal notes. Perhaps he didn't want his more famous pen name used in any way with Remington's products, so he refused to even sign it. But it also seems at least a little bit possible that when he wrote as Twain, Clemens felt he had a kind of creative power he did not possess as Clemens alone, but that when he wrote with the Remington it had a kind of power over him, and even over Twain, that made them both uncomfortable, even anxious. "Mark Twain" started out not as a given name but as a sailor's pseudonym. Before that it was a sailor's call — "mark twain!" — meaning the river's depth was two fathoms (12 feet) deep, and the boat could navigate its passage safely. When Clemens selected Mark Twain, he selected not only the name of a storyteller but the sign of a technician, who, with this piece of information, could signal the crew that the ship was in control and could be guided safely down its course.

Cybernetics, which is the study of communication and control between humans and machines, takes its name from the Greek "kybernetes," who is the oarsman, pilot, or rudder: the one who can skillfully bring a boat to port. Clemens's pseudonym, Twain, was another name for the author himself. But, according to his letters, his typewriter often behaved as an allonym — a ghostwriter. While the pen name Twain helped to put Clemens in control of the writing process, the Remington's ghostwriter effect counteracted that control, placing the invention of text somehow just beyond its operator's reach, or total understanding.

Like Twain, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's experience with his Hansen Writing Ball, a typewriter Nietzsche purchased in 1882 directly from its inventor, seemed somehow beyond his control — even supernatural. Living in Genoa with his eyesight failing, Nietzsche hoped the writing ball would make it easier for him to write away from home, but he arrived to find his machine damaged in transit. The Hansen's already fussy keys only became more difficult in inclement weather. "The typewriter has been unusable since my last card," Nietzsche wrote, "for the weather is dreary and cloudy, that is, humid: then each time the ribbon is also wet and sticky, so that every key gets stuck, and the writing cannot be seen at all." The typewriter, which was meant to free Nietzsche from his pen and make it easier for him to write, had left him blocked. No longer in control of his own output, Nietzche's productivity would now rise and fall with the barometer. By 1882, he'd pounded out a well-known poem, which reads, "The Writing Ball is a thing like me: of iron / Yet twisted easily — especially on journeys. / Patience and tact must be had in abundance / As well as fine [little] fingers to use it." As Professor Friedrich Kittler points out in his study *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, in Nietzsche's poem, "three moments of writing coincide: the equipment, the thing, and the agent. An author, however, does not appear [ . . . ] Our writing tool not only works on our thoughts, it 'is a thing like me.' "

Nietzsche would soon give up his typewriter, but he would never dismiss it entirely. In one of his last typewritten letters, he observes, "This machine is delicate as a little dog and causes a lot of trouble — and provides some entertainment. Now all my friends have to do is invent a reading machine: otherwise I will fall behind myself and won't be able to supply myself with sufficient intellectual nourishment." Nietzsche feared his own typewriter might outproduce him. Its mechanistic drive to produce text faster than its owner could read it harkens back to the scene that Twain described previously, when he was first entranced by the typewriter in the shop. Fifty-seven words a minute! If only he could write that fast. But recall that the salesgirl who'd impressed Twain had a trick: she always typed the same text, over and over and over again. In Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, in a touchstone image of typewriter-as-ghostwriter, the ceaselessly repeated typescript reappears as Wendy discovers that her husband Jack's novel isn't a novel at all. Instead, he has typed "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" on sheet after endless sheet. Jack isn't using his Adler typewriter; the Adler is using him. Realizing her husband has lost his mind, Wendy's face pales, terrified.

Kubrick's film is fictional, but cautionary. Kittler, too, tells of a 1941 detective play by Jean Cocteau called *La Machine à écrire* (*The Typewriter*) involving "an unknown woman who has been tormenting her community with anonymous typewritten letters." Kittler continues, "[the detective] 'imagines the culprit at work at her typewriter, aiming and operating her machine gun.' Typewriters are simply 'fast,' not just 'like Jazz' [ . . . ] but also like rapid-fire weapons." When Cocteau's antiheroine finally confesses, she explains, "I wanted to attack the whole city. [ . . . ] I wanted to stir that muck, attack and reveal it. It was like a hoax! Without accounting for myself, I chose the dirtiest and cheapest of all weapons, the typewriter." She terrorizes the city with the stroke of a key.

A vividly real and far more terrorizing letter from an anonymous typist was received by *The New York Times* on 26 April 1995. It had been keyed on an old machine later identified as a 1920s-era L.C. Smith-Corona. Enclosed was a lengthy typewritten manifesto that began, "The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race." *The New York Times* shared the letter with the FBI, who explained that it was from a domestic terrorist known as the Unabomber. The letter demanded that the manifesto be published "in *The New York Times*, *Time* or *Newsweek*, or in some other widely read, nationally distributed periodical," and, it promised, "if you can get it published according to our requirements we will permanently desist from terrorist activities." As for the text, its author stipulated that "after six months from the first appearance of the article or book it must become public property, so that anyone can reproduce or publish it." Also: "because of its length, we suppose it will have to be serialized."

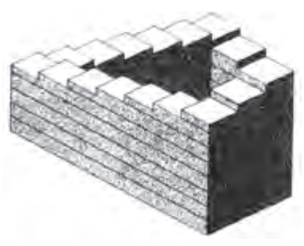
*The Washington Post* instead opted to print the text whole as a four-page supplement that September. It would prove to be the Unabomber's undoing. The following April, authorities raided the one-room cabin of a former UC Berkeley professor named Theodore Kaczynski, whose brother had called in a tip that Kaczynski's writings reminded him the Unabomber's. By the time they finished their search, they'd found the smoking gun: amidst firearms, handmade bombs, and various disguises, sitting on a desk littered with carbon copies of the letters and manifesto, was the Smith-Corona. (RG) ■

CAPTION CARTOON CONTEST

(CA) *"What a misunderstanding!"*

# HEY MANHATTAN

One five three five / For your information battalion one is requesting Hazmat / One five three seven / Ten four / Battalion one / Five people on the boat / Hazmat battalion / Thank you Manhattan / Ten calling Hazmat battalion / Go ahead Manhattan / Can you confirm with the first battalion if the Ellis Island ferry is docked on the Manhattan side / I was unable to contact a representative from the New Jersey police / Ten four / Hazmat battalion was unable to reach anyone on the Jersey side / Ten four / First battalion / We are in touch with the New Jersey side / We are going to let everyone off the boat / Hazmat battalion / Ten four / Negative for Jersey authorities / We are letting people off the boat / Battalion one / Hazmat one / Hey Manhattan / Subway near the Atlantic wall / Unknown / They say they have a unit on the scene / ten four / One five one four / Can you call it city wide / City wide one five seven oh / Fire apartment on eddy / Reporting a fire apartment 1A / Battalion two seven / Two seven / We are going to leave it at four two for your response / Forty two we just got a phone call from transit that you were holding up a train, is that correct / We had to momentarily, but it's long gone / Forty two thank you / Battalion two / One five four nine Manhattan / Ten four / Wheel chair bound occupant needing to get up too / Automatic alarm in a private dwelling / It's been out for a few minutes already / Ten four / No injury no EMS needed / Ten four / Division one five / Sixteen hundred hours / Construction fire between avenue X and T - Tom / Reporting a fire on the fourth floor / Brooklyn battalion three eight / Four nine seven fire on the fourth floor / Isolated wings floors number A B C D vents on roof / South side exposure / One six oh five dispatching one oh seven / Ten twenty box three nine oh / One six oh six / Dispatching two oh seven / Ten four on way / Standby / One five six / Three eight six / Ten four will notify / One four four / Central alarm company who called this in / One six oh eight dispatch two oh seven / One six oh eight Manhattan / Transformer emergency / Engine one five six/ Ten four / Engine one five six / ConEd has been notified they have a crew responding / Recorded fire on a roof of a multiple dwelling / One six one three / EMS Kennedy bridge unknown direction for an auto accident / Calling battalion four nine / One six one five Manhattan / Ten four / One six one seven hours / Apartment four D occupant just arrived home there was a water leak we shut it down / Two six three / Heading into Manhattan reported motor vehicle accident / Let me know if you see anything going in / One six two one five five / Four nine to Manhattan / ten thirty six It's going to be a code three / Box three one / Smoke coming from a building on the corner / Battalion two two / Ten four / Incident going eastbound / One six three / Ten four / Grand central eastbound / Engine two six three / Battalion four five / Ten four / Bus fire / Engine two eight two / Six nine / Battalion two oh seven / One six two nine oh Luigi Sono, None (Ninth Hour), November 14 (PE) ■



A Reconsideration of the Newspaper Industry in 5 Easy Allusions (5): *Does this lead somewhere or lead nowhere? Is it a loop or a cycle? Or both, or neither?*

# MUCH FUSSED OVER PUSSY

EVERYWHERE, NOWHERE — It's easy to imagine today's newspaper office like the opening scene to a zombie film: pairs of eyes that look like they were purchased in junk shops and white shirts in pork-pie hats buffeting their own brains. Newspapermen used to ask the questions, but a hemophiliac economic model has made the reporter the reported, an internal investigator who fact-checks his own demise and cashes in his office hours with a self-administered proctology exam. Like the MTA, the micro-refinement of this rot is in constant rotation and maintenance. Is this circulation asphyxiation more an autopsy than a prognosis? And who is the no-man we are most afraid of leaving behind — the pulpy medium, the grimy journalist, or the language itself?

When the business model changed, so did the news. On September 3, 1833, twenty-three-year-old publisher Benjamin Day launched the American newspaper as the industry it is today. Undercutting his competitors by a fifth, he sold his *New York Sun* for just a penny. The paper was funded by advertisers, not subscribers, and sold on the street; it no longer catered only to the Eustace Tilleys, but to those just beginning to fumble with words.

The bargain paper found a salesman in Bernard Flaherty, hired as the first newspaper boy. This single double-helix atomized an archetype of a loud-mouth little middle man and revolutionized not only the way information circulated but the way it was editorialized. Uneducated but not un-newsed, the newsboy memorized the morning paper like a proverb and broadcast it like a transmitter. Fed on commission, these newsies sold headlines as front row seats to the world's greatest drama. Plot trumped Fact, and the headlines became the high blood pressure entertainment narcotics we equate with current page-six ecology. Editorial instincts pursued this new sensational imperative and resulting increases in readership determined that the penny paper's most accessible emotions were indignation, apocalyptic glee, and rage.

Beginning in 1913, theologian Mordecai Kaplan, a Lithuanian immigrant, began recording the harmless data of his existence. He indexed and filed away the very air he breathed. Despite his American following, Kaplan suffered from an acute anxiety of presence. Consumed by the prospect of his religious influence outlasting his physical life, his fanatical scrawling engaged an unrelenting desire to create permanence. For the next twenty-one years, he assembled a material echo of self, an archive of journals eventually comprising a personal Encyclopedia of Man.

But isn't the act of recording, as well as the record itself, about becoming rather than being? When a newspaper editor in New York asked who was going to write Kaplan's obituary, a staff writer responded, "Kaplan already did."

Obituaries are irrevocable, but when the newspaper is the corpse, the cat suddenly has nine hundred lives. The newspaper, our much fussed over pussy, began dying in 1765. These first last words were printed as *The Pennsylvania Journal*, suffering from a terminal British Stamp Act, designed the front page like a tombstone, "EXPIRING: In Hopes of a Resurrection to Life again . . . " The editors knew that death, even if it was their own, was a hot commodity.

The anxiety over our newspapers's own extinction leaves us in a rhetorical editorial tailspin, asking impulsive questions that don't welcome answers and feeling like monkeys making faces in the vacuum. Questioning the newspapers's mortality quickly becomes about our sense of civil geography and homeostasis. We are always the observer and the observed. We are always our own headline.

How long could a eulogy last in a twenty-four hour medium? When will our newspaper look funny and antiquated on someone the way suspenders do? When it goes Jurassic, when we are finally looking at it, a little gray postage stamp, in the palm of our hand, what will we say? Where will the knowledge get lost in the obituary, as Kaplan feared? Will the martyrdom give you whiplash? Will the writer be on red alert with the hypertension headlines with which we chase storms and terrorists (a hyperbolic farewell)? Or will he gently ease into a first person retirement speech (a we-had-a-good-run farewell)? Or will he go balls and marbles crazy (a that's-all-folks farewell)? Should "*New York Times* is No Longer Fit For Print" (a tongue in your cheek farewell) be . . . is . . . was . . . will be?

Today, the moon shows signs of water. Militants killed 17 outside a courthouse in Peshawar. A British helicopter with a failed sight system shot itself down over Afghanistan. The temperature is forty-seven. The humidity is eighty-nine. (SS) ■

*How Media Masters Reality #6*

# CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG

TIVOLI, NY — "Feedback is a method of controlling a system by reinserting into it the results of its past performance," according to Norbert Wiener.

In this series of six articles, *How Media Masters Reality*, we've described the media as a feedback loop that collapses the difference between producer and consumer. As users of email and social networking sites or as participants in non-scripted TV shows we work to provide content for formats that are owned by somebody else. At the base of this media ecosystem we generate and trade information, and as we accrue it — lots of friends on Facebook, lots of photos on Flickr, a massive list of email addresses — we use it to heighten our visibility and increase our value as self-performing commodities. Although celebrities float at the top of the information economy's celestial canopy, they are constituted as media subjects by the same stuff as you and me — bits of information feeding back through the system.

Although scripted forms of entertainment remain dominant, non-scripted TV is gaining ground during primetime. This is partly because non-scripted TV is simply cheap to produce, but also because it constructs a narrative about TV production that the medium feeds back into itself. In this new narrative, you the viewer are the central character and, if you work hard enough, you get a speaking part. And why fill the screen with aboveboard Colgate-clean actors when the screen time can be filled with someone more or less like you and me?

The non-scripted TV show doesn't only give us the opportunity to perform, it also provides us with the means to assess, test, and judge people more or less like ourselves — and to be assessed, tested, and judged by people more or less like ourselves. The feedback between watching and doing constitutes a pan-media surveillance system in which we police ourselves, and in which we translate the duties and obligations that are thrust upon us (to be always "on," to be conspicuously visible, to be incredibly busy, to acquiesce to the judgement of our peers) into choices . . . into *freedom*. So "freedom of information" translates into us all giving things away for free — our talents as performers, as programmers, as content providers.

It's easy to forget how old the idea of the audience as commodity is. We should have seen it coming. In 1975, the same year that Ant Farm mounted their spectacular anti-media offensive, B. Livant wrote: "Virtually everyone is organized into the complex tapestry of these audiences, whose underlying priorities we are just beginning to understand. For one thing, the production, destruction, division, and recombination of audiences is a vast and turbulent motion. For another, the Audience Commodity is a multipurpose capacity. It is the other side of labor power that Marx discovered in the production of commodities-in-general, and it is Protean in its capacities. The first great form of the organization of this commodity [is] the Audience Commodity as a market. This form emerged first historically and with the greatest clarity in the United States . . . This form is the first, but not the last."

Although the grandiloquence of this text speaks of a bygone time, it nevertheless proposes an understanding of media which classic Marxist media critique failed to fully recognize. Dallas W. Smythe takes up the story, pointing out that the only time we're not productive is when we're asleep, because our waking time is itself sold as a commodity to advertisers. Audience production is the material connection between advertisers and content providers — audiences are as much commodities as TV sets and cars. The difference is that you can't sell a car to a TV set but you can sell an audience to an audience.

The end product of the media machine, therefore, is not the passive consumer living in a relationship of "bad faith" with the products they consume, because in the post-mass media world there is no endpoint, as the producer-consumer feeds back production in the form of content in the form of participation. The spectacle doesn't alienate us from the real and make us passive; it unremittingly seeks to involve us, requiring us to test ourselves, measure ourselves, retain visibility as a self-performing commodity. This excitation is fed back through the system and comes out as the narrative of the hard-working, self-reliant, independent, efficient, networked individual.

For optimists, the shift to self-performance — the demand to be as visible as possible — affords new opportunities for freedom, as new technological devices give access to more information and to new modes of social interaction. In this reading, we are caught in a virtuous feedback loop in which desire can be expressed and fulfilled, and in which technology will ultimately take care of the inequalities in the world. But we've heard all this before. Every technological innovation comes with the promise of greater personal freedom and social equality. The chemical technology of drugs turned the hippies on to a communal future that ended in ruins. The technologies of community radio stations and video collectives sporting Portapaks and satellite dishes promised a future where, once again, technology would help to build a cozy global village. And the dream was revived yet again when Howard Rheingold announced the "virtual community," a new "Jeffersonian democracy" of cybernetic free expression.

So we come to the stage where, to be part of the virtual community, we are entreated at every turn to have our say. But who wants to listen to my opinion on Britney's mental stability, Kirstie's waistline, Barack's Middle East strategy . . . and you know what I think of global warming? I hate it!

Anyone who would value my ill-informed opinion on these matters already understands knowledge to be radically provisional. If the crop circle maker and the flat earther fight with the Pulitzer Prize winner for my attention — and I am called on to evaluate all three — what kind of hierarchy of knowledge production are we dealing with? The "have your say" principle represents the uncoupling of democracy from democratic institutions. It floats freely in a bubble of self-legitimation.

Throughout the twentieth century, "public opinion" was regarded as something to be feared, but it was also understood as something that could be fashioned. The public could be educated in regimes of self-improvement and self-maintenance. The rise of social policies such as the Welfare State and the New Deal corresponded with the rise of the public information documentary, in which knowledge was mediated by *the expert* — the man (always a man) in the white coat. Knowledge was "democratizing" on both sides of the Atlantic, but people had to learn how to learn. As Otto Neurath, the pioneer of public education, put it in the 1933: "We consider our selves the executive agent of the spectators. In order to do this it is necessary to simplify and eliminate things, he who makes the better choice will be the better pedagogue." Everything from education to inoculation was championed. In the U.S., the role of information provision was soon taken over by major corporations, and as the Cold War got hotter, the same techniques were applied to civil defense media.

As far as factual, instructive documentary is concerned, our current position is ambiguous. While these days we reflexively tend to suspect some form of "propaganda" at play, we're also comforted by the worldview presented by such as the Discovery Channel and National Geographic. There's nothing as reassuring as a matter of fact clearly conveyed.

Perhaps these six installments of *How Media Masters Reality* have painted a bleak picture of us as lab rats in our own experiment — or maybe something like a post-mass media Hieronymus Bosch painting in which the damned labor on the eternal work of being watched. But once we gain knowledge of how media masters reality, we might begin to work out ways of finding our freedom within it. French philosopher Michel Foucault was once asked: If we are socially constructed, is conscious change possible? Foucault turned the question on its head. We actually don't realize how free we are, there are more freedoms than the horizon of the humanist tradition can show us, and the one thing we can learn from the development of human thought is that change is inevitable. (SR) ■

*How Media Masters Reality* was informed by many sources, including: Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched*; Richard Barbrook & Andy Cameron, *The California Ideology*; Jack Z. Bratich, *Conspiracy Panics, Political Rationality and Popular Culture*; Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*; John Conner, *Performing the Real: Documentary Diversions (with Afterword)*; Daniel Dayan & Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*; Gilles Deleuze, *Postscript on Control Societies*; Rod Dickinson & Steve Rushton, *Who, What, Where, When, Why & How*; Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France 1973–1974* and *Technologies of the Self*; Peter Galison, *The Ontology of the Enemy: Norbert Wiener and the Cybernetic Vision*; Katerine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer* and *How We Became Postmodern*; Alison Hern, *Hoax-ing the Real*; David Joselit, *Feedback: Television Against Democracy*; Constance M. Lewallen & Steve Said, *Ant Farm 1968–1978*; Sven Lütticken, *An Arena in Which to Re-enact*; Ted Magder, *Television 2.0: The Business of American Television in Transition*; Rux Martin, *Truth, Power, Self*; Michael Massing, *A New Horizon for the News* and *The News About the Internet*, No 14 and 15, volume 1.1, NYRB; Anna McCarthy, *Stanley Milgram, Allen Funt & Me*; Patricia Mellencamp, *Video Politics: Guerrilla TV, Ant Farm, Eternal Frame*; Laurie Ouellette, *"Take Responsibility for Yourself": Judge Judy and the Neo-liberal Citizen*; Susan Murry & Laurie Ouellette (eds.), *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*; Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*; Felicity D. Scott, *Living Archive 7: Ant Farm; Allegorical Time Warp: The Media Fallout of July 21, 1969*; Richard Serra, *Television Delivers People*; Michael Shamberg, *Guerrilla Television*; Dallas W. Smythe, *On the Audience Commodity*; Ted Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*; Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: or, Control and Communication in the Animal and Machine* and *God and Golem, Inc.*

$0 \div 0 \longrightarrow 0$

CHICAGO — If you've read newspapers regularly for the past two decades, probably you encountered higher mathematics once: when Andrew Wiles proved Fermat's Last Theorem in 1994. Maybe you paid enough attention to notice when the Poincaré Conjecture was confirmed in 2006. If you haven't encountered anything else on math, it's not your fault — zero divided by anything is still zero. Why isn't there popular-press coverage of mathematics?

BECAUSE IT'S TOO OBSCURE. An unspoken premise here is that the press doesn't cover obscure things. Take as a simple counterexample the *New York Times* article of October 29 titled "7.3 Billion Light-Years Later, Einstein's Theory Prevails," which includes this sentence: "Some theorists have suggested that space on very small scales has a granular structure that would speed some light waves faster than others — in short, that relativity could break down on the smallest scales."

BECAUSE IT'S TOO DIFFICULT. Difficult things make the paper every day: healthcare reform, complex political scandals, explaining the financial crash, and, as was already mentioned, science. It's the job of the journalist to simplify complicated topics by prioritizing the information she collects and finding clear ways to express it. In journalism, the reader need not understand everything about the topic on a visceral level — hard-news stories are written so that a reader who quits reading in the middle will still have hit the main point. Readers of news first learn the main outline and why it's important, then fill in broad strokes, then smaller details. There's no *a priori* reason why math can't be presented in this model.

BECAUSE IT'S TOO BORING. Boring is in the eye of the benumbed. Scores of readers never open the sports section. Rafts of them never read travel. Masses won't touch religion.

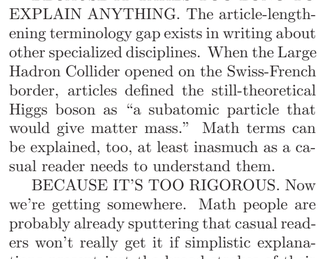
BECAUSE IT DOESN'T TALK ABOUT THE REAL WORLD. Math's real-world applications are no farther afield than science-page darlings like cosmology and string theory.

BECAUSE IT TAKES TOO LONG TO EXPLAIN ANYTHING. The article-lengthening terminology gap exists in writing about other specialized disciplines. When the Large Hadron Collider opened on the Swiss-French border, articles defined the still-theoretical Higgs boson as "a subatomic particle that would give matter mass." Math terms can be explained, too, at least inasmuch as a casual reader needs to understand them.

BECAUSE IT'S TOO RIGOROUS. Now we're getting somewhere. Math people are probably already sputtering that casual readers won't really get it if simplistic explanations present just the broad strokes of their work. Here's the central conflict: *Really getting it isn't the point of journalism.* Math is about rigor. A mathematical statement enters the body of knowledge when it is proved. Journalism is about importance. A story is successful when it imparts the most important pieces of information with the greatest concision.

Science doesn't pose this conflict. The minimization of unavoidable error and weighing of the statistical significance of correlation coefficients don't come from the world of 100 percent certainty. Philosophy suffers as math does — if you can name a philosophy publication other than *On Bullshit* from the past 20 years, gold star.

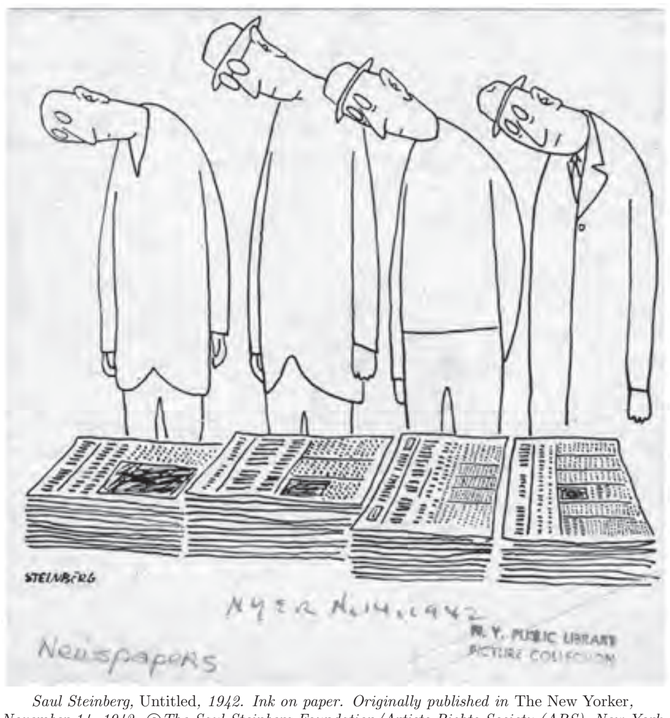
BECAUSE PEOPLE DON'T LIKE IT. People don't like it because they can't wrap their minds around it. They can't wrap their minds around it because no one presents it accessibly. No one presents it accessibly because people don't like it. That's really the essence of it, but geometers would call that argument circular. (GM) ■




"Well that's that cleared up then," said Dick. "Shall we go down the lower road for a walk? We should leave these two to get on and catch up. It's been a while. Coming?"

"K." Anna stood up and began to clear away the bowls and Dick asked if we wanted tea. I gave him a wide-eyed smile. He picked up the board: by now strewn with crusts, rinds and crumbs, and used the bread knife to scrape these together and into the bowl on top of the stack.

All this happened out of eyeshot and the old man stared ahead. As they went out the door onto the outside porch, he spoke loudly through the window, mouthing, "Dick, could you go down to the beach below the old toll house, by the mermaid, on your way back? Ian's down there. You know." Getting up to stop the kettle whistling, he said, "Came down to stay and do a bit of sea fishing. Mackerel come in here really close to the water's edge at this time of year, when the tide's in and the water's calm. Little schools make the water boil. Fancy some for tea?" (WH) ■




*Saul Steinberg,* Untitled, *1942. Ink on paper. Originally published in* The New Yorker, *November 14, 1942.* ©*The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York*

# PATIENCE, FORTITUDE REMAIN LIONS

NEW YORK — The artist Edward Laning is hardly a household name, but to generations of visitors to the New York Public Library's 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue building, his work is as familiar as "Patience" and "Fortitude," the two lions that stand guard outside Manhattan's great repository of knowledge.

Each day, thousands of readers pass Laning's work on their way through the McGraw Rotunda to the library's reading rooms. The Rotunda is home to Laning's most famous work: five painted panels that tell "The Story of the Recorded Word." Nestled between 17-foot high Corinthian walnut pilasters, and beneath a barrel-vaulted ceiling mural — also by Laning, and which depicts the Greek hero Prometheus bringing the flame of knowledge to earth from the heavens, "The Story of the Recorded Word" was commissioned in 1938 by architect, library trustee, and author of *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, and completed in 1942. Employed as an artist by the Works Progress Administration, Laning had already completed a number of large-scale public commissions, including a series of murals at Ellis Island, before he was invited to create this cycle of paintings for the NYPL. Aged just 32 at the time, and an acquaintance of famed left-wing muralist Diego Rivera, Laning's commission reportedly raised eyebrows in some quarters. Yet his quintet of Biblical, historical, and futurological panels is today one of the library's best-known, if idiosyncratic, attractions.

Proceeding chronologically, the first panel, situated on the west wall, shows Moses descending from Mount Sinai bearing the stone tablets on which God has engraved his Ten Commandments. Laning's Moses is muscular and determined, a rock of a man battling tempests and torment — a depiction in debt both to the drama of the Italian baroque, yet also prefiguring Hollywood's spectacular Biblical epics of the 1950s. Laning's Moses is filled with righteous ire; he paints him smashing the tablets in anger at seeing his people worship the golden calf. Here, the recorded word is a symbol of divine power, but also hints at its own future history; according to the story, God later ordered Moses back up the mountain to receive a fresh set of tablets — The Ten Commandments, 2nd edition.

Next to Moses is the second panel, which shows a medieval monk copying an illuminated manuscript. Despite the ostensibly scholarly subject matter, this is no less dramatic than Moses's fury at the Israelites; through the monastery windows we can see the brutal pillaging of a local village — a reminder that these monks guarded the teachings of antiquity through dark and violent times. (It is a little known fact that the manuscript depicted here at the scribe's feet is a copy of the fourteenth-century *Tickhill Psalter*.)

Directly opposite, on the east wall, we see a hopeful-looking Johannes Gutenberg presenting the first proof of his Bible to Adolph of Nassau, the Elector of Mainz. Gutenberg is credited with having invented the printing press and movable type around the middle of the fifteenth century — the technological leap forward that enabled the rapid distribution of information — and a copy of his famous Bible is one of the NYPL's most famous treasures.

From Gutenberg we shoot forward to the late nineteenth century and Ottmar Mergenthaler's Linotype machine, which revolutionized printing, especially in the newspaper industry. In a style that could almost be described as a capitalist version of Socialist Realist painting, Laning depicts Mergenthaler at the keyboard of his Linotype, his brooding gaze turned towards the Brooklyn Bridge in the distance, and a newsboy shouting the latest headlines. In the foreground is Whitelaw Reid, politician and editor of *The New York Tribune*, examining a page printed by the new machine. Reid supported Mergenthaler's development of his invention, and, it is said, christened it the "Linotype."

In the final painting — a freestanding panel affixed to a mahogany- and walnut-veneered trolley that visitors can move around the library — Laning gazes into the future; or rather, what appears to be our present. Unlike its four siblings, the fifth panel is oriented landscape, rather than portrait (partly to allow the painting to be moved easily from room to room), and Laning uses the widescreen format to paint a scene that looks as if it were lifted straight from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* or a Le Corbusier drawing. In the center of the image, we see a young man working at a typewriter. By his side are a notebook and camera, items that suggest he is a reporter. From his typewriter extends a cluster of sleek tubes that shoot from his keyboard into the middle-distance of the left-hand side of the painting. Above the pipes, ranged across hilltops behind which a rosy-fingered dawn is breaking, are a series of buildings — not too dissimilar in style to the Beaux-Arts NYPL itself. Each carries a different national flag: U.S.A., Britain, France. Radio masts crown these buildings, from which — perhaps in homage to RKO's famous logo — concentric circles emanate. In the lower left-quadrant of the panel, we see teams of white-coated technicians attending vast banks of machines housed in grand interiors reminiscent of the McGraw Rotunda. To the right of the young writer, in the immediate foreground, is a woman looking into what appears to be a luminous make-up compact, but is engraved on the outside with the words "Daily News." Next to her, a group of school children are seen carrying leather satchels that one or two in the group also appear to be using as exercise books. Behind them, factory workers in a canteen read from a giant screen while they eat. But all is not necessarily well in Laning's future of the recorded word: older, white-bearded men guard vast stacks of books from a marauding crowd, as printing presses are fed into smelting furnaces. The sky behind them has turned from beautiful dawn into an abstract, Kandinsky-esque spectrum of color.

Many, including Laning's patrons, dismissed the fifth panel as left-wing subversion or, contemptuously, as "modern art." Despite the efforts of a small group of Laning supporters, who, each year on Laning's birthday, wheel the panel from the empty corridor to which it has been banished back into the Rotunda for all to see, the final installment in his "Story of the Recorded Word" remains neglected. Yet to our contemporary eyes the fifth panel now seems urgent and vibrant, perhaps vindicating Laning's assertion, in a *Life* magazine article from September 1940, that, "My murals don't condescend to people. What I am trying to do is paint pictures that are sensuous, alive, and real." (DF) ■

# 20 QUESTIONS INVERTED

NEW YORK — Two years ago, on March 25, while on the way to a barbeque in Topenga Canyon, I foresaw my own death. I had been visiting Los Angeles for a week. Naturally, I was spending a great deal of time in cars. As my friend and I drove up the two-lane Topenga Canyon Road in his converted diesel that afternoon, we approached a sharp curve, with a grassy embankment to our right and a drop-off of several hundred feet to our left. Out of the corner of my left eye, I noticed then that the white sedan speeding downhill in the oncoming lane was moving too quickly to hold the curve. I registered instantly that the vehicle was, in fact, out of control. I registered instantly that, given our current trajectory and the white sedan's current trajectory, a head-on collision was, in fact, imminent. My friend, the driver, saw the same future and automatically reached for me with his right hand to brace against the impact. Then, something strange happened. Time slowed down. To a crawl. Almost a halt. During the second in which I registered what was about to occur, I had the very clear and emotionally unremarkable realization that this would be the end of my life. I surveyed the scene. Magic hour. The sun was setting. I had no further thoughts, no analysis, no plan, but suddenly I could see every color, every distant tree leaf in ultra-vivid detail. Not that anything seemed sudden. I watched as the front end of my friend's car passed ever so slowly through the back end of the white sedan. With my view of the white car partially obstructed by the hood of my friend's car, I couldn't see the other car's rear bumper until it emerged again on my right, following its front end directly into the embankment. We had cleared the sedan by a hair. As we skidded to a stop on the gravel shoulder, time sped up again. We dashed from our car to the embankment where four teenage girls in bikini tops and shorts emerged from the wrecked sedan, dazed, but unscathed. Minutes later, as the shock settled, my friend and I returned to the diesel. We continued on our drive. He assured me repeatedly that "It wasn't our time," but for the next few hours, I couldn't shake the thought that I might be dead. My sense of sight remained unusually acute for at least two weeks following the episode. Back in New York, I was sometimes overwhelmed, emotionally, by my awareness of too much color, too much detail. I couldn't concentrate with my eyes open.

Over the past two years, I've thought only rarely about this experience of time made elastic, then stretched and suspended. I set it aside as a curious anomaly, as unlikely to recur, as to be adequately addressed by science, or even believed by any audience with whom I hadn't already established considerable credibility. Then, two weeks ago, Walter Murch — amateur astronomer, polymath, sage, pioneering sound and image editor of cinematic benchmarks including *The Conversation* and *Apocalypse Now*, and author of a book about blinking — explained the exact phenomenon I had experienced during an interview he gave in New York while in town to present some of his astronomical findings to a small audience at NYU.

Murch described the perception of slow motion that occurs during extremely heightened emotional states as an effect of a physiological change to one's normal flicker fusion rate, a psychophysical concept that can be compared to a frame-rate in film. At a projection speed of 24 frames per second, most people stop noticing individual images flickering quickly on screen, and perceive smooth motion instead. At fewer frames per second, the film appears to jerk. The film's flicker rate has dropped below the frequency of the typical viewer's flicker fusion threshold. Every species has a specific flicker fusion rate, which differs slightly among individuals. For humans, the rate is approximately 50 milliseconds. This is the frequency at which most people would perceive a strobe light that is flickering on and off to be glowing steadily. In a life-threatening situation, the brain's flicker fusion threshold rises considerably. The eye can perceive sharp detail that would otherwise appear as a blur. Imagine looking at a rapidly rotating propeller and distinguishing individual blades, rather than a single, solid disc of color. The human eye and brain are capable of this degree of visual acuity, but the mental resources required to sustain it are tremendous, and are therefore reserved only for emergency use.

Murch learned much of what he knows about perception in the course of his work as a film editor. He occupies the territory of master auteurs like Stanley Kubrick, whose innovations in the mechanics and technique of their craft parallel the ambition and quality of their productions. He began his career as a sound designer, working on the first features made by his friends Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas, who'd been his classmates at USC film school. While creating sound for Lucas's 1971 science fiction film *THX 1138*, which he co-wrote, Murch discovered that people also have a threshold for distinguishing overlapping sounds. He found that the footsteps of two people in a frame must be synchronized perfectly to the image, but once there are three people, synchronization is irrelevant. The brain does not map with precision three distinct, simultaneous sounds of a similar type. However, different parts of the brain process different types of sound, so additional layers of sound can be distinguished if certain of the sounds are of a categorically different type. After further work as an editor — craft being roughly analogous to laboratory experimentation and empirical observation in Murch's analytical methodology — he eventually arrived at a theory of density and clarity in aural perception which describes sound as a spectrum from encoded (speech) to embodied (music) types, and provides a framework for understanding how layered sound operates (or fails to operate effectively) in film as a function of the left-right duality of the brain, ultimately concluding that "simultaneous density and clarity can only be achieved by a kind of subterfuge."

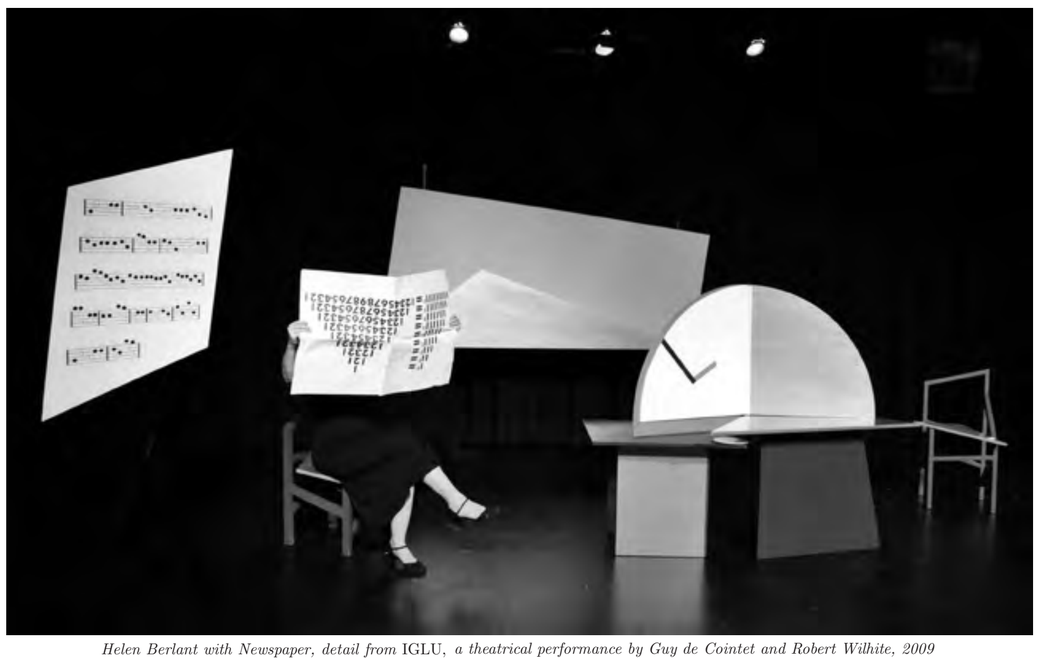
Murch is forthcoming about his process for creating subterfuge. In fact, Murch is generally forthcoming in his knowledge as well as his curiosity, both of which he seems to possess in inordinate supply, directly proportional to his generosity.

When I met Murch at a dinner during his visit to New York, the entire table of guests remained rapt for several hours after the plates were cleared, engrossed by a conversation in which Murch stitched filmmaking to astronomy to studies of human perception to the congruence of the belief systems of Hopi Indians, ancient Greeks and contemporary physicists. At one point, Murch described the inherently complex, collaborative process of filmmaking as a game of Inverse Twenty Questions, a variation on Exquisite Corpse. In the standard version of Twenty Questions, a designated "guesser" leaves the room while the remaining players select an object together. The returning guesser's objective is to identify the chosen object through the course of asking up to twenty questions of the other players. In a game of Inverse Twenty Questions, the players do not concur while the guesser is out of the room. Instead, as the guesser asks each question, all the players continually modify their assumption about what the object might be. Ideally, the entire group of players arrives at an object together, without having initially agreed upon a winning answer. Sometimes, the game simply falls apart.

*The Conversation* was the first feature for which Murch was editor of both sound and image. The 1974 film, directed by Coppola, stars Gene Hackman as an eccentric audio surveillance expert who becomes increasingly entangled in a knot of suspicion and deception surrounding an object of surveillance — a conversation — which he cannot unambiguously interpret. While editing *The Conversation* (which Murch did with very little input from Coppola, who typically refrains from the editing process when working with Murch), he first became aware of the significance of a blink marking the mental transition between discrete thoughts. The basic story is now legendary among film editors. As Murch retold it two weeks ago, he had been up all night, cutting close-ups of Hackman, and had noticed that more often than not the point at which he chose to cut — the point that felt right for the cut — happened to be on a blink. He headed out of the editing room to pick up breakfast in the Bowery district of San Francisco. On his way, he passed by a Christian Science reading room, which happened to have a copy of *The Christian Science Reader* featuring an interview with John Huston, who had just finished making *Fat City*. In the interview, when the subject of editing comes up, Huston directs the interviewer to look back and forth from Huston to a lamp in the room. Huston then points out to the interviewer that he blinked each time he transitioned from one to the other. With each change of view, there is a blink, there is a cut. The blink is a physical punctuation in the thought process, which has its analogue with a cut in a film. Without paying conscious attention to blinks, people nevertheless develop an intuitive understanding of their rhythm as related to the rhythm of thought, so that when one's blinks are out of sync with one's speech or actions, others will feel distrustful. When someone blinks at the wrong moment, especially an actor in a close-up shot, the person will likely be perceived as inauthentic or deceptive. Similarly, when an editor's cuts are off, an overall dissonance is felt in a film. There are expected rhythms in the cognitive order.

In his field, Murch has consistently redrafted the horizon of what is technically possible, often by first patiently illuminating patterns at play in the way things have already been done. Recently, he has been bringing his ingenuity to bear on an amateur interest in astronomy, which he describes as "a rabbit hole he fell down" in between editing films. On October 31, in an upstairs cinema at the NYU Cantor Film Center, Murch appeared at the invitation of Lawrence Weschler to present his current project, an attempt to devise a reliable formula to describe and predict the patterned arrangement of large celestial bodies. To this end, he has been revisiting the long-discredited Bode's Law, which he hopes to rescue from disrepute, pending a few necessary adjustments. Bode's Law is a mathematical formula derived by the German astronomer Johann Titius in 1766, subsequently popularized by the younger, more charismatic Johann Bode in 1768, and later discredited by the extraordinarily credible Johann Gauss, one of the most prolific and influential mathematicians of recent centuries. Bode's Law caught Murch's attention exactly one year ago, when, at the Mauna Kea Observatory in Hawaii, planets were observed for the first time in orbit around HR 8799, a distant star 129 light years away from earth. The position of these planets — scantily named b, c, and d — relative to one another and to their sun corresponds almost exactly to the positions of Earth, Mars, and Ceres, relative to our sun, and also to the positions of Jupiter's moons — Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto — relative to Jupiter, despite their widely incongruous masses. Bode's Law describes all of these and hundreds of other observed orbits accurately. Murch realized that Exoplanetary systems, which Bode could not have observed, are organized in Bodean intervals.

Murch's presentation of his findings began modestly, with a definition of *apophenia*, "the tendency of human beings to seek patterns where none exist," then proceeded systematically through a description of the phenomenon Bode described mathematically, to Gauss's criticisms of Bode's formula, then to the Murch modifications of Bode's Law, which address Gauss's specific objections. Murch arrives at a simplified formula that happens not only to accurately describe the spatial arrangement of large celestial bodies (those greater than 40km in diameter) in a regular, predictable pattern, but also corresponds to just intonation — in other words, Murch has found that the distances between large masses orbiting around the same object in space correspond, proportionately, to the distances between notes in a tonal series. Just intonation also accords with the wave pattern of a ripple, which Murch refers to as the "vibrations of nature." If Murch is correct, space is harmonic. When asked what the implications of a revival of Bode's Law would be, Murch replied simply, "Known laws do not explain why this phenomenon should occur. That's a big deal. Some new explanation will be required." (AK) ■



*Helen Berlant with Newspaper, detail from* IGLU, *a theatrical performance by Guy de Cointet and Robert Wilhite, 2009*

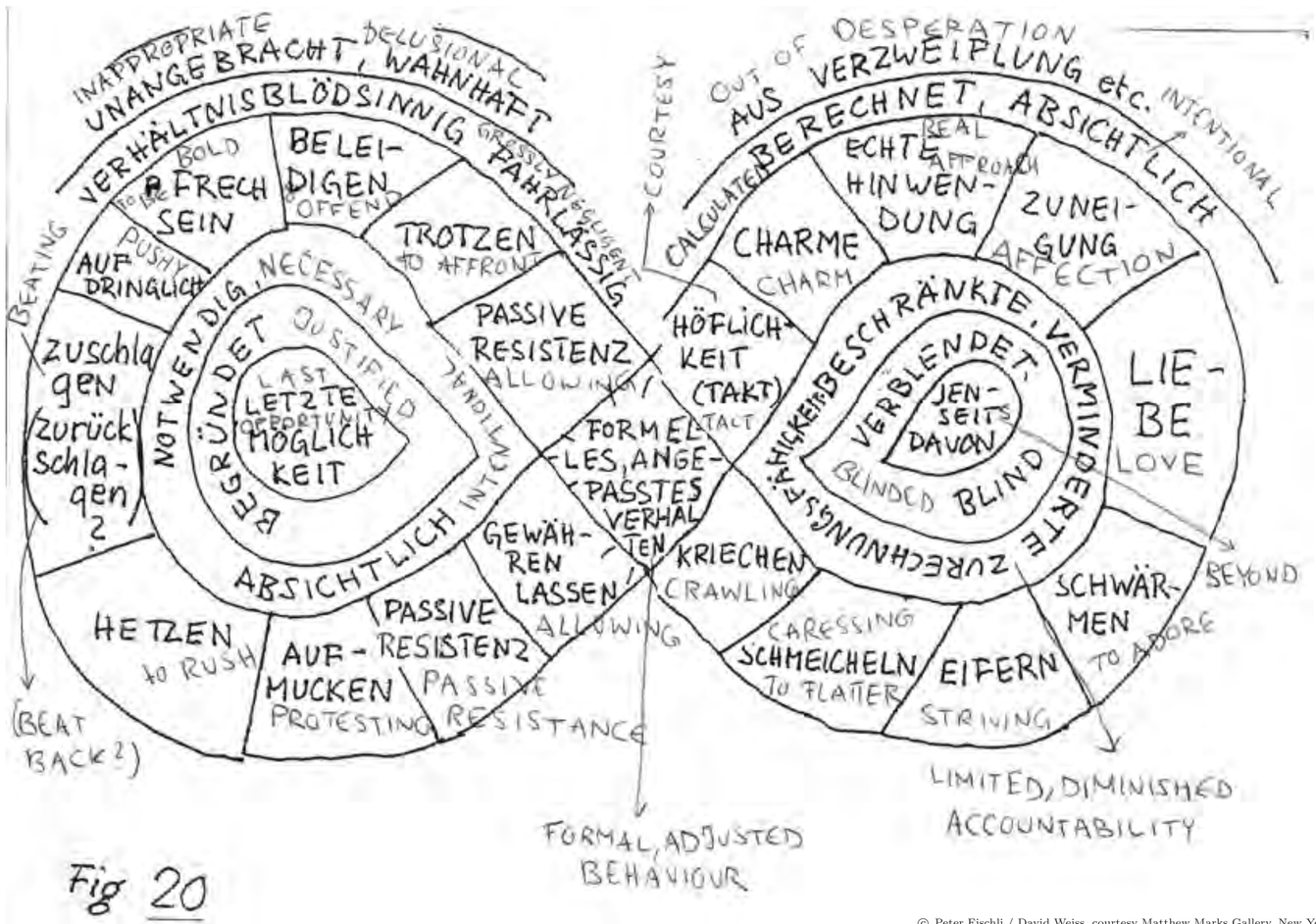



Fig 20



# CORDUROY PILLOW MAKES HEADLINES

(FS) ■

*Part 6: Headless Body, Topless Bar*

# WHOSE THROAT CAN I EAT?

GLASGOW — The Internet didn't do it.

Whatever problems exist with news today have their roots much further back in time. If we now have celebrities rather than stars it's because publicists demanded total control over interviews and features on their artists from the 1980s onwards. Creativity was smothered, the artist's take on reality was elided, and a bland, mainstream profile was cultivated for each client. It's not that the flaws of the famous are hidden from us either, simply that those stumbles are now packaged within a neat career trajectory that includes rehab as a saintly rest station on the longer journey. As each artistic career has become more manufactured and predictable, so the status of these figures has declined.

Similarly, in the weightier arena of war journalism, the possibilities of reporting accurately have been severely curtailed. With the end of the Vietnam War came the gradual end of many journalistic freedoms as governments considered the impact of allowing writers to describe the realities of combat or the military treatment of civilian populations. By the time the second Iraq war began in 2003, journalists were being euphemistically "embedded" with army personnel. As one military spokesman put it, "Frankly, our job is to win the war. Part of that is information warfare. So we are going to attempt to dominate the information environment." This was never going to encourage independent journalism and it marked a dangerous capitulation by the new corporations who accepted those limitations.

Things have been no better on the domestic front. Mike Sager described the changes that had already taken place by the early '90s, saying, "I've shown up at a murder scene in the mountains of coal country only to find three lawyers, three production companies, and a woman named Aphrodite writing a book. The members of the family that had lost a daughter to murder were feuding. They'd each sold rights to different companies . . . Monthly I receive letters from men in prison, long rambling appeals not for *habeas corpus* but for six-figure book and movie deals."

David Simon only highlighted part of the problem when he described a culture in which newspaper writers recycle press releases. The Internet can make that process easier but changing technology doesn't explain the industry's growing contempt for its own readers. The news industry, like the music and movie industries, seems unable to sense the disillusionment of its audience, who has always been smarter than it was given credit for, and who has noted every step in the decline of the basic product on offer.

Looking back on 25 years of *Rolling Stone* features, P.J. O'Rourke interviewed Hunter S. Thompson and in response to a query on satirical irreverence they found themselves close to the heart of journalism:

"*I just don't know of anything better in the world than the justified attack on authority figures that also uses humor. Is there anything that beats making fun of people?*

"Not if they're the right people. I think the shared perception is huge in that. You know what works: If they jump, you know you got the right word. With readers, I was surprised, and still am, at the very solid and articulate mass of people out there who are extremely varied but really do like me and agree that I'm expressing their feelings. I believe that journalism and fiction have to do that. It's not just amusement.

"*Fiction writers, even when they use interesting techniques, are often not audience directed. If you're a journalist, you have to be directed toward your readers.*

"Newspapers give you that connection with your reader. You've got no choice. You are fucked if you're not connected."

It's a surprisingly serious exchange on the immediacy of newspapers and a reminder of the true writer lurking within Thompson.The novelty of gonzo journalism has often obscured the reasons for its existence and the urgency behind its extremism. Looking back on the creation of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Thompson explained that it was based on an attempt to escape temporarily from threats in Los Angeles where he had been researching an article on the death of Mexican-American columnist and reporter Ruben Salazar during a riot in East L.A. Both *Fear and Loathing* and the piece on Salazar, "Strange Rumblings in Aztlán," were written up in parallel in the same room on the same typewriter. They are two sides of the same coin — one detailing the absurdity of political reality in that era, the other plumbing the psyche of a country in trauma. Assessing that writing process over twenty years later, Thompson was ruthless in his honesty about the impulses that were propelling his journalism:

"We *must* come face to face with the terrible Fact that there is a Brutal, Overweening violence somewhere near the Core of my Work(s), which the first-time reader should not necessarily be forced to embrace and confront all at once. . . . Or at least not *immediately*. No. Not everybody is comfortable on this plane.

"That is the *art*. That is the Crystalized Vision. I am only the medium, the channel, a human lightning rod for all the smoking, homeless visions and the horrible Acid flashbacks of a whole Generation — which are precious, if only as Living, Savage monuments to a dream that haunts us all."

This skill in divining is what separates feature writers from news aggregators. It's an ability to discern patterns amid the constant stream of facts and an interpretative approach that enables them to anticipate the direction history is taking. Hunter Thompson's wild prose is so pumped with adrenalin that this argument could be dismissed on the grounds of style alone. Someone like John McPhee, however, can channel similar undercurrents in society with more sobriety and without even a whiff of the gonzoid pheromone. In 1974 he published *The Curve of Binding Energy*, a lengthy profile of the physicist, Ted Taylor, who had designed several nuclear bombs. By the '70s Taylor was concerned about easy access to weapons-grade nuclear materials and his own research had focused on making the smallest nuclear bomb possible. To demonstrate the potential dangers, Taylor took McPhee to Manhattan:

"We had been heading for midtown but impulsively kept going, drawn irresistibly toward two of the tallest buildings in the world. We went down the Chambers Street ramp, and parked, in a devastation of rubble, beside the Hudson River. Across the water in New Jersey, the Colgate sign, a huge neon clock as red as the sky, said 6:15. We looked up the west wall of the nearest tower. From so close, so narrow an angle, there was nothing at the top to arrest the eye, and the building seemed to be some sort of probe touching the earth from the darkness of space. 'What an artifact that is!' Taylor said, and he walked to the base and paced it off. We went inside, into a wide, uncolumned lobby. The building was standing on its glass-and-steel walls and on its elevator core. Neither of us had been there before. We got into an elevator. He pressed, at random, 40. We rode upward in a silence broken only by the muffled whoosh of air and machinery and by Taylor's describing where the most effective place for a nuclear bomb would be."

McPhee's imaginative skills here reveal the darker anxieties that can lie dormant in a society for decades. And, much as he might balk at the conjunction, both he and Thompson are willing to explore the unsayable and to voice the unthinkable.

It's that energy and total commitment to language and writing that makes a good journalist. If it can be wrapped in the broad folds of a newspaper filled with writing that defies the logic of the bulletin, then even better. But it's that willingness to go for the jugular that induces pleasure. Readers know this instinctively and they always catch the scent of a kill.

*But when I'm finished, I'm sure that you are soon to see / Reality, my secret technique . . .* (Big Daddy Kane, "Ain't no half-steppin") (FM) ■

*Red-tailed hawk in Union Square*

# UNICORN: "I EXIST"

PROSPECT PARK — You've never been told the truth about the likes of those who write, but it's high time for you to know, now. So let me put it to you straight: *all writers are liars*. Shamelessly they'll lie to your face, ready to do whatever it takes to steal your trust. To appear trustworthy to a reader they may go as far as to denounce their own trade. All forms of betrayal will seem justified in the service of exercising power over you by capturing your attention and steering your thoughts and feelings in a particular direction. It's a vicious trick, trust me, I urge you: *don't let them pull it on you!*

Alright, you got me, I admit, I was about to do the same thing. But now, since you know, we're cool, yes? A clean start, I swear, I won't do it again. I'll be a better person, no more cheating, I promise! Love, comfort, and honor you, I pledge, once more, I will, I do, unconditionally . . .

As if!

As if unconditional sincerity in writing were ever possible. As if the precondition for the connection between reader and text was not always already a lie: the lie that a few choice words could suffice to create a bond of mutual trust, *ex nihilo*, instantly and out of the blue, between reader and writer, skipping all the steps that it takes for trust to slowly be built up between people in the social world.

Still, the lie works. The moment we continue reading beyond a text's opening lines, we intuitively entrust ourselves to the text, in good faith that submitting to the experience we will undergo, intellectually and emotionally, will do us no harm. If we do read on, it's because we feel safe to assume that we won't be fooled. The reasons for this aren't rational, but structural. The act of reading itself both produces and requires a moment of unconditional intimacy. Without it, the immersive concentration that brings written letters to life would literally be impossible. The default fallacy built into the act of reading — the fallacy that permits writers to trick their readers into trusting them — lies then in the fact that the moment of *mental intimacy* immanent to an immersion in text is practically indistinguishable from an experience of *personal honesty*. Reading feels honest. This is the conditon of its technical possibility. Yet, by definition, honesty is unconditional. If it isn't, it ceases to be what it is, and turns into its opposite. For honesty to remain conditional effectively means that it becomes a lie: a technical, functional lie.

So all writers are liars. By default. Yet, all liars too are writers. Existentially speaking. They live a life, the story of which they write, being both its narrator and protagonist. Here, I mean to refer to *true liars*, as opposed to casual liars, who might see fit, in want of other means, to at times deploy lies to get what they desire. True liars never merely *use* a lie. True liars *live* the lie. So nothing of what they say is ever truly false nor is anything they do actually dishonest. Their words and deeds are entirely consistent with their view of the world, and this view in turn is easily readjusted to fit new developments or interests. True liars will therefore continuously edit and rewrite the story of their lives to convert unexpected events into logical plot twists. If the overall plot must be bent into a new shape to accomodate the twist, this job is done with the greatest ease, and in the blink of an eye. True liars are extraordinarily creative and among the most morally resolute people walking the earth. There's a rationale for all they do which, though it might be in perpetual flux, is still always firmly in place. Try to prove a true liar wrong. You might as well talk to a unicorn and debate its existence. By reasoning with it, you've already entered the story in which, of course, it *uncontestably* exists.

Why do true liars lie? Arguably it is because *the conditional* is the only mode in which they feel free to live their lifes. Keeping their lie alive is the condition that permits them to keep moving on their own terms. The most existential threat to true liars therefore is the experience of *the unconditional* — love, unreservedly given, being the absolute worst case scenario. This is because an unconditional bond would deprive true liars of the power to freely set and alter the conditions of the lie they live. It would put them on the spot and thus, in their view, tie them down. So they'll shun it. Love is to liars what doubts about horned horses are to unicorns: a menace.

As freedom for true liars resides in the unfettered possibility to keep rewriting their story, they need to maintain full control over the conditions of writing. To this end, they will therefore insist on controlling the conditions under which they experience — and interpret — their life, as well as the conditions under which they are perceived by others. In fact, both have to align, because it's only when others believe their story too, that true liars feel at ease with how their life is developing, namely according to the plot they write for it. This is why true liars are the most sympathetic people you're ever likely to meet. In order to receive your approval of their view of things they'll make themselves infinitely agreeable. Especially so if they sense you to have the ability to see through them. Critics attract liars. In order to defuse the chance of exposure, true liars will seek the critic's friendship and subsume him or her into their story, as one of its characters. Characters won't violate the plot. They can't. Because they're part of it.

Critics are no better anyway. They're writers too, after all. And since moral resoluteness, as we have seen, is the true liar's most recognizable trademark, critics instantly give their own game away when they claim the moral high ground. Liars they are like anyone else! Bigoted writers!

Since true liars are always honest to themselves, on their own terms, it's not even clear what exposing one could amount to. The reality that true liars inhabit is the world of concocted *sympathy*. Stepping out of this reality feels to a true liar like shutting down the computer does to a writer: it prompts a lapse into *apathy*. As true liars experience life exclusively from the perspective of being narrator and protagonist of their own story, once the story is interrupted there's noone left to feel a thing. To realize the bearing of having wronged another would dramatically interrupt the story. Since that interruption prompts instant apathy, however, the realization never penetrates. True liars play dead when confronted by the pain they cause others. Coming back to life, they will swiftly re-edit the story, and move on.

So the story goes. But what is its analysis but yet another story, a true lie, if there ever was one? As it concocts its theories, the analytic mind will find ubiquitous evidence for its view of things and wrap all up nicely in a conclusive account. Finding as much easy comfort as grim pleasure in the idea of having it all worked out, the analytic mind thus washes itself in its own toxic secretions, oblivious to how the writing it churns out begins to truly stink of the lies it tries to rinse away.

It's hard to see what could end these painful exercises, break the spell of lies and bring us back to our senses. If it's not love, nor analysis, then perhaps it's still writing that could do the job. For, as much as it will remain a medium of conditional honesty — and thus technically always a true lie — writing does have the power to produce sudden moments of unconditional clarity that hit you with the force of a bullet to the brain. But how do you fire the bullet that cannot be dodged? I don't think you can do it intentionally. To trust a well-aimed shot to hit its target is the conceit of the analyst who only fires at the other and will therefore always miss him- or herself. With the analyst as last man standing, there is still one liar too much left. To kill the lie, the bullet would in fact have to backfire first, enter the analyst's heart, exit the body, to then hit its successive targets. This ballistic curve won't fit the *sympathy / apathy* formula. The path the bullet describes follows the principles of *empathy / telepathy*: fired from a range that couldn't be closer, it continues to travel into the far distance to hit whomever gets caught by it. This is a magic bullet theory. Or no theory at all, as, by definition, magic bullets defy the laws of forensics as much as the skills of marksmanship. There is no way to know how to best fire one. The shot must release itself. And there is nothing you can do to make that happen.

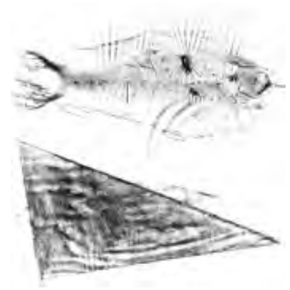
Except maybe write with the safety catch off. (JV) ■

REVIEW

Of *A Select History of Experimental music. Curated by Mike Kelley and Mark Beasley. The Gramercy Theater, Nov. 20–21, 2009.*
A fantastic world
And ONOMATOPOEIA
Superimposed, yeah
(MB/VB) ■

KAFKAESQUE

"Alas," said the mouse, "the world is growing smaller every day. At the beginning it was so big that I was afraid, I kept running and running, and I was glad when at last I saw walls far away to the right and left, but these long walls have narrowed so quickly that I am in the last chamber already, and there in the corner stands the trap that I must run into," "You only need to change your direction," said the cat, and ate it up. (Franz Kafka, "A Little Fable," sometime between 1917–23) ■



"FIRST/LAST" NEWSPAPER TO FOLD AFTER SIX EDITIONS

DEXter Sinister commemorated the printing of their final *First/Last Newspaper* and closing of their Port Authority office Saturday night, November 21 from 7 – 9pm. Visitors were able to collect remaining stock produced during the paper's brief three-week existence, including the latest and last just delivered from Linco Printers in neighboring Long Island City. Also present in the Port Authority Space, at the corner of 41st Street and Eighth Avenue, was Gareth Spor's version of Brion Gysin's seminal 1960s Dream Machine — a stencilled cylinder placed on a revolving turntable with a 100-watt lamp inside to produce a stroboscopic flicker that induces a supposedly hypnagogic state when viewed with eyes closed. Spor's update replaces Gysin's original pattern with open letterforms that spell out an aphorism by Gysin's friend and collaborator William Burroughs: "Illusion is a Revolutionary Weapon." The public was advised that this machine may be dangerous for people with photosensitive epilepsy or other nervous disorders. Also available were portions of fish and chips wrapped in old issues of *TF/LN*. Due to concerns over ink poisoning, particularly related to old lead type, the tradition of wrapping fish and chips in newsprint has largely been phased out despite industry workers's claims that modern newspaper inks such as those used in Queens pose no such health risks. Today's chip paper, tomorrow's news, as the old Fleet Street saying goes. Surely this is, at last, the "artless art." Sinister stressed that they would assume no responsibility for the public's epilepsy or poisoning. (DS) ■




The sixth First/Last Newspaper was assembled by DEXTER SINISTER with contributions by Angie Keefer, Francis McKee, Steve Rushton, Rob Giampietro, Will Holder, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Paul Elliman, Walead Beshty, Dan Fox, Frances Stark, Jeanne Dreskin, Snowden Snowden, Cory Arcangel, Guy de Cointet, Graham Meyer, Sammy's Roumanian, and Mark Beasley. Produced with the assistance of Brendan Dalton and Anne Callahan. With a special thank you to Gerald Scupp of the Fashion Center for his early advocacy and his continued careful reading, and to Glenn Weiss for making things easy and playing along. Presented under the umbrella of PERFORMA 09 and in partnership with Times Square Alliance. Edited in cooperation with Defne Ayas and Virginie Bobin.

Masthead set in Strike Alphabet courtesy Shannon Ebner.

Performa, a non-profit multidisciplinary arts organization established by RoseLee Goldberg in 2004, is dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth century art and to encouraging new directions in performance for the twenty-first century.