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Poems and an Essay on Teaching Digital Creative Writing

A Dissertation  
Presented to the  
Graduate Faculty of the  
University of Louisiana at Lafayette  
In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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Poems and an Essay on Teaching Digital Creative Writing

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# Flipping the Script: The Pedagogical Relevance of Digital Creative Writing

## 1.1 Introduction

The artistic, personal, social, and cognitive benefits of digital creative writing instruction at the undergraduate and graduate levels are multiple and real. The inherent features of digital literary works, “connectivity, interactivity, multimediality, non-linearity, performativity, and transformability” (Simanowski 15), can help realize a widely held pedagogical goal that a university education seeks at its most basic level, “the cultivation of imaginative, compassionate, broadly informed citizens” (Engell and Dangerfield 64-65).

## 1.2 Background

While much has been written on the poetics and aesthetics of reading and writing digital literature, less has been written on teaching it. Scholarship within conventional or traditional Creative Writing Studies either does not address digital creative writing or addresses it only briefly. For example, quintessential texts in Creative Writing Studies, such as Wendy Bishop’s and Hans Ostrom’s *Colors of a Different Horse*, Katharine Haake’s *What Our Speech Disrupts*, and Joseph Moxley’s *Creative Writing in America*, refrain from discussions of the ways in which digital technology is marking the field or the issues related to reading and writing practices particular to digital literature. And they can hardly be faulted since all three were written prior to the surge in digital literature. Graeme Harper’s and Dianne Donnelly’s *Key Issues in Creative Writing* offers a single chapter by Stephanie Vanderslice that “considers the ways in which digital competency, industry awareness and initiative, and resilience lead students to mapping their own career pathways in the face of inevitable changes” (137). Graeme Harper’s and Jeri Kroll’s *Creative Writing Studies: Practice, Research, and Pedagogy*, which, in fairness, attempts to traverse the wide field of Creative Writing Studies, devotes one chapter to digital creative writing instruction. In that chapter, “Let Stones Speak: New Media Remediation in the Poetry Writing Classroom,” the late



Jake Adam York, “focusing on new media teaching techniques, suggests ways in which the university Creative Writing classroom might be a place for pedagogic investigation of the nature of particular genre [sic]” (xii). Other recent scholarship, such as Donnelly’s *Does the Writing Workshop Still Work?* and Vanderslice’s *Rethinking Creative Writing in Higher Education*, mentions the import of the digital into creative writing in passing. Such brevity makes sense given the prominence of print-based creative writing and the relative scarcity of digital creative writers who teach courses on the subject. Still other texts, such as Kelly Ritter’s and Stephanie Vanderslice’s *Can It Really Be Taught?* and Anna Leahy’s *Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom*, offer little, if anything at all, on the ways digital technology is marking the creative writing classroom, or on the ways reading and writing practices have evolved as a result of digital literature. However, they can hardly be faulted for their omissions, given the specific focus of those texts, the myths surrounding creative writing instruction and the power dynamics governing the creative writing classroom respectively. The state of affairs regarding digital creative writing scholarship as it pertains to pedagogical issues makes sense, as digital creative writing is still emerging as a field and a teachable discipline.

Just as creative writing scholarship writ large tends to ignore or gloss over the teaching of digital creative writing, so, too, does digital literary scholarship. Many of the eminent texts in digital literary scholarship, such as Loss Pequeño Glazier’s *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetries*, Lev Manovich’s *The Language of New Media*, George Landow’s *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*, and Jerome McGann’s *Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web*, tend to address theoretical and aesthetic issues at the expense of pedagogical ones. They either concern themselves with the poetics of the genre, such as in Glazier’s text, or investigate the nature of the genre by analyzing its relationship to others, such as film, as in Manovich’s work. They either focus on digital literature as it intersects with critical theory, as in

Landow's work, or speculate on the potential digital technology has for redefining textuality, as McGann's work does. Michael Joyce's *Of Two Minds: Hypertext Pedagogy and Poetics* contains one chapter that explicitly addresses the teaching of digital literature. Two recent texts have focused on the reading, writing, and teaching of digital literature and digital creative writing: *Reading Moving Letters: Digital Literature in Research and Teaching*, edited by Roberto Simanowski, Jörgen Schäfer, and Peter Gendolla, and the forthcoming *Creative Writing in the Digital Age: Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy*, edited by Michael Dean Clark, Trent Hergenrader, and Joseph Rein. The former title explores the ways in which scholarly work in digital literature and the teaching of it inform each other while the latter explores the effect digital technologies and practices are having on creative writing studies and how the use of those technologies in the creative writing classroom shapes the composing of literary texts. The appearance of these recent titles suggests that digital creative writing courses are increasing in university curricula and that more people are writing more digitally born texts.

### **1.3 Digital Creative Writing**

Just as creative writing refers to the corpus of imaginative literature and the practice of creating that literature, digital creative writing refers to the corpus of digital literature and the practice of creating digital literary objects. Additionally, as with creative writing, digital creative writing refers to a particular course that exists within university curricula to teach the genre's literature and creative practices. Often, given the context, digital creative writing is synonymous with digital literature, that is, the literary objects by themselves.

Digital creative writing is text-based, literary work that requires the use of digital technology at every stage, from creation to transmission/reception to preservation. It is not print-based literary work that has been remediated into a digital format, such as a PDF or e-reader format. Rather, the digital technology plays a crucial role in the ontology of the literary

object, situating it between literature and visual art. Digital creative writing exists in what J.R. Carpenter refers to as the “*entre-space*,” or between-space (*Interrogating Electronic Literature*). Noah Wardrip-Fruin defines digital literature as “work with important literary aspects that requires the use of digital computation” (163). While this definition is satisfactory, indicating the inherent literariness of the works and that digital technology is involved, it glosses the significance of digital computation and technology in the ontology of digital literature. The Electronic Literature Organization (ELO), founded and charged with, as it states, “to facilitate and promote the writing, publishing, and reading of literature in electronic media,” defines electronic literature similarly to Wardrip-Fruin as “works with important literary aspects that take advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer” (ELO). The ELO’s definition is moderately more effective than Wardrip-Fruin’s because it suggests that digital technologies carry with them a context which becomes part of the life of the work and because it further incorporates the concept of the digital network. While Wardrip-Fruin’s and the ELO’s definitions are open-ended, allowing for the inclusion of a variety of works, they contain the essences of digital literature: that it is literary and intimately connected to digital processes and technologies.

The connection between literary works and digital elements is more complex than “intimately connected” would suggest. In fact, the digital elements are necessary to the creation of the literary objects; the incorporation of the digital is not a peripheral consideration but a central one. As the ELO states, “[t]he confrontation with technology at the level of creation . . . distinguishes electronic literature from . . . digitized versions of print works” (ELO). Stephanie Strickland foregrounds the “confrontation” when she defines digital literature as text-based, literary work that requires “code for creation, preservation, and display.” Electronic literature cannot exist without a computer or other digital device or software (Strickland, “Born Digital”).

Electronic literature relies on the performance, or execution, of a code. And it must be more than having been composed on a computer, the end result of which is to be printed. As Strickland notes, “[i]f it could possibly be printed out, it isn’t e-lit” (“Born Digital”). For the rest of the essay, Strickland delineates the characteristics specific to electronic literature. It is a genre that, because of its relationship to code and digital technologies, requires of readers new reading strategies that accommodate for the distribution of texts over human and machine networks, which challenge conventional attitudes of literature with regard to time and space. It is a genre that produces objects rather than texts, that is, the objects are three-dimensional structures more apt to be played than to be read. Finally, it is a genre that exists in an interdependent dynamic system, or feedback loop, between human and machine intelligences (“Born Digital”). What emerges from Strickland is the realization that even though it contains features of both literary and visual art digital literature exists as its own genre occupying a space between them.

While “Born Digital” provides an overview of the multiplicitous nature of digital literature two other essays by Strickland, “Writing the Virtual: Eleven Dimensions of E-Poetry” and “Quantum Poetics,” examine the *entre-space* as it also exists in relation to a human-machine dynamic. These two works address the mutability, transformability, and variability, the transitional/transitory nature, of digital literature. They refer to what C.T. Funkhouser labels the genre’s “plasticity” (*New Directions* 5). In other words, the characteristics of e-poetry are to be thought of macroscopically, as dimensions, because the access to technology on the parts of the writer and reader engender multiple acceptable iterations of the digital object. Moreover, in addition to these effects of technology on the work, Strickland notes how the transitional, continually evolving nature of digital objects results from the interplay of technology and the digital objects with the human body and its cognitive processes. They argue for a critical understanding of e-poetry, and digital literature writ large, that accounts for these myriad

engagements of digital objects and human bodies. It is clear from Strickland's essays that the human elements are every bit as significant for digital literature as for print literature.

