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ISSUE #15: B-SIDE MODERNISM

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ISSUE DESCRIPTION

ISSUE #15: B-SIDE MODERNISM

In June of 2014, nonsite.org, with the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, sponsored four fellows to do research in the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library at Emory University. Danowski's synoptic ambition—to collect literally all poetry in English published in the 20th century, including the independent journals, short-run chapbooks and broadsides that gave modernism its distinctive energy—has created an opportunity to examine the materials out of which our accounts of the century have been made, without the influence of a shaping hand.

The work of our B-Side Fellows, presented here, takes the shapelessness of "everything" as a provocation to investigate the divergences between canonical accounts of modernism in poetry; to explore the many roads not taken, whether they manifest in the unedited arc of a career, in the one-off achievement, or the unclassified ephemera of a moment. What else might modernism have been? And how do such reconsiderations of modernism bear on what happens on the flip side of the mid-century divide? Edited by Jennifer Ashton and Oren Izenberg.

ARTICLES

HEARING THE TONE OF THE SELF:
TOWARD AN ALTERNATIVE ETHICS OF TRANSLATION

V. JOSHUA ADAMS

"No man is capable of Translating Poetry, who besides a Genius to that Art, is not a Master both of his Authours Language, and of his own: Nor must we understand the Language only of the Poet, but his particular turn of Thoughts, and of Expression, which are the Characters which distinguish, and as it were individuate him from all other writers. When we are come thus far, 'tis time to look into our selves…"
—John Dryden [1]

In 1965, the American poet Ron Padgett went to Paris on a Fulbright fellowship. There he discovered Pierre Reverdy's first book, *Poèmes en prose*. "I fell for [it] the first time I read it," he writes. "I loved its austerity, its spookiness, and what I imagined to be its cubism." [2] Padgett decided to translate the book, making drafts while still in France, and then worked on them intermittently over the next twenty-five years. After a flurry of revisions in the early 90s and the publication of a few of the translations in magazines, he put the manuscript aside again, finally publishing it in 2007. In the forty-two years between the first ecstatic encounter with Reverdy and the publication of his final version of *Prose Poems*, Padgett became a celebrated poet in his own right, as well as a noted translator of vanguardist French poets, including Apollinaire and Cendrars. Whatever the reasons for the lengthy germination of his Reverdy project, Padgett's final versions at least enjoy the benefit of sustained reflection, both on translation in general and Reverdy in particular. A specific example of the fruits of this reflection can be found in the postface to the 2007 book, where Padgett, in addition to recalling the history that I have sketched here, reveals that one of the final things he changed in his translations was the punctuation: "[It] was normal in French but quirky in English. Perhaps I had liked the way it gave a 'modern' effect in English. Reverdy was a modernist,

but he was not one for giving effects."[3] To Padgett's ear, this quirkiness comes off as a poor representation of Reverdy. So he changed the punctuation of the translations, appealing not only to his own judgment of what sounded quirky (or not) in English, but also, importantly, to an implicit claim about what Reverdy would have thought about such quirkiness in his own poems.

This story will help us flesh out some assumptions about translation and the choices involved in it, as well as some challenges to the ways those choices are made. To begin, it bears noting that changing the punctuation of sentences can change their meaning, thus changing our sense of the intentions of the speaker or the author of those sentences.[4] Endorsing such changes would seem to conflict with the common sense expectation that the task of the translator is to convey the meaning of a text from one language to another. Yet Padgett's renovation of Reverdy's punctuation, inviting as it does the possibility of significant changes to the meaning of Reverdy's poems, hardly strikes me as controversial. It seems just the opposite, a mere attestation to truths that differentiate translation from other sorts of writing. Translation is an art of divided loyalties; a translator is responsible at once to her source but also to her readership. Competing conventions of punctuation bring these divided loyalties to the fore, since they are one of the many ways in which a text in one language can differ from a text in another one (not to mention a way in which modern texts can differ from older texts in the same language, and in which prose and poetry in the same language can differ from each another.) Of course punctuation is hardly the most conspicuous difference between texts in different languages; the most conspicuous difference is that of the languages themselves![5] These differences produce obstacles to mutual understanding that a translator must try to overcome. Overcoming them is not easy. Eugene Nida explains that "[s]ince no two languages are identical … it stands to reason that there can be no absolute correspondence between languages. Hence there can be no fully exact translations."[6]

Figuring out how to sufficiently satisfy demands for correspondence and exactitude when absolute correspondence and full exactitude are impossible is the task of most professional translators.[7] In a purely or largely instrumental context, like the translation of an instruction manual or a restaurant menu, one satisfies the task by focusing on semantic content, on getting the message across. In contexts that depart from instrumentality, however, the problems are harder to negotiate, since the message of these texts is bound up with the language in which they are originally written in various and complicated ways. Literary and religious and even some philosophical contexts provide examples of this departure.[8] Among these, poetry poses the most problems because of the degree to which poems depend on words and sounds and sometimes shapes that are language-specific. Even here, though, the difficulty is not wholly insurmountable. Roman Jakobson, who was a poet before he was a

linguist, believed that "poetry by definition is untranslatable," but that it could nevertheless be creatively transposed within languages, across languages, and across art forms.[9] The limits to this transposition constitute the limits of acceptable translation. One traditional way of talking about these limits is the idea of "fidelity." Translations are praised for being faithful, and more often are criticized for faithlessness. But, as I have already implied, fidelity in a literary translation is a complicated thing. This is so even if we affirm that the task of the translator is to be faithful to the author's intention, both because there may be competing ways of rendering that intention in the target language, and because there may be more intentions in a literary text than the intention to mean.[10] Do we allow ourselves semantic latitude, for instance, in order to produce a translation of a poem that preserves the rhyme scheme of its original? Such a translation can be dismissed on the grounds that it is inaccurate. Do we forget about rhyme and even lineation and just provide a literal prose trot or perhaps an interlinear gloss? Such a translation strays far from the effect of the original; the original intention to make a verse artifact has not survived.

Padgett's story shows how a translator interested in fidelity to his source has to make a hard choice. (It also shows, incidentally, that the difficulties of translating poetry are not confined to translating verse, although they are generally not as extreme.) Friedrich Schleiermacher memorably described this choice as one in which the translator either moves the writer of the source text toward the readers of the translation, or moves the readers of the translation toward the writer of the source text.[11] Inspired by Schleiermacher's dichotomy, and by the work of Antoine Berman on translation theory in and around German Romanticism, Lawrence Ventui has called the competing approaches "domesticating" and "foreignizing" translation, respectively.[12] A domesticating translation strives for fluency. It makes the source text read as if it were originally written in the target language. A foreignizing translation strives to preserve difference. It maintains the strangeness of the source text by disrupting the norms and codes of the target language. The categories are occasionally criticized as reductive, but they are useful, insofar as they preserve Schleiermacher's (and before him, Herder's) insight that the translator must confront "the irrationality of languages" — the fact that, though many languages share roots, not all languages are commensurate with one another. This is really what we are getting at when we say that a word or an expression is "untranslatable": not that it can't be translated via an extended periphrasis, but that there is no functionally equivalent word or expression in other languages.[13]

Padgett's punctuation swap moves Reverdy toward his (Padgett's) audience. In the parlance of contemporary translation theory, then, Padgett's is a "domesticating" choice. And it is a common one, since most translations of poetry, despite or perhaps because of the difficulties involved in reproducing foreign sounds or shapes, are domesticating.[14] Robert Pinsky's

version of *Inferno*, for example, begins, "Midway on our life's journey, I found myself / In dark woods, the right road lost."[15] Pinsky's choice of "journey" for "*cammin*" might have been an attempt to take us back to the 19th century — it is the word Longfellow used in the opening of his famous translation — and then to take us back even further with a more austere, Anglo-Saxon clause ("the right road lost"). This imaginative transport does not succeed so completely now; the bathos of "journey" (try not to think of the rock band), not to mention the complement of Germanic word origins, conspire to prevent us from accepting either that these lines have come from the 13th century or that they have come there from Italy. So does the fact that an entire rhymed tercet in Italian is condensed to just one and a half-lines of unrhymed English. Nevertheless, that condensation, and the translation's readability as English and specifically American poetry, testify to Pinsky's skill as a domesticating translator. So do more specific and subtle word choices: witness, for example, his choice of "in dark woods" for "*una selva oscura*," which, in addition to prioritizing the more idiomatic "woods" for "wood" (and thus perhaps diminishing the allegorical function of Dante's choice) picks up some echoes from another, more recent poem about a journey: "These woods are lovely, dark, and deep." Dante, by way of Frost. It is true that there are sonic echoes of the original: "right road lost" captures some of the alliteration and assonance of "la diritta via era smarrita." And Pinsky does use a form of *terza rima* — albeit a much more flexible English version, which depends on terminal consonant sounds, like "tell" and "feel" and "sleep" and "up." But his opening lines, and I think his translation as a whole, give readers a sense of fluency, which is pretty much what his translator's note says he set out to do: "I have tried to make an *Inferno* in English that stays true to the nature of English."[16]

A skeptic might reasonably reply: whose English, exactly? And one could go further than this. For Venuti, a translation practice like Pinsky's or Padgett's — indeed, the translation practice of most translators in most places at most times — is philosophically and morally compromised. It is philosophically compromised because it does not recognize (in Derridean fashion) that "meaning is an effect of relations and differences among signifiers along a potentially endless chain," that it "is always differential and deferred, never present as an original unity," and finally that "both foreign text and translation are derivative, [consisting] of diverse linguistic and cultural materials that neither the foreign writer nor the translator originates, and that destabilize the work of signification, inevitably exceeding and possibly conflicting with their intentions."[17] And it is morally compromised because any translation that purports to reproduce or transfer meaning across languages will have arbitrarily closed down other possibilities on no other grounds than a translator's fiat. Such translations will fail to represent the fact that "the foreign text is the site of many different semantic possibilities that are fixed only provisionally in any one translation, on the basis of varying cultural assumptions and interpretive choices, in specific social situations, in different historical

periods."[18] Indeed this illegitimate fixing of semantic possibilities has darker undertones. It underwrites what Venuti calls the "ethnocentric violence" of the translation process, one that has been particularly pronounced in Anglo-American intellectual culture since the early modern period.[19] The conjunction of philosophical and moral critique supports a bleak description of translation, not as a species of interpretation but a species of forced substitution: "Translation is the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that will be intelligible to the target language reader."[20] Against this oppression, Ventui urges the resistance of the foreign: "Foreignizing translation in English can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations."[21]

Even if one does not agree with the philosophy of language that undergirds Venuti's critique (and I do not), there is ample historical evidence of the overt and covert ethnocentric violence of domesticating translation for his moral critique of it to stand. (I leave it to others to explain how a commitment to a Derridean conception of meaning as *endlessly* deferred should not also *endlessly* defer things like moral judgments against violence, and in favor of, say, "democratic geopolitical relations.") The history of the translation of poetry is certainly guilty of the charges lodged against domesticating translation practices more generally. In fact, despite recent "poetry of witness,"[22] there seems to be a strong historical connection between poetic vocation and the eradication of otherness. What Allen Grossman called the "eidetic violence" of representation manifests itself in translations that seek to be poems in their own right.[23] So let us say we grant, then, that the history of translation has been driven by chauvinistic ideologies and by aesthetic, rather than ethical, crtieria. Is a foreignizing translation the only, or indeed the preferable, response? Might there be moral, and not just aesthetic, reasons to justify a "domesticating" translation (and thus moral, and not just aesthetic reasons, for resisting a foreignizing one)? Is fidelity worthless in the translation of poetry? Venuti's definition of translation as "forcible replacement" delegitimizes translation under all auspices except those of power and resistance to power. Offering an alternative approach to the ethics of translation would allow us to revalue (or merely value) translations and translation practices that could otherwise look suspect in the current intellectual landscape. More ambitiously: it might give us a way to translate poets, or poetic projects, that do not seem well served by existing translations, whether foreignizing or domesticating.

***

First, though, the bad news: the long history of poetry provides much evidence to corroborate Venuti's charges. Dryden famously remarked, in the preface to his translation of the *Aeneid*, that "I have endeavor'd to make *Virgil* speak such *English*, as he wou'd himself have spoken,

if he had been born in England, and in this present Age."[24] Even if this is not ethnocentric violence it is at least ethnocentric ventriloquism. Dryden does not aspire to present Virgil as a stranger, someone who was not a contemporary or a compatriot. It would not have been beyond him to do this: archaism was available as a poetic strategy that would have indicated a divergence from contemporary norms. Of course, this strategy was not always praised, even before Dryden's own neoclassical moment: witness Ben Jonson's complaint about Spenser: "Spen[s]er, in affecting the Ancients writ no language."[25] Archaism of this sort could have been ruled out as incompatible with Virgil's style, so that, in opting for the continuity sponsored by the community of spoken English, even in an age when Latin was still a functioning literary language, Dryden may have been responding to and reflecting something he had recognized in Virgil as a poet.[26] Absent this justification, however, the claim to have represented him as English appears potentially distorting.

There are of course more aggressive attitudes with respect to cultural and linguistic difference than Dryden's, ones much closer to those held by Virgil and his contemporaries (a fact to which the second quotation from Jonson alludes.) Nietzsche reminds us of those attitudes with characteristic bluntness in *The Gay Science*:

> One can gauge the degree of the historical sense an age possesses by the manner in which it translates texts and by the manner in which it seeks to incorporate past epochs and books into its own being. Corneille's Frenchmen — and even those of the Revolution — took hold of Roman antiquity in a manner that we — thanks to our more refined sense of history — would no longer have the courage to employ. And then Roman antiquity itself: how violently, and at the same time how naively, it pressed its hand upon everything good and sublime in the older periods of ancient Greece! Consider how the Romans translated this material to suit their own age … Horace, off and on, translated Alcaeus or Archilochus; Propertius translated Callimachus and Philetas …. How little concern these translators had for this or that experience by the actual creator who had imbued his poems with symbols of such experiences! As poets, they were averse to the antiquarian inquisitive spirit that precedes the historical sense. As poets they did not recognize the existence of the purely personal images and names of anything that served as the national costume or mask of a city … and therefore immediately replaced all this by present realities and by things Roman. … These poet translators did not know the pleasure of the historical sense; anything past and alien was an irritant to them, and as Romans they considered it to be nothing but a stimulus

> for yet another Roman conquest. In those days, indeed, to translate meant to conquer…."[27]

Earlier epochs were more sanguine about the possibility of translation, even the translation of poetry, than we are now. This is not surprising, given the relatively recent emergence of what Nietzsche calls "the historical sense" and that we might call cultural (or textual) autonomy. But it is not only the spirit of the age, whether Classical or Neoclassical, that accounts for the strikingly acquisitive stance Nietzsche describes. "As *poets*, they were averse to the antiquarian inquisitive spirit that precedes the historical sense. As *poets* they did not recognize the existence of purely personal images and names of anything that served as the national costume or mask of a city…" (my emphasis). Poetic vocation and imperial conquest go hand in hand. The translation of poetry into poetry demanded indifference to the particularity of source texts. It facilitated the vampiric incorporation of past epochs and books into the being of the present.

However problematic such a possessive stance toward cultural or historical difference might be for us, however — and Robert Lowell, who attempted to use Dryden's precedent to justify his own book of translations, recognized it was problematic enough to merit the title *Imitations* — some of us might affirm, enthusiastically or grudgingly, that what contemporary translation theory considers domesticating, ethnocentrically violent translation practices have produced great poems (including Dryden's *Aeneid* and Pope's *Iliad*, but also even a few of Lowell's imitations, at least of Villon and Baudelaire). Ezra Pound, for example, remarked that "English literature lives on translation; it is fed by translation; every new exuberance, every new heave, is stimulated by translation; every allegedly great age is an age of translation."[28] The survival and the greatness of national literatures derive from other languages. Cosmopolitan though this picture might appear, it is not an encounter between equals, but more like that between predator and prey, or (brief) stimulus and (sustained) response: the source text is to be digested or transformed into something else. We may agree with Pound's judgment about literary history, but then it appears we are complicit with, if not tacitly endorsing, acts of ethnocentric violence. The greatness of these ages was not due to their preservation of the radical otherness of source texts. This was still true in Pound's own time: it enabled, for example, the simple beauties of *Cathay*.

Does the translation of poetry into poetry require an ethics of empire, an irresistible colonizing urge? Foreignizing translation appears to offer an alternative to the assimilation of cultural difference by offering us a way to merge aesthetic and ethical criteria. And there are some truly remarkable translations by poets that frustrate the domesticating expectations of fluency, including Pound's own translation of "The Seafarer," which exploits alliteration,

archaism, and estranged syntax to remind its readers that it has come from another place and time:

> May I for my own self song's truth reckon,
> Journey's jargon, how I in harsh days
> Hardship endured oft.
> Bitter breast-cares have I abided,
> Known on my keel many a care's hold,
> And dire sea-surge, and there I oft spent
> Narrow nightwatch nigh the ship's head
> While she tossed close to cliffs. Coldly afflicted,
> My feet were by frost benumbed.

More foreignizing than Pound's artful homage are Hölderlin's versions of Sophocles and Pindar, for example, which preserve the syntax of the original Greek, even to the point of breaking German words into pieces. But while this and other foreignizing translation projects are sometimes remarkable as aesthetic objects, they all inevitably obscure the meaning of the source text in their attempts to radicalize the reproduction of its syntax or its sound. (Recall the way that Pound just lops the Christianity off the end of "The Seafarer.") Or they require us to revise our conception of meaning, as Louis and Celia Zukofsky did with their "homphonic" version of Catullus, which attempted to follow the sound of the Latin text in rendering the English sense.[29] As Venuti himself remarks, "in its effort to do right abroad, [foreignizing translation] must do wrong at home, deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience."[30] And just as domesticating translations fail the ethical test because of excessive fluency, foreignizing translations can fail the aesthetic test because of excessive estrangement. This aesthetic failure risks ethical failure, too, since it has already risked abjuring the basic task of transferring recognizably equivalent meanings from one language to the other. Nabokov's translation of Pushkin, in the judgment of Edmund Wilson, went so far in its refusal of idiomatic English that it was no longer a translation at all.[31] Thus a foreignizing translation is not any more faithful than the domesticating translation; it is just faithful to something different about (or in or around) the text in question: not its meaning, say, but its words, or the shape or sound of those words, those aspects of the text that are pre-or-non-linguistic. There may be circumstances in which this choice is strategically merited. Perhaps a foreignizing translation can show us something about the original text that has been occluded. Perhaps the foreignizing translation is sponsored by a sacralized view of the source text or source language, and we happen to have sympathy with that view. But, putting special theories of poetic language to the side for the moment, if the ethical desideratum of poetry translation

is something like fidelity to the author's intentions — and fidelity to all of those intentions, not just some of them — it seems we are condemned to be unfaithful whichever way we go: *traduttore, traditore*.

Might it be better to just give up on the idea that there is something like an ethics of poetry translation? It is tempting to agree with Borges and suggest that translations of literary works should be judged only on aesthetic grounds, that they "can only be conceived of *in the wake of a literature*."[32] And yet most of us who translate *do* have a sense that there are differences between good translations and bad translations, and these differences are not just aesthetic choices but have something to do with a moral sense of fidelity to the source text. Saddled as we are with what Nietzsche called "the historical sense," we do not dare to improve the original (as Borges occasionally did). Nor are we just going on our nerve, making it up as we go along. Dante Gabriel Rossetti furnishes a good example of the survival of ethical criteria amidst an otherwise aesthetically justified translation practice. In the preface to his *Early Italian Poets* he famously remarked that "The only true motive for putting poetry into a fresh language must be to endow a fresh nation, as far as possible, with one more possession of beauty."[33] To hell with ethical considerations — bring on the spoils of empire! But, having written this, and cognizant of the way in which his lovely rhymed translations frequently depart from would have been recognized as the literal meaning of his source texts, Rossetti emphasized the distinction between literality (which he lacked) and fidelity (which he supposedly possessed). He did not want to abandon his claim to the latter. Was he — are we — simply deceiving ourselves? Isn't fidelity in translation so elastic as to be meaningless?

Consider, for example, the genre of the pseudo-translation, the text that pretends to be a translation but is actually not. Such texts put defenders of criteria of fidelity in an awkward spot, since the pseudo-translation is "faithful" to a text that does not exist. Emily Apter has gone so far as to suggest that pseudo-translations reveal "the fundamental unreliability of translation's claim to approximate the original in another tongue," and that they "expose the ways in which all translators are to some extent counterfeit artists, experts at forgeries of voice and style."[34] I find her claims here are much too severe, as her eventual hedge ("to some extent") reveals. After all, who or what is the judge of the "fundamental unreliability" of translation, as opposed, say, to its partial unreliability? And wouldn't something that is partially unreliable also be partially reliable? And what is wrong with this exactly? No translation will be perfect, but the alternative to perfection is imperfection, not necessarily counterfeit or forgery. The use of the latter two categories would only be warranted if the translation were somehow supposed to take the place of the original text. But even a radically domesticating translation doesn't necessarily do this; it just produces a version of a text for another audience. Pseudo-translation does not show us that fidelity is impossible. It just

pretends to possess something that it does not have. You can pretend to have something, but this doesn't mean that everyone who has it is pretending.

Let me make two proposals for revitalizing, or at least burnishing, the concept of fidelity in translation. The first is that the two choices of domestication and foreignization might not be as mutually exclusive as Schleiermacher himself thought they were (he believed that a mix of the strategies in the same text would be infelicitous and result in obscurity). If a translation combined domesticating moves that prioritized paraphrasable meaning and fluency, with foreignizing moves that prioritized reproducing specific formal aspects of the poem's source, then there might be a way to maximize fidelity that would be lost in an either/or scenario. The success of some translations in fact may stem from such a combination: though Pope's *Iliad* is often characterized as the apogee of a domesticating translation, H.A. Mason argued that it succeeds more than any other in sending us back to the original, and Gary Wills suggested that Pope's assonance is an effective sonic echo of the Greek. [35]

This technical proposal leads into another idea, more ambitious in its sweep if not in its recommendations. It stems from the conviction that contemporary translation theorists like Venuti and Apter, in mapping an acknowledgment of cultural difference onto a philosophy of *différance*, have missed something important about Schleiermacher's observation, which is the way it emphasizes the understanding of persons in addition to the understanding of texts. [36] Of the translator, he writes: "Should he try to bring two people together who are so totally separated from each other — as his fellow man, who is completely ignorant of the author's language, and the author himself are — into such an immediate relationship as that of author and reader?" [37] And later, the famous passage:

> …now the true translator, who really wants *to bring together these two entirely separate persons*, his author and his reader, and to assist the latter in obtaining *the most correct and complete understanding and enjoyment possible* of the former without, however, forcing him out of the sphere of his mother tongue, what paths are open to the translator for that purpose? In my opinion there are only two. Either the translator keeps the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader toward the writer, or he leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer toward the reader. [38]

I began this essay with a story about a translator justifying his decision to facilitate the sort of relationship Schleiermacher describes. Such a process is not only a matter of transferring meaning but of doing so in a way that brings together two separate persons via a third. Ethical requirements of translation would be satisfied or shirked in fulfilling the task of facilitating

this relationship; fidelity would be an index, not of the literal meaning of the text or its word order or rhyme scheme or some such reduction or reproduction, but of the thoroughness with which understanding and enjoyment of the original had been fostered. Without the idea of a person who has created the text with a certain goal (or with certain goals) in mind, the idea of a faithful translation, and with it the idea of an ethical translation, loses the constraint that would differentiate it from an unethical one.[39] Such ethics can be abused: a translator can shirk his responsibility to provide understanding while indulging his responsibility to provide enjoyment, for example. Historically, many poets have done this. One can do the reverse, and commit the sin of scholarship by letting understanding destroy enjoyment. Such abuses or failures would ultimately need to be weighed along with the translation's successes. But if you believe that anything like "the most correct and complete understanding and enjoyment of a poem" is possible — and my sense is that most translators do believe this — then this is the only ethics of translation worth having.

***

All well and good. But how do we get to "the most correct and complete understanding and enjoyment possible"? We read and reread. And, if that text is a poem, we take care to read with an eye to the way the text departs from instrumental forms of language use — for some aspect of these, too, should be part of our translation. One way to describe this caretaking in relation to poems was offered by the British poet and translator David Gascoyne.[40] In an unpublished lecture in the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library at Emory University, "The Poet Translator and His Problems"[41] — the title is a nod to Eliot's essay about *Hamlet*, in which Eliot offered his (in)famous theory of the "objective correlative" — Gascoyne lays out an approach to translation and to evaluating translations that, building on some remarks of George Steiner, resonates with Schleiermacher's notion of what a "true translator" has to do in order to complete his task.

The handwritten notes for Gascoyne's talk begin with several quotations from Steiner's *After Babel*:

> GS writes: "Translation is inward directed discourse, a descent, at least partial, down Montaigne's 'spiral staircase of the self,'" and goes on to ask: "What light does this process throw on the vital issue of the primal direction or target of human speech? Are the mechanics of self-address, of interior monologue between syntax and identity, different in a polyglot and in a single language speaker?"

> "In what language am I, suis-Je, bin Ich, when I am inmost? What is the tone of self?"

Steiner's first remark is counter-intuitive. One would think that translation is not directed inward but outward.[42] But the choices that the translator herself makes in order to bridge the gap between languages require reflection on the resource of one's own language, of what sounds right. And reflection on both the resources of one's own language and one's judgment about them leads to the ground of that reflection and that judgment. Gascoyne uses Steiner's meditations on polyglot subjectivity to launch his own discussion of the relation between a poet's translating practice and his subjectivity "'What is the tone of self?' This seems to me a very relevant question for the translator to ask himself." He continues, invoking use of a familiar idea from Keats in a less familiar way:

> If the translator of poetry is himself a poet, then he is possibly more likely to possess what Keats considered to be the poet's principal requisite, that is, what he called "negative capability" (verify) by which he meant, as I understand it, not that a poet should have no distinct self to call his own, or even simply the capacity for voluntary self-effacement which enables him to be at the disposition of what was once known as the Muse, and nowadays, if thought to exist at all, is generally thought to be the well-spring of the Unconscious … not as temporary absence or suppression of self, then, so much as the special kind of empathy which enables one to identify oneself in a special way with one's subject, be it a person as in all love-poetry, or a place or landscape, a flower, rocks, trees, or even kitchen chairs or sinks.

Gascoyne's account of poetic vocation as poetic identification is sharply different from Nietzsche's conception of the same vocation as imperial conquest. It is also an unorthodox appeal to "negative capability," as his own parenthetical remark to "verify" potentially acknowledges, since by that phrase Keats meant the capacity to be "in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."[43] Gascoyne may have confused this remark on negative capability with another famous remark from Keats's letters about the identity of the poet —"A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity – he is continually in for – and filling some other Body – The Sun, The Moon, The Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute – the poet has none; no identity"[44] — but the confusion is generative, since Gascoyne wants to identify the capacity which would enable the poet to be

the sort of thing he is, and thus the capacity that a poet would bring to the act of translation. That capacity is a "special kind of empathy" which enables multiple identifications, even with human and non-human objects. Training for translation (and for poetry writing more broadly) would thus involve the cultivation of an emotional responsiveness whose purchase was much wider than both. It would culminate, actually, in a functional impersonality, allowing the poet to dissolve the boundary between things — like flowers, rocks, trees and the kitchen sink — and the mind that experienced them.

Gascoyne continues to the question "of what constitutes a good translation," suggesting that it is directly related to the quotation from Steiner, i.e. "What is the tone of self." He writes:

> To put it as simply as possible. Translation is a matter of attunement in view of a ~~fair or just~~ transaction. The more delicate, imaginatively close the attunement, the juster or more satisfactory the transaction. The perfectly accurate translation is unusually rare, even when the text to be transferred from one language to another is a purely technical prose article…
>
> What I personally regard as a "good" translation is one resulting from the translator's ability to discern, or if you prefer "hear," the tone of the self of the poet he has chosen to translate.

Attunement and transaction — rather than forcible replacement— are the preferred metaphors here for describing a good translation. And neither "attunement" nor "transaction" invokes a scenario in which something is being forcibly or forever transformed or deformed into something else. Both involve reciprocity: if I am attuned to something, I stand in a relation to it. My attunement depends on my judgment of it being a certain way, and of it continuing to be a certain way. Meanwhile, if I conduct a transaction with you, I give up something to get something else. I make an exchange. The justice of the exchange depends on how sensitively I am attuned to the goods that are exchanged. Normally, we would expect the goods exchanged in a translation transaction to be words and their meanings; Gascoyne is somewhat ambiguous here as to what these goods are. I take him to be implying that, if what's being translated is a poem, then the poem includes, along with its words, the tone of the self of the poet who wrote it, and a good translation (as opposed to a bad or merely adequate one) would capture that tone in pursuit of rendering the meaning of the poem. Gascoyne had evidently thought to describe the transaction as potentially fair or just in advance but struck these out; he settled on making the justness or the satisfaction of the transaction a result of the attunement, rather than something that would have shaped and potentially warped the attunement in the first place. A wise revision.

And just what is this "tone of the self?" Steiner had originally asked "In what language am I … when I am inmost? What is the tone of the self?" Gascoyne undoes the elision between language and tone (for spoken language can have many tones). And he stresses that the tone expresses something that is more basic than the personality or the sensibility of the poet:

> …one may assume that whatever the degree of temporary abdication of conscious or everyday self achieved by the poet before writing his poem, or in order to write it, the work resulting from his holding in abeyance his ratiocinative functions, which are responsible for much of what is generally thought to contribute to a person's "normal" self, will bear the poet's unmistakable hall-mark, it will provide an instance of his own special tone. "Je est un autre" declared Rimbaud. "No I, not I, but that the wind that blows through me!" cries D.H. Lawrence at the opening of one of the most unusual of his earlier poems. So it would seem that the self at the bottom of the spiral staircase is the tone, the true, the deep-buried self, that which psychoanalysis when successful enables us to recognize and accept as our own; and it is the tone of the voice with which that self speaks that is recognizable as the poet's own, most valuable one, and that which the translator if he is fortunate or fortunately endowed is able somehow to evoke in his own language.

Neither the ego nor even a point of view — hence the quotations from Rimbaud and D.H. Lawrence signaling an estrangement or a distance from the first person — the tone of the self can be heard in activities in which we are maximally free from the work of repression that produces the "conscious," "everyday," "normal" self. Gascoyne remained faithful to the aspect of Surrealist practice that sought to assimilate the traditional account of inspiration to an encounter with the Unconscious and cites Breton's remarks on automatic writing elsewhere in the lecture. Poetry is a place where the tone of the self, usually masked, rings true. This choice of the word "tone" is important. It does not suggest that poetry is a transparent window into anything like the self or even the unconscious. That would be too facile. Nor does it seem to be a situation of separating a manifest self from a latent one, as in Freud's approach to dream interpretation, which also invokes translation as a model. The tone of the self is not the same thing as what the self says, and it is also not the same thing as what the self is actually saying when it says something else. Nor is it the same thing as what the self is. It is an attribute of the self, a means through which the content of one's experiences or one's consciousness might be made manifest. Through attending to this attribute or this means, we can hear — and if we are translators, we should aspire to hear — an expression of the valuable or primal self of the poet, something that would prefigure any persona or mask. And

because, so the argument might go, the psyche is universal in a way that languages are not, what we hear can help us in our practical decision of how to render the work of a poet across languages. Capturing the "tone of the self" is a way of increasing the quality of a translation by making it seem as if the subjectivity of the original poet — some aspect of her personhood, and not merely the meaning of her words — had found its way into a new language.

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To close this essay, I want to return to Padgett's Reverdy translations. The notebook mentioned in the 2007 postface, festooned with a cartoon characters and a tongue-in-cheek dedication to Ted Berrigan, resides in the Danowski collection. It allows us to see how Padgett's more thorough attunement with the sensibility responsible for the source text produced a good translation, one whose "domesticating" procedures are justified on the grounds of providing a more complete comprehension of the source.

Here is a poem titled "Des Êtres vagues," first in Reverdy's French, then Padgett's first rough version:

Des Êtres Vagues

Une honte trop grande a relevé mon front. Je me suis débarrassé de ces encombrantes guenilles et j'attends.

Vous attendez aussi mais je ne sais plus quoi. Pourvu que quelque chose arrive. Tous les yeux s'allument aux fenêtres, toute la jalousie de nos rivaux recule au seuil des portes. Pourtant s'il n'allait rien venir.

À présent je passe entre les deux trottoirs; je suis seul, avec le vent qui m'accompagne en se moquant de moi. Comment fuir ailleurs que dans la nuit.

Mais la table et la lampe sont là qui m'attendent et tout le reste est mort de rage sous la porte. [45]

Vague Beings

Too great a shame called attention to my face. I got rid of those cumbersome rags and I wait.

You wait too but I no longer know what for. Provided that something happens. All the eyes go out of the windows, all the jealousy of our rivals has moved back to the edge of the doors. Nevertheless if nothing was going to come.

Right now I am passing between the 2 sidewalks: I am alone, w/ the wind that comes along with me and mocks me. How to run away somewhere else except in [into?] the night. ~~(at night~~.

But the table and the lamp await me and the rest is dead of rage under the door. [46]

Padgett's underlining seems to indicate places where he was not sure how to proceed — not knowing, for example, whether "I got rid of" was an adequate translation for "je me suis débarrassé" (he decided it was). Here is the final version he published, where he corrects a few small mistakes of vocabulary and grammar and makes a few small interpretive changes, one of which includes the aforementioned change of some punctuation:

Vague Beings

Too great a shame called attention to my face. I got rid of those cumbersome rags and I wait.

You wait too, but I no longer know what for. Provided that something happens. All the eyes light up at the windows, all the jealousy of our rivals has moved back to the thresholds of the doors. Nevertheless if nothing was going to happen.

Right now I am moving between the two sidewalks, I am alone with the wind that accompanies me and mocks me. How to run away somewhere else except at night.

But the table and the lamp are there waiting for me and the rest is dead of rage under the door. [47]

The changes are not radical, by any means: "edge of the doors" becomes "thresholds of the doors"; "passing" becomes "moving": "comes along with me" becomes "accompanies." These changes stay close to what competent readers of the French would recognize as literal meaning while increasing the fluency of the English. The shift, after "les deux trottoirs" ("the two sidewalks"), from semicolon (in the French original) to colon (in Padgett's first translation) and finally to comma (in Padgett's final version) reveals the degree to which this fluency differs from grammaticality. The final version produces a comma splice, but this mistake has the effect of bringing a reader of the English closer to speech, and potentially also to spontaneity, since a person who writes "Right now I am moving between the two sidewalks" might not manage to anticipate where his or her sentence will be going next in order to punctuate it correctly.

To what degree does the final version capture the "tone of the self" in Reverdy's poem — a poem that, though it refers to more than one person (a beloved?), concentrates on what might be called a *flanêur* of the mind? It is hard to answer this question in a truly satisfactory way without performing something like a lay analysis on the whole body of Reverdy's work — or at least spending as much time with it as Padgett did. For now, I think the best way to approach this question would be by comparison. Here is Mark Polizzotti's translation of the same poem:

Vague Creatures

Too great a shame holds my head high. I've rid myself of those cumbersome rags and I'm waiting.

You're waiting too but I don't know for what. As long as something happens. In the windows all eyes are shining; all the jealousy of our rivals recoils at the entrance. But what if nothing were coming…

For now I pass between two sidewalks. I'm alone, with a wind that mocks me as it blows alongside. Where else to flee but into the night.

But the table and lamp are here waiting for me, and all the rest has died of rage at the door.

There are some striking differences between the two translations: Padgett renders "a relevé mon front" as "called attention to my face" while Polizzotti gives it as "holds my head high." Polizzotti is probably closer to the literal sense of *relever* here, used as a transitive verb meaning to "lift" or "raise up" — it can also mean "note" or "notice," which is probably what Padgett had in mind when he chose "called attention to," even though his version makes a transitive verb into an intransitive one. But Polizzotti has the tense wrong. Keeping the whole line in the present, as he does, results in a more exciting English sentence. But it blurs an implication of discrete cause and effect that is there in the French. And, in serving idiomatic English expression, he makes the opening more grandiose than it needs to be, since the adjective "high" is not there in the original. It might have been if Reverdy had written *relevé la tête*. But he used *front*, "forehead," which both translators quietly treat as a metonymy. (It surprises me that, given Reverdy's association with Cubism, and the particular kind of representations of the human body Cubist art produced, neither of these translators decided to reject the metonymy and exploit the distorting effects available by the literal translation for "*front*," i.e. "forehead.") Padgett makes *front* into the face. The shame leads there; perhaps it is visible there. The shame is important because of the way it is perceived by others. In Polizzotti's version, the shame is already psychologized. It offers a motive for the compensatory raising of the head.

In addition to striking a bolder tone than Padgett's translation, Polizzotti gives himself more semantic latitude. (Perhaps surprisingly, the poet's translation ends up being the more conservative of the two.) This can work: "But what if nothing were coming…" is probably a more effective translation of "Pourtant s'il n' allait rien venir" than "Nevertheless if nothing was going to happen." Here Polizzotti's fluency is a helpful antidote to the imposing thicket of the hypothetical French negation. Yet those ellipses are too dramatic. And the flip side of the drama is superficiality. "Comment fuir ailleurs que dans la nuit," writes Reverdy. The line echoes with sadness but, more importantly, resignation and exhaustion. The emphasis is on the *ailleurs*, that venerable theme of the Symbolist elsewhere, the place that Baudelaire and Mallarmé were always trying (unsuccessfully) to go. How can we revive this dream except under the cover of darkness? And how cliché to want to do so! Padgett's conservative translation, "How to run away somewhere else except at night" preserves some of this in its deadpan. Polizzotti's translation, meanwhile, drifts away from this quiet disenchantment towards greater pathos: "Where else to flee but into the night." The exaggeration of "dans la nuit" and the emphasis on the grand literary echoes of *fuir* produce a line that could have been written by Edna St. Vincent Millay — which is not to say that it is bad line per se, only that it is not a good translation of Reverdy. The grandness of this tone, and the chattiness of Polizzotti's contractions makes Reverdy's poem less strange in English, just as his choice of translating "Êtres" as "Creatures" makes it more familiar even as it tries for a certain

creepiness. But strange is not creepy, and Padgett, though he could be accused of taking very few risks, manages also to preserve more of the "tone of the self" I hear in Reverdy's original.

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I do not mean to imply that fidelity, or translating for the "tone of the self," are just apologies for literalism or conservatism in translation. In theory, one could hear the tone of the self in a translation that was quite semantically free. More work could be done to see whether such translations can be described convincingly as being faithful in Gascoyne's sense. In the meantime: there are plenty of reservations to be lodged against Gascoyne's theory, both from the perspectives of philosophy and psychoanalysis and also from the perspective of literary theory. Most obviously: the self might not exist. Less obviously: if the self does exist, there might be no one final deep-buried self beneath more superficial selves. And if that deep-buried self does exist, we might not ever be able to hear it speak in its own language. There may be no end to repression; no final moment in which we can recognize and accept our deep-buried self as our own. (There is a quaint, pre-Lacanian optimism to Gascoyne's account of the potential success of psychoanalysis, although I am not sure whether this quaintness is a function of his naivéte or our cynicism.) And not every poet will write work that is as obviously conducive a conduit to any sort of deep-buried self as Rimbaud's or D.H. Lawrence's was; the work might be antagonistic to expression, or invested in the proliferation of personae to such a degree that no single self could be heard. Writing might be the destruction of every voice, as Barthes said it was, and thus obviate the discerning of any tone except its own neutralizing one. (But perhaps this description only applies to writing of a particular sort, one Barthes mistook for writing in general…)

Despite these potential reservations, which I offer as legitimate debates and not as settled issues, Gascoyne's reflections are useful if we recall their focus on the practical matters of how we translate and how we judge translations of poems. Approaching translation as a hearing of the "tone of the self," and as a recreation of that tone in an attuned transaction, reminds us that in order to produce a faithful translation of a poet's work, we should have the most complete understanding and appreciation of what is happening in the work as we can have. This is not a simple return to considering the spirit rather than letter of a given utterance in a text, but rather a communing with the spirit that presides over an entire text, and letting that be the standard against which a "good" translation is judged. If something like this were possible, then an ethical translation of poetry would not necessarily be caught on the dilemma of whether to foreignize or domesticate; both fluency and estrangement would be subordinate to sustaining the meaning of the text, including the tone of the self that was crucial to expressing that meaning. At the same time, the corresponding difficulty of an ethical translation would be more radical and demanding: it would require not only

the hermeneutic and verbal skills we associate with translation in its traditional form, but the capacity to identify with someone else's work in such a way as to hear what made it different from that of everyone else.

NOTES

1. John Dryden, "From the Preface to *Ovid's Epistles*" in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Lawrence Venuti (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 41.

2. "Translating Reverdy's *Poèmes en prose*" in Pierre Reverdy, *Prose Poems*, trans. Ron Padgett (Brooklyn: Black Square Editions & The Brooklyn Rail, 2007), 59.

3. Here I follow Walter Benn Michaels and Stephen Knapp's axiom that "the meaning of a text is simply identical to the author's intended meaning." See their eponymous essay in *Against Theory: Literary Studies and the New Pragmatism*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 12. For the importance of punctuation for meaning and intention, see Laura Riding and Robert Graves on Shakespeare's sonnet 94 in their *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* (London: Heinemann, 1927). I thank Jennifer Ashton for reminding me of this work and for encouraging me to think more about the question of intention in translation.

4. To be more specific: these differences will be lexical, grammatical, and, when translating languages with different writing systems or alphabets, graphical.

5. Eugene Nida, "Principles of Correspondence," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 153.

6. Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Derbelnet have helpfully catalogued what they call the seven translation procedures in increasing order of difficulty: borrowing, calque (the borrowing of expressions whose components are literally translated), literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. Translators will frequently make use of several of these techniques at the same time. See "A Methodology for Translation" in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 128-137.

7. These ways vary. Sacred texts are often thought to express directly revealed truth, and so translating them into other languages is frequently controversial (the Qur'an would be a good contemporary example). Poems are thought to resist translation insofar as their meaning depends on the specificity of their articulation — a position notoriously advanced by Cleanth Brooks in his critique of "the heresy of paraphrase"; this specificity obviously includes aspects of verse like prosody and rhyme, which are often not reproducible in translation except at the cost of intelligibility, but also extends to any use of words that is deliberately ambiguous or suggestive relative to a particular linguistic context. The same specificity would apply to literary prose. Some philosophers and theorists — particularly Heidegger and Lacan and their students — use words in ways approximate to what we might find in literary texts, and so the problem of paraphrasability or translatability appears in philosophy, too.

8. Roman Jakoboson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, ed. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 151.

9. As Knapp and Michaels put it (in response to a criticism by Stanley Cavell) "not all intentions are intentions to mean." See their "Against Theory 2: Hermeneutics and Deconstruction" in *Critical Inquiry* 14, No. 1 (1987), 49. The significance of this statement for interpretation will depend on whether a text could contain such an intention.

10. Schleiermacher had been anticipated, to a degree, by Dryden, who distinguished between Metaphrase (word by word translation), Paraphrase ("Translation with Latitude") and Imitation ("taking only some general hints from the Original, to run division on the ground-work as he pleases"). John Dryden, "from the Preface to *Ovid's Epistles,*" 38.

11. See Antoine Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique: Herder, Goethe, Schlegel, Novalis, Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Hölderlin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984) [Translated by Stefan Heyvaert as *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992)] and Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995).

12. I recently learned, for example, that the Arabic noun "gurfa" means "the amount of water that can be held in one hand." See Ella Frances Sanders, *Lost in Translation: An Illustrated Compendium of Untranslatable Words from around the World* (Berkeley: Ten Speed, 2014).

13. For the history of the foreignizing / domesticating debate, see Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, especially chapters 2 and 3.

14. *The Inferno of Dante: A New Verse Translation*, trans. Robert Pinsky (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995), 3. In the original, the opening tercet of *Inferno* reads: "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita / Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, / che la diritta via era smarrita."

15. *The Inferno of Dante: A New Verse Translation*, xix.

16. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility,* 18.

17. Ibid., 18.

18. Ibid., 20. The emphasis on domesticating translation is also prominent in French intellectual culture of the same period, and Herder and Schleiermacher were polemicizing against this eradication of cultural difference, and for a German alternative, when they wrote their pioneering essays on translation.

19. Ibid., 18.

20. Ibid., 20.

21. Ibid., 20.

22. See *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness*, ed. Carolyn Forché (New York: Norton, 1993).

23. See Allen Grossman, "On Communicative Difficulty in General and 'Difficult' Poetry in Particular: The Example of Hart Crane's 'The Broken Tower'" in *True Love: Essays on Poetry and Valuing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

24. John Dryden, "On Translation," 26.

25. Ben Johnson, *Timber, or Discoveries Made on Men and Matter* in *Ben Jonson's Literary Criticism*, ed. J.D. Redwin Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 19.

26. After the remark on Spenser, Jonson immediately adds, "Yet I would have him read for his matter … as Virgil read Ennius." Johnson, *Timber*, 19. The idea being that Virgil took ideas expressed roughly in poetry by Ennius and refined them in his own work, and something of the same might be done with Spenser.

27. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Problem of Translation" in *Theories of Translation,* 68–69.

28. Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1968), 34–35.

29. David Wray notes that the description of the Zukofsky Catullus as "homophonic" is importantly misleading insofar it does not capture the materialist dimension of Zukofsky's approach to language: "The question of what the Zukofskys meant by their stated aim to "breathe the 'literal" meaning" with Catullus and how far they actually accomplished that aim is a question that can never be answered adequately in terms of homphony, because that term implies a sound-sense dualism radically opposed to Zukofsky's materialist conception of how words mean …. Even the 'dance of the intellect among words,' for Zukofsky, left footprints. Intellectual ones, to be sure, but also always bodily ones, pressed into actual matter." David Wray, "cool rare air: Zukofsky's Breathing with Catullus and Plautus" in *Chicago Review* 50, Nos. 2–4 (2005), 85. Whether or not the Zukofskys "materialist conception of how words mean" is just an attempt to make the idea of a categorically distinct poetic language acceptable to Marxists, it is clear that their *Catullus* does a lot more than try to mimic the sound of the Latin. See also the recent article by Joseph Horáček, "Pedantry and Play: The Zukofsky *Catullus*" in *Comparative Literature Studies* 51, No. 1 (2014): 106–31.

30. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 20.

31. Edmund Wilson, "The Strange Case of Pushkin and Nabokov," *New York Review of Books*, July 15, 1965.

32. Jorge Luis Broges, "The Translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*," trans. Esther Allen, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 106.

33. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "Preface to *The Early Italian Poets*" in *Theories of Translation*, 65.

34. Emily Apter, "Translation with No Original: Scandals of Textual Reproduction" in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 167.

35. See H.A. Mason, *To Homer Through Pope: An Introduction to Homer's* Illiad *and Pope's Translation* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972) and Garry Wills, "On Reading Pope's Homer," *The New York Times*, June 1, 1997.

36. Indeed, a serious embrace of Derridean claims about meaning would entail going further than Jakobson did: not only poetry or verse but all language would be (like sacred scripture) untranslatable.

37. Friedrich Schleiermacher, "*from* On the Different Methods of Translating," in *Theories of Translation*, 39.

38. Schleiermacher, "*from* On the Different Methods of Translating," 41–42. My emphasis.

39. Some translators might suggest that the radical otherness of the source text is the origin of an ethics of translation, but this is to ignore one of the lessons of *Against Theory*: this otherness is only the otherness of a *text* — and not, say, the radical otherness of random markings — if we attribute some intention to it. And if we do not attribute some intention to it, what is to stop us from deciding that the best way to preserve the otherness of the text is just to leave it untranslated? Even a Levinasian ethics, which would seem to sponsor something like this investment in otherness as the origin of ethics, puts a limit on this otherness by locating it in a very familiar place, i.e. the face.

[40.] Gascoyne (1916–2001) is occasionally associated with the Neo-Romantic poets, though he distinguished himself by his early interest and participation in the Surrealist movement, and was responsible for introducing the work of many Surrealist writers to English audiences in his *Short Survey of Surrealism* (1935; London: Enitharmon Press, 2000). He became well-known as poet in the late 40s and 50s and his *Collected Poems* was published in 1965. He soon suffered a mental breakdown that interrupted his writing for a long period, but eventually returned to prominence in the 1980s.

[41.] David Gascoyne, "The Poet Translator and His Problems," manuscript, Raymond Danowski Poetry Library (Series 1, Box 7, Folder 1), Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. All citations from Gascoyne are from this manuscript.

[42.] Steiner's remarks can be found in *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 125.

[43.] *Selected Letters of John Keats*, ed. Grant F. Scott (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 60.

[44.] *Selected Letters of John Keats*, 195.

[45.] Pierre Reverdy, *Œuvres Complètes*, 2 Vols., ed. Étienne-Alain Hubert (Paris: Flammarion, 2010).

[46.] Pierre Reverdy, *Poèmes en prose*, trans. Ron Padgett, manuscript, 1965, Raymond Danowski Poetry Library (Series 1, Box 20, Folder 9), Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

[47.] Pierre Reverdy, *Prose Poems*, trans. Ron Padgett, 39.

[48.] *Pierre Reverdy*, ed. Mary Ann Caws (New York: New York Review Books, 2013), 12.

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"CROWDED AIR":
PREVIOUS MODERNISMS IN SOME 1964 NEW YORK LITTLE MAGAZINES

STEPHANIE ANDERSON

> In our "literary" listings and groupings […] we make constellations of the works of poetry that are, if they are anything, linked by gender, works of our selves, drawings of our spiritual kinship, of when and where what we are is happening. —Robert Duncan [1]

In the most recent issue of *Lana Turner*, Joshua Clover draws out the differences between what he terms the "genealogical" and the "historical" avant-gardes. The former, he claims, "is a diachronic account which takes genealogy for history"; in doing so, it necessarily suffers from "the affirmation trap," which blunts an avant-garde's political ambitions for "an enlarged struggle toward the transformation of basic social arrangements" by positioning itself (and whatever political claims it does make) "within the cultural sphere." Thus an unavoidable contradiction arises: a genealogical avant-garde "has no choice but to affirm the very cultural continuity which it must also claim to oppose." It preserves an existing social sphere and concerns itself not with social "antagonism" but with questions of form and the status of art—though it also requires "a matching of aesthetic practice to some corresponding and contemporaneous social content." [2] In contrast, a historical avant-garde is "synchronic" and "align[s] itself first with the negation of the current social arrangement including the negation of culture both as a medium for transmission and as such." Formally, it is distinct from previous avant-gardes.

Clover's delineations are provocative and compacted; they describe the contemporary Anglophone poetry scene, and appeal for a genuinely historical "negationist" avant-garde that moves beyond the "affirmation trap" through a "direct engagement with lived social antagonism," [3] yet they also have a history. In this essay, I propose the 1960s New York poetry scene as one that navigates—sometimes deftly, sometimes necessarily messily—the genealogical and the historical avant-gardes, with the goal of avoiding "the affirmation trap." Like Ed Sanders's antagonistically and aptly named Fuck You Press, whose publication list

includes bootleg mimeograph printings of W.H. Auden and Ezra Pound, little magazines from 1964 serve as case studies for an avant-garde scene that grapples with the enshrinement of/resistance to previous avant-gardes (in Clover's terms, the genealogical avant-garde) and an engagement with social antagonism (the historical avant-garde). Ultimately, these scenes' interest in social self-documentation is, in some ways, propelled by an attempt to get around the problem posed by the relegation of poems (of whatever aesthetic genealogy) to the cultural sphere.

The early 1960s were a formative time for small press publishing in New York: between 1960 and 1961, publications include Donald Allen's influential anthology *The New American Poetry, Kulchur* magazine, and first books by Barbara Guest, LeRoi Jones, and Jerome Rothenberg; 1962 is the year of John Ashbery's divisive *The Tennis Court Oath*, which utilizes collage and juxtaposition in a form very different from his debut *Some Trees,* thus somewhat polarizing his audience; 1963 marks the founding of Ted Berrigan's *"C"* press and magazine; in 1964 Frank O'Hara's seminal *Lunch Poems* is released. All of this work serves as a foundation to a flurry of little magazine activity that crescendos through second half of the decade—New York alone sees the commencement and contrails of some well-remembered magazines like *0 To 9, Adventures in Poetry, The World, Angel Hair, Umbra, Caterpillar, The Floating Bear,* and others, often grouped together under the label of the "mimeograph revolution."[4]

The mimeograph revolution, as a term, describes the specific circulation and the technology of production of some magazines. But it is also, as Steven Clay and Rodney Phillips point out, a kind of comprehensive shorthand for a group of aesthetic practices or styles (including but not limited to spontaneity, collaboration, and appropriation) and their continuation in later magazines.[5] Daniel Kane, writing about a more specific group of magazines than the ones showcased in the B-Side Modernism exhibit, says, "Much of the poetry and associated commentary in the mimeos tended to emphasize and articulate both the poets' allegiances to a historical experimental tradition (Williams, Pound, Stein, and so on) as well as to a heightened sense of the poets' fraternity and their marginalized relationship to the society in which they wrote."[6] This is certainly true sometimes, but what's also evident—sometimes within the same magazine—is a contrasting desire to shuck the notion of poetic progenitors. The marginality embraced by 1960s small press poets sometimes validates itself by positioning itself within a lineage of experimentation (for instance, Ted Berrigan's first sonnet, an homage to Ezra Pound, ends with the couplet, "We are the sleeping fragments of his sky, / Wind giving presence to fragments,"[7] drawing attention both to an indebtedness to Pound's formal innovations and to Berrigan's own furthering of fragmentation, his "cut-up" method of composition). But such a marginality must also emphasize autonomy and a writing of the present, what I call *contemporaneity*, in order to make itself distinct. That distinction sometimes

reveals itself in the magazines' content, certainly, but also emerges in the various production practices of the time: stories of mimeograph magazines production, frequently completed at night and on the sly with available office and church mimeographs, often sound similar to descriptions of protest press and underground newspaper production.[8] As the decade continues, the spheres of production and circulation of protest literature and poetry small press publishing increasingly overlap, as in Susan Sherman's IKONstore.[9] By attending to specific aspects of production (details of publication and circulation embedded in what Robert Darnton calls "the communications circuit"[10]), we discover that the mimeograph revolution's desire for contemporaneity is often more evidenced in sociality (gossip, anecdote, conversation) than in genealogical or even formal questions, which are often perceived as having their own retrograde temporality.

The term "mimeograph revolution" was coined as said revolution occurred; Eric Mottram uses it as a title in 1964 for a round-up review in *The Times Literary Supplement*, writing, "Kirby Congdon, the poet who runs Crank Press, calls [the flurry of self-published little magazines] the mimeography revolution, the end of the competitive approach to poetry and waiting and pleading at the doors of big time publishing."[11] Of course, little magazines were not new—modernism had been circulated via publications like *Blast*, *Poetry*, and *The Little Review*[12]—but emergent technologies and a changing social atmosphere in the post-World War II years gave the 1960s magazines new energy and form. Contending with limited resources and obscenity laws that dampened transnational distribution networks,[13] the number of magazines produced in the '50s cannot compare to the exponential production of the next two decades. Still, some of the offset little magazines of the '50s—notably *Origin*, *The Black Mountain Review*, *The Fifties*, *Measure*, and others—both paved the way for the "revolution" and provided models against which to work. Decade-bridging little magazines include LeRoi and Hettie Jones's *Yugen*, which began in 1958, and which managed to circulate outside of the city primarily because of Hettie Jones's *Partisan Review* acquaintance with distributor Bernhard DeBoer (otherwise, to get distribution, "you had to have a spine and ours was stapled").[14] Jerome Rothenberg's *Poems from the Floating World* commenced in 1959, circulating in and influencing the New York poetry scene. Robert Kelly, Joan Kelly, and George Economou started *Trobar* in 1960, after the three editors left *The Chelsea Review*.[15] Looking at *Trobar*'s genesis gives us one window onto what is now considered a relative lull in and perceived stylistic bent of New York area little magazine production just prior to the mimeo boom. Kelly recalls:

> At that time, in the late '50s […] there was nothing to read; the magazines were very few and far between. There was *J*, the mimeograph paper that Jack Spicer ran in San Francisco, which hardly got to New York until 1959 or 1960—1960 I think we got it there, in the great Eighth Street Bookshop. There were a few other things […] a few that were around and that were interesting—*Yugen* is one of them… [16]

Kelly refers to Bly's *The Fifties* as their "apostate," but explains and he and his fellow editors wanted to counterbalance the prevailing tendency toward translation in that magazine and elsewhere; the impetus behind *Trobar* was to "follow whatever was developing in the sense of an American aesthetic, an American poetic." He continues:

> We had Emerson to guide us, and Whitman and Dickinson and Melville to guide us, and Hart Crane and so on to guide us—they were wonderful outposts of reality, maybe extensions of how far we could go in certain directions, but what we didn't have was a convincing sense of that's enough, that we can work with that, can go forward in our own language. [17]

Economou supports this present-oriented impetus when he says, "The title *Trobar* announced something about the longevity and pedigree of our take on poetry to go with the intensity of our commitment to its present moment." In addition to Crane and others, Kelly also cites Stein as a "master," and Economou credits Pound as the "inspiration" for the title, suggesting the ambition of maintaining a genealogical avant-garde while also hinting toward aspects of a historical one. [18]

In Economou's and Kelly's accounts, previous modernists seem to be both generative of ("guides," "masters," "inspirations") and inadequate to ("that's enough," "our own language") the publication of a contemporaneous poetics, one that is present-based and seeks innovation—though that innovation can occur by working with predecessor material. According to Kelly, *Trobar*'s conceptualization and advocacy of the "deep image" is indebted to Pound's "division of powers" (*logos, melos,* and *phanos*), [19] though part of what attracts Kelly to the *phanos* is its apparent ability to encompass the social. Implicit here is the idea that contemporaneous social problems cannot be adequately explained within the frame of past influences, especially if that frame is aesthetic—too much is left out.

In other words, one way Pound's seemingly metaphysical categories may be relevant for the "present moment" of the mimeo boom is to see the image as reflective of "a particular stance of the poet as regards his material." The deep image is ultimately intended to generate a

"conceptual cognitive freedom" capable of explaining the present: the deep image was not, Kelly says, "about profundity in a religious sense," but "about getting below the surface of ordinary reality to see what its sources are. Trying to get to know, to put it in social terms, trying to get beneath the social to see what the roots are of social behavior. Why are black people being discriminated against? Why are women so humiliated in our society?" [20] By opposing "profundity"—of religion, or even of what we might consider the traditional lyric—with "ordinary reality," Kelly suggests that only a confrontation with the latter can reveal anything "beneath the social." Kelly's account of the deep image stands precisely in the contradiction where Clover locates "the affirmation trap": an "image" is nothing if not aesthetic, and very clearly invokes imagism and previous avant-gardes, yet it seeks to understand its "causes" not in traditions of image-making but in unmediated social reality. It seeks to produce knowledge and a transformed sense of social practice. The unlikeliness that the deep image can actually operate this way is what marks the tension of an avant-garde in search of the ground of its contemporaneity and efficacy. *Trobar* is an early example of a magazine obliquely invested in a politics that is enmeshed with notions of aesthetic lineage and autonomy.

I want now to consider some of the publications in and around 1964 in this social context—and particularly at moments when they reference previous modernisms, which weave through the youthful little mags of the '60s in various ways. The Danowski collection, based in the concept of inclusiveness, is an ideal place to examine the reverberations of previous modernisms in the 1960s little magazines, especially short-lived ones that do not quite fit into historical narratives of fraternity and affiliation. [21]

If we are attentive to the social context in and around 1964, it becomes easier to see how engaging the lineage of experimentation (the genealogical avant-garde) and desiring to discard lineage entirely and embrace social antagonism (the historical avant-garde) may have become increasingly entwined as both social movements and the New York literary scene expanded. With the founding of SDS in the early '60s, the urgency of the social questions "deep image" in part sought to address seemed to accelerate. Todd Gitlin points to the disappointment of the Atlantic City Democratic Convention, the murders of civil rights workers, and the Gulf of Tonkin as crucial events for the New Left: "Before, liberalism posed a dilemma. After, it was an obstacle." What came next, he says, was

> …the perfecting and proliferating of identities: culture as politics: the idea of 'liberation'; the movement as a culture, a way of life apart. Cultural transformations already at work in the Fifties picked up speed. Subsurface tendencies showed

> themselves, shaping the rest of the decade: campus reform; black power; seeds of counterculture; the women's movement; the withering away of nonviolence. [22]

At the same time, the poetry and publishing scene in New York, especially the one affiliated with the Lower East Side readings at Les Deux Mégots and Café Le Metro, was growing considerably. This fact is evidenced not only in the contemporary publication of accounts and critical work addressing these years but also in the activities of self-archiving that occurred during or shortly after the first half of the decade, suggesting participants' awareness of the moment as one of increased artistic production. [23]

One youthful new magazine was *Things* (eventually to become the magazine and press Hanging Loose, an enterprise that continues today), launched in fall 1964 by Emmett Jarrett and Ron Schreiber, who had met at Columbia circa 1960 when Jarrett studied with Schreiber, then a PhD student. [24] *Things* has a typically male masthead; however, it is unusual in that its first issue contains more women poets than many of its contemporaries—five of fifteen total. Though it's not a mimeo mag, *Things* nonetheless bristles with youthful ambition, asserting epochal separation and newness: "…a period in our literature has ended," Jarrett and Schreiber assert in their "Prospectus."

> Ours is an urban, industrial, mechanized age. Williams foreshadowed a period in which the poet's voice must be the voice of the city, the voice of a society in which individuals seem to shrink from a world that may end. In this half-century, there must be a literature of direct statement because things need to be stated directly: facts have too long been muffled by private verse and public rhetoric.

Figure 1: *Things* Issue 1, 1964.

A sense of the Cold War era's apocalyptic atmosphere lurks behind their prose, and a kind of exasperation with not only academia ("[literature] should be a literature of assertion rather than analysis, statement rather than criticism") but also the discussion surrounding current events ("Few essays on the Birmingham riots emphasized that individuals were beaten and bitten. Human content was lost in discussions of group conflict. The essays we publish will present human facts, not sociological generalizations."). According to the editors, neither "private verse" nor "public rhetoric" will suffice—only "direct statement," implying a frustration with public/private distinctions that are often extended to genres, and suggesting a middle ground that is perhaps more akin to person-to-person conversation or talk. In their description of desirable fiction, the ethos starts to feel one step removed from direct action: "The fiction we publish will relate experiences of one human being confronting another or himself. Stories in which a protagonist is smothered by his environment do not interest us. We are concerned with stories which relate the smothered man's own feelings, explicitly and directly." Alongside the "poet's voice" as "the voice of the city, the voice of a society" this statement makes a sideways assertion—environments can be read either as saturated with institutions or as wilderness, but either way, they are removed from "cities," which are the

province of poets. In Jarrett and Schreiber's vision, poets create a society conceived as a group of individuals, bound by their "direct" conversation—the city is a set of relations between individuals. The poet speaks from personal experience but is also authorized to be representative of the group.

Things opens with a passage from *Paterson*, a text that further helps illuminate the editors' conception of a city—and their indebtedness to William Carlos Williams.[25] The books of *Paterson* were published separately in the '40s and '50s, and finally as a single volume in 1963; Williams was thus a contemporary, the work received by young poets for perhaps the first time. *Things'* inner cover framing quotation actually takes a passage from *Paterson*'s preface and inserts under it the now-famous "no ideas but in things" line which first occurs a few pages later in the text—though given the way that incantatory phrase migrates through Williams's previous versions of the text, the mash-up would have been no great transgression.[26] Instead, it's the potential mis- or over-application of the line that prompts Levertov's "Admonition." Levertov writes:

> "No ideas but in things" does not mean "No ideas." Nor does it specify:
> "No ideas but in everyday things
>
> modern things
> urban things." No! It means that:
>
> poetry appears when meaning is embodied in the figure.

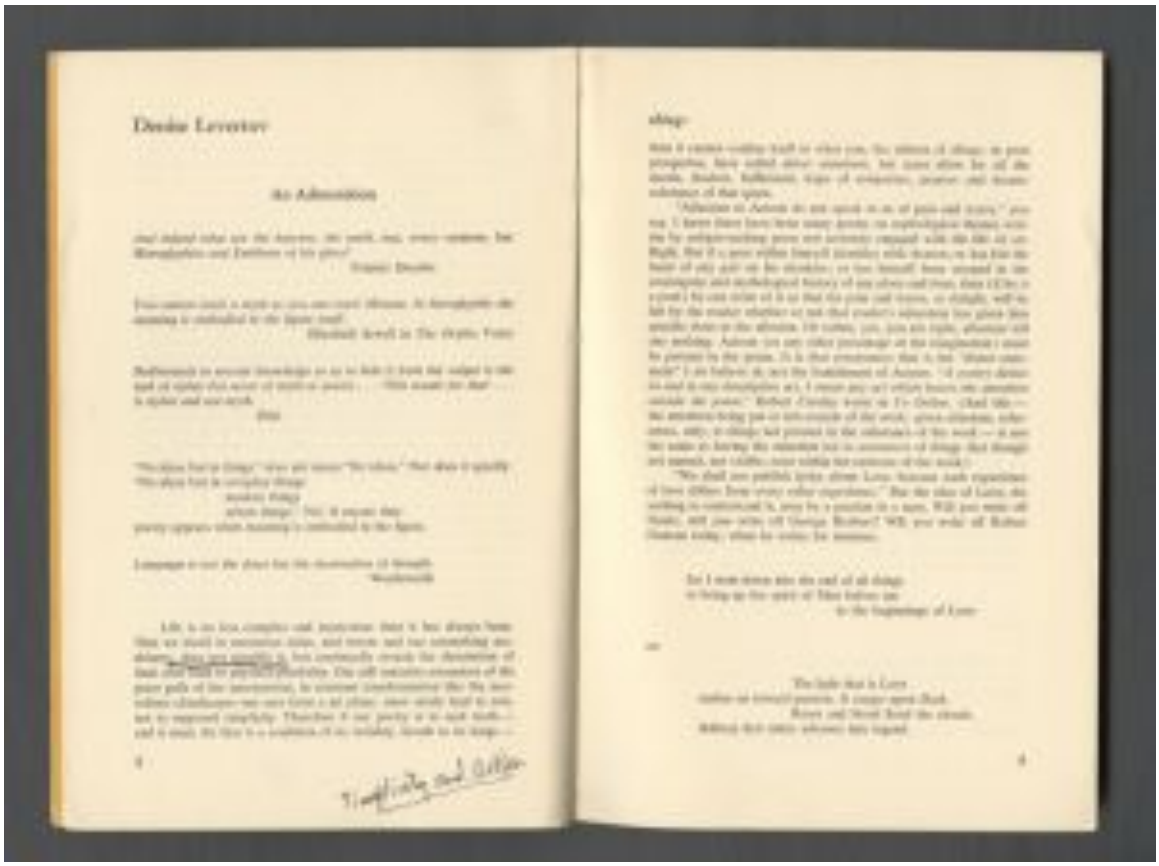

Figure 2: Denise Levertov. "Admonition." *Things* Issue 1, 1964.

One of the deft moves Levertov makes in her response is to point the editors/readers toward Duncan's discussion of "the school of rational imagination" in an excerpt from what would eventually become *The H.D. Book.*[27] She writes:

> Robert Duncan […] has pointed out how the poets and critics of the school of Rational Imagination […] have regarded words "not as powers but as counters." A misinterpretation of "No ideas but in things" can lead to a similar stance. […] We need a poetry not of *direct statement* but of *direct evocation:* a poetry of hieroglyphics, of embodiment, incarnation: in which the personages may be of myth or of Monday, no matter, if they are of the living imagination.

Levertov does not mention—but assumes the reader will discover—Duncan's description, earlier in the excerpt, of an "admonition" of sorts that H.D. sends to Williams. Duncan writes:

> "I think you have the *spark*," H.D. wrote Williams in that 1916 letter about his *Postludes*, "and when you speak *direct* are a poet." The spark lies in, is, the word wherever it is spoken direct, directs what we are then, for we involve our selves in saying. In poetry we make things real by working with every word as *directive*, as the immediate condition of or presence of the poem itself. [28]

By pointing the reader toward Duncan's text, Levertov seems to be warning against the over-instrumentalization of texts and against singular readings of authors. She nuances Jarrett and Schreiber's sense of what Williams could mean by "direct" writing, and in so doing points to a possible lineage of modernist influence in which Williams is not only progenitor but also inheritor. So on one hand, her "admonition" argues against the simplistic enshrinement of a predecessor; on the other hand, it does so by pointing the reader toward the codification of a larger genealogy. She does not insist that the valences toward social action in the editors' statement are misguided, but that they are potentially misplaced in relation to that larger genealogy.

Indeed, by nuancing and correcting the Williams account, Levertov reminds us that in practice, the idea of form always evokes *some* genealogical considerations. Or, to put it another way, the *Things* exchange demonstrates that the delamination between an avant-garde that proceeds in terms of genealogy and one that proceeds in terms of conceptions of contemporaneity is unattainable. Clover argued that the desire of the avant-garde to vindicate itself in genealogical terms is paradoxical, since genealogy merely re-establishes the domain of "culture" that the avant-garde sets out to oppose. But Levertov shows us that the idea of a truly historical avant-garde, one that "will not be identifiable via formal similarities to previous avant-gardes" is *itself* paradoxical. Clover concedes that a historical avant-garde might be "unrecognizable to the very culture in which it arises"; but for it to be recognizable *at all,* in any culture, it must be identifiable in terms that can always be seen to have—or acquire—a genealogy. Thus, in offering this moment as a pre-history of Clover's terms, I mean not precisely to vindicate the idea of a historical avant-garde, but rather to propose that the struggle (sometimes conscious, sometimes uncomprehending) with this very contradiction drove participants in this little magazine scene away from rich meditations on genealogy or powerful conceptions of form, and toward *self-documentation* as the field in which contemporaneity could be achieved or expressed. If, in the remainder of the essay, my examples gradually shift to focus less on issues of form and more on those that might be associated with gossip, it is because this kind of microhistory of little magazines comes closer to how this avant-garde sought contemporaneity—by embodying and documenting their own particular forms of sociality.

Other little magazines published around 1964 seem to follow both Levertov's and Economou and Kelly's leads at the same time, choosing not to take their scaffolding from a single modernist predecessor but rather pulling content from numerous modernist sources while also showcasing contemporaneity. Howard Moody, minister of the Judson Memorial Church, uses Stein's sentence structure to illustrate the dislocation of the contemporaneous "fourth man" in an essay for 1963's *The Judson Review*.[29] Also that year, the first issue of *Signal* (ed. Bret Rohmer) prints "a new Hart Crane find," "The Moth that God Made Blind," a sort of Icarus coming-of-age parable written when Crane was sixteen.

Figure 3: *Signal* Vol. 1, No. 1, Fall 1963.

In the same issue, Diane di Prima (an associate editor of the magazine, along with Paul Z. Parish) publishes a poem called "The Moth," perhaps an oblique response. Crane's poem reserves the first person for the final stanza, whereas di Prima's begins with it ("I took a lot of / kleenex from the back of the store / to cry into, / if I had to.") and circles around a "he" figure whose referent is somewhat indeterminate, fluctuating between man and moth and both ("You wonder how long he can scrape the ground like that / while you pull him along on his stomach / and where it will end").[30] The indeterminacy of the poem's scenes and their connections risks speculative readings. Yet given the proximity of the poem to Crane's

in the issue and the play on "present" in the fifth section, which reads "The packages arent all presents. The packages / arent all presents. The / packages arent all presents," there does seem to be a concern with the poetic "gifts" of previous writers and in what temporality they—and the current poem—exist. In di Prima's poem's final section, the moth dies when "they tried to pull it" off the speaker's shirt, the cause being "Coronary thrombosis. / Or what is it / moths die of[.]" The moth is both hearty, clinging to the speaker's shirt, and fragile, dying upon removal. With irreverence and slanted referents, di Prima redirects the modernist lineage sideways: she leaves open the possibility that the poem might address poetic inheritance without explicitly invoking it.

Other writers wrestled with the contradiction between genealogy and contemporaneity within the framework of the academy. Up at Columbia, in the fall of 1962, a group of poets was forming via a different tangential link to Crane. Michael O'Brien remembers:

> First came the place, then the magazine. The Eventorium was thought up, and then made to happen, by the poets Hunter Ingalls and Frank Kuenstler. Hunter was a graduate student in the art history department at Columbia, writing a dissertation on the painter William Sommer, a friend of Hart Crane's. Hunter spent his life making things happen; in this instance he wanted to set up a poetry reading, and wondered what poets were around. Over in the English department John Unterecker, himself a poet, was working on his biography of Hart Crane, and I suppose Hunter had introduced himself and they'd talked about Crane and Sommer. Hunter asked him what poets were around; names were mentioned—Erica Mann [later Erica Jong], Prescott Evarts, me. So, counting himself, Hunter had four poets. Now he needed a place. A friend from the art history department, Steve Pepper had rented a loft on the northwest corner of Broadway and 100th St. and installed himself there under the guise of Captain Steve's Friendly Art Store. (I'm not making this up.) Hunter asked him if he'd sponsor a reading, Steve, who'd sponsor anything, one felt, said sure, and so it happened […] Another reading took place, and Frank, who was living in the neighborhood, came to this one. It never took anyone much time to realize that Frank was something else. He and Hunter hit it off. They talked about how desirable this thing Hunter had started was, how it might be made to continue, and concluded that the way to do it was to move into the loft (Captain Steve was moving on) and start running programs on a regular basis. The name was Hunter's. [31]

Readings took place on Sunday afternoons; two featured readers were followed by an open mic.[32] The magazine, edited jointly by O'Brien and Hunter Ingalls, began in 1964, as an extension of the series and as a way to distribute work by members of the group. O'Brien explains, "None of us were getting published, so the next thing seemed to be to start a magazine—lots of magazines were being started those days, all on a shoestring. It was no big deal. It took some work, and the will to do it, but it was no big deal." Five issues were produced in the following three years, alongside three books by Kuenstler, one by O'Brien, and one by Barbara Holland. The magazine was the sort of DIY affair becoming increasingly popular in the '60s: stencils typed in the office of the art history department; issues printed "in a tiny offset shop downtown." O'Brien continues, "We sold them at the readings, we had a few subscribers, we exchanged issues with other magazines, including the gorgeous *El Corno Emplumado*, we gave them away. It was a world. I miss it." Rachel Blau DuPlessis was another member of the group, which provided her with an alternative to the downtown scene, and contrasted with downtown's "really strong dangers for juicy young females at that time."[33] She has called The Eventorium "surrealist-based"[34] though she explains that the interest in French encompassed other literary movements and translation;[35] O'Brien describes the atmosphere more as "anything goes"—"Surrealists were in the air, but it was a pretty crowded air."[36] The magazines themselves contain translations and surrealist plays—and, appropriately enough, the first issue contains O'Brien's poem "Hart Crane."

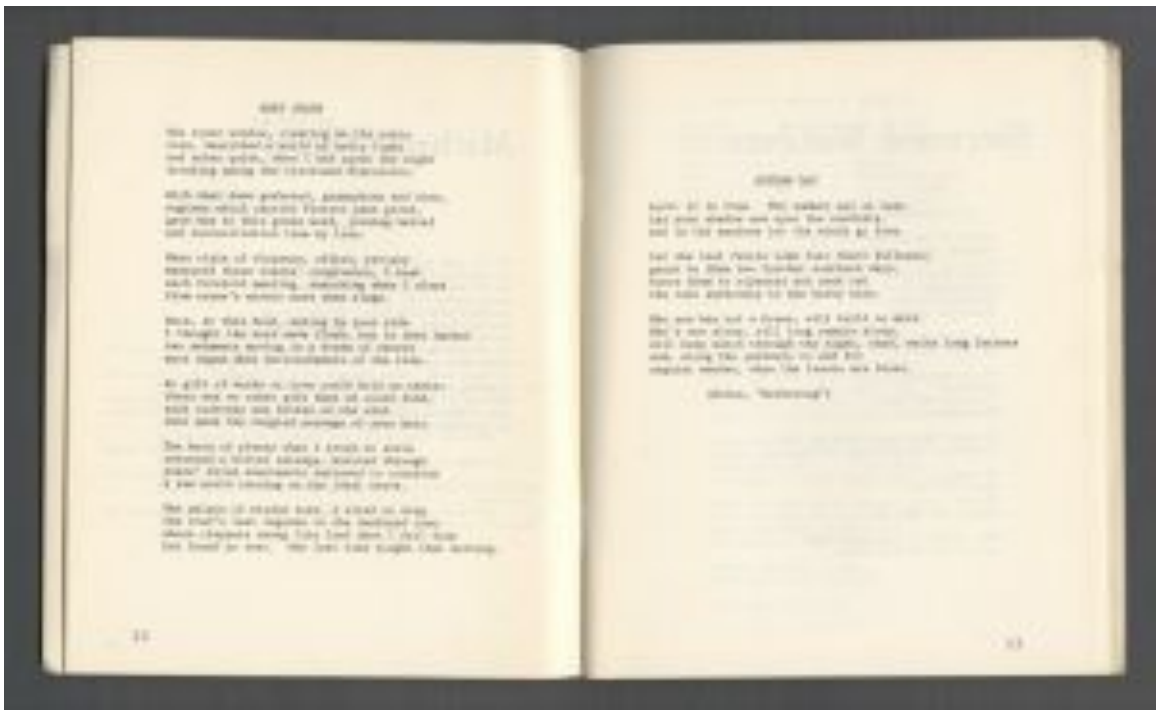

Figure 4: *The Eventorium Muse,* No. 1, Spring 1964.

An interest in French modernisms was nothing new—especially for poets associated with the New York School—but that interest was also cropping up in the other little magazines not as directly tied to the New York School scene, yet linked through networks of local distribution. Robert Kelly appears as writer, not editor, in the one-off magazine *Pogamoggan* (1964) with "Three Organ Rituals for Erik Satie," a piece that's part homage and part parody ("This is for the dullest & most precious work of Erik Satie"). Another poem in the magazine, Anselm Hollo's "A program," expresses the speaker's desire for musical sound, but it perhaps also mocks the tendency of previous modernists toward "statements" and "programs." The poem, in its entirety, reads:

> Enough of statements,
> or too much! I want
> just in a corner make
> one long, the same
> sweet sound (& by
> whatever means)
> then sleep. A simple
> flow. And when I wake
> make it again
> & eat my beans,
> let everybody know
> I'm here, not
> happy & not sad, but almost perfect.

The playful syntax of the second line, "or too much! I want" suggests that the writer desires too much at the same time that he or she proclaims to want only "a simple flow" between sound and sleep. The "one long" sound is produced not by proscription ("by / whatever means"), but its description as "the same / sweet sound" creates ambiguity. One reading is that the sound remains unchanged, the same, but another hinges on the line break after "the same" to allow the reader to momentarily read it as descriptive of the aforementioned "statements": as in, the speaker tires of statements while also longing to make one him or herself. *Pogamoggan* was the effort of three Brooklyn College students, Harry Lewis, Leonard Neufeld, and Robert Shatkin, who were encouraged in their efforts by Jerome Rothenberg; Lewis also recalls being supported in the endeavor by their professor Ulla Dydo (then Ulla Eder). At 173 pages, *Pogomoggan* is substantially longer than many of its contemporaries, and was made possible because of a free printing job obtained by Lewis's father, a rare book dealer, through one of his associates.[37] According to Lewis, distribution was a local affair:

"New York City at that time, you could go to five, six different bookshops and probably move as many copies as you needed to, and people would line up to buy copies of magazines with these people in it, because there was enough of a community."[38] The magazine was printed by Omphalos Press, created for this purpose, and itself another gesture toward a previous modernism. Lenny Neufeld says they found the word—which can refer to a religious stone, often the one at Delphi, and also means "navel" in Greek—in *Ulysses*, on which art editor Martha Rosler (then using the name Martha Neufeld) was writing a paper at the time.[39]

Pogamoggan's tale of local distribution underscores a committed and supportive scene, even for one-off magazines that aren't immediately legible as part of a lineage. For the two-issue run of the magazine *Nadada*, commitment to and placement of the New York scene alongside European modernism creates a distinctly American and contemporary note. With its focus on Dada, *Nadada* falls into the affirmation trap—but Dada's aesthetic ideals also tend to undercut modes of cultural transmission. Gerard Malanga, listed as the editorial associate for *Nadada*, gathered much of the written content for that magazine. Malanga ultimately provided one issue's cover image, which mixed traditions and eras, but kept the pop content vibe of Dada intact:

> *Nadada* was the brainchild of Timothy Baum. He had a penchant for everything having to do with the Dada movement, and being a poet himself, he related emphatically with its philosophy. The magazine, I believe, was to reflect this philosophy; but overall, it was in name only. We went overboard. The first issue contained a wide assortment of disparate voices. Timothy brought me in because of the simpatico of our burgeoning friendship; and I think he felt I could come up with the goods. I'd already had a background in editing, having edited the Wagner Literary Magazine which was considered the best college lit mag in America at the time. By the time we met I'd already established a sizable base of contacts, so it was fairly easy for me to solicit contributors as well as pull works out of my files. Timothy listed me as Associate Editor, but my strongest hand was for the cover: Emperor Ming of Planet Mongo from the *Flash Gordon* series. I mean, how Dada was that?! It took a bit of coaxing, but Timothy went for it.[40]

Nadada put work from René Magritte and Tristan Tzara alongside John Perreault and Ted Berrigan. It claimed everything and nothing under its umbrella, and the fact that the second issue contains the "First *Nadada* Retrospective" presages its short run. As a play on the coherence of visual art retrospectives, it undercuts notions of coherent and complete aesthetic lineages.

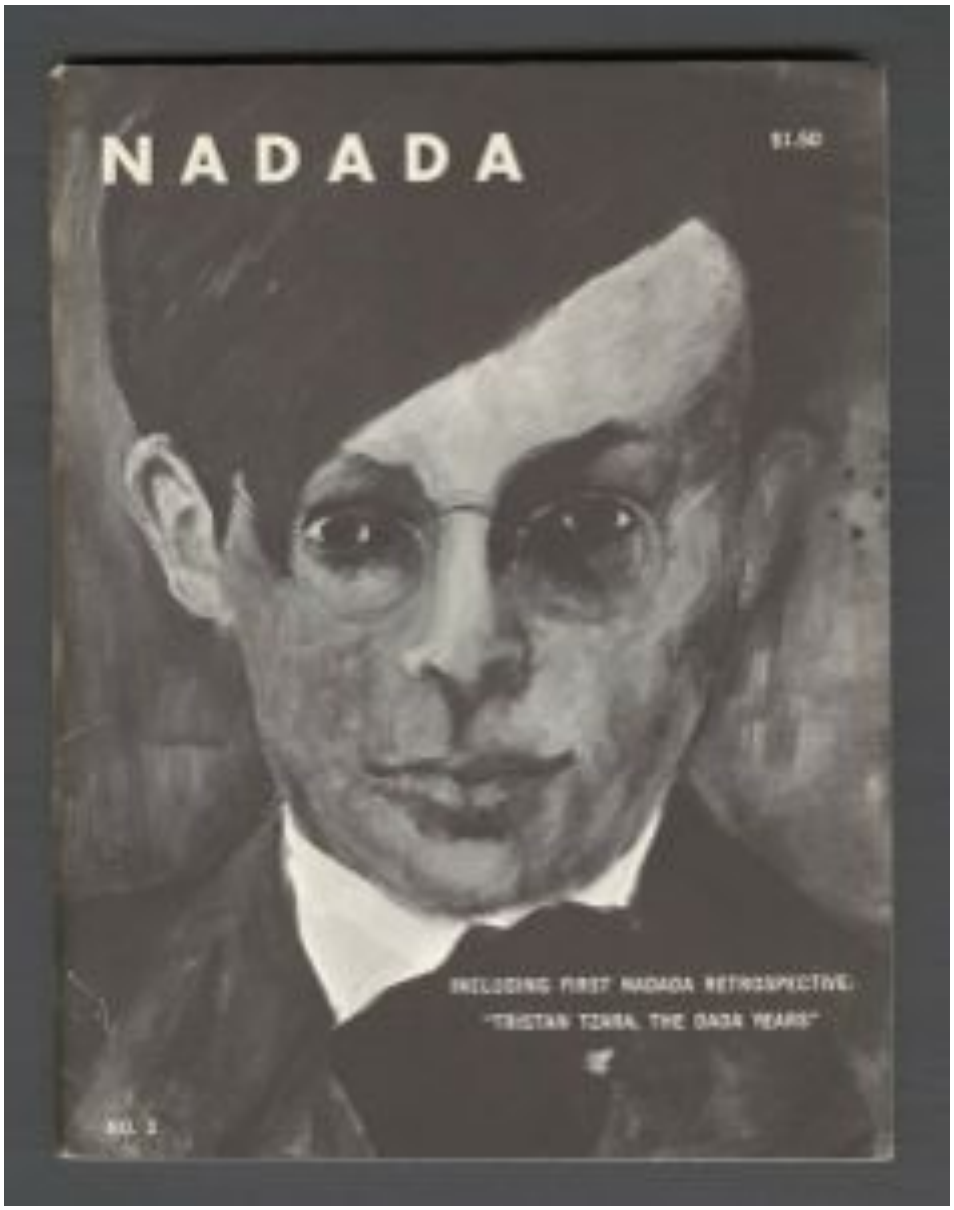

Figure 5: *Nadada* No. 2, 1965. "The Tristan Tzara Issue."

One might even say that *Nadada*'s indebtedness to the Dada modernist movement and its desire to showcase "disparate" and autonomous voices created an unsustainable project. But then again, perhaps indebtedness is also what enabled such projects. I want to suggest that the unstable mood resulting from the tension between embracing an innovative modernist lineage and creating contemporaneous and socially antagonistic autonomous art was a driving force behind little magazines circa 1964. Such a mood fostered an outburst of overlapping affiliations whose links were often spatial and distributional, rather than inherited or linear. In her introduction to the anthology *Light Years*, Carol Bergé writes, "Poetry and fiction in

the 1960s could be viewed as compressed information, a ritual act of societal commentary, with writers as keepers of knowledge as were the Lindisfarne monastery school."[41] In Bergé's arguably romanticized characterization, 1960s poets guarded the traditions of their predecessors while also using the poem to enact social commentary. The explosions of New York's youthful little magazines around 1964 are, as Kane argues, often countercultural, but clusters of poets turned to modernists and modernisms as related and as various as Hart Crane, Gertrude Stein, Dada, surrealism, and others to reflect their versions of contemporaneity. Luckily for us, they would continue to do so through the next two decades in such great numbers that perhaps no collection can ever be complete, the air becoming more crowded still.

NOTES

1. "From The Day Book," *Origin*, July 1963, 4.

2. For Clover, labor provides the occasion for such matching. See "The Genealogical Avant-Garde," *Lana Turner*, no. 7 (2014), http://www.lanaturnerjournal.com/print-issue-7-contents/the-genealogical-avant-garde.

3. Ibid.

4. In particular, the mimeographed *The Floating Bear* (ed. Diane di Prima and LeRoi Jones, who later became known as Amiri Baraka), distributed as a newsletter, was an important precursor to much of the later little magazine publication.

5. Clay and Phillips are thinking more explicitly about content: "The 'mimeo revolution,' as a term, is a bit of a misnomer in the sense that well over half the materials produced under its banner were not strictly produced on the mimeograph machine; however, the formal means of production are not as important in identifying the works of this movement as is the nature of their content." See *A Secret Location on the Lower East Side: Adventures in Writing, 1960–1980: A Sourcebook of Information* (New York: New York Public Library and Granary Books, 1998), 15.

6. *All Poets Welcome: The Lower East Side Poetry Scene in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 59.

7. *The Sonnets*, annotated edition (Penguin Books, 2000), 1.

8. See the introduction to John Campbell McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). It's worth noting that the two scenes—poetry and alternative press—shared no small number of participants, especially through the late '60s and early '70s.

9. Susan Sherman, *America's Child: A Woman's Journey through the Radical Sixties* (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Books, 2007), 178–180.

10. *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History*, 1st ed (New York: Norton, 1990), 112.

11. "The Mimeograph Revolution," *The Times Literary Supplement*, August 6, 1964, 714.

12. For an excellent resource to little magazines published between 1890 and 1922, see The Modernist Journals Project (www.modjourn.org).

13. Magazines and books could be and were seized by the post office under obscenity laws: though the censorship trials regarding the City Lights publication of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* in 1957 are the most notorious, many magazines, including *The Floating Bear, Fuck You/ A Magazine of the Arts*, and *Big Table* experienced suppression by the post office or the universities with which they were affiliated.

14. About *Yugen* and *Totem*, interview by Stephanie Anderson, phone, September 10, 2014; *How I Became Hettie Jones* (New York: Grove Press, 1996).

15. George Economou to Stephanie Anderson, "My Response," September 2, 2014. Kelly and Economou met "in classes in medieval literature at Columbia."

16. About *Trobar*, interview by Stephanie Anderson, phone, September 4, 2014. Bob Wilson's Phoenix Bookshop was also an important resource for little magazines.

17. Ibid. Elsewhere, Kelly says, "The poetry we publish, God knows, the poetry we write, is new and it is American; the important thing is that it gets written, that it stands." See David Ossman, "Robert Kelly, an Interview on *Trobar*," in *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History*, ed. Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie (Yonkers, N.Y.: Pushcart Press, 1979), 402.

18. to Anderson, "My Response."

19. Ossman, "Robert Kelly, an Interview on *Trobar*."

20. *About Trobar*.

21. A note about the principle of selection for this inquiry: I set out to examine New York magazines that, to my knowledge, had not been indexed elsewhere—primarily, in either Christopher Harter, *An Author Index to Little Magazines of the Mimeograph Revolution, 1958–1980* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008) or Clay and Phillips, *A Secret Location on the Lower East Side*. I was hoping, too, to find publications that reflected aspects of New York scenes not obviously part of the "New York School."

22. *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, revised edition (New York: Bantam, 1993), 162–163.

[23.] See Carol Bergé, "An Informal Timetable of Coffee-House Activities in New York," *Magazine* 2 (1965): 21–25; Allen De Loach, ed., *The East Side Scene: American Poetry, 1960–1965*, First Edition edition (Anchor., 1972). The introduction to the De Loach anthology lists several contemporaneous anthologies, as well as magazines doing retrospectives of the scene through the late '60s and early '70s.

[24.] Dick Lourie to Stephanie Anderson, "*Things*," August 20, 2014. Jarrett entered the Episcopal priesthood in the mid-1970s and became a peace activist. Schreiber went on to cofound Hanging Loose with Dick Lourie and Robert Hershon, and remained with the magazine and press until his death in 2004.

[25.] Williams's opening note to the text begins: "*Paterson* is a long poem in four parts—that a man in himself is a city, beginning, seeking, achieving and concluding his life in ways which the various aspects of a city may embody—if imaginatively conceived—any city, all the details of which may be made to voice his most intimate convictions." See *Paterson* (New Directions Publishing, 1992), xiv.

[26.] Thanks to Patrick Morrissey for helping with this observation.

[27.] Levertov is working from the excerpt published in the July 1963 issue of Cid Corman's *Origin*.

[28.] "From The Day Book," 4.

[29.] He writes, "As Gertrude Stein might put it: 'The deracinated Jew is like the deracinated Negro is like the deracinated European is like the deracinated American.'" See "The Fourth Man," *The Judson Review*, 1963, 67. The magazine was edited by Al Carmines and Don Katzman, with associate editors Robert Lima, Allen Katzman, and Robert Nichols, and poetry editors Ted Enslin and Paul Blackburn. Carmines created the Judson Poets' Theatre; the Katzman brothers had also edited the mimeo magazine *Seventh Street* (1962), and went on to be involved with the alternative press publication *The East Village Other*.

[30.] The seeming discontinuity between the poem's numbered sections perhaps reflects di Prima's then-interest in other arts, specifically film; she writes that she was "[…] reading Eisenstein's Film Forum, applying montage straightforwardly to the poem." See *Recollections of My Life as a Woman: The New York Years: A Memoir* (New York: Viking, 2001), 148.

[31.] Michael O'Brown to Stephanie Anderson, "EVENTORIUM," August 20, 2014.

[32.] Of the open mic portion of the readings, O'Brien says, "Hunter believed, deeply, in things like open readings. He was a populist. He believed in people, and in their being heard."

[33.] Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Maria Damon, "Desiring Visual Texts," *Jacket2*, March 25, 2013, http://jacket2.org/article/desiring-visual-texts.

[34.] Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Jeanne Heuving, "An Interview with Rachel Blau DuPlessis," *Contemporary Literature* 45, no. 3 (October 1, 2004): 411.

[35.] Rachel Blau DuPlessis to Stephanie Anderson, "Eventorium Muse Query," August 8, 2014.

[36.] to Anderson, "EVENTORIUM."

[37.] Harry Lewis, about *Pogamoggan*, interview by Stephanie Anderson, phone, August 15, 2014. The issue arrived with several errors—the editors had to hand-letter the spines, for instance, and stamp Anselm Hollo's name above his poems.

[38.] Ibid.

[39.] Leonard Neufeld, about *Pogamoggan*, interview by Stephanie Anderson, phone, August 12, 2014.

[40.] Gerard Malanga, about *Nadada*, interview by Stephanie Anderson, email, August 16, 2014.

[41.] *Light Years: An Anthology on Sociocultural Happenings* (New York: Spuyten Duyvil; Santa Fe, NM: AWAREing Press, 2010), 7.

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‘ENDLESS TALK’:
BEAT WRITERS AND THE INTERVIEW FORM

REBECCA ROACH

“Talk – endless talk – forms the warp and woof of Beat existence” (Paul O’Neil, “The Only Rebellion Around,” *Life,* November 30, 1959) [1]

“a handbook for the new generation” (letter from William S. Burroughs to Brion Gysin, July 1, 1968) [2]

When journalist Paul O’Neil remarked upon the prevalence of talk in Beat circles, it was meant as a criticism. Part of a larger indictment of Beat poetry, “pads” and persons in an article for the mass-market *Life* magazine, O’Neil’s comment drew upon talk’s perceived associations with amateurism and gossip to deride the group’s claims to be engaged in more elevated cultural work. Equating talk here with the more specific form of the interview, a genre purporting to publish the account of a conversation between two or more persons, it is certainly true that the Beats and the wider counterculture utilised the interview extensively and for its promotional purposes. [3] However, to read this as mere celebrity-garnering or a simple capitulation to the market, becomes problematic when we turn to my second epigraph. The “handbook” to which Burroughs refers is an anthology of his interviews, *The Job* (1970). For Burroughs, and for his American publisher Grove Press, celebrated for its list of revolutionary manifestoes and avant-garde authors, this volume of interviews had a serious and radical import. Quite how this association could be made, and the import of this for how we value these writers’ “endless talk,” is the focus of my discussion. Drawing extensively on the holdings – manuscript and print – of the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library Collection, I argue that the interview form becomes not just a means for countercultural writers to cultivate celebrity, but to intervene in contemporary debates around the position of the writer and his or her work in society.

Interviewing (beat) authors

From the mid 1950s onwards the Beats were regularly interviewed; the beatnik phenomenon (often treated pejoratively) and the various associated obscenity trials were popular topics in the mass media and many of the associated poets attained celebrity status.[4] While they were not the first authors to be interviewed – originating in the mid nineteenth century, interviews had become a standard promotional tactic for authors by the 1890s, and readers consumed them voraciously – the amount of coverage they received was, at mid-century, unique. Historically, this engagement has been viewed as merely another example of these writers' non-serious, fame-obsessed, popular status. The interview was frequently associated with publicity – in 1961 Daniel Boorstin characterised the interview as the quintessential "pseudo-event," or "an event which takes place only for the purposes of being reported"[5] – and the Beats were visibly linked to the form, regularly promoting their activities, politics, work and authorial personae.

The underground press and publishers associated with these countercultural writers also used this particular mainstream tactic in their attempts to promote authors, causes and a counterpublic. Specific interviews were often reprinted across a network of titles, with prominent acknowledgement of these in other publications. A 1968 interview with William Burroughs for *Rat: Subterranean News* (New York), which included discussion of his cut-up methods, politics and techniques of mind control was quickly republished in *Georgia Straight* (Vancouver), the *San Francisco Express Times* and *Spokane Natural* (Washington State and distributed in Britain).[6] Geographically dispersed, this circulated interview acted as a touchstone for a community based around shared radical politics.

On a larger scale, Grove Press and its magazine the *Evergreen Review* had, by the mid-sixties, not only "revolutionized the publishing industry but had also mobilized a cadre of publishers, academics, and artists in a successful effort to transform the cultural field itself by incorporating the literary underground into the mainstream".[7] This mobilisation and transformation was partly achieved through interviews. The inaugural issue of *Evergreen Review* opened with an interview reprinted from the Paris *Express* with Jean-Paul Sartre discussing the Russian invasion of Hungary; issue six included Frank O'Hara conversing with the painter Franz Kline, whose work was a major influence on Roy Kuhlmann, the key designer of Grove covers. Later issues included interviews with authors such as Antonin Artaud, Juan Soriano, Louis-Ferdinand Céline and local New York-based writers as a means of introducing their work to a wider public, as well as subjects such as Fidel Castro who spoke to the politically radical ethos Grove promoted.

Significantly, Grove Press also drew on the growing connections between interviewing and interrogation (discussed in more detail below) as part of their legal and marketing strategies. During the obscenity trials of "Howl"*, Tropic of Cancer* and *Naked Lunch*, Grove used the expert

testimony of literary critics as part of its defence. The trial over the American edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* had seen Alfred Kazin and Malcolm Cowley testify. Extracts from these cross examinations formed an important element of Rossett's publicity, printed in *Evergreen Review* and quoted on book covers. The fourth issue of the periodical featured "Horn on 'Howl'," Ferlinghetti's story of the trial, and included excerpts from cross-examinations.[8] Number 36 also printed the interrogations of Norman Mailer and Allen Ginsberg as they testified in court as expert witnesses during the Boston *Naked Lunch* trial.[9] Grove Press promoted a radical, anti-establishment reputation for itself in part through its use of sensational courtroom interactions that resembled hostile interviews.

As I have already suggested, there is, at the same time, no doubt that countercultural authors and publications deployed interviews for promotional purposes. In a postwar culture increasingly dominated by Madison Avenue and celebrity promotion, this adoption of a form heavily associated with self-publicity is potentially troublesome for critics wishing to claim for these authors, and the postwar avant-garde more generally, a critical and political value.[10] Compelling for their opponents is the notable divergence between pre and postwar avant-garde writers in their engagement with the interview. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg and others acknowledged the influence of William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, H.D. and the surrealists on their work, but in their promotional activities they differed quite substantially from the strategies of modernist writers. While interviews with writers were commonplace throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the most notable aspect of modernist engagement with the interview before mid century is its lack.[11] Despite the form proliferating hugely in mainstream magazines and newspapers in this period, interviews are rarely published in modernist magazines and, before mid-century, Woolf gave no interviews (in English), Joyce, Pound, Eliot and Breton only a few.

The profound difference between modernist and Beat writers' engagement with the form might merely be taken to reinforce the latter group's obsessions with publicity. The dearth of modernist interviews can be partly accounted for through their comparatively obscure public personae and coterie publics, as well as the form's association before the Second World War with gossip and Hollywood celebrity. As productive work by scholars such as Lawrence Rainey, Jennifer Wicke, Aaron Jaffe, Loren Glass and others has illustrated, however, far from rejecting the marketplace, modernist writers often deployed publicity strategies borrowed directly from the fields of advertising and mass-media.[12] So too critics have shown that these writers often engaged far more extensively with Fleet and Grub Street – and retained correspondingly complicated and fluctuating attitudes towards mass-market journalism – than has previously been conceded.[13] In the early twenties British *Vogue* was a haven for avant-garde artistic ideas under the editorship of Dorothy Todd; by the 1930s surrealism was being

promoted in American *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Clear distinctions between pre and postwar countercultural writers based on their engagement with mass culture or promotional strategies become more difficult to uphold.

There is no doubt that there was a cultural shift after the Second World War in America; commercialism and the publicity interview were defining features of this period, as an older generation (tentatively) joined the younger in tolerating the medium (T. S. Eliot's 1957 "photo-interview" for the British *Daily Express* about his love of dance being one of the more ridiculous examples).[14] It is also true that publicity and privacy were becoming increasingly contested as literary concerns, as scholars such as Deborah Nelson, reading confessional poetry against contemporaneous legal decisions around the "right to privacy," demonstrate.[15] However, reading Beat and countercultural interviews within an interpretative framework of celebrity and mass-culture is restrictive, reducing their agency to a choice to either self-publicise or not. This ignores the degree to which these writers engaged with the specifics of the interview form itself, and leaves open the question of why exactly writers such as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and others were willing to risk being labelled as addicted to their own celebrity.

Questioning Kerouac

Jack Kerouac was interviewed for the *Paris Review*'s prestigious "Art of Fiction" series in 1968. The interviewer was poet Ted Berrigan, accompanied by writers Aram Saroyan and Duncan McNaughton. While it follows the usual *Review* format – opening with an introduction by the interviewer that describes the circumstances behind the interview, including a facsimile of a manuscript page and an image of the author – this interview is notable for its informality. It begins:

> INTERVIEWER
> Could we put the footstool over here to put this on?
>
> STELLA
> Yes.
>
> JACK KEROUAC
> God, you're so inadequate there, Berrigan.
>
> INTERVIEWER
> Well, I'm no tape-recorder man, Jack. I'm just a big talker, like you. OK, we're off.[16]

Less the formal tone of other *Review* interviews, this reads more as a transcript of a conversation between increasingly intoxicated colleagues.[17] Despite the impersonal label, the "Interviewer" quickly moves away from being an objective representative of the absent public, in that Kerouac immediately identifies him by name, locating him as part of a particular coterie setting. Kerouac retains his position as master-artist and interview-subject but Berrigan, Saroyan, McNaughton and Stella Kerouac all participate as they interject, joke, share allusions, opine and swap literary gossip. The casual back-and-forth, the friendly insults and deictic references create an intimate atmosphere and sense of immediacy. While the occasion might have a "serious purpose," aimed at enlightening a wider public (in this case the *Paris Review's* small but influential readership of literary-minded persons in North America and Europe), the interview's coterie style suppresses this aim, reducing the implied public to the space of a living room. Moreover when Berrigan announces that he is "no tape-recorder man," his claim to amateurism has specific import: widely associated with the government surveillance of its own citizens that flourished in the aftermath of the Second World War and the onset of the Cold War, this inscription device evoked a very different type of interview environment.

As we have already seen, before mid-century, the interview was largely associated with celebrity promotion and gossip. The quintessential mass-media interview style might be represented by the phenomenally successful radio broadcasts of Mary Margaret McBride: deferential, friendly, and with frequent product placements. As television broadcasting developed in the 1950s, similarly affable interviews or "chats" with celebrities dominated the airwaves, what the *New Yorker* was later to characterise as "a discreet, milky, brand-selling, hear-no-evil-speak-no-evil style of questioning that veers aside from points of controversy as fast as it races through points of interest".[18] Against the backdrop of the Cold War, however, the disciplinary function of publicity became more overt and the interview itself began to take on threatening associations.[19] The televised cross-examinations of the House Committee on Un-American Activities had illustrated not only that gossip and the private life of a subject could be used to devastating effect by interrogators, but that interviewing could also be a form of public interrogation. Welcomed by many as protection against a perceived Communist threat, the surveillance society being erected, and the interview's place within this society, was profoundly concerning for others.[20] As the bestselling book *The Naked Society* announced in 1964, "Millions of Americans are living in an atmosphere in which peering electronic eyes, undercover agents, lie detectors, hidden tape recorders, bureaucratic investigators, and outrageously intrusive questionnaires are becoming commonplace, if only suspected, facts of life".[21] Not only was interviewing in its various forms a highly publicised strategy of interrogation utilised by the state, but it was increasingly deployed by businesses and researchers to scrutinise the individual. The ideologically-charged renegotiations of the

boundaries between public and private in this era were frequently tethered to the interview itself.

How then do we read Kerouac's interview? As a retreat into the gossipy pre-war celebrity chat? To do so risks capitulating to those wishing to dismiss the interview as the quintessential form of the culture industry and the Beats as celebrity-mongers; it also denies the counterculture a role in offering an effective oppositional stance. Crucially, this reading also fails to account for the Beats' willingness to engage in – and undermine – more hostile interviewing experiences.

A decade before the *Review* interview, the journalist Mike Wallace interviewed Kerouac for his national newspaper column. A pioneer of interrogative interviewing in the media, Wallace had garnered attention for his television programme *Night Beat* (later the *Mike Wallace Interview*) in 1956. The press hailed this as "antithesis of the conventional interview show," with its carefully researched brief, lengthy discussion, tough questions and "attempts to nail the subject to the wall with inconsistencies from his past"; a style "with a strong flavor of committee hearings in it" as one commentator noted.[22] His preparatory notes for interviewing Kerouac, part of the Mike Wallace Papers held at the University of Michigan, indicate a hostile approach:

> Q. The main figure in your book, Dean Moriarty, is an ex-juvenile delinquent, a lover of women, a drug-taker, a thief, a seeker of "kicks." Why do you refer to him as almost a saint? What is he supposed to represent?
>
> Q. Do you feel, that in order to live life to the fullest, that one has to indulge in violent, anti-social, delinquent activities?
>
> Q. A critic has accused you and your group of being filled with self-pity and self-admiration. He says that "we are entitled to despair or howl for rebellion only after much harder than anyone (of you) has bothered to do." Are you howling or whining?[23]

These rapid-fire or sudden questions mirror the interrogative techniques of the security services or committee hearings, positioning the subject as an outsider, intimidating him, and giving him little time to reflect before being pressured for an answer. In a common move, a third party – here an anonymous critic – is quoted, granting immediate authority to the specific enquiry and to Wallace's status within the interaction. Wallace situates himself, not as an individual engaged on a personal level with the subject (as we see, for example, in the Berrigan interview), but as a conduit for the interests of an absent and antagonising

public. The interview is a model for the critical public sphere. These questions, then, enact a double movement, attempting on the one hand to emphasise the conflict that Kerouac's values supposedly represent to those of the reading public, in effect ostracising him, whilst simultaneously promoting Wallace's position as dispassionate public prosecutor, representative of the wider community. Such questions aim for a very different ambiance than that promoted in the *Review* interview. Claustrophobia rather than intimacy marks the atmosphere and the absent public's norms are discernible in the shape of the questions.

More interesting than these stylistic differences is what Kerouac does with his answers, and it is here that we can begin to identify a recognisably "Beat" response to the form. When Wallace did sit down to tape-record Kerouac, the interview differed quite dramatically from Wallace's intended direction – and from the majority of Wallace's broadcasting and print interviews. Take the moment he introduces the anonymous critic:

> Q. you've been accused – of being filled with self pity and self admiration. some critic – I don't know XXXXXXX which critic this is…
>
> A. in the book?
>
> Q. no
>
> A. oh – Charles Rollo?
>
> Q. It might be – he says – he apparently talks of the whole group including you and he says – "We are entitled to dispair or howl [illegible redaction] for rebellion only after much harder work than any one of you XXX has bothered to do…" Are you desperate – are you howling in rebellion?
>
> A. that's not me – that's Allen Ginsberg – he's talking about Allen Ginsberg – the author of Howl – a poem that was banned in San Francisco –
>
> Q. that poem – well – he's referring to the whole group – he says it's true of all of you – you don't sound to me as XX if you're howling – XX.
>
> A. not me – happy
>
> Q. but you don't sound [illegible redaction] happy. You sound – you look ~~but you do sound possibly~~ as if such despair has overcome you that you have been driven out of reality..
>
> A.I'm tremendously [illegible redaction] sad – I'm in great despair.. [24]

An emended transcript of the tape-recording, the conversation inevitably includes more repetition, false-starts and overlaps than a published interview. With the possibility of editing – unlike his televised interviews, this is not live – Wallace can afford to be less intimidating in procuring his material. However, the degree to which Kerouac is an active partner in this conversation is noticeable: he questions and corrects Wallace, he even supplies the identity of the anonymous critic, and he rejects outright the application of the quotation to himself, explaining who Ginsberg is to Wallace. This is not a conversation between members of a coterie but between individuals belonging to very different communities – they cannot assume they share the same references. If anything, it is Wallace who is the outsider. His tentatively delivered questions are frequently brushed aside by Kerouac, who instead enthusiastically expands on points of interest, offering explanations and clarifications. Clearly enjoying the discussion, Kerouac resists all of Wallace's attempts to position him as a subject on trial.[25] No confession is forthcoming.

While this cross-examination proved unsuccessful – in the published version the above interaction is excised, and Kerouac is presented not as a social menace or worthy interlocutor but as a naive mystic[26] – such experiences made a significant impression on writers. As the interview's associations became more severe, more interrogative and less gossipy, authors such as Kerouac, Ginsberg and Berrigan began to endorse an alternative model of the interview. In doing so they scrutinised the form more closely and perceived in the interviewing process a productive model for countercultural creative practice.

Self-Interviewing

During the *Paris Review* interview, Berrigan asks Kerouac about the influence of Ginsberg and Burroughs. Kerouac responds:

> The influence we exerted on one another has been written about over and over again [. . .] You can find a lot of the details in *Vanity* [*of Duluoz*]… in *On the Road*, where Burroughs is Bull Lee and Ginsberg is Carlo Marx [. . .] I am so busy interviewing myself in my novels, and have been so busy writing down these self-interviews, that I don't see why I should draw breath in pain every year for the last ten years to repeat and repeat to everybody who interviews me (hundreds of journalists, thousands of students) what I've already explained in the books themselves. [. . .] Notoriety and public confession in the literary form is a frazzler of the heart you were born with, believe me.[27]

While complaining about being the target of so many interviews, Kerouac's description of novel writing as self-interviewing is noteworthy. Although writers have habitually expressed concern that interviews compete with their fictional output, here Kerouac uses the interview as a model for creativity. In doing so he departs from the more familiar argument that interviews are mere promotional content and of inconsequential aesthetic value, arguing instead for a kind of equivalence between creative work and the interview. His novel here becomes an assemblage of interviews. This is a curiously diminishing statement, even taking into account the Beats' frequent inclusion of auto/biographical details in their work. Placing the interviewing process as central to his creative practice, Kerouac leaves us wondering whether his novels resemble the interview on the earlier generation's model – that is, whether the literary works themselves merely serve to promote celebrity, "Notoriety and public confession."

Certainly the Beats' reliance on the tape recorder implicitly reinforces this impression. The sheer number of extant recordings, whether personal talk between colleagues, formal interviews, or poetry readings, does seem to give credence to O'Neil's complaint: endlessly recording talk smacks of hubris and celebrity garnering. As I have already begun to show, however, it was not the promotional possibilities offered by the technology that held the Beats and their associates, but its creative possibilities, and as we shall see more specifically, the new methods of textual composition it enabled. Crucially, these methods bear a noticeable relation to interviewing. Take Kerouac's *Visions of Cody* (1972). Composed in the early fifties, the work was made up in part of transcripts from the tape-recorded dialogue between the writer and Neal Cassady.[28] Like many recordings made by Beat and countercultural writers, these dialogues were not recorded for the purpose of immediate publication but as stimulants to (collaborative) creativity and the raw material of published works. By archiving the conversation, the tape-recorder offers the possibility of a split interview, in which publication is temporarily deferred. The composition process is envisaged as an intimate private discussion, taking place in a realm temporarily outside of public space. This process seems to offer the possibility, so frequently imagined elsewhere in these writers' works,[29] that the coterie experience of composition could be expanded to create not the antagonistic, atomistic society fostered by Cold War paranoia, but an audience of intimates (the ambiance we see promoted in the *Paris Review* interview). Such a composition experience is enabled, moreover, precisely through deployment of the quintessential tool of exposure. Like the interview, in this model of composition the realm of public space, with its spectre of publicity, structures and delineates the (supposedly) private space constituted here as its opposite. Kerouac's claim for the parity between interviewing and writing begins to seem less strange.

Yet, for all his – and other countercultural writers' – interest in collaboration and dialogue between artists, Kerouac explicitly talks of "self-interviews". This is a curiously autonomous form that discounts the emphasis on cooperative practice and multiple-authorship, practices that the interview is reliant upon and yet suppresses in favour of foregrounding the single interview subject.[30] Kerouac's term seems to want to dispense entirely with interlocutors while retaining other elements of the interviewing process. Instead, it bifurcates the single interview subject, who experiences events, friendships and, indeed, the influence of literary colleagues, from the writer who analyses, archives and creates. Kerouac thus seems to want to mobilise a type of creativity associated with collaborative working and dialogue in a purely private, solitary form.

He was not alone in exploring this possibility. Ginsberg, in discussing his use of the tape-recorder to compose "Wichita Vortex Sutra," expresses a similar desire:

> when transcribing, I pay attention to the clicking on and off of the machine, which is literally the pauses [. . .] Like if you're talking aloud, if you're talking—composing aloud or talking aloud to yourself. Actually I was in the back of a bus, talking to myself, except with a tape recorder. So everytime [sic] I said something interesting to myself I put it on tape.[31]

The tape-recorder becomes a kind of technological-interlocutor for Ginsberg. Regurgitating an individual's speech in playback, the recorder defamiliarises those words, adding in its own clicks and background noise. Situated uneasily between creative agent and transcription machine, the tape-recorder seems to offer an opportunity to invoke those aspects of intimate dialogic creativity deemed beneficial in the absence of a human interlocutor. In contrast to Ginsberg, Kerouac dispenses with the technological agent, attempting to create this sense of alterity within himself. In this reading, self-interviewing becomes a kind of writerly introspection, occurring in the private realm of one, simultaneously modelling itself on a community of two, and explicitly tied to publication.[32]

This notion of self-scrutiny in dialogue was also used to extraordinary effect by others in the counterculture for the specific purpose of fostering resistance to state ideology. While we don't tend to think of William Burroughs in terms of his engagement with the interview, in fact the form underpins much of his (and his collaborators') work from the 1960s forwards, including the cut-up. Taking the Beat concept of self-interviewing to its extreme conclusion, Burroughs and frequent collaborator Gysin, turn the form's interrogative function on the artist and the artwork. In doing so they highlight the interview's potential to be a critically engaged, radical form.

Interviews and cut-ups

William Burroughs dated the invention of the cut-up – the splicing together of different texts – to October 1, 1959. This was also the day that he was interviewed by Paris-based *Life* journalists David Snell and Loomis Dean for Paul O'Neil's article. More than a pleasing coincidence, for Burroughs and Gysin the cut-up and the interview text share a vital interrogative function. Not that the Snell-Dean interview simply epitomised the cross-examination, as Burroughs acknowledged himself. In a letter to Ginsberg, he described the pair as "2 far out cats with real appreciation for my work that can't be faked. Of course they have nothing to do with the final form of the story".[33] The distinction that Burroughs identifies between the circumstances of a conversation and the published "final form" was something that he and Gysin exploited in their cut-up experiments; while an interview might be an affirmative experience produced by like-minded individuals, the resultant dialogue could also be turned against the speaker. The letter continues, "Police and beatniks Gould level are ventriloquist dummies for each other in nasty and stupid love affair".[34] Alluding to Joe Gould, an eccentric writer profiled by the *New Yorker* in 1942 for his efforts to write an expansive "Oral History of Our Time," supposedly comprising of upwards of 20,000 conversations, Burroughs links the Beatnik phenomenon firmly with the interview and the interview with police surveillance.[35] This string of associations was to form the centre of Gysin and Burroughs' experiments with the cut-up.

One of the earliest published products of this technique was *Minutes to Go* (Paris, 1960).[36] A collaboration between Burroughs, Gysin, Sinclair Beiles and Gregory Corso, the volume collected a series of poetry cut-ups and simultaneously promoted the form:

> Pick up a book any book cut it up
>
> [. . .]
>
> chop in some bible pour on some Madison Avenue
>
> prose [. . .]
>
> shuffle like cards
>
> [. . .]
>
> here is the system according to us[37]

Advocating the juxtaposition of different found texts,[38] for the authors the cut-up performs a kind of cross-examination on these texts: "as if the words themselves had been interrogated and forced to reveal their hidden meanings".[39] Shuffling, cutting up, chopping in, pouring on: generating a productive form of exposure and scrutiny, the cut-up method inflicts a very active form of self-interviewing upon the found text.

Such activity does not necessarily result in the publication of poems in the form of an interview; more frequently the generative structure is subsumed within the work. One of the less concealed examples is seen in *Minutes to Go*; Burroughs and Gysin respond directly to O'Neil's article, and "Open Letter to Life [sic] Magazine" is labelled as a "Cut-up of 'Beat Generation' Life [sic] Magazine Dec 5 1959." Less than a week after O'Neil's article was published, the pair created a prose-poem interrogating the journalist's words, transforming hostile mass-media publicity into a critically engaged, creative work. O'Neil's words are transformed into a lyrical protest work reminiscent of "Howl" and *Naked Lunch*: "Exhibitionists abused Burroughs. 'A Pale' they said, and plunged aint-dancers wit unfortunate malfunct molotov last seen wait on Varso-message-knives-costume in hort 22. Sample a drug called heavy commitments."[40] The "Open Letter" adopts the favourite techniques of Senator McCarthy and Mike Wallace: quoting the (textual) subject's own words back at him or her.

The cut-up also enacts a kind of textual self-interviewing in two other respects. First, as numerous contemporary and subsequent commentators have observed, the cut-up and textual assemblage was not new but had its origins in the experiments of the continental avant-garde. As Gregory Corso announced in an afterword to *Minutes to Go*, "Tzara did it all before".[41] By pointing out as much, the volume enacts a dialogue with itself about its own relationship with its predecessors. Published by Jean Fanchette, editor of little magazine *Two Cities* (publisher of Anaïs Nin, Lawrence Durrell, Henry Miller, Richard Aldington and others) the volume positioned itself as a continuation of the interwar avant-garde.[42] Gysin meanwhile, a one-time surrealist painter expelled from the group in the thirties, used the opportunity to distance himself from previous colleagues and influences:

> Tristan Tzara, the Man from Nowhere, divined Dada, out of a dictionary with a knife, pulled words out of a hat and [. . .] might well have burned the Louvre if he hadn't diverted into the Communist Panic by the Art Wing of the Freudian Conspiracy calling itself Surrealism under André Breton.[43]

The distinct opinions held by the various collaborators are articulated within the volume at large. Far from an autonomous and unified work, this multiple-authored anthology is a split-subject of a book, in permanent hostile conversation with itself.

The second aspect derives from the particular inheritances exhibited in the first. Less concerned than their peers with maintaining a realm of compositional intimacy, Burroughs and Gysin were more interested in exploring how self-interviewing could be used to undermine authority – whether of the state, the text, or the subject. In pursuing these interests, they drew on their predecessors' experiments in unconscious creativity, even as they derided the "Freudian conspiracy" of surrealism. While interviews were not a common feature of continental surrealist publications,[44] occasional articles such as "Le Dialogue en 1928" articulated the belief held by André Breton and collaborators that the question/answer technique could facilitate a form of creativity that bypassed individual or conscious intent.[45] Their frequent experiments with "exquisite corpses,"[46] automatic writing and dream analysis further explored the possibilities inherent in unconscious authorships.[47]

Burroughs and Gysin's own use of the interview marked less a departure from prewar avant-garde energies and more an update of this same constellation of interests for radical interrogative purposes. While rejecting psychoanalysis, Burroughs was an enthusiastic proponent of Scientology's "auditing process," interested in how it might work to break down the subject. As part of the process, the "auditor" asks the subject questions, occasionally issues directives and creates a file on the subject's responses (permanently inaccessible to the subject). The auditor also often utilises an E-Meter, a machine purporting to combine the functions of an electroshock device and a lie-detector. Similar to Freud's talking cure, auditing associates therapeutic dialogue with interrogation of the unconscious. For Burroughs this seems to offer the ideal model of the interview as cut-up. He makes frequent reference to it and other interrogative forms across his fiction and essays; his so-called "cut-up trilogy," comprised of *The Soft Machine*, *The Ticket That Exploded* and *Nova Express,* unites courtroom cross-examinations, futuristic technology-police questioning, mind control strategies and even Mayan social control techniques within a formal strategy of self-interviewing.[48]

Burroughs and his collaborators also adopt a more interrogative understanding of the technology of the interviewer. While Ginsberg portrayed the tape recorder as promoting a beneficial degree of alterity within the writer, for Burroughs, this technology is to be championed for its ability to break down the sovereignty of the subject to a much greater extent. If the interviewer, before the advent of the tape recorder, was a disconcerting "inscription technology" (to borrow a term from Lisa Gitelman[49]) amalgamating recording device and human agent, with the introduction of the tape recorder, machine and human

interviewer were comfortably separated. Nevertheless, the same technology also rendered the subject and his or her voice detachable. A short sound piece by Burroughs and his lover Ian Somerville illustrates this.[50] A tape recording of the pair's conversation has been cut-up, sections spliced together and cut-in with different material. In parts, two versions of Burroughs' speech are layered together, one running backwards. "Inoculation," "exposure," "weapon" and other distinct utterances punctuate the listener's right ear as "billy," "will," "smoke of dreams," while other partial words and ungrammatical clauses filter through the left.[51] It's an isolating experience, as the listener is left straining to make narrative links across the disjointed material and maintain a sense of a coherent speaker through the vocal fragmentation. The interview might be used to promote the individual authorial self, but it could also break it down.

While the journalistic interview might connote interviewing's most extreme practice, torture, for some authors, for Burroughs and some others, therein also lay the form's strength: it could be used to break down not just the sovereign subject, but the sovereign state. Burroughs and Gysin pursued this explicitly in other works; promoting the revolutionary possibilities inherent in wielding a tape recorder. Well before the Watergate scandal, Burroughs emphasised the controlling associations of the technology in his 1968 *Rat* interview with the "bourgeois middle class" described as "walking tape recorders" and tools of state control.[52] In "Playback from Eden to Watergate" (1973), however, Burroughs exhorted young people to use the tape recorder against the state. The most famous "playback" episode in American political history demonstrated that the techniques of the surveillance state could be turned against even its most powerful players.

This possibility was not confined to the tape recorder; print interviews and interviewing could also be harnessed on behalf of the revolution. Both Burroughs and Gysin produced cut-up interview anthologies. In *Here to Go: Planet R-101* (1982), a collaboration with Terry Wilson, Gysin's art and photographs were juxtaposed with excerpts of dialogue captured on tape and rendered in print through typographic experimentation.[53] The interviews were broken up, re-ordered and infiltrated with quotations of Gysin's own speech from other texts; enacting their own interrogation. So too *The Job,* a collaboration between Burroughs and Daniel Odier, consisted of interviews cut up with materials the former had previously published elsewhere. In the foreword to *The Job* Burroughs states that the book was originally conceived of as a series of impromptu interviews, but he found that in many cases he had already answered the question better in a previous text. Instead of paraphrasing, therefore, he and Odier inserted that material into the volume, in effect replaying it: "The result is interview form presented as a film with fade-outs and flash-back *illustrating* the answers."[54]

Consisting of their statements on politics and art, specifically the cut-up technique, these volumes also exposed to scrutiny the very autonomy of such pronouncements. These texts don't promote intimacy between writer and reader, and they don't liken writing to a process of self-interviewing; instead they undermine the very autonomy of the text, encouraging the reader to replicate the role they themselves adopt towards their materials: interrogation. The reader's role, in other words, should not stop with the text. Writing to Gysin in this context, Burroughs declared that *The Job* "should be a handbook for the new generation".

In a sense it would be. While Beats and associated publishing ventures often worked in different ways to resist the new disciplinary and publicity aspects of the form, as we have seen, in doing so they imbued it with serious and radical associations. The impact of this in more mainstream venues is clearly visible by the 1970s: aside from *Interview*, mass-market publications such as *Esquire*, *Playboy*, *Rolling Stone* and *New York* magazine began to experiment with interviews.[55] New Journalists such as Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer and others drew heavily on the interview form when experimenting with participant journalism. While not a revolution on the international political scale that Burroughs and Gysin might have hoped for, these writers' "endless talk" was far from the capitulation to the marketplace it is often taken to be. Within the interview writers of the counterculture found a significant source of inspiration and oppositional poetics.

NOTES

For ease of reference, I have designated those citations referring to volumes that are part of the *printed* holdings of the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library Collection with the mark "RD".

1. Paul O'Neil, "The Only Rebellion Around," *Life* November 30, 1959.

2. William Burroughs to Brion Gysin, July 1, 1968 in *Rub Out The Words*: *The Letters of William S. Burroughs, 1959-1971*, ed. and intro. Bill Morgan, (London: Penguin, 2012), 278.

3. The sheer number of interviews published between the 1950s and seventies with writers associated with the Beats, the San Francisco Renaissance, the Black Mountain Poets and the St Mark's Poetry Project easily testifies to this. Collections featuring early interviews include *Beat Writers at Work*, ed. George Plimpton, (London: Harvill, 1999) RD; *San Francisco Beat: Talking with the Poets,* ed. David Meltzer (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2001*)*; Robert Creeley, *Contexts of Poetry: Interviews, 1961-1971*, ed. Donald Allen (Bolinas: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973); Allen Ginsberg, *Spontaneous Mind: Selected Interviews, 1958-1996*, ed. David Carter (London: Penguin, 2001); *Conversations with William S. Burroughs*, ed. Allen Hibbard (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1999); *Burroughs Live: the Collected Interviews of William S. Burroughs 1960-1997*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Los Angeles: Semiotexte; London: MIT Press, 2001) and Anne Waldman, *Vow to Poetry: Essays, Interviews and Manifestoes* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2001), amongst others.

4. There has been a huge growth in scholarship on authorial celebrity in the last few decades, drawing heavily on the influence of Leo Braudy's *The Frenzy of Renown* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) and Richard Dyer's *Stars*, new ed. with a supplementary chapter and bibliography by Paul McDonald (London: BFI, 1998). Two good starting points for mid-century American literary celebrity include Loren Glass, *Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2004) and Joe Moran, *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

5. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image, Or What Happened to the American Dream* (London: Weidenfeld, 1961), 11.

6. William Burroughs, interview by Jeff Shero, "William Burroughs Interview," *RAT Subterranean News* 1, no. 18 (October 4, 1968) and 1, no. 19 (October 18, 1968), RD.

7. Loren Glass, *Counterculture Colophon: Grove Press, the "Evergreen Review", and the Incorporation of the Avant-garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 116.

8. Ibid., 151, 156.

9. "The Boston Trial of 'Naked Lunch' [sic]," *Evergreen Review* June 1965, RD. The Raymond Danowski Poetry Archive also includes Ginsberg's notes for the trial, (Series 1, Box 7, Folder 10, Raymond Danowski Poetry Library Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University).

10. The classic texts here are Clement Greenberg's 1939 essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review* 6, no. 5 (1939): 34-49; Renato Poggioli's *Teoria dell'arte d'avanguardia* (1962), trans. as *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* by Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968); the work of the Frankfurt School, especially Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (German ed. 1947) trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Gunzelin Schmidt Noerr, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); and Peter Bürger's *Theorie der Avantgarde* [Theory of the Avant-Garde] (Frankfurt am Main: 1974).

11. For two major exceptions see Timothy W. Galow's discussion of Gertrude Stein's 1934-35 tour of America and F. Scott Fitzgerald's early American career in *Writing Celebrity: Stein, Fitzgerald, and the Modern(ist) Art of Self-Fashioning* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). While these two authors did give many interviews (in Stein's case over a specific time-limited period), they were unusual amongst their peers.

12. Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1998); Jennifer Wicke, *Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement and Social Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

13. See for example Patrick Collier, *Modernism on Fleet Street* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); and Leila Brosnan, *Reading Virginia Woolf's Essays and Journalism: Breaking the Surface of Silence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

14. T. S. Eliot, interview, "T. S. Eliot Gives a Unique Photo-interview," *Daily Express* September 20, 1957.

15. Deborah Nelson, *Pursuing Privacy in Cold War America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

16. Jack Kerouc, interview by Ted Berrigan, "Jack Kerouac, The Art of Fiction No. 41," *Paris Review* 43 (1968), http://theparisreview.org. A physical copy of the issue is also held as part of RD.

17. Although there is not the space to discuss this in depth, the *Paris Review* itself was to play an important role in promoting the interview's collaborative and serious potential. Despite being socially and professionally connected with the Beats, the Merlin Group and other avant-garde figures in the 1950s in Paris, and later the New York scene, the *Review* tends not to be categorised as part of the counterculture. Founded by (in the main) wealthy WASP Americans, the individuals were very different in background from the majority of writers and artists it published and promoted in its interview and print series, from to Robert Motherwell, John Giorno and Jane Wilson. Editor George Plimpton was frequently involved in New York happenings and organised poetry readings and live events. Also interviewing modernist writers, the magazine helped to publicise the elements of the countercultural vision of the interview that would make it palatable to these older writers. For a discussion of the magazine's relationship to modernist authors, see Christopher Bains, "Critics Abroad: The Early Years of *The Paris Review* (1953-65)," in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Volume 2, North America, 1894-1960*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 759-774. For a discussion of the *Paris Review*'s important relationship to the counterculture, see my *Transatlantic Conversations: The Art of the Interview in Britain and America*, (DPhil Thesis, Oxford University, 2014), 224-243.

18. John Lardner, "The Total Interview," *New Yorker* November 9, 1957, 166.

19. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), 9.

20. In the introduction to his anthology of interviews, journalist Harvey Breit offers a fascinating contemporary portrayal of privacy in relation to communism, the writer and the interview; in the process he justifies having "screened and protected" his subjects, *The Writer Observed* (London: Redman, 1957), 11-33 (32) RD.

21. Vance Packard, *The Naked Society* (London: Longmans, 1964), 5. As de-classified information has evidenced, writers had every reason to be paranoid; the FBI and other state bodies were actively compiling evidence against them. See, for example, *Herbert Mitgang's Dangerous Dossiers: exposing the secret war against America's greatest authors* (New York: D.I. Fine, 1988) and Claire Culleton, *Joyce and the G-men: J. Edgar Hoover's manipulation of modernism* (New York; Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; 2004).

22. Lardner, "The Total Interview," 166.

23. The (untitled) notes are held in the Mike Wallace Papers 1956-63, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. My thanks to the University of Michigan for permission to quote from these papers.

24. Hand-emended typescript of the interview: "XXX" indicate typist errors, superscript and strikethrough text indicates handwritten pen and pencil insertions and emendations. All punctuation and spelling has been rendered as is. The entire passage up until "But you don't sound happy" is also struck out in pencil ("Jack Kerouac," Mike Wallace Papers), 10.

25. Despite resisting his own interrogation, Kerouac was a sympathetic supporter of McCarthy, as Beats biographer Barry Miles has noted, *The Beat Hotel: Ginsberg, Burroughs and Corso in Paris, 1958-1963* (New York: Grove Press, 2000), 60.

26. Jack Kerouac, interview by Mike Wallace, "Mike Wallace Asks… Jack Kerouac," *New York Post* January 21, 1958. While Wallace was frequently accused of a sensational and interrogative form, he also hoped that this style would promote more a critically engaged citizenry. For a period his show was perceived to do so, the Ford Foundation's "Fund for the Republic" sponsored it for a time.

27. Kerouac and Berrigan, "Jack Kerouac: The Art of Fiction."

28. For further discussion on this work and the role of informatics and technology, see James Riley, "'I am a Recording Angel': Jack Kerouac's *Visions of Cody* and the Recording Process," *Electronic Book Review* December 19, 2006, http://electronicbookreview.com. In the *Paris Review* interview Kerouac does express his more recent dissatisfaction with the method, although he doesn't entirely rule out its future use.

29. For example, Ginsberg's elegy *Kaddish* or the "I'm with you in Rockland" section of "Howl" experiment with personal and public modes of address. Allen Ginsberg, *Kaddish, and other poems, 1958-60*, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1961) RD copy is signed by Ginsberg; Allen Ginsberg, *Howl: original draft facsimile, transcript & variant versions, fully annotated by author, with contemporaneous correspondence, account of first public reading, legal skirmishes, precursor texts & bibliography*, ed. Barry Miles, (New York: Harper, 1986) RD.

30. Something Berrigan exploits in pieces such as "An Interview with John Cage" and "Jimi Hendrix Questionnaire"; both expose the fallacies of single authorship and unique celebrity promoted by the form by producing interviews in which the subject was not involved. See Ted Berrigan with Ron Padgett, "An Interview with John Cage" in *Bean Spasms*, illus. Joe Brainard, (New York: Kulchur, 1967) 62-67 RD; Ted Berrigan and Scott Cohen, "Jimi Hendrix Questionnaire" (Box 2, Folder 14, Ted Berrigan and Alice Notley Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University).

31. Allen Ginsberg et al., "Improvised Poetics" (1968) in *Composed on the Tongue*, ed. Donald Allen (Bolinas, Cal.: Grey Fox Press, 1980), 18-62 (29).

[32.] Following Friedrich Kittler we might note that the advent of the tape recorder put pressure on the pre-eminent position of the book – *and the interviewer* – as a method of storing conversation (television and radio still operated predominantly via live broadcast in this period). Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. and intro. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[33.] William Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg, December 2, 1959, in Burroughs, *Rub Out The Words,* 8-9.

[34.] Ibid., 9.

[35.] In 1964 a second *New Yorker* profile by Joseph Mitchell revealed that the work did not exist. See Joseph Mitchell, *Joe Gould's Secret* (1965), (London, Jonathan Cape, 1997).

[36.] This volume was also printed in San Francisco by Beach Books, Texts and Documents in 1968 (RD). Beach Books was the publishing house of artist Mary Beach (relative of Sylvia) and partner Claude Pélieu. The pair lived in Paris, New York and San Francisco, translating many Beat works into French and were also closely involved in the Paris-based Fluxus movement along with Gysin.

[37.] Brion Gysin, "Minutes to Go," in *Minutes to Go* by William Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Sinclair Beiles and Gregory Corso, (Paris: Two Cities Editions, 1960), 3-5 (4-5) RD.

[38.] For an interesting visual equivalent, see Robert Rauschenberg's 1955 "combine" painting *Interview*. Held by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, http://www.moca.org/museum/pc_artwork_detail.php?acsnum=85.22&keywords=rauschenberg&x=-561&y=-503&.

[39.] William Burroughs and Daniel Odier, *The Job: Interviews with William S. Burroughs*, new ed. (London: Penguin, 2008), 161. Published by Grove Press in 1970 (RD), later editions included significant additions. The volume has also been translated into French, Spanish and German to date.

[40.] William Burroughs and Brion Gysin, "Open Letter to Life [sic] Magazine," in Burroughs et al, *Minutes to Go*, 11-12 (11).

[41.] Gregory Corso, "Postscript" in Burroughs et al, *Minutes to Go*, 63 (63).

[42.] By publishing with Fanchette, the authors positioned themselves as successors to a prior generation of modernist writing in Paris: Anaïs Nin was the American editor of *Two Cities*, which also published Lawrence Durrell, Henry Miller, Richard Aldington and others.

[43.] Brion Gysin, "C M U * B G * [. . .]" in Burroughs et al, *Minutes to Go,* 42-46 (42-43).

[44.] Uniquely, the American surrealist publication *View* did publish several interviews, including one with Breton that reads more like a manifesto than a dialogue; "Interview with André Breton *View*, 1, nos. 7-8 (October-November 1941), 1-2, RD. Also reprinted in *Arson: An Ardent Review*, (London), "Part One of A Surrealism Manifesto" (1942), 2–5, RD.

[45.] "Le Dialogue en 1928", *La Revolution Surréaliste* no. 11 (March 15, 1928), 7-8 (7), RD.

[46.] "Exquisite corpse" is the name given to a series of games used by the surrealists to produce collaborative writings. Observing a specific set of pre-defined rules, compositors would add to the piece in sequence.

[47.] In one of his less somber experiments, Gysin read out "Card Game for Two Players" at the Parisian nightclub La Bohême in 1960. Constituted of a series of catalogue cards inscribed with brief repetitive sentences in red or blue ink, they could be shuffled and then read out, producing a dialogue ordered by chance (Box 7, Folder 23, Brion Gysin Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University; originally received as part of RD). A slightly different version was printed as "A Game of Cards" in *Intrepid* 5 (March 1965), RD.

[48.] See for example William Burroughs, *The Ticket That Exploded*, (London: Calder and Boyars, 1968), 58-59, RD, in which a trial Q&A takes place regarding a "nova" agent/criminal. The Mayan narrative also offers an interesting example of what James Clifford has termed "ethnographic surrealism," specifically associated with Georges Bataille's *Documents*. The interview's association with ethnographic methodologies in this era neatly ties even the most exotic features of Burroughs' trilogy back into surrealism and interviewing. See James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Surrealism", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 no. 4 (October 1981): 539-564.

[49.] Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves and Writing Machines: Technology in the Edison Era* (Standford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[50.] Burroughs, Gysin and Somerville (a techno-savvy mathematics student) also collaborated on projects involving other technologies. One such project was "Control" a computer programme designed to engage a human subject in conversation. Seemingly alluding to the "Master Control Program" (1961) designed by one of America's major computing companies of the 1960s, a company founded by, and named after, Burroughs' grandfather, the programme also purported to be from

outer space. The alien voice of rationality was juxtaposed with human responses in order to encourage the interlocutor to reflect on the power dynamics at play within dialogue.

51. "William Burroughs, Ian Sommerville, Cut-ins," (Call number: g2d8z. Audiocassette, Series 7, Box 1, Raymond Danowski Poetry Library Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University).

52. Burroughs and Shero, "William Burroughs," Part Two.

53. Brion Gysin and Terry Wilson, *Here to Go: Planet R-101* (London: Quartet, 1985). RD.

54. Burroughs and Odier, *The Job*, 24.

55. The cut-up also influenced avant-garde artists and writers, among them surrealist aficionados. Sound poet Henri Chopin published *Revue OU* in the 1960s and seventies which including pieces by artists associated with dada, surrealism, concrete poetry, Lettrisme, the Fluxus movement and the Beats. A deconstructed magazine, issues were often comprised of loose sheets, vinyl disks and other materials. Issue 38-39 featured the silkscreen print "W.B. is a virus" by Chopin which cut up Burroughs' notorious statement in *The Ticket that Exploded* that "Language is a virus" (i.e. an invasive form of mind control); *Revue OU* 38-39 (1971) (OP168, Series 3, Raymond Danoswki Poetry Library Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University).

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JOE BRAINARD'S GRID, OR, THE MATTER OF COMICS

DANIEL WORDEN

"I remember trying to save money, for a
day or two, and quickly losing interest."
-Joe Brainard, *I Remember* [1]

Best known for his autobiographical text *I Remember*, published between 1970 and 1975, the artist and writer Joe Brainard has recently undergone something of a recovery project.[2] Following a 2001 retrospective exhibition at the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and an accompanying exhibition catalogue, the 2008 volume *The Nancy Book* collected Brainard's renditions of the comic strip character Nancy, and in 2012, *The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard* was published by the Library of America.[3] A still underappreciated figure, Joe Brainard was born in 1942 and grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He moved to New York City in 1960, where he would become associated with the "second generation" of the New York School, collaborating with his long-time partner Kenward Elmslie, as well as John Ashbery, Ted Berrigan, Robert Creeley, LeRoi Jones, Frank O'Hara, Ron Padgett, and Anne Waldman, among others. Brainard's output was vast, yet much of Brainard's work is difficult to categorize—small, mimeographed chapbooks that are mostly illustrations and collages, two issues of a comics anthology, book and magazine covers, and prose poems.[4] Even his visual art is seemingly minor in scale—the largest artwork in *The Nancy Book*, the drawing *Untitled (If Nancy Was a Drawing by Leonardo da Vinci)* (1972) measures 10 ¼" x 14", and Brainard would draw on materials as small as postage stamps. *The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard* makes much of Brainard's prose and chapbook work available, yet the volume cannot do justice to all that Brainard created, much of which doesn't collect easily within the pages of a single-author text.

The terms of the recent Joe Brainard recovery project, steeped in the personal reminiscence of Brainard's collaborators and friends, have turned on the intimacy, warmth, and everydayness of Brainard's prose, often marveling at his own disinterest in the literary and the artistic marketplaces. Following Brainard's death, at only 52 years of age, from AIDS-induced

pneumonia in 1994, Edmund White's remembrance, originally published in 1997 in *Art in America,* is a good example of the terms and approach commonly used to discuss Brainard:

> Joe was the only person I've ever known that I'd try to talk and act like when I was with him. My imitations were embarrassing and never successful, but the urge to delete all phoniness and really *look* at the surrounding world with a fresh eye and to shower everyone with generosity was so compelling that by the end of an evening with Joe I was even unconsciously imitating his stutter. Joe's personal style was certainly hypnotic.[5]

Brainard's authenticity, generosity, and ease are motifs that one can find in almost any account of the artist and writer's work, and today, in a moment when "personal style" can be said to dominate both the memoir-saturated literary marketplace and the artist-as-brand fine art world, it is no surprise that Brainard has been the subject of renewed interest. Moreover, Brainard has been the focus of a recent monograph that aims to situate him within 20th-century poetics, Andy Fitch's *Pop Poetics: Reframing Joe Brainard.* In *Pop Poetics*, Fitch approaches Brainard as a poet whose "pop poetics . . . adopts the oft-dismissed lyric subject as site for adventurous explorations of poetic space."[6] By recognizing the ways in which Brainard's text *I Remember* functions as an "algorithmic artifice" that is also "a banalized, chatty prose-like form," Fitch argues for Brainard's status as a unique mediator between confessional and Language poetry, as well as between Pop Art, abstract expressionism, and minimalism.[7] Fitch's account is a valuable contextualization of Brainard that questions some of the boundaries, period designations, and formal categories in literary studies and art history, and Fitch ultimately finds in Brainard a new lyrical subject articulated through "serial-identity."[8] Building upon Fitch's contextualization but moving beyond his focus on the lyric subject, I will argue that Brainard's work is less about the lyric subject than it is about economic structures that facilitate and mediate the subject in late capitalism. Indeed, in this essay, I will think of and approach Brainard as a writer and artist, or, really, as a comics poet, who engages in anti-capitalist imagining, a negation of value that preserves aesthetics while bypassing the monetized categories of fine art and literature.

As Marjorie Perloff noted in a review of *The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard* and *The Nancy Book*, the recent collections of Brainard's work continue in the same vein as Edmund White's personalized reminiscence above:

> To accompany the volume, moreover, the Library of America has put together a special website (http://www.loa.org/IRememberJoeBrainard/), where you can hear leading writers from Edmund White to Frank Bidart and Ann Lauterbach providing fond reminiscences of Joe. The reverential tone of these video commentaries reminds one of the ardent response in 1966 to the tragic death of Frank O'Hara, struck by a beach buggy on Fire Island at the age of forty. Like the charismatic older poet– in a 1969 diary, Brainard quipped "If I have a hero (I do) it is Frank O'Hara"—Brainard seems to have been adored by all who knew him; they can't say enough about his charm, wit, brilliance, generosity, kindness, modesty, and just plain loveable nature.[9]

Perloff goes on to note that she is decidedly less adoring of Brainard's work, and that perhaps Brainard's intimacy was, in fact, a limitation rather than an invitation, because it limited Brainard's appeal and relevance to those involved in or interested in the coterie of the New York School. As Perloff remarks about the writings collected by the Library of America, "however charming, funny, and disarmingly frank this narrator could be, there is something missing here: perhaps the larger world beyond the little in-group where *feeling* is all."[10] Perloff's critique can be loosely mapped onto the division that has served as a template for 20th-century poetic history. Oren Izenberg has described this as the "two kinds" approach to poetic history, in which poetry in the twentieth century is divided into a "traditionalist lineage" and a "paradoxical 'avant-garde' tradition."[11] Brainard's work is, then, perhaps experimental enough in form but lacking in meaning-making to qualify as properly "avant garde," and its warm, personal content seems to disqualify it almost immediately from consideration as a contribution to late modernism. Like Izenberg, I wish here to argue not for the value of one side over another, or even to claim that Brainard has been a misunderstood modernist or an underappreciated avant-gardist, but instead to read Brainard as representative of a third way of thinking of not just poetry but also aesthetics in the twentieth century.

Inspired by Christopher Nealon's account of poetry's relations to capital—that poetry can aim to be "fleet and circulatory, like money, or defiantly valueless, money's opposite"[12] —I view Brainard's work as aiming for the latter option, as using mundane materials—comics, everyday life, casual remembrance—not to elevate them but to defy the expectation that art aspires to be valuable. Brainard's work stands in contrast to the texts and authors analyzed in Michael W. Clune's *American Literature and the Free Market*, which imagine a kind of utopian free market, unhinged from material constraints. Instead, and because so much of his work was in the comics medium, Brainard differs from his collaborator Frank O'Hara, for whom "the aesthetic frees economic choice, economic interest, economic agency."[13] Brainard's

work, and especially his work as a comics artist, dwells on valuelessness and materiality, the ephemeral matter that can be thought of as art but that eludes value.

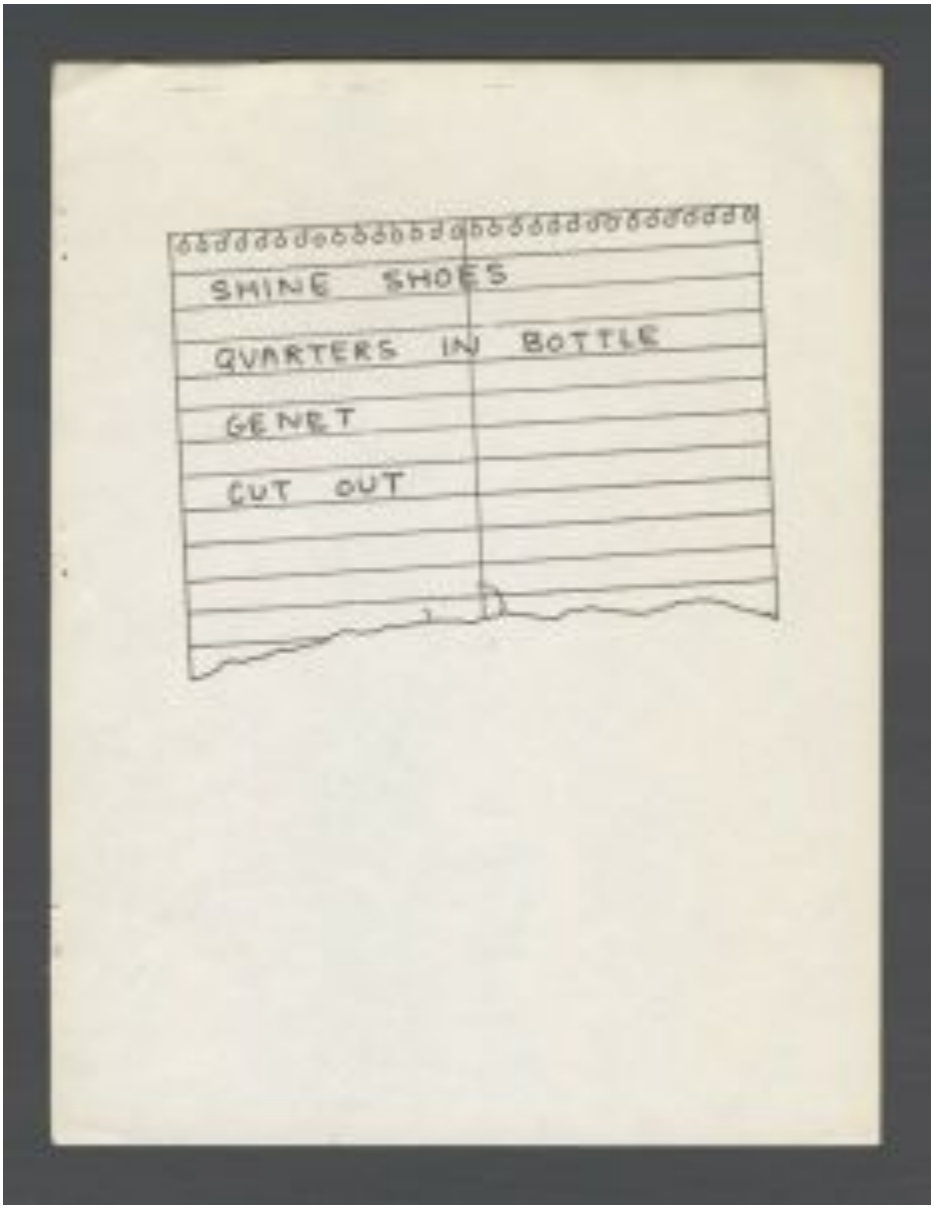

Figure 1: *Some Drawings of Some Notes to Myself.* New York: Siamese Banana P, 1971.

For example, in a stapled, mimeographed book titled *Some Drawings of Some Notes to Myself*, Brainard draws exactly what the title of the book purports: a series of handwritten notes, written on torn, sometimes lined notebook paper. One drawings of a torn piece of lined notebook paper lists "Shine Shoes / Quarters In Bottle / Genet / Cut Out" (Figure 1).[14] While the mundane content might seem to give the viewer a glimpse into Brainard's everyday life, the note is so vague that it tells us nothing, really, about the person who compiled it. The

act of drawing the note—from the lines on the notebook paper to the spiral holes and tears at the top and bottom—is careful and precise, yet the drawing, even as a drawing, seems to have no meaning. It is merely a drawing of a note, again revealing nothing about the notetaker. Is "Genet" a reminder to read something? Does "Cut Out" refer to Brainard's collage work, or something else entirely? There is no way to even begin to answer these questions given the material in the 8-page chapbook. The seeming transparency or disclosure of the artist's self, then, runs aground. The note neither captures a moment of everyday life for lyrical reflection, nor does it function as an expressive device. When approached as an artifact, it raises more questions than it answers about everyday life or the note's author. As a drawing, its precision is in the service of nothing—verisimilitude accomplishes the transcription of a scrap. A line from Brainard's *I Remember* encapsulates the lack of content here: "I remember searching for something you *know* is there, but it isn't."[15]

What *Some Drawings of Some Notes to Myself* makes clear is how Brainard's work is less a record of Brainard's own kindness and authenticity, as so much of the current recovery project serves to insist, than it is an abstract mediation of subjectivity itself by aesthetic forms, a mediation that Brainard would often enact in the comics medium. The warmth, kindness, and authenticity so often described as integral to Brainard's writing emanates, then, not as what Perloff describes as a surplus of coterie and insider feeling, but instead as a feeling of individual dissolution and valuelessness, a sensibility that I will characterize as stemming from an anti-capitalist aesthetic.

The major venue in which Brainard published comics was his short-lived *C Comics* magazine, which ran only 2 issues, one in 1964, the second in 1965.[16] The fact that *C Comics* only appeared twice is part of a larger trend in Brainard's life, one that is linked to what I am calling his anti-capitalist aesthetic. Despite a long record of publications and gallery exhibitions, Brainard would stop exhibiting his work and mostly stop making art or writing from 1980 until his untimely death in 1994. This reluctance or even refusal to continue to work is reflected in Brainard's early work, too, which resists the terms and modes of valuation in both literary culture and the art world. As Ann Lauterbach notes, "By the time Joe Brainard and I had become good friends, he had virtually ceased making art. Once, after a day of Christmas shopping, we stopped for a drink, and I had the temerity to ask him why. He said, 'I am not good enough,' and then, in a variant, 'I don't have enough ambition,' or, maybe, 'the right kind of ambition."[17] The slippage here, from talent to ambition to the "right kind of ambition," is a glimpse of what I will argue makes Brainard's work anti-capitalist and also what makes his work seem "minor" when approached from traditional artistic or literary standards. Brainard's engagement with the mundane, the comic, the serial, the repetitive, and the meaningless amounts to art that aspires to have no value, and for Brainard by 1980, could have no value

in the context of a neoliberal art world where "collectors, curators, and dealers were playing for high stakes in the quixotic markets of finance, real estate, fashion, and fame." [18]

C Comics featured collaborative comic strips drawn by Brainard and authored by a number of the New York School poets in his circle, including John Ashbery, Bill Berkson, Ted Berrigan, Kenward Elmslie, Barbara Guest, Kenneth Koch, Frank Lima, Frank O'Hara, and others. Outside of *C Comics*, Brainard would collaborate on more comics, many of which appeared in stapled chapbooks in the 1970s, and some of which would appear in books like Kenward Elmslie's *Album* (1969), Ted Berrigan and Ron Padgett's *Bean Spasms* (1967), and Anne Waldman's *No Hassles* (1971). In terms of comics, Brainard is perhaps best known for his drawings and paintings of the comic strip character Nancy, works that both mock high art conventions, as in *If Nancy was a Painting by De Kooning* (1975) and *If Nancy was Art Nouveau* (1972), and engage in a queer aesthetic, playing on the word "nancy," as in *If Nancy was a Boy* (1972) and *If Nancy was a Sailor's Basket* (1972). [19] These drawings and paintings are akin to Roy Lichtenstein's large-scale paintings of comics panels, though Brainard plays with the content of the comic strip rather than magnify the mechanical, benday dot production of comics. What makes Brainard radically different than Lichtenstein, though, is less Brainard's humorous play with Nancy than his engagement with comics as an aesthetic form, rather than a form to be appropriated and molded into the format of fine art painting. Indeed, most of Brainard's Nancy artworks are 9" x 12" in size, conforming to the approximate size of the comic book page rather than blowing up a comics image into a larger format. Unlike Lichtenstein, Brainard is a comics artist, not a painter who uses comics as raw material. *C Comics*, then, stands out as Brainard's most concentrated contribution to comics. Moreover, it is a contribution that is not included in the Library of America's *Collected Writings of Joe Brainard* and that is absent from the growing scholarship in comics studies. Indeed, while some of Brainard's comics have been reprinted in *The Nancy Book* alongside his drawings and paintings, and while some original copies of *C Comics* can be purchased for hundreds and even thousands of dollars from rare book dealers, the only way now for a scholar to read *C Comics* in its entirety is to read it in a collection like the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library. What *C Comics* makes visible is the way in which comics have been integral to twentieth-century aesthetics, though our aesthetic categories in both art history and literary studies have made comics invisible as a determining aesthetic force throughout the twentieth century. [20]

To chart the aesthetics of comics, it is useful to draw from another history of aesthetic legitimation. One of the major accomplishments of postmodernism has been the legitimation of photography as an aesthetic medium. A process that began during the early twentieth century, photography's full incorporation into the art museum occurred not through modernist experimentation but, instead, through the postmodern critique of the work of art.

One way to mark the success of photography's incorporation into the art museum is Michael Fried's revisionist history of photographic aesthetics, which identifies a painterly aesthetic of absorption in some contemporary photographers—an approach to photography that is only available after its incorporation into the museum.[21] As Douglas Crimp noted in 1980, the art museum as an institution responded to postmodernism by backwards-looking attempts to "recuperate the auratic. These attempts are manifest in two, contradictory pheonomena: the resurgence of expressionist painting and the triumph of photography-as-art."[22] What matters for our purposes is the difference between the legitimation of photography and legitimation of comics. While photography at once questioned the role of the artist and the status of the original, and also ultimately reinforced those ideologies in the museum, comics have entered the art world and literary studies as a medium of artistic expressivity. Rather than being part of the postmodern simulacra, the comics and the comics artists most celebrated in the art museum and in literature anthologies today—artists like Art Spiegelman who write in the memoir form and whose art bears traces of the artist's hand through hand-drawn grids and expressive lines—reinforce the importance of the individual as the ultimate arbiter of meaning. This legitimation of single-artist, memoiristic comics reflects and contributes to the broader neoliberal culture in which we still live, where the entrepreneurial individual is the ideal subject.

The reception and legitimization of comics has progressed unevenly over the past two and a half decades. As Bart Beaty has argued in his analysis of MoMA's 1990 *High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture* exhibition, even Pop Art's use of comics came to connote not an openness to comics as a visual arts tradition suitable for the museum, but instead a form that could be appropriated by artists: "According to the logic of High and Low, the vast bulk of comics history can only inspire art as a sort of mutely passive muse; it is not art itself."[23] Later in the 1990s and 2000s, in literary studies, an emphasis on single-author "graphic novels" has allowed comics to enter, for example, the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* and the pages of *PMLA*. Many comics artists who produce single-authored, long-form works, such as Daniel Clowes, R. Crumb, Art Spiegelman, and Chris Ware have been the subject of recent museum exhibitions, shoring up the distinction between the kinds of comics that count as art or literature, and the reservoir of comics that undergirds, a kind of raw material for artistic appropriation. Brainard's comics work, published in his *C Comics* or in other literary and artistic venues, poses an interesting counter to both of these modes of addressing comics. Neither mass-produced "low" art nor single-authored, long-form work, Brainard's comics draw attention not to how comics can be molded into an already established discourse – not, in other words, because they can be read as novels or approached like paintings – but to how comics bear their own aesthetic ideology.

Contrary to the focus on the virtuosic artist in contemporary comics discourse, part of the promise of photography during postmodernism was the elision of the artist, the incoherence of originality and authenticity, and the troubling of the fine art museum's curatorial practices. As Walter Benjamin noted in his oft-cited "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility," photography undoes "aura" and "authenticity" only to present an illusion of an unmediated view of the world, "the Blue Flower in the land of technology."[24] This curious ontology is described by Crimp as shifting in postmodernism, into "an aura, only now it is a function not of presence but of absence, severed from an origin, from an originator, from authenticity."[25] The aura of postmodern photography, then, both confirms and offers an alternative to our mediated relation to experience under postmodernism. If the postmodern promise of the photograph has been its production of presence without the artist and without originality, then comics pose an interesting inversion. Comics have been legitimated in both the art world and literary studies through the most conventional appeals to authorship, authenticity, and the unified work, which has privileged a certain brand of comics art's emphasis on the hand-drawn, the hand-lettered, and the autobiographical. As I have already begun to suggest, comics that have been incorporated into literary, cultural, and visual studies most robustly—Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan* and *Building Stories*—are bound to each artist's individual style and even life histories. Postmodernism's obliteration of narrow modernist categories has been undone, ironically, by the incorporation of a mass cultural medium into the museum and the literary canon. In the now-established field of comics studies, scholars have begun to question the field's focus on single-author "graphic novels," such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.[26] The emphasis on the above texts in comics studies has entailed the misreading of comics as chiefly concerned with representing personal experience and family relations as traumatic, while the medium is clearly not limited to those subjects.

To develop a way to analyze Brainard's comics, and to further develop an account of the matter and medium of comics, I will now turn to a classic essay on modernist and postmodernist aesthetics, an essay that has an important bearing on how comics might be conceptualized as and against the category of art. In "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," Rosalind Krauss demonstrates how modernist painting is premised on a mythological origin point, the grid. The grid's artificiality and primal structure bears the promise, for the heroic modernist painter, that painting is autonomous and original, not copied from nature but instead the product of the painter's hand and mind. Yet, of course, as Krauss argues, the opposite applies to the grid, too—the grid is not, can't be, original, and the grid frustrates imagination:

> the grid is . . . highly inflexible. Thus just as no one could claim to have invented it, so once one is involved in deploying it the grid is extremely difficult to use in the service of invention. And thus when we examine the careers of those artists who have been most committed to the grid, we could say that from the time they submit themselves to this structure their work virtually ceases to develop and becomes involved, instead, in repetition. [27]

The grid, then, is both the structure of avant-garde painting and its repressed unoriginality, a structure that is critiqued and liquidated by postmodernism, which, in its embrace of repetition as/and originality, renders clear modernism's "fictitious condition." [28]

Building on Krauss's explication of the grid as a mythological origin point for abstract painting, I would like to dwell on the presence of the grid through the twentieth century in the form of the comics page. The "first comic book," *Famous Funnies*, was published in 1933 and reprinted newspaper comic strips, and it would be quickly followed by comic books that contained original material, most famously *Action Comics* #1 in 1938, which featured the first Superman story. The comic books were preceded by a number of comic strips that made use of a large grid, such as George Herriman's *Krazy and Ignatz* and Windsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland*. These comics often call attention to the grid as a material surface, a kind of medium-specific limitation on which to experiment. The grid connotes not only abstraction or blankness, but also the comics page, conventionally divided into nine or twelve panels of equal size.

For Krauss, photography and its reproducibility constitute the "repressed" of modernist aesthetics, the repetitive structure of the purportedly original grid, only to rise to prominence and be given their due in postmodernism. The continuation of this dialectical logic can be seen, for example, in recent work by Crimp, Jonathan Flatley, and Catherine Zuromskis, who go even further by shifting attention from the artist Andy Warhol's silkscreens to his collaborative factory's production of film and photographs, moving from the individual to the collective. [29] What I wish to demonstrate with Brainard is how the grid as the comics page functions as a key element and somewhat paradoxical repository of personhood in the late twentieth century: personhood not as a referent in the representation – its subject – but as a source of intention that denies the value of that subject. That is, comics allow for the trace of the artist and author, even as it is an inherently mass-produced medium, one that seems to function along the same logics as film and photography. But, despite its mechanical reproducibility, the artistic engagement with the grid and the importance of the line on the

comics page bears the trace of the artist and artistic intention in the way that a photograph or a film can only do through the frame. [30]

While a history of the longer intermingling of comics and fine art remains to be written, my focus here on Joe Brainard's work is meant to seize upon a key moment, both in terms of aesthetics as such and in terms of how aesthetics function in relation to economics. This intersection of aesthetics and economics is encapsulated in a passage from one of Brainard's prose pieces about Nancy: "Nancy wanted to be 'that' kind of girl. I at 'that' age didn't know what I wanted to be. But I certainly didn't want to be 'that.' Nancy did." [31] Brainard engages a subject/object dichotomy here ("I" versus "that"), one that on the surface seems to be about conformity and gender. While that valence is certainly present—Brainard doesn't want to be a "nancy," and growing up in Tulsa, Oklahoma in the 1950s and early 1960s, Brainard quite possibly lacked other models for homosexual manhood—the "Nancy" here is also a commodity, a well-known comics character whose eponymous comic strip began in 1938 and is still running today. [32] Brainard's resistance to gender norms is also a resistance to the commodity form—the confusion of personhood with objecthood, of "I" with "that." [33] The rejection of type and object, the refusal to inhabit a category recognizable as an economic category, resonates as a rejection of rational subjectivity itself, which, in the 1960s, is beginning the process of becoming inextricably connected to the free market. In Foucault's lectures on biopolitics, he notes that under neoliberalism, "economic behavior is the grid of intelligibility one will adopt on the behavior of a new individual." [34] Brainard's resistence to "that" is precisely a resistance to an intelligibility that Foucault argues produces the "new individual" of "homo œconomicus." Brainard seeks out an unspecified role, a way of being that can't have value because it can't be named or seen—and in the art world of the 1960s and 1970s, comics have no value in and of themselves. Brainard seizes upon an aesthetic that is aesthetic precisely because it can't be pinned down to "that," to an object. A comic that merely uses Nancy, rather than a painting that appropriates Nancy, does not seek to elevate its subject matter. Instead, as is so often the case with Brainard's Nancy drawings and paintings, the point is to devalue painting, to turn painting into a valueless form, by folding painting into comics.

Brainard's comics negate value by acknowledging the repressed structure of fine art, thus demonstrating how art can be art without being valuable. This is, ultimately, the work of Brainard—not the proliferation of meaning but the denial of meaning, the negation of value. For someone like Brainard, who uses popular culture materials (importantly, he does not appropriate them as content but as a medium), the function of art is less to critique than to stand apart, to posit a formal existence that cannot be monetized in either the art or the literary world. This project is even more crucial today than it was in the 20th century, as fine

art has increasingly become, in David Joselit's phrase, an "international currency" in and of itself. [35]

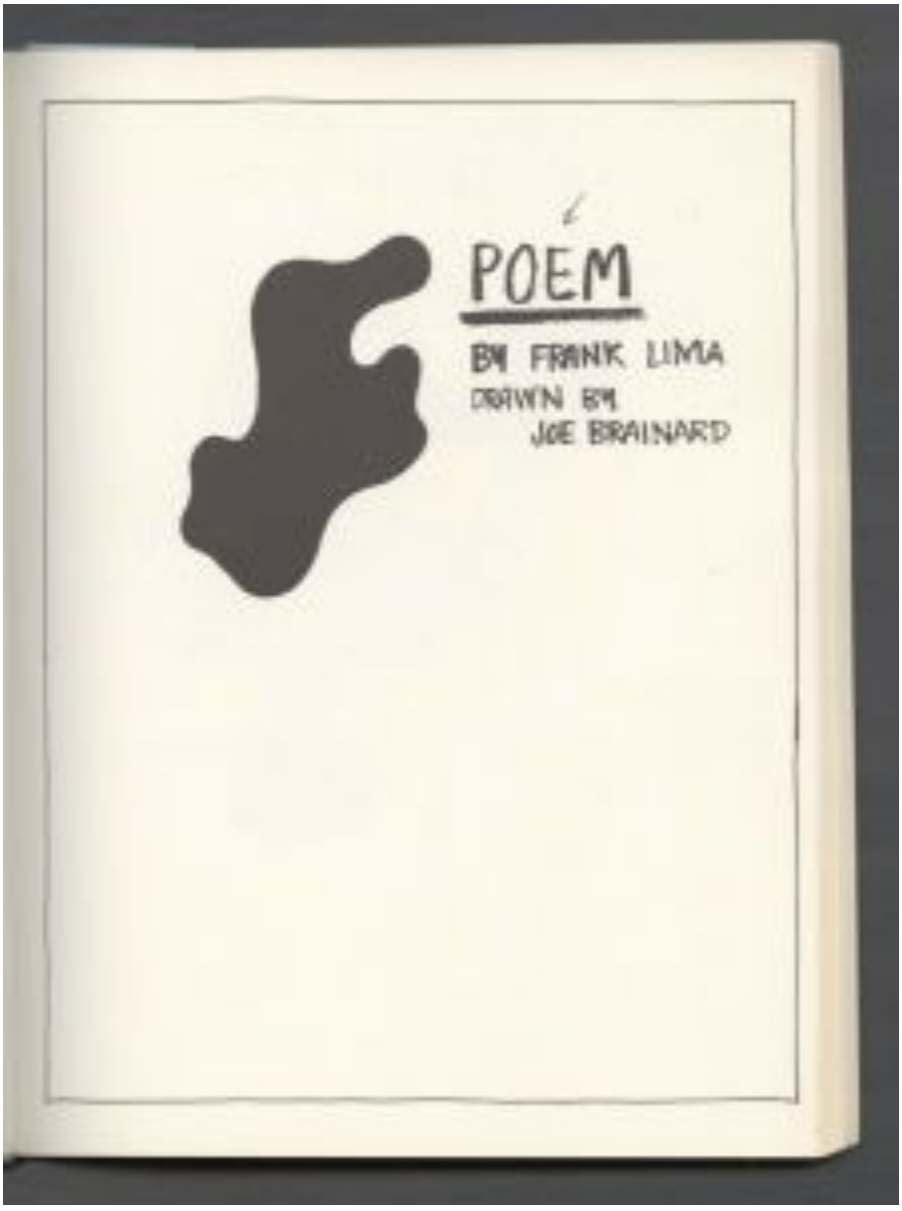

Figure 2: Joe Brainard and Frank Lima. "Poem." *C Comics* No. 2 (1965).

To see the denial of value enacted by Brainard's comics, one can look at "Poem," a collaboration from *C Comics* Number 2 with poet Frank Lima. A three-page comic, "Poem" does not use a grid, but it does use thought balloons, a conventional formal element of comics. The comics' first page is a title page, with a small arrow pointing to the title "POEM," and a large, black ink blot (Figure 2). While the arrow lends the page a kind of intimate urgency—as if this page had been annotated by someone who wished you to notice the

text—the ink blot connotes error and mistake. Though clearly carefully drawn, with smooth edges and a uniform interior texture, the inkblot is intentional yet accidental, an error that makes the artist's hand visible on the page.

Figure 3: Joe Brainard and Ron Padgett. "The Nancy Book." *C Comics* No. 2 (1965).

These kinds of "errors" persist throughout Brainard's comics, which routinely feature crossed-through words and scribbled out illustrations. For example, in a page from Joe Brainard and Ron Padgett's "The Nancy Book," a long, abstract comic featuring Brainard's signature, adopted character, a striking page features Nancy falling through a comics grid, with a struck-through word, the not-complete word "Pride," in her word balloon, "Of Crazy

Pride that Goeth Before a Fall" (Figure 3). Susan Sontag, in her seminal essay "Against Interpretation," remarks that film is an important art in the late twentieth century because of its visible mistakes: "Perhaps the way one tells how alive a particular art form is, is by the latitude it gives for making mistakes in it, and still being good."[36] In keeping with this, one could argue that comics also share this quality, and even a shared geneaology with film.[37] The visibility of the artist's presence on the page through his mistakes is also the visibility of his intention. Creeping in through the mistake, this intentionality presents a vision of the artist that is not rigidly structured by self-interest and monetization, that eschews virtuosity and value.

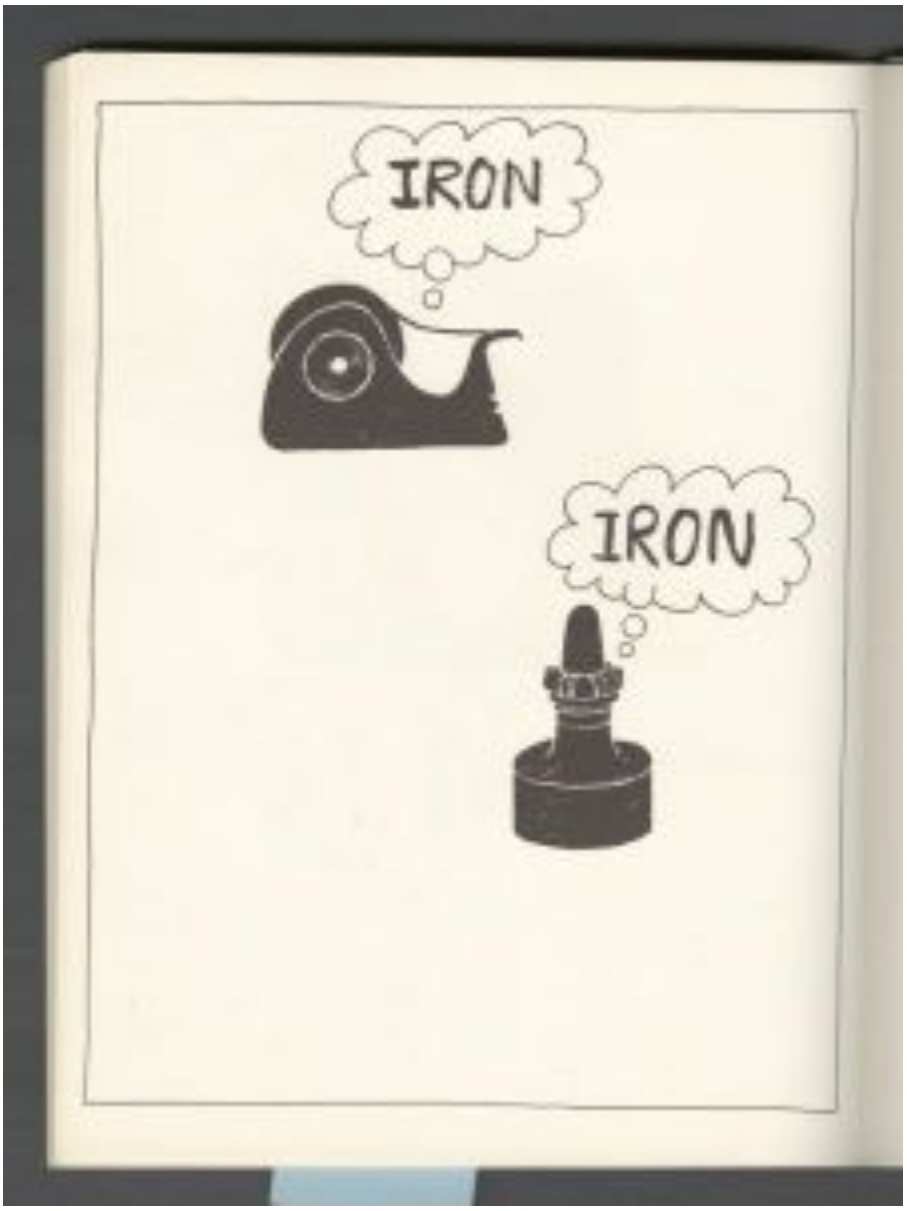

Figure 4: Joe Brainard and Frank Lima. "Poem." *C Comics* No. 2 (1965).

The next page of "Poem" features two desk objects, an inkwell and a tape dispenser, both with thought balloons containing the word "Iron" (Figure 4). It is hard to posit any meaning to the thought balloons or the objects. Indeed, it seems as if the tape dispenser and inkwell's "Iron" thoughts gesture to the impermanence of comics and the comics artist. Iron is more durable than ink and tape, and the tools of the comics artist, the matter of an ephemeral medium, can only dream of permanence.

C Comics No. 2 (1965)

This self-awareness is made coherent in the comic's final page, which depicts Nancy saying "I have burned down the sky" (Figure 5). The apocalyptic image here, delivered by a silhouetted Nancy, is at once impossible—the sky cannot be "burned down" in any literal way—and also terrifying, the sign of a true apocalypse wherein air becomes solid and all is aflame. Objects becoming conscious, then, leads to the sky burning down. It is both terrifying and impossible, invoking an emotional response yet also complete nonsense.

As in his "Poem" with Lima, Brainard's comics are emblems of negation. "I have burned down the sky." And, burning down the sky, positing something incoherent and impossible, is one way to imagine an art that isn't a mere critique of capitalism, but an art that stands

apart from capitalism. By making a comic about comics' ephemerality and impossibility as art, Brainard's comics collaboration with Lima and his work more generally, take comics seriously as an aesthetic medium and, in so doing, find in comics no value that can be monetized, commodified, or even really translated into either the fine art world or literary culture.


RED RYDER

Figures 6 and 7: Joe Brainard and Frank O'Hara. "Red Rydler and Dog." *C Comics* No. 1 (1964).

One two-page comic from *C Comics* Number 1, "Red Rydler and Dog," by Frank O'Hara and Joe Brainard is an example of what the grid as comics page brings into relief, and how Brainard's comics engage personhood, sexuality, and genre to foreground economic relations (Figures 6 and 7). The cowboy protagonist of the comic, Red Rydler, has two companions, a dog and a young Native American boy referred to as the "Runt Indian." In the comic, Red gets in a confrontation with another cowboy because Red has taken the cowboy's pants. The other cowboy accuses Red of having a "pants fetish," and the two get into a brief gunfight, only to be interrupted by Red's dog and the "Runt Indian." Remarking that his dog's "puss is

peculiar" (the dog's face has been scrawled out in black ink throughout the two-page comic), Red proposes that he take his pet and the Indian boy to Vegas. On the one hand, this comic clearly uses common genre tropes and elements—the iconic mid-century American western, the trope of the homosocial bond between the Western hero and his Native American companion, and even the queer connotations of cowboy fashion and culture in the 1960s and 1970s. But, these elements should not be viewed as tropes that Brainard is appropriating or somehow elevating from mass culture. Instead, like in Andy Warhol's film *Lonesome Cowboys* (1968), the Western is, indeed, just a Western. When "Rex Rydler and Dog" is viewed as a comic, rather than an artistic appropriation of comics, three things rise to prominence: the overt sexuality of the narrative, the imposition of the grid as a device of interruption, and the dog's scratched-out face. All three of these elements serve to make us aware of the abstraction at the center of the comics form—the story of Red Rydler the pants fetishist may be bizarre, but it nonetheless can conform to the conventional comics grid. The dog's scratched out face serves almost as an element of horror in the strip, the intrusion of the artist's hand onto the codes of the comics page. And, the interruption of text as it is written in panels—sentences continue without any notice from one panel to the next, providing a jarring reading experience for those accustomed to the comics page, where sentences are usually completed in one word balloon—serves to emphasize the gutters, the space between panels that are usually silent indicators of the passage and juxtaposition of different temporal moments. Not only do Brainard and O'Hara produce a comic about comics, they also produce a comic that is a bad comic according to the medium's conventions of representation and narrative coherence.

This essay's epigraph is taken from Brainard's best known work, *I Remember*. Like many comics, *I Remember* is a serial work—a book-length collection of sentences that all begin with the phrase "I remember." As the epigraph makes clear, savings is not something Brainard was interested in, nor did his efforts result in the accumulation of interest—"I remember trying to save money, for a day or two, and quickly losing interest." [38]

This line from *I Remember* plays on the relation between interest as attention and interest as return on investment. Today, as Thomas Piketty has demonstrated with such success, interest and accumulating returns on investment have given rise to a class of oligarchs and a much larger class of people who have little chance of accumulating much of anything. [39] Those with the most capital can achieve high returns on investment, while those with little capital receive small, and sometimes even negative, returns on investment. What Brainard's work enacts is the eschewal of value, and in valuelessness we must find not the possibility to monetize that which is outside of the market or hope for a renewed "interest" on our human capital, but the possibility of there being a space outside of the market that can be inhabited, that can be a home to us all.

NOTES

1. Joe Brainard, *I Remember*, in *The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard*, ed. Ron Padgett (New York: Library of America, 2012), 93.

2. Joe Brainard's *I Remember* was first published in 1970, and it was followed by *I Remember More* in 1972 as well as *More I Remember More* and *I Remember Christmas* in 1973. In 1975, a final version of *I Remember* was published that synthesized the four earlier publications.

3. See Constance Lewallen, *Joe Brainard: A Retrospective* (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley Art Museum, 2001); Joe Brainard, *The Nancy Book* (Los Angeles: Siglio P, 2008); and, Joe Brainard, *The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard*, ed. Ron Padgett (New York: Library of America, 2012).

4. Brainard wrote poetry and prose, which appeared in an array of literary magazines and chapbooks during the 1960s and 1970s, created paintings and assemblages, many of which were exhibited at New York's Fischbach Art Gallery, and designed covers for and illustrated for a number of publishing projects, including most of the covers for *C: A Journal of Poetry*. In the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library at Emory University, one can find a rare version of W.H. Auden's *The Platonic Blow* published by the Fuck You Press in 1965, which contains a hand-drawn illustration by Brainard; a Joe Brainard illustrated cover on the 1969 music score *Four Dialogues for Two Voices and Two Pianos* by Ned Rorem and Frank O'Hara; and the proofs for Joe Brainard's cover for Ted Berrigan's 1971 long poem *Train Ride*, along with nearly all of Brainard's chapbook publications, his magazine *C Comics*, and the various editions of *I Remember*.

5. Edmund White, "Joe Brainard," *Arts and Letters* (San Francisco: Cleis P, 2004), 241.

6. Andy Fitch, *Pop Poetics: Reframing Joe Brainard* (Champaign: Dalkey Archive P, 2012), 48.

7. Ibid., 27.

8. Ibid., 175.

9. Marjorie Perloff, "I Remember Vanilla Pudding," *Times Literary Supplement* (3 August 2011), 10.

10. This critical passage did not make it into print in the *Times Literary Supplement*, but is available as a part of the review published on Perloff's own website. See Marjorie Perloff, "The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard, edited by Ron Padgett," http://marjorieperloff.com/reviews/brainard/

11. Oren Izenberg, *Being Numerous: Poetry and the Ground of Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2011), 5-6.

12. Christopher Nealon, *The Matter of Capital: Poetry and Crisis in the American Century* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2011), 30.

13. Michael W. Clune, *American Literature and the Free Market, 1945-2000* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2010), 74.

14. Joe Brainard, *Some Drawings of Some Notes to Myself* (New York: Siamese Banana P, 1971). This small book is collected in *The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard*, 255-262.

15. Brainard, *I Remember*, 125.

16. *C Comics* was edited and drawn by Joe Brainard, and it was an offshoot of *C: A Journal of Poetry*, edited by Ted Berrigan. While *C Comics* ran for only 2 issues in 1964 and 1965, *C: A Journal of Poetry* ran for 13 issues, from 1963 to 1966, with Andy Warhol contributing a silkscreen cover for issue 4, and Brainard contributing covers for 9 issues of the journal.

17. Ann Lauterbach, "Joe Brainard & Nancy," in Joe Brainard, *The Nancy Book* (Los Angeles: Siglio P, 2008), 23.

18. Ibid., 23-24.

19. These drawings and paintings are all reproduced in Brainard, *The Nancy Book*.

20. The most substantive account to date of comics' intersection with abstract art is Andrei Molotiu, ed., *Abstract Comics, The Anthology, 1967-2009* (Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2009).

21. See Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2008).

22. Douglas Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," *October* 15 (1980), 96.

23. Bart Beaty, *Comics Versus Art* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2012), 58. See also the exhibition catalog, Kirk Varnedde and Adam Gopnik, *High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1990).

24. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version," *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008), 35.

25. Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," 100.

26. See Beaty, *Comics Versus Art* and Andrew Lowman, "'That Mouse's Shadow': The Canonization of Spiegelman's *Maus*." *The Rise of the American Comics Artist: Creators and Contexts,* eds. Paul Williams and James Lyons (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2010), 210-34.

27. Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition," *October* 18 (1981), 56. For an account of the grid's emergence as a modernist, mythic structure, see Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," *October* 9 (1979): 50-64.

28. Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," 66. For a deep history of the grid that traces its function as an architectural, textual, and visual structure back to 9000 BCE, see Hannah B. Higgins, *The Grid Book* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2009). Higgins's provocative history ranges from bricks and maps to boxes and screens, but it does not address the modern medium of comics.

29. See Douglas Crimp, *"Our Kind of Movie": The Films of Andy Warhol* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2012); Jonathan Flatley, "Like: Collecting and Collectivity," *October* 132 (2010): 71-98; and, Catherine Zuromskis, *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2013).

30. I have been influenced here by Jared Gardner's work on the line in comics. See Jared Gardner, "Storylines," *Substance* 40.1 (2011): 53-69.

31. Joe Brainard, "Nancy," in *The Nancy Book*, 67-69.

32. Ernie Bushmiller and John Stanley's *Nancy* comics are being collected and reprinted by the comics publisher Drawn and Quarterly.

33. In an interview conducted in 1977, Tim Dlugos asked Brainard how he became a "national figure," to which Brainard responded, "You've got to be kidding." Brainard went on to say, "I don't have a definite commodity, and that's the only way to make money." Tim Dlugos, "The Joe Brainard Interview," in *The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard*, 497-98.

34. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2008), 252.

35. David Joselit, *After Art* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2013), 1.

36. Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 1990), 12.

37. See Jared Gardner, *Projections: Comics and the History of Twenty-First-Century Storytelling* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2012). Also, for a reading of the comics form's aesthetic possibilities both parallel to and imaginatively departing from film, see Scott Bukatman, *The Poetics of Slumberland: Animated Spirits and the Animating Spirit* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2012).

38. Brainard, *I Remember*, 93.

39. See Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2014), esp. 430-67.

Daniel Worden is associate professor in the Department of English at the University of New Mexico. He is the author of *Masculine Style: The American West and Literary Modernism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; paperback edition, 2013), which received the Thomas J. Lyon Book Award in Western American Literary and Cultural Studies. He is also the coeditor of *Oil Culture* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014) and the editor of *The Comics of Joe Sacco: Journalism in a Visual World* (University Press of Mississippi, 2015). He is currently completing a book about literary journalism, the politics of the personal, and privatization, an article from which is forthcoming in *American Literature.*

FEATURES

"B-SIDE MODERNISM" EXHIBITION

NONSITE

These images from The Raymond Danowski Poetry Library were selected by our B-Side Fellows to accompany the essays in Issue 15.

These documents—many of them rare and seldom viewed, some of them unique and made public here for the first time—represent only a tiny fraction of the wealth of material that the Danowski Library collection has to offer the scholar of twentieth-century literature.

The B-Side Modernism Exhibition is a digital companion to a physical exhibition assembled in collaboration with Emory University's Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library (MARBL), on display in Emory's Robert W. Woodruff library through March 15, 2015.
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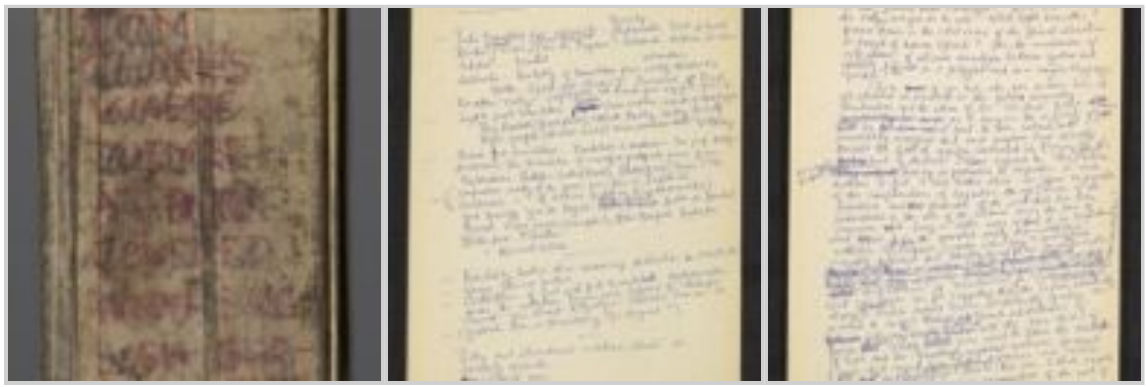
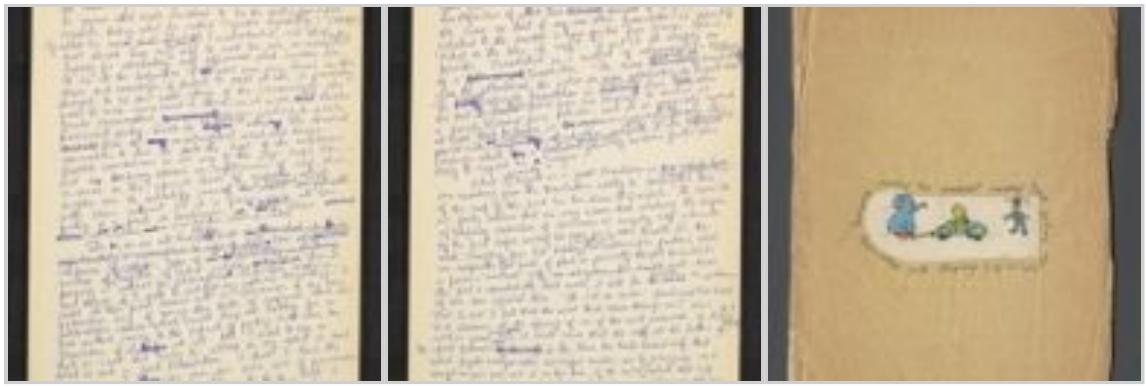
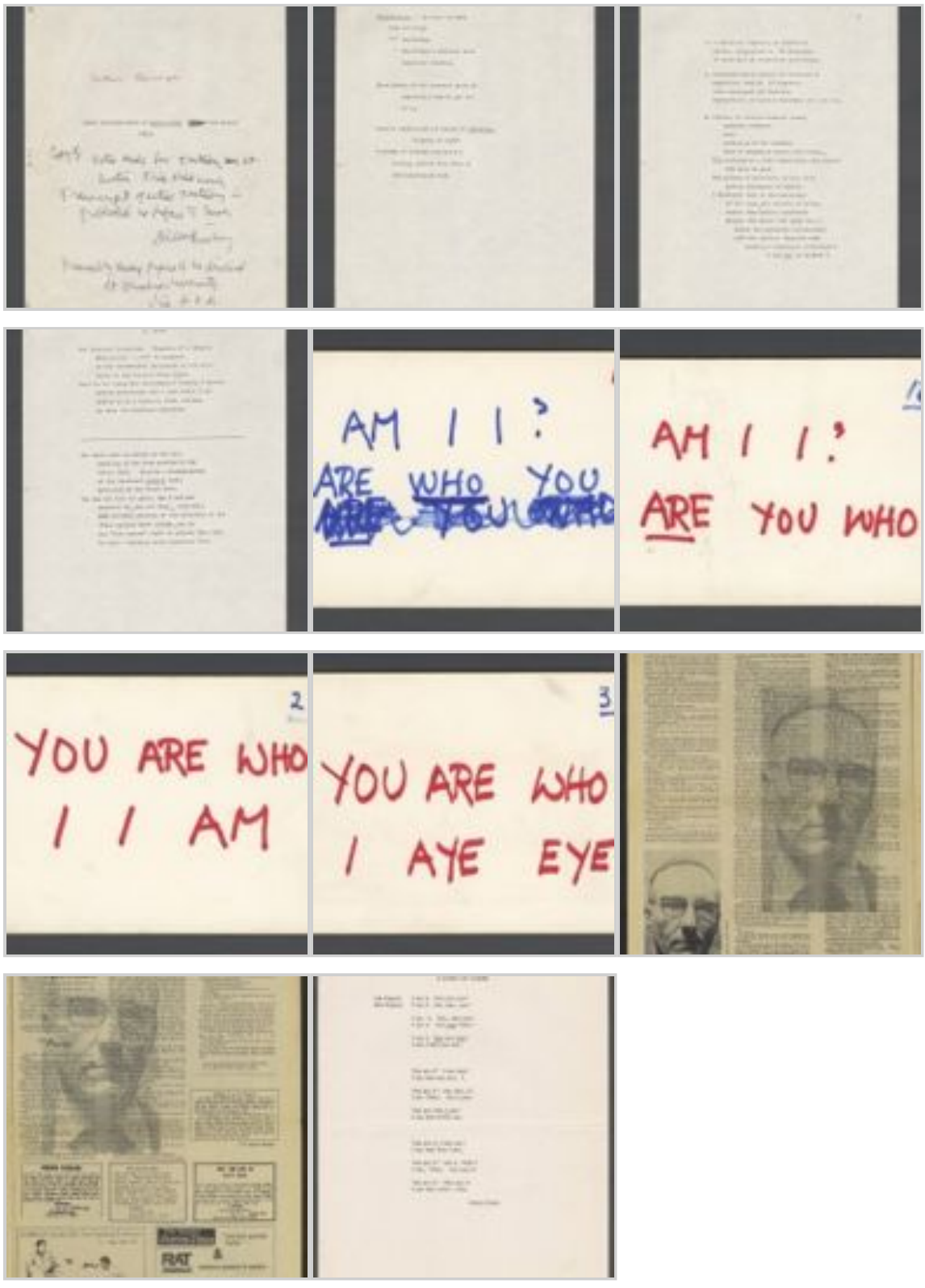
Joshua Adams "Hearing the Tone of the Self: Toward An Alternative Ethics of Translation"





Rebecca Roach: "'Endless Talk': Beat Writers and the Interview Form"



Daniel Worden: "Joe Brainard's Grid, or, the Matter of Comics"


GOETH BEFORE A FALL
POEM
IRON
IRON
RELAX!!!
RELAX!!!
SOME DRAWINGS OF SOME NOTES TO MYSELF BY JOE BRAINARD


LAUNDRY
I HAVE
WHAT PEOPLE WANT
NEW LIFE
BELT


(AS A WRITER)
IF I WAS
OLD AND
FAT
AND WORE
HATS

Stephanie Anderson, "'Crowded Air': Previous Modernisms in some 1964 New York Little Magazines"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A Quarterly Review

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