The entanglements between human and machine bodies and human cognition and machine "cognitive" processes important to Strickland's understanding of digital literature are also central to N. Katherine Hayles. Much of Hayles's work, notably *Writing Machines* and *How We Became Posthuman*, examines the entangled ways humans and digital technologies coexist. Her book, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*, defines the genre of electronic literature and outlines some of the theoretical considerations shaping it, such as the concept of intermediation. According to Hayles, intermediation explains the process "whereby a first-level emergent pattern is captured in another medium and re-represented with the primitives of the new medium, and so forth" (45). The system that results is "multi-tiered," one in which "feedback and feedforward loops tie the system together through continuing interactions circulating throughout" (45). As the two, humans and digital machines, interact with each other, their respective inputs and processes change the dynamic between them, which causes the entities themselves to change, and these changes compound over time. This suggests, and this is a central theme for Hayles, that human intelligence is uniquely and complexly keyed to, even dependent upon, intelligent machines. The relationship between humans and digital machines and processes is complex and fluid, and in the context of electronic literature, the objects produced are also complex and fluid. And Hayles devotes an entire chapter to providing taxonomizing the genre, illustrating its complexity and fluidity. As her taxonomy indicates, electronic literature is distinct from print literature. In fact, "[t]o see electronic literature only through the lens of print is . . . not to see it at all" (3). Her taxonomy, which includes hypertext fiction, interactive fiction, locative narratives, virtual narratives, playable media, interactive drama, generative art, code work, and flash poetry, also indicates the level to which electronic

literature engages with readers on a more dynamic, or kinesthetic, level than print literature. In many cases, electronic literature requires readers to participate in a more rigorous way with it than with print literature.

Much criticism and scholarship on digital creative writing has taken care to define it and its sub-genres, which serves to demonstrate its vibrancy and potential through delineating its many manifestations. And this is the case with Eduardo Kac's *Media Poetry: An International Anthology*, which collects essays from various makers and critics discussing various genres of digital poetry, such as videopoetry, holopoetry, biopoetry, interactive poems, and nomadic poems, to name a few. The anthology presents a poetic landscape that is expanding and including within it typically non-poetic media, challenging what poetry can be. As Kac notes, *Media Poetry* collects critical work from "poets that appropriate the new writing tools of our time and with them give life to new and differentiated poetic forms" (12). *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories* follows Kac's lead and collects critical work about new media poetry so as to "extend the work of understanding the computer as an expressive medium" and help it be scrutinized in the same way as "other digital art forms" (Morris 5). New media poetry, and by extension digital literature, these anthologies show, is expansive: both expanding into new social and medial ecologies and also expanding older ones, such as the "marginalized lineages of print and sound poetics, procedural writing, gestural abstraction and conceptual art, and activist and/or utopian communities formed by emergent poetics" (Morris 5). Digital literature, we see, is continually branching out and rooted ever deeper in earlier traditions.

For all its newness, digital literature is not without its earlier print predecessors. Despite its technological prowess, digital literature's roots, on formal and conceptual levels, can be traced back to the avant-garde Modernist print tradition. This is Jessica Pressman's argument in *Digital Modernism: Making It New in New Media*. Pressman confronts the myth that digital literature is a

“postmodern literary form that grows out of technologies, subjectivities, and poetics from the middle of the twentieth century” (2). Rather, Pressman contends that much digital literature extends directly from the work of Modernists, such as Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and Bob Brown, those writers for whom “make it new” was a supreme guiding principle. Pressman demonstrates that at least some digital literary works operate in the eminently Modernist ways: “adapt[ing] seminal texts from the modernist canon (e.g., Pound’s *Cantos*, Joyce’s *Ulysses*), remediat[ing] specific formal techniques (e.g., stream of consciousness, super-position), and engag[ing] with cornerstone cultural issues (e.g., the relationship between poetics, translation, and global politics” (2). Digital literature, then, while different than print literature, nevertheless “illuminates and refreshes our sense of literary history” (1). It also situates digital literature within literary history, thus demanding that it be read as seriously as other print works that help form that history.

Like Pressman, Loss Pequeño Glazier argues the distinctness of digital poetry and literature, while simultaneously linking it and its experimental attitudes to an earlier print tradition. Whereas Pressman returns to the Modernism of the 1920s and 30s to establish the roots of digital innovation, Glazier, in *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetries*, prefers to place digital poetry’s roots in “*innovative* poetry practices,” (emphasis in original 22) such as those associated with Concrete, Black Mountain, Fluxus, and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetries. These practices are important because they explore similar issues to those explored in digital practice, such as “the perspective of the multiple ‘I’” (22) and the centrality of “the materials of writing to writing itself” (22). As Glazier writes:

[*Digital Poetics* is] an investigation into the materiality of electronic writing. It addresses, to varying depths, the three principal forms of electronic textuality: hypertext, visual/kinetic, and works in programmable media . . . . [I]t looks at

electronic textuality as writing per se and investigates how the materiality of electronic writing has changed the idea of writing itself, how this writing functions in the real world of the Web, and what writing becomes when activated in the electronic medium. (6)

What is important about Glazier's work, as well as Pressman's, is the way it positions digital technology as another material and electronic space as "a space of poesis" (3) with and through which poets, and indeed other writers, use to express what Kac would call their "textual aspirations" (11) and "contribute to a re-definition of writing itself" that relevant in light of emerging twenty-first century textual conditions.

Digital literature is an emergent literature of the twenty-first century and has its genesis in the literary creative practices of the twentieth century. It is part of, not apart from literary history. Like Glazier and Pressman, C.T. Funkhouser recognizes the connections between digital poetry and twentieth century avant-gardism, but like Hayles and Strickland, he recognizes the differences between them that allow it, and digital literature in general, to forge a new understanding of writing and literature.

In *Prehistoric Digital Poetry: An Archeology of Forms, 1959-1995*, he notes that understanding and appreciating digital poetry as it is requires understanding of its origins (1). Funkhouser argues that "digital poetry's foundations, mechanically and conceptually built in the decades before personal computers, were firmly established by the 1990s—before WWW came into existence" and was used as a creative tool (1). He examines various sub-genres of digital poetry, such as programmable, kinetic, and hyper-based works, by analyzing historical forebears of each. *What Prehistorical Digital Poetry* ultimately shows is that digital literature is a hybrid genre, that is, a "conglomeration of forms that now constitutes a genre even though the creative activity itself—in terms of its media, methods, expressive intent—contains heterogeneous components" (1).



The works are not hybrid in that they incorporate characteristics of other genres within the same mode or medium. Rather, they are hybrid in that they incorporate heterogeneous components, those that belong to wholly different, or incongruous, modes and mediums.

While *Prehistoric Digital Poetry* looks back at the origins, *New Directions in Digital Poetry* looks forward to the horizons of the genre. It presents analyses of prominent digital poems written after 1995, the year the World Wide Web (WWW) ascended to prominence, showing its hybrid nature continues to evolve. In describing what digital poetry is, Funkhouser also describes the way digital literature writ large operates:

Digital poetry can be seen as a type of organism, as an approach to expression having properties and relations of its individual parts, but by the character of the whole parts, and by relations of parts of the whole. Thus far, in its relatively brief history, an ever-present variability has proven itself as a primary attribute of composition (and thus presentation). Digital poetry, as a literary and artistic form, is an equivocal organism, with many identities or iterations. As an expressive form, . . . it invites vibrant, transformative multimodal engagement for its practitioners and audience alike. (3-4)

The works that he analyses further demonstrate this description. They are works that engender polyformality, mutability, interactivity, and performativity. They are works that incorporate the technology of the age and reflect some of its central cultural issues. They are works that possess many, if not all, of the eleven traits Ihab Hassan argues as characteristic of postmodern literature in “Beyond Postmodernism?: Theory, Sense, and Pragmatism”: indeterminacy, fragmentation, decanonization, selflessness, unpresentability, irony, hybridization, carnivalization, performance, constructionism, and immanence (131-33). What becomes clear in *New Directions in Digital Poetry* as well as the aforementioned scholarship is that digital literature is postmodern literature.

*Reading Moving Letters*, edited by Roberto Simanowski, Jürgen Schäfer, and Peter Gendolla, provides the most robust discussion of the ways digital creative writing operates within contemporary culture. The book is divided into two parts, the first of which concerns reading strategies and the second of which concerns teaching strategies. Both sections contain essays by the same scholars in an effort to show how they navigate critical and pedagogical issues. The book concerns the institutionalization of digital creative writing, that is, the incorporation of digital creative writing into the academy and what issues arise in the process. As the editors note in the “Preface,” “While we have a number of impressive theoretical texts about digital literature, we as of yet have little in the way of resources for discussing the down-to-earth practices of research, teaching, and curriculum necessary for this work to mature” (9). Moreover, they write:

*Reading Moving Letters* addresses this need on an up-to-date basis and provides examinations in an international comparative perspective: terminological considerations, close readings, institutional aspects, pedagogical concerns, experiences, and solutions shared by authors from different academic backgrounds. (9)

The text addresses digital literature as a scholarly endeavor in the humanities, while also addressing practical pedagogical issues. *Reading Moving Letters* illustrates the complexity with which digital creative writing operates and the various ways it can affect literature and literary conceptions. It also illustrates the ability of digital creative writing to engage with meaningful pedagogical issues, in an attempt to help us better understand how and why we teach this or any other discipline.

Digital creative writing, with its “connectivity, interactivity, multimediality, non-linearity, performativity, and transformability” (Simanowski 15), has a unique ability to usher students into

the aforementioned citizenship by requiring them to creatively and critically confront the nature of literature, i.e. what it is, how it changes, and how it can operate in contemporary society, and by extension the nature of themselves, i.e. who they are and how they interact with the world. And it is this potentiality to which the title refers. Though I do not introduce new terms into the critical discourse surrounding digital literature, my application of existing terms, along with others from literary theory, to an analysis of the creative writing field offers a potentially new way to understand both digital literature and creative writing studies.

#### **1.4 Benefits of Digital Creative Writing**

“Flipping the Script: On the Educational Relevance of Digital Creative Writing,” examines the benefits of digital creative writing instruction and how it might help realize larger educational goals, such as “the cultivation of imaginative, compassionate, broadly informed citizens” (Engell and Dangerfield 64-65). Additionally, the essay examines the significant issues surrounding the institutionalization of digital creative writing at the university level. In “Teaching Digital Literature,” Simanowski summarizes and comments on the essays from the other contributors that comprise the second part. As he notes, teaching digital literature takes advantage of a facility with technology that is widespread, particularly with younger generations. Furthermore, it prepares students to inhabit the 21<sup>st</sup> century by requiring them to develop not only new media or information literacy but also semiotic literacy that spans various modalities:

Digital literature can offer a critical approach to the conventions of digital language indispensable for a concept of digital literacy that is not reduced to the mere management of information and acquisition of technical skills. (235)

Digital literature destabilizes boundaries between teacher and student, as well as other institutions related to authority, as Janez Strehovec indicates, by “help[ing] break some of the powerful enchantments of a culture industry since it alienates our expectations about . . . what

constitutes literature and about how digital technology is supposed to work” (qtd. in Simanowski 234). In short, *Reading Moving Letters*, and indeed all the aforementioned scholarship on digital literature, illustrates the myriad benefits of digital literature that are then transmitted to students in the writing classroom. In order to argue the benefits I have appropriated terms related to concepts widely written about in scholarship on digital literature, thus constructing a critical framework based on five broad categories, or nodes: *poiesis*, *literacy*, *identification*, *authority*, and *cognition*.

#### 1.4.1 Poiesis

*Poiesis* concerns issues related to the making of digital literary works, not only the creation of a literary work but also the critical considerations involved in how and why it was created. Teaching digital creative writing provides students yet another, highly versatile, uniquely contemporary, way to create literary work and develop a critical awareness of the processes of reading and writing. Just as traditional creative writing encourages students to understand their relationship to literature by fostering their capacity as writers and readers, and just as it prompts students to think critically about textuality, so too does digital creative writing. In fact, it likely does even more so.

Two critics central to this argument are Loss Pequeño Glazier and Katharine Haake. For Glazier, the “electronic space,” he argues, is a “space of poiesis” (3). Digital media provide yet more potential materials from which to make literary works, and digital literary works extend from the same poietic impetus seen in other “innovative poetry practices” (22). However, he argues that these innovative practices, including illuminated manuscripts, typography-based texts, and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry, concerned as they are with “the multiple in discourse, perspective, and textual constitution” and “the materials of writing to writing itself” (22), are extended, “not merely repositioned,” in the digital realm (26). And these concerns

require critical engagement, a quality of the university-educated citizen. As for Haake, she argues in “Teaching Creative Writing If the Shoe Fits,” that a goal in creative writing courses should be teaching students to “analyze their own textuality” (78) and how to sustain a writing practice beyond the course (93) by incorporating more critical and literary theory, which provides a framework that allows one to ask the right questions, and by “shift[ing] our emphasis away from the product to the process of writing” (81). As she writes: “[theory] helps us analyze not *what* texts mean, but *how* they mean, not who we are, but how we are what we believe we are at any given moment, and how, as well, that changes, as it does” (86). This consideration of how texts mean is exactly what must be negotiated when reading and composing a digital literary work, given its inherent features, as Simanowski notes, “such as connectivity, interactivity, multimediality, non-linearity, performativity, and transformability” (15).

#### **1.4.2 Literacy**

*Literacy* concerns issues related to digital creative writing’s role in shaping the ability to read and write and the relationship between people and communicative apparatuses. Teaching digital creative writing, given the current multimodal and multimedial landscape, exposes students to multiple literacies and requires them to develop a level of proficiency with them. The most prominent of these literacies include media, computer, digital, information, and creative. Of these, creative literacy is perhaps the most complex. In “Beyond the Literary: Why Creative Literacy Matters,” Steve Healey argues that creative writing courses, while helping students develop an ability to produce literary works, are perhaps more beneficial because they help develop a sense of being creative and an ability to access that creativity in a variety of situations beyond the literary and the classroom:

Creative literacy develops many proficiencies, including the ability to use language (along with visual images and many other media) to produce complex

affective states in an audience; the ability to think and communicate in associative, metaphorical, non-linear, non-hierarchical ways; the ability to craft evocative stories with fully realized characters, personas, voices; the ability to manipulate or destabilize received meanings and to produce new meanings. (63)

These “proficiencies” result from and are, in many cases, requisite for, the creation of digital literary work; in fact, the first, second, and fourth ones could be found in scholarship on digital literature. These proficiencies are often similar, if not identical to, the stated missions of countless institutions, from English departments to universities, as James Engell and Anthony Dangerfield have noted. It seems evident that in the current and emerging media and technology saturated society creative literacy through digital literature and digital creative practice would prove to be an actively pursued pedagogical outcome.

The substrate for this category is Gregory Ulmer’s theory of electracy, a portmanteau of “electrical” and “literacy.” As noted in the chapter on electracy in *networked: a (networked\_book) about (networked\_art)*, electracy follows from literacy, which follows from orality. Indeed, electracy is “to digital media what literacy is to alphabetic writing: an apparatus, or social machine, partly technological, partly institutional” (Authors and Collaborators). Within this movement from one apparatus, literacy, which coincides with the invention of alphabetic writing, to the other, electracy, which coincides with the saturation of digital media, and the digital image in particular, there exist myriad cultural, social, and political implications. Electracy is the term that identifies the condition of the emergence of a new linguistic apparatus, and cannot be taught as such. But, institutionalizing digital creative writing does not teach electracy, but rather a set of skills, or literacies, that allow students to understand the emerging apparatus and participate more deliberately in its invention. It is evident how teaching students to make digital literary works, given their aforementioned features, can make them more media, computer, digital, information,

and creative literate. But the real benefit of digital creative writing, hybrid as it is, is that it might be “the perfect place to teach *transliteracy*: the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media” (emphasis in original, Simanowski, “Teaching Digital Literature” 232-233). This ability to be transliterate is perfectly suited to, if not necessary for, navigating the new electrate society.

### 1.4.3 Identification

This node can be further divided into the sub-nodes: genre and identity. As for genre, digital creative writing combines features of literary and visual art, blurring boundaries between genres. To read these works requires the ability to see a work’s literary merit beyond genre considerations, which literary writers and works often disregard or deliberately violate. To write these works requires the ability to identify the generic characteristics of a particular piece and then to determine which of those characteristics will be used in order to realize the piece.

Reading and writing digital literature often requires one to focus more on the individual piece and how it accomplishes its *raison d’être* rather than on the type, or brand, of literature it is. This is not to suggest that genre is irrelevant. Some writers write within a genre, and the *raison d’être* of a work is its desire to satisfy genre conventions, to consider the needs of the work and the writer and the expectations of readers and genres and subject matter. For example, some writers write poems that behave as poems should, based on a fixed definition of poetry, while some writers write genre fiction based on the accepted conventions for the particular genre. However, much of the *raison d’être* of the literary, of literature as art, is rooted in making the old new, in reconsidering established conventions and repurposing them to create works of a current time, location, and perspective. This “making new” has been prevalent within the print canon and resonates within the still-emerging canon of digital literature, one that is quite contemporaneous. To teach digital creative writing is to make students aware of generic conventions and the literary

impulse to play with them. It encourages young writers to understand their own particular *raison d'être*, as well as that of their work.

And there is certainly much scholarship within digital literature on genre and taxonomy. As has already been noted, Hayles's *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*, outlines the genres of electronic literature, noting "the immediacy of code to the text's performance" and that "[m]ajor genres in the canon of electronic literature emerge not only from different ways in which the user experiences them, but also from the structure and specificity of the underlying code" (5). What is important about her taxonomy is that while identifying the traits for the genres it is clear that few genres of digital literature can claim a trait solely for themselves. There is within digital literature, a pronounced fluidity, or plasticity, with regard to genre. In his essay "Beyond Taxonomy: Digital Poetics and the Problem of Reading," Talan Memmott writes that digital literature invites *taxonomadism*, the ability to move between various genres, predominantly in the interest of reading digital literary works fully and faithfully and writing a work that succeeds in honoring its *raison d'être*. Taxonomadism also empowers writers and readers beyond superficial preoccupations with genre, helping to push the bounds of the literary and promote the most robust possible experience with a work. While this taxonomadism is essential for readers and writers, it can pose problems for critics, for whom genre and taxonomy are essential (304-05). The hybridity of digital literature is part of its nature, and if we are to teach digital literature we, as well as our students, must recognize this. Teaching readers and writers how to negotiate this hybridity helps promote their cognitive engagement with the multivalent world and the vibrancy of the canon in particular and literary work in general.

As for identity sub-node, generally speaking, writing as a performative act, allows the writer to construct an identity. In short, writers, the theory suggests, construct an identity in the act of writing; they write who they are or want to be or even could be. This complex notion of



identity is informed by myriad vectors, not least of which are cultural and linguistic. Digital creative writing is no different. In fact, the multimodal nature of digital literature, with its access to different media and media reflective of the digitally saturated world, perhaps allows for a more pronounced sense of construction. Reading is also a performative act in which a reader constructs, or writes, the meaning of a text. The act of constructing meaning is particularly true of digital literature, which requires a concerted level of interactivity. And the constructed meaning, as with the constructed identity, is complex and informed by myriad vectors, including cultural and linguistic. If the text is a construction, then the meaning that is constructed is also a constructed identity, or a performance, of the writer's identity. It is these notions of identity, i.e. its being constructed through writing and reconstructed through reading, that the *identification* node of this argument encompasses.

If constructing and receiving identity through print-born writing is difficult enough, the process is even more complicated by the digital text. Digital creative writing instruction provides students with an understanding of the construction and performance of identity as it occurs in electracy. Students create literary works and in the process create an identity; in fact, it is more likely that they perform an identity that is acted on by cultural forces and expectations, i.e. cultural conventions, linguistic facility, what a writer is, what literature can be, generically, materially, and thematically. They learn that identity is provisional and protean. While there may be some debate about whether or not identity is constructed or performed, the resultant literary work is made, and this making constitutes having committed an act. Students understand that their textual identity in the works they produce, as with a page-born text, is only as representative of who they are in as much as a reader can, or is willing, to permit. In fact, students learn that reading is often contingent and indeterminate, which has implications for writing both digital- and page-born works.

Corollary to these ideas, particularly those regarding the reading of a digital literary work, is that instruction in digital literature exposes students to writers and texts belonging to a variety of cultures and languages. For example, much of the literary and critical work done in digital literature comes from writers and scholars who belong to cultural and linguistic traditions as diverse as France, Spain, Finland, Korea, and the United States. Often works are written in English, but sometimes they are not. Another benefit of digital literature, then, is its transcultural nature, which questions and calls into question the prevalence of English outside the United States and as a default language. The benefit is providing an opportunity to consider the ramifications of living, and performing, in a multicultural, multilingual world.

#### **1.4.4 Authority**

Overlapping with issues of identification are those of authority. The *authority* node involves two different considerations of authority: what is authorship and how does one navigate authority? Much of the context for these considerations can be found in poststructuralism and Katharine Haake's critical writing about teaching creative writing, respectively. Issues concerning authorship are rooted in the ideas of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Julia Kristeva. For Barthes, the author is "born simultaneously with [the] text" and is "in no way supplied with a being which precedes or transcends [the] writing" so that "one is in no way the subject of which [one's] book is the predicate" ("The Death" 3). And Barthes further suggests that "there is no other time than that of the utterance, and every text is eternally written here and now" (3). All of this occurs because the writer is informed not by anything else, e.g. "of recording, of observing, of representing, of 'painting'," but by the desire to perform an utterance which has "no other content than the act by which it is uttered" (3). According to Barthes, the onus for imbuing a text with meaning resides with the reader:

the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of the text is not in its origin, it is in its destination; . . . [the reader] is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted. (6)

Barthes is referring to writerly texts, those that ask a reader to participate significantly in the generation of the meaning in them. In fact, these texts are meaningless without the reader's activity. The reader is, in essence, an author of the text. The reader inscribes it with meaning, or executes the codes found there.

For Foucault, an author is a constructed entity, a socio-historical component of discourse. As he writes in "What Is an Author?" the constructed entity is a function: "In this sense, the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society" (1481). The author, as a function, is mutable, contingent upon the shifting nature of discourse over time, and it is "not formed spontaneously through the simple attribution of a discourse to an individual" but "from a complex operation" involving methods "to authenticate (or to reject) the particular texts" of a particular institution (1483). Also, the author-function refers to a person outside the text who marks and is marked by the text, creating another self "whose similarity to the author is never fixed" (1484). This vision of how writing and reading occurs is more complicated than Barthes, as it posits that the writers and readers are complex, independent agents, both of whom have roles in the constructed text. Each executes a function on the text that is relative to its own agendas. These agendas result from various experiences and predilections, which are keyed to socio-economic class and political affiliations.

Finally, as George Landow has examined in his work, particularly *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology* and *Hyper/Text/Theory*, Kristeva's ideas

about intertextuality are important because they indicate that texts are partly constructed with reference, or in reaction, to other, preceding texts, akin to Jacques Derrida's notions of citationality and Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of poly- and intervocality. All of these critics and philosophers argue for an understanding of authorship, in an increasingly multicultural or globalized world, as a vastly complicated activity mitigated by numerous forces within and without the writer.

As for navigating authority, this originates with Haake, who considers the creative writing classroom "a site of bricolage, where the teacher-writer, together with the her or his student-writers, uses everything at hand not just to make writing happen, but to do so within a critical framework that reveals writing systems and gives students authority over their own work" (*What Our Speech* 18). For her, the creative writing classroom should be less as a space for training writers in the business of publishing and more as a "nonhierarchical space" that grants every student the privilege of his or her own speech" (*What Our Speech* 18-19). The goal of the creative writing classroom is to discover the ontology of writing, i.e. what and why of writing, and explore the obstacles to writing, many of which are related to issues of authority, i.e. who is included and excluded from writing, who is authenticated or authorized to write, or speak ("Teaching Creative Writing" 88-89). Her concern is with how students can reclaim writing not only for the duration of the course but also for the time after it is over ("Teaching Creative Writing" 93). And teaching students literary theory and poetics accomplishes her goals because they provide self-reflective and critical apparatuses, e.g. recognition of "the puppet strings" ("Teaching Creative Writing" 86), or as Mary Ann Cain writes, the "language for my questions" ("Charming Tyrants" 31), or as Rachel Blau DuPlessis writes, the "permission to continue" (156).

Basically, teaching digital creative writing is important because it requires students to consider what an author is and where authorship originates, and making them conscious of its qualities provides them an opportunity to resist authority, or to speak back to power. And this is nothing new. Teaching print literature, particularly avant-garde, innovative, or ergodic literatures, can accomplish the same results. As far as digital literature is concerned, issues of authorship are important because of the interactivity necessary on the part of the interactor and because so many others, beyond the writer, have a role because they created the applications and technologies that allow for the final text. There is also the fact that digital creative writing requires the execution of a code, and this code constitutes its own text. Thus, the digital literary object results from the interplay of two texts.

Digital creative writing allows students and teachers to navigate authority in meaningful ways. Digital creative writing helps with regard to empowerment and resistance, as John Zuern and Alexandra Saemmer demonstrate, by relying on a highly critical negotiation of multiplicitous forms and contents and by fostering a disruption of conventions rooted in digital culture (Simanowski 234-35). In “Pop Spells, Hermetic Lessons,” Zuern narrates and reflects upon his experience teaching Jason Nelson’s digital work *Hermeticon: Pop Spell Maker*. The work is interactive, allowing interactors the opportunity to input text with their keyboards, which conjures other preselected text and imagery. The text and imagery are displayed on a grid on the screen to produce a fragmented and enigmatic text that defies “a coherent message,” despite the interactor’s actions (262). Nelson’s work, then, performs a kind of translation, translating “whatever words a reader attempts to types into . . . puzzling, provocative ‘spells’” (Zuern 262). *Hermeticon* challenges conventional notions of the literary and of agency in reading and writing processes; it also allows students to deploy an already acquired body of knowledge to augment an understanding of the work (Zuern 266-67). Ultimately, Zuern asserts that *Hermeticon*, along

with other digital creative writing, can facilitate the kind of learning environment that helps to realize James Engell's and Anthony Dangerfield's interest in "recover[ing] the university's fundamental mission—the cultivation of imaginative, compassionate, broadly informed citizens—from the increasingly utilitarian, profit-driven cooptation of higher education by commercial interests" (267). Zuern writes:

In order to conduct adequate readings of computer-based materials [which then extends to the creation of their own digital works], students need to make a concentrated effort to assemble evidence, follow up on leads, and weigh alternative interpretations; that is to say, digital literature demands an exercise of the *sophrosyne* that higher education in the U.S. is on the brink of abandoning as a central objective of the liberal arts curriculum. (268)

In other words, to engage meaningfully with digital creative writing requires readers to deploy creative and critical thinking skills. And this means that teachers must do more than teach students to note differences between page-born and digital-born works. It means "that they work to extend these observations into wider-ranging analyses and critiques of contemporary culture" (268). Saemmer echoes Zuern's conclusions in her essay "Digital Literature—In Search of a Discipline," which explores some of the issues involved with the institutionalization of digital creative writing in France. For Saemmer, building upon Jacques Rancière's notion of a "systematic difference" between artistic and non-artistic communication protocols, "digital art and literature constitutes an excellent way for students to reflect on the use of digital tools, supports and interfaces in our society, to question the issues, utopias, advantages and dangers of the 'digital revolution'" (331). Thus, instruction in digital creative writing provides more than simple skills in differentiating between print and digital texts and in managing information.

Instead, it provides students recourse to resist the authority and authoritative structures as mediated and disseminated through digital culture, allowing them to become educated citizenry.

#### 1.4.5 Cognition

Digital creative writing helps students understand the symbiotic relationship between human and machine cognition and the sophisticated processural nature of thinking. As N. Katherine Hayles indicates, intermediation demonstrates that human cognition is both inward- and outward-directed and proceeding over time. As readers interact with a digital literary object, they construct a dialectical relationship with it. That is, one action on the part of the interactor causes an action on the part of the object, or vice versa. This give-and-take dynamic continues until the end of the transaction, and over the course of the transaction, both agents reacting and adapting to each other's sensory and cognitive stimuli. Digital literary objects, then, are not the evidence of what has been thought or the communication to a reader of what the writer thought or determined about a particular subject. They are acts of thinking in which the reader, and to some extent the writer, enact creative and critical thinking. They are spaces that instigate thinking, spaces where thinking occurs. And this is reminiscent of what William Carlos Williams writes in the introduction to *The Wedge* and in "The Poem as a Field of Action." In the former, he refers to a poem as a "machine," and in the latter, he relates it to a field of action, a space within which the poet thinks through the subject, i.e. produces text that is marked, among other things, by associationality and indeterminacy. Consider, for example, Williams's *Spring and All*, published in 1923, which blends genres and employs a multicursive, associational structure, allowing for readers to process the text for themselves. Loss Pequeño Glazier echoes Williams in *Digital Poetics* when he writes that [t]he poem is not some idealized result of thinking," that the poem is a device "the poet thinks *through*" (6, emphasis in original). This extends to digital literature as well: that these works are "the process of thinking through this new medium,

thinking through *making*” (6, emphasis in original). In some ways, it is as if literature in general and digital literature in particular were devices or technologies with which to process thinking. The embodiment, or externalization, of thinking, often an invisible, interiorally situated process, has immense pedagogical value. If students can see thinking, then it might help teach them better how it works and how to do it.

It may help to consider the work of other critics who serve as touchstones for the relationship between technology and thinking. For example, in his 1945 essay, “As We May Think,” Vannevar Bush describes and explains the significance of the memex, his device for “transmitting and reviewing the results of research” (37). The memex, an analog machine, is a desk “in which an individual stores . . . books, records, and communications, and which is mechanized so that it may be consulted with exceeding speed and flexibility. It is an enlarged intimate supplement to . . . memory” (45). The memex utilizes a keyboard, translucent screens, and dry photography to retrieve material from and add material to the database, which is comprised of spools of microfilm. An individual, with the memex, has the opportunity to interact with information, which can be organized and accessed not only quickly but also in a more organic manner. Bush questions the “artificiality of systems of indexing,” in which data are “filed alphabetically or numerically” and located within a matrix of groupings, whose governing rules are “cumbersome” and inefficient (44). The memex seeks to remedy this artificiality by allowing a user to process data organically, in a way analogous to the way the mind functions, i.e. “by association . . . in accordance with some intricate web of trails” (44). He also notes the mind’s shortcoming, i.e. its transitory nature, the fading of those trails from lack of use, that the memex can remedy by mechanizing associative indexing and “beat[ing] the mind decisively in regard to the permanence and clarity of the items resurrected from storage” (44). The memex, for all intents and purposes, resembles and presages the personal computer.



Theodor Nelson, in his book *Computer Lib / Dream Machines*, predicts the arrival of personal computers, and as Noah Wardrip-Fruin notes, “challenge[s] the popular notion of what computers were for,” i.e. not “their capacity for calculation,” but their ability to engender newer and newer forms of media and human-computer interaction (Wardrip-Fruin et al. 301). By way of extension, Nelson coins the term “thinkertoy” as “a system to help people think . . . a computer display system that helps you envision complex alternatives,” which are important to any number of activities (330). In many ways, digital literary objects, particularly those that C. T. Funkhouser categorizes as “participatory,” provide a system of potential alternatives. Ultimately, these three writers point to the potentially positive relationship between technology and humanity through technology’s ability to mediate and externalize, or embody, the thinking process.

Another writer whose work is aware of the relationship between digital technology and thinking is Donna Haraway, whose essay, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” treats with critical rigor the concept of the cybernetic organism, a concept rooted in science fiction and indicative of the emerging digital culture. Admittedly, Haraway’s text uses the metaphor of a cyborg to critique traditional feminism and promote a more robust feminist strategy, not the process of thinking through writing or technology. Whereas traditional feminism is overly concerned with identity, the person one inherently is, a more relevant contemporary feminism would be more concerned with affinity, with the person one can be. For Haraway, traditional feminism is flawed because it considers identity as essentialized and rooted in rigid dualisms that place women in a position of being other. But by understanding identity as constructed and non-essentialized presents greater freedom and more equality, allowing one to choose, or inscribe one’s own, affinity. And the cyborg is a perfect metaphor for this because it is not rooted in phallogocentric myths and

designations, but it is rather ahistorical and contemporaneous. It is a chimera whose borders cannot be delineated; it is plural (“A Cyborg”). In many ways, Haraway’s ideas are better suited to the discussion of identity above, which she intended, however, they are also well-suited to the discussion of cognition—if the cyborg, a chimera, plural organism, part human, part machine, is absent distinguishable boundaries with regard to its body, then it is absent those boundaries that separate its thought processes, i.e. it thinks as both. Haraway’s cyborg symbolizes the interdependency of multiple modalities and the ability to think through, or rethink, established structures. Just as Haraway’s cyborg symbolizes the current human condition, it serves as an elegant metaphor for the relationship between digital technology, literary work, and human cognition.

The first benefit of digital literature with regard to cognition is that it demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between human and machine cognition. N. Katherine Hayles refers to this interpenetrating cognitive dynamic as intermediation. Intermediation explains the ways in which humans and computers “are bound together by recursive feedback and feedforward loops” (*Electronic Literature* 48). As people interact with computers, they change the way the computers function, and these new functions in the computers change the way people function. This relationship is particularly rich when considered in the context of electronic literature, which utilizes or is marked by human-computer interaction. In *Electronic Literature*, Hayles writes:

Electronic literature extends the traditional functions of print literature in creating recursive feedback loops between explicit articulations, conscious thought, and embodied sensorimotor knowledge. The feedback loops progress in both directions, up from embodied sensorimotor knowledge to explicit articulation, and down from explicit articulation to sensorimotor knowledge.

While print literature also operates in this way, electronic literature performs the

additional function of entwining human ways of knowing with machine cognitions. . . . [E]lectronic literature fashions *intermediations* between computer code and human-only language, digital and analogue processing, and print and electronic media forms. Intermediation facilitates the recursive cycle by re-presenting material in a different medium, changing in the process the modes of sensory input. These changes involve differences in the *kinds* of knowledge represented. (135, emphasis in original)

The implications of this relationship are extensive. Hayles proposes that, as far as electronic literature is concerned, “verbal narratives are simultaneously conveyed and disrupted by code” and that “distributed cognition implies distributed agency” (154). The idea is that digital literary works, while conveying narratives, also risk not being able to convey them, and this failure serves to highlight the current electrated condition of which instability is a large part. Also, as cognition is spread across so many modes and participants, so too is agency spread across locations of the body other than the head. These conveyances/disruptions and distributions provide an opportunity electronic literature can capitalize on to usher in new knowledge and understanding.

Corollary to intermediation, digital literature is important because it illustrates the processural nature of thought. It illustrates that thought occurs cumulatively and in a continuous present. Engaging with a digital literary work, as with reading any other literary work, is a process, one that occurs locally, i.e. identifying words and putting them together into phrases/sentences, and phrases/sentences together into larger structures of meaning, and one that occurs globally, i.e. returning to a work repeatedly and interpreting or re-interpreting it through consideration and reconsideration of content. Digital creative writing has, as Talan Memmott claims, “[t]he ability to *cause thinking*” (italics in original, 303). This activity is what

Adelaide Morris hints at in her essay “New Media Poetics: As We May Think/How to Write” when she posits digital poetry as a process, a being done instead of a having been done, and what Funkhouser speaks to in *New Directions in Digital Poetry* when he refers to and elaborates on Janez Strehovec’s notion of elevator poetics and Hayles’s distinction between “hyper” attention and deep attention. For Morris’s part, whose essay introduces the book *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories*, digital poetry is an active genre that requires continual semiotic and cognitive negotiation of all the constituent modalities of the work at the moment of access; to access the work “transforms it from ‘object to event’ . . . or performs its signs and sign regimes in a *mise en écran* as robust and transgressive as the *mise en scène* demanded by Antonin Artaud” (15). Funkhouser notes digital poetry’s ability to mimic and ultimately capitalize on cognitive abilities, such as those related to attention span; digital works “absorb our attention from the start, and then move us to want to proceed beyond the first impressions” (246). Central to his idea are Hayles’s delineation between hyper attention, the desire to move quickly from one stimulus to the next, and deep attention, the kind of focus fostered and required in the humanities (*Electronic Literature* 117) and Strehovec’s notion of an “‘elevator pitch’ as a temporal ideal for digital poetry—the idea that the poem, ‘can be delivered in the time of an elevator ride, e.g. thirty seconds or 100-150 words)’ [sic], which ‘hooks the reader/user within a very short temporal unit’, units that are strung together to form larger units and encourage prolonged engagement (242-243). Digital creative writing immerses students in the complexities inherent in cognition, in the process of thinking and the instability of knowing. Because of the intermediary and processural nature of both cognition and digital literature, teaching students how to read and write it allows them to understand and participate in the deployment of “diverse knowledges” and the development of “nascent connections” (Hayles 139).

Ultimately, digital literature and digital creative practice are appropriate for the students, teachers, and classrooms of the 21<sup>st</sup> century electrated society. The ways in which literature is being made and interacted with is changing with the emergence of digital technology. The ways in which humans are identifying themselves and operating in reaction to that digital technology is changing. As the canon of digital literature continues to grow and digital technologies continue to pervade the various sectors of contemporary life, teaching students to read and write digital literature becomes even more vital. Moreover, the interdisciplinary nature of digital literature means that the skills it teaches and requires can benefit, not only in other fields but also in those of conventional literary and composition studies. The benefits of instruction in digital literature and digital creative practice can also help institutions achieve their goals of educating creative and thoughtful citizens.

### **1.5 Regarding Institutionalization**

As with introducing any discipline into the academy, there are several issues and obstacles involved with institutionalizing digital creative writing. One issue is rooted in the nature of the discipline. The multimodal and multidisciplinary nature of digital literature, that which makes it dynamic and vital, is that which makes it marginal and homeless. Simanowski writes that:

[digital literature is] a subject connected to so many areas, lacking . . . the discipline to fit into traditional categories (after all, it sometimes can't even decide whether it wants to be literature or art or just applied technology), is still in search of an academic discipline that understands it as its own genuine subject of research. ("Teaching Digital Literature" 235)

The scenario is not unlike the one creative writing has had and continues to navigate when it began appearing in the academy. There are numerous forces that prevent digital creative writing

from being fully embraced by the academy, and they can be grouped into three categories: technical, philosophical, and political. The forces located in the first two categories, if not surmountable, are at least manageable issues, while the forces located in the last category are more powerful and complex obstacles. This section seeks to focus on the most dominant of the forces.

### **1.5.1 Technical**

As for the technical, the nature of these forces is twofold, involving skillsets, particularly with regard to teachers, and facilities, particularly with regard to computer equipment and software. Digital literature requires a diverse skillset to be able to teach. On the one hand, a teacher would possess highly developed visual, acoustic, computer, and media literacies, which would facilitate teaching students to read and write various digital literary works. For example, a teacher of digital literature would have the ability to teach students how to read the text and visual and acoustic imagery of various works as well as how to generate and manipulate those vectors to create their own works; she would have the ability to use and teach others about code and various applications and technologies to read and write digital literature. On the other hand, however, there exist many digital creative writing teachers who might not be proficient in all of the ideal skills, for as Simanowski notes, “the generation of teachers educated in [the arts and humanities and computer science] has still to be raised” (241). But perhaps they do not need to be. What matters here is that teachers of digital literature likely became proficient in various skills either on their own or in school and combined them in order to write their works. There is, in short, little to no training in the reading and writing of digital literature at the baccalaureate and graduate levels that qualifies one to teach it. There is, and has been a trend toward the development of digital humanities in the academy, but the digital humanities is different from practices of reading and writing digital literature. Another issue that complicates the

institutionalization of digital literature is that of facilities. Teaching students about a literary genre that is born-digital requires much in the way of digital facilities and equipment. While more and more universities are building computer classrooms and making it easier to incorporate digital technology, and while more and more students have computers and digital devices and a fairly well developed computer literacy, obtaining the software and instruction to create digital works is a challenge. Both of these issues, adequately trained teachers and digital facilities, while important are relatively easy to overcome. In fact, much is already trending in that direction.

### **1.5.2 Philosophical**

The institutionalizing of a subject as a field of study usually involves considering two complex questions: 1) what constitutes the body of knowledge for this subject and how will codifying it affect the field in the future, and 2) how will teaching digital creative writing either strengthen or weaken the quality of digital literary works. Dealing with these questions constitutes the nature of the philosophical category. As for the first two questions, often considered together, the issue is canon formation. In order to establish a body of knowledge, scholars and writers must be able to define digital literature and digital creative practice, and they must do so in a way that allows them to be recognized by others. To do this means establishing a theory, or poetics, for how and why digital literary practice operates and to give, in the words of Rachel Blau DuPlessis, “permission to continue” (156); additionally, it means reading and responding critically to works in order to mark trends, genres, and histories. While many critics and practitioners have done much to accomplish this goal, e.g. C. T. Funkhouser, Loss Pequeño Glazier, Katherine Hayles, Talan Memmott, Roberto Simanowski, and Stephanie Strickland, there is still more to be done to define the field so that those outside the discipline recognize its value, particularly those outsiders within the academy in other disciplines, even those comprising digital literature, e.g. visual art, literary studies, computer science, and media studies. While this

aspect of developing a body of knowledge is important and can contribute positively to the field, it is not without concern. The establishment of a body of knowledge also establishes a power structure, i.e. a system in which a few people exert great influence in determining the canon and in which many works and artists are excluded from it. On the other hand, this power structure will likely be offset by the profusion and democratization of digital technologies and citizens proficient in their uses.

The other significant philosophical issue concerns the effect that institutionalizing a creative practice has on the vitality of the works produced. It could be argued that digital creative writing should not be institutionalized because, as has been claimed by critics of the institutionalization of creative writing, once we start teaching students how to read and write digital literature we start short-circuiting creativity and experimentation; we start breeding derivative and homogenous works. We start laying the groundwork for the “workshop” poem or story. We start engendering a literary culture that expects digital literary works to be a certain way. Whether or not a so-called workshop poem or story exists is irrelevant. If we teach digital creative writing with the intent of preparing writers to publish and consider publishing the end to a means, then the risk of stale, homogenous writing exists. But if we rethink the pedagogical goals, then we can circumvent that risk. If we can think of the teaching of digital creative writing as something to help students develop creative and critical thinking skills that they can use to better understand the electrified world, then we do not need to worry about issues of originality. If we think of the teaching of digital creative writing as something to help students keep writing after the class is over, then again we do not have to worry about originality.

### **1.5.3 Political**

As previously stated, whereas the technical and philosophical issues surrounding the institutionalization of digital creative writing are relatively easy to overcome, or manage, the last



one is not because it involves larger forces, the nature of which are political. These forces exist within current academic attitudes and university structures. Attitudes toward digital literature have so far and continue to keep it marginalized, despite the recent surge in digital humanities and its subfields, such as digital journalism and media studies. In broad terms, digital humanities seeks to understand the ways in which digital technology affects the way we study the humanities or teach them; digital humanities seeks to employ digital technologies in the service of the researching and studying and established field.

Attitudes toward digital literature are also the result of the goal of university education, i.e. to produce primary and secondary teachers who must pass standardized, accrediting exams and teach students to do the same, thus necessitating the need to teach basic, established material, not material that affronts foundations and conventional assessment protocols. If producing these kinds of teachers is, as Saemmer and Grigar posit, the bread and butter of literature departments, if it is the kind of instruction that receives the most financial support, then diverting that support is difficult, if not impossible, to do. In essence, the financial considerations of many university literature departments and the expectations foisted upon them by the state dictate some of the attitudes toward digital literature within those departments. The goal is to educate teachers, particularly those in the United States, who can teach the page-based canon, e.g. Shakespeare, Dickinson, Poe, and Hemingway, not Michael Joyce, Stephanie Strickland, Brian Kim Stefans, and Talan Memmott. The goal is further complicated by national politics, the preservation and dissemination of national literary and linguistic traditions, as Strehovec notes about the current situation in Slovenia, a country sensitive to preserving its traditions in light of its small population (Simanowski, "Teaching Digital Literature" 236). Teachers in secondary schools in the United States, many of which are publicly funded and mandated at the state and national levels, are expected to teach the English-American literary

traditions. Therefore, at the university level, where these secondary school teachers are educated, many research areas that do not directly feed into teacher education are, if not disdained, then lower in the hierarchy.

Digital literature has had a difficult time finding an institutional home because of university structures resulting from its interdisciplinary nature. Even though digital literature incorporates text, it also incorporates elements that are not, and those elements are at least as foregrounded as much as the textual, or linguistic, element, if not more so. Even when it does incorporate text, it does so minimally. These qualities, the non-linguistic elements and the minimized role of language, make it “difficult to locate the discussion of this subject within the traditional academic institutions of literature” (Simanowski, “Teaching Digital Literature” 235). On the other hand, because of the use of language and because scholars and practitioners continually adduce to the literariness of digital works, there is a case to be made for their inclusion in literature departments. The problem is the notion of the literary and who has dominion over it. As Simanowski notes, many scholars, Zuern among them, find, given its multicultural and multilinguistic properties, which often pose problems for literature departments geared to a national language or literary tradition, that digital literature is better suited for inclusion in a comparative literature department. The advantage is that these departments already have a tendency to look beyond a single linguistic or literary tradition and are “attentive to the various forms of expression and figuration not only in different national cultures but also in different media” (238). Zuern writes:

Though the two fields have different foci, with digital literature largely emphasizing relationships across media and comparative literature concentrating primarily on relationships among linguistic, cultural, and historical contexts, both have been compelled to define “literature” in ways that counter deeply

entrenched presuppositions: for the former, the dominance of print-based conceptions of literary production, and for the latter, the dominance of national (and nationalist) conceptions of literary culture and, more recently, the dominance of Euroamerican languages and literary traditions over those other parts of the world. For each field, moreover, a retooled definition of literature has served as an organizing principle for innovative research projects, determining to a large extent scholars' choice of primary materials, theoretical frameworks, and critical methodologies. (59)

Whereas both digital literature and comparative literature have similarities that make them excellent institutional partners, many of the problems that comprise the housing of digital literature in literature departments still exist, namely the non-textual, i.e. visual, aural, and computer, components. These components are the reasons still more scholars consider an even better home for digital literary studies to be a department of Media and Creative Studies (Simanowski, "Teaching Digital Literature" 239). This is because, at least as far as the United Kingdom is concerned, these departments focus their curricula on reading and writing new media, and they also are rooted in interdisciplinary cooperation. According to Astrid Ensslin and James Pope, these "academic environments within which scholars, practitioners and computer scientists are showing the greatest willingness to experiment with new forms of teaching as well as combined methodologies that integrate learning and teaching strategies from various academic disciplines" (311).

Digital creative writing, which incorporates so many disciplines, can provide necessary and profound education for students about themselves, literature, and the world. But its interdisciplinary nature, while an asset, is also what keeps it from being fully embracing within the academy. The obstacles to the institutionalization of digital literature are far-reaching, some

more complex and some easier to negotiate than others. Some obstacles are already eroding, given the ever-accelerating accessibility and capability of digital technology and users of it. Some obstacles, such as those rooted in the political, require more effort because they challenge deeply entrenched notions about the role of university education, both at the university and the state levels.

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## Note on the Poems

The poems that complete this dissertation demonstrate some of the ways the print and digital literary traditions can co-exist. They are divided into three discrete sections, each organized around the notions of anode, node, and ode. The poems are not only generically diverse, e.g. lyrical, dramatic, and narrative, but also stylistically diverse, e.g. Imagistic, Objectivist, Conceptual, Flarfist, and Surrealist. Ultimately, the poems respond to their environment and strive to contain a world that resists being contained.

### 2.1 /anode

The anode poems take cues from a literal and figurative consideration of an anode. On the one hand, an anode, an electrode of an electrochemical cell, is the point where oxidation occurs. It is the point through which positive current flows into a polarized electrical device, such as a battery; it is the point where positive charge enters the device, and electrons, which are negative, exit. The anode is opposed to the cathode, the electrode from which current exits a polarized electrical device. The cathode attracts positively charged cations and repels negatively charged anions, which move in the direction of the anode. On the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, the anode, as a site of entrance and exit for charged particles, functions as a point of transference, or interchange. It is a site where the outside moves inside and vice versa. The figurative quality of the anode bears more poignancy when considering that the word *metaphor*, derived from the Greek, means *to carry over*, or *transfer*.

The poems that belong to the anode classification do so by way of analogy. Just as an anode acts as a conduit for charged particles and as a site of electrical transference, so too do these poems. They are anodic because they possess a kind of charge, i.e. a heightened diction, Surrealistic imagery, or a prominent repetitive device, and because they act as sites of transference, i.e. of culture via an engagement with political issues, historical events, or visual

artworks. For example, several poems, the “Selfie” series, in some ways taking cues from John Ashbery’s “Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror,” play with the tradition of the literary and artistic self-portrait and how it has been marked by contemporary culture. These lyric self-portraits are ekphrastic in a sense. While ekphrastic poems seek to render in poetry actual paintings, these poems are ekphrastic in that they seek to render self-portraits I would paint were I able to paint. The poems are charged with dense diction and Surrealist imagery. They also act as transference sites, at times emulating the imagery of painters such as Frida Kahlo and Jean-Michel Basquiat and alluding to films such as *Star Wars*. Moreover, they show the markings of digital pop culture on the self-portrait tradition with titles that include the word *selfie* nested within HTML image tags, e.g. “<img src=“Selfie” alt=“on Bed”>.” Other anodic poems are those entitled “Dear Interrogator,” which alludes to literary culture. These poems, organized into twelve stanzas, provide an answer to the twelve questions that structure Bhanu Kapil Rider’s *The Vertical Interrogation of Strangers*. Other anode poems engage other artists and artworks, e.g. Remedios Varo and Godfrey Reggio’s film *Naqoyqatsi*, and historical events, e.g. the gang rape and murder of an Iraqi girl, Abeer Qassim Hamza Al-Janabi, and the murder of her family by U.S. soldiers in 2006 near Mahmudiyah, Iraq. Ultimately, while I might refer to these poems as anodes or as having an anodic relationship to subject matter or larger cultural forces, it is also true, if not more so, that the larger cultural forces, and indeed myself, are anodes, and that all three are active participants in a larger, dynamic, interdependent relationship.

## 2.2 a/node

The node poems rely on an understanding of the node both as a thing and as a concept. As a thing, a node is a point at which lines or pathways intersect or branch, or it is a central connection point. Because of this broad definition, the node, unlike the anode, an object confined to the field of physics, exists in multiple fields. For example, in computing, a node is a

piece of equipment, such as a PC or peripheral device, connected to a network. In mathematics, it is a point where a curve intersects itself. In botany, it is the point of a plant stem where one or more leaves emerge. In anatomy, a node, such as a lymph node, is a small mass comprised of differentiated tissue. In grammar, it is an end point or vertex of a tree diagram. While consideration of the node as a physical object is important, it is equally important, given that the dissertation is comprised of born-digital poems and poems preoccupied with the natural world, the body, and the materiality of language, to consider the node as a critical concept.

As a critical concept, the node speaks to notions of intersection and network, which can be seen in the work of Ezra Pound, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes. Pound and Foucault actually use the word “node” when referring to aspects of texts, while Barthes merely intimates their nodal aspects. Pound, during his movement away from Imagism and toward Vorticism, attempting to define the latter, refers to the image as “a radiant node or cluster . . . from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing” (“Vorticism” 92). As such, the image, which he had previously defined as “an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” (“A Retrospect” 4), becomes a charged site where ideas and perspectives, perhaps unrelated and contradictory, converge and yoke, at least momentarily. The implication is that words and groups of words are charged constructions in to and out of which energy flows, and that the image, made of words, has, by extension, a nodal quality that channels energy throughout its structure. It further implies that the image or images, particularly within the same poem, are interlinked. Perhaps not exactly what Pound had in mind, it seems quite plausible to apply his schematic concerning images to individual words, i.e. they can be seen as radiant nodes that channel ideas. As for Foucault, George P. Landow notes that, when discussing the book and its role in the discourse of knowledge, he refers to it as “a node within a network” (23). Again, there exists an interlinking relationship, this time between books. As with Pound’s image,

it seems quite plausible to extend the relationship—that a poem is a node within the network of a book and that the image is a node within the network of the poem. The node plays an important role in conceptualizing the interdependence of the elements of literary works.

Roland Barthes does not employ the term *node* explicitly, and yet his description of the interdependent aspects of a literary work is even more relevant than Pound's and Foucault's. In describing the ideal text, Barthes refers to it as a series of networks, which are “many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds” (5-6). By referring to a “network” or a body comprised of intersections, Barthes suggests that the ideal text is nodal; any point in the text is a potential node, depending upon the reader. George Landow, in writing about the nature of hypertext, draws parallels between Barthes' textuality and that of hypertext, which is largely predicated upon interconnectivity and user interactivity.

Still other writers find the node important even though they are not writing specifically about the node, but about other concepts that include nodes or nodal constructions. For example, Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze in *A Thousand Plateaus* examine multiplicity by drawing an analogy between it and the botanical rhizome (409). The root structures of some plants, such as ginger, are distinguished by an ability to grow laterally in a series of more or less independent and equal parts, and the points at which these connections occur, or where new growth originates, is a node. The rhizome, and its attendant nodal structure, stands as a metaphor for the way thinking, and thus knowledge, occurs (409). The poems in the creative section rely heavily on these latter notions of textuality as a series of networks or the text as possessing a nodal structure.

The node is represented in the dissertation by the long poem, “Treatment.” The poem's whole is the accumulation of several more or less independent poems organized laterally in a

non-linear, or non-chronological, series, a structure analogous to that of a rhizome. The larger structure, and the relationships between the constituent parts, is more or less heterarchal, rather than hierarchal. In other words, because of the fragmentation of narrative time and the stylistic variation from one poem to the next, all the constituent poems occupy relatively an equal level of importance, at least with respect to the larger structure. In addition to its interest in the relationship between biography, poetry, and rhizomatic structure and perhaps corollary to it, “Treatment” shows an interest in performativity, i.e. the notion that what one says or how one acts possesses agency or contributes to one’s identity formation and performance.

“Treatment” plays with two understandings of the word: treatment as related to therapy and as related to film. As it pertains to the former, the poem utilizes a Confessional mode, deploying personal, overly intimate details and imagery and an atypical poetic stance, under the aegis that writing poetry can be a form of therapy, or treatment. Though similar, the Confessional mode informing “Treatment” differs from that found in the Confessional Poets, whose poems often explore psychic landscapes to highlight the poet’s own neuroses, depressive state, and perceived victimization. Much, if not all, of the subject matter for “Treatment” originates from my biography. Dramatic poems about the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in the third grade appear beside Imagistic poems that present discrete childhood memories, and lyric poems that reflect on my father’s funeral appear beside conceptual poems meant to mock social, political, and religious conventions. As it pertains to the latter, “Treatment” arises from an interest in the biopic, or biographical film, and what an experimental, avant-garde biopic for a poet, might be like; if not the actual film, then the script, or treatment, for it. Many of the poem’s formal cues can be traced back to film, notably Oliver Stone’s *Natural Born Killers*, which is formally complex, incorporating various kinds of photography and photographic effects (e.g. black and white, animation, overlays), narrative techniques (e.g. cuts, inserts, temporal

fragmentation), and style (e.g. lyrical, parodic) to navigate its story. Other filmic antecedents include Godfrey Reggio's *Qatsi* Trilogy (i.e. *Koyaanisqatsi*, *Powaqqatsi*, *Naqoyqatsi*), Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tennenbaums*, Alejandro González Iñárritu's films, *The X-Files*, Bill Viola's and Nam June Paik's videos, and various music videos. The poem is multimodal, multimedial, and multilinear. It incorporates several literary genres, from dramatic to lyric, and from Imagistic to Conceptual. It employs text, photographs, drawings, and digital works. It invites the use of multiple paths to navigate. Ultimately, "Treatment" is hybrid, or chimeric. As such, it seeks to embody the multiplicity and interdependency of contemporary life.

### **2.3 an/ode**

The ode poems explore the ode tradition and, in particular, the deformation of it. The ode, a celebratory poem at its most basic level, has its roots in ancient Greece, with Pindar as the most celebrated practitioner and advocate. The Pindaric ode is lyrical and often written to be sung in celebration of some accomplishment. It uses a three-part structure, comprised of the strophe, antistrophe, and epode, each of which observes specific metrical requirements. Another ode, the Horatian ode, is named for the Roman poet Horace. The Horatian ode observes a formal metrical and stanzaic structure, albeit less strictly than the Pindaric ode. Horace's ode also differs from Pindar's in that it is more contemplative than celebratory, more appropriate for private reflection than performance in the public sphere, or on stage. Lastly, the irregular ode is just that, irregular with regard to structure and tone, or rhetorical stance. The irregular ode is the ode of the Romantic period and beyond, the ode of praise, celebration, contemplation, and reverie. It is an ode marked by the irony of the contemporary age, i.e. praising the subject by including its less-than-praiseworthy traits. The odic poems of this dissertation begin with an understanding these three ode types.

However, the odes are chimeric in that they incorporate major elements of all three types often within the same poem. Though they eschew meter and the strophe-antistrophe-epode structure, they are Pindaric in that they are celebratory and raucous, exuberant and performative, relying on heightened diction and a rigid structure that unfolds via repetitive rhetorical devices, such as anaphora. They are Horatian in their use of a prominent structure, i.e. the repetitive rhetorical device, and in their quieter, more contemplative nature, treating topics typically more private and mundane. As irregular odes, they not only refuse to adhere strictly to the classical ode types, but also in the willingness to further deform the ode by infusing it with the pastoral and elegiac modes and by nodding to the contemporary critical lenses of ecocriticism and the necropastoral. For example, a poem entitled “an/ode for Dawn” appears as text blocks with every sentence or phrase beginning with or containing the word *dawn*. The diction lends itself to being performed, or recited, while its dense, hyperbolic imagery engages the topic literally and figuratively. Additionally, the poem is crowded with biographical details and references, or allusions, to pop culture and artworks, e.g. traditions for anniversary gifts, the poetic form of the aubade, and Ted Berrigan’s poem “Red Shift.” Ultimately, the poem, as do the other ode poems, sings praise in a sophisticated and ironic way.

The following poetry seeks to render the feedback loop that exists between idea and text, between an embodied and embodying identity and a highly animate, media saturate world. That they exist in feedback loops with each other means that they are continually emerging, interacting, and transforming. The ideas, poems, and identities, therefore, are indeterminate, chimeric, and highly provisional. They are continually informing and shaping each other, engaged in the dynamic processes of being.



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**/anode**



the field brown with wheat  
turquoise lake in the distance  
behind the lake mountains of carets  
behind the mountains palimpsest of cursive

some of the stars lightbulbs  
some asterisks pentagrams

a gold lowercase i stamped  
repeatedly on a violet curtain beside me

my head tilting back eyes closed  
a hole in my cheek exposing my teeth  
my chest green & chipping  
groin a tangle of flagella

one arm humanoid one animatronic  
one an m16 one a twig  
one leg a marblecolumn one a pulleysystem  
one a goat one human

## Dear Interrogator

I am Chris. I love the Dawn.

I came from a cave  
surrounded with angry faces,  
haloed by an electric eye.  
I arrived burrowing through lightning.

I'll begin cataloging the river, its ash,  
love of bodies.

I want to live by trial.  
However that means.

My shape hollow, to be filled. A drum.

Who cares who made my mother suffer?  
It's enough she does. Probably my fault.  
I'm her son & can't live close.

I remember the earth had stillness embossing me.  
The earth & the sky, conjoined.  
The wind, stonedriven.

Politics, the consequence of silence.

Dismemberment means having one's members taken.  
By members I mean limbs.  
Dismemberment can't be undone.  
Though dismember & remember have the same root, right?

The first time I woke without fear  
it was cold. Light filled the curtains.  
I was on a kind of island with the Dawn.  
We ate pancakes & drank coffee from a Frenchpress.

I'll ready myself for death by breathing in its face.

If I could, I'd say something about love.

### **After Rikki Ducornet**

Greenmonkey Greenmonkey climbed Flower  
Flower grew from Barley  
Barley was red rust & lost body  
Greenmonkey Greenmonkey had a tail  
Two lips it used sparingly  
It knew up was up  
Did you say Pig or Fig  
I said fig Yellowseaweed said  
Yellowseaweed lived beside Barley  
It was angry & dehydrated  
Greenmonkey Greenmonkey poked Fig  
Fig exploded into Space with Frond  
Greenmonkey Greenmonkey had teeth & ached  
For Dawn that caromed beyond Borders  
Dawn whose body couldn't be touched  
Whose light permeated Field  
What will become of you without Dawn Almond asked  
I'll tumble off Flower Greenmonkey Greenmonkey said  
I'll become black & so will Dreams become black  
I'll cry because Garden will wilt & blacken  
Breath will blacken  
My eyes will crystallize as blackness  
Almond shrugged  
Steered Boat around Whirlpool  
Almond an excellent mariner  
Sailed up the side of Sandwich  
What would happen if all this began again World asked  
If all what began again  
All this climbing & growing  
Steering Boat & exploding Fig & questioning Almond  
Flower & Barley & Frond & Yellowseaweed  
Dawn enlivening Field  
Then I'd breathe & remember my hands & feet  
The only things I can control



a steel bed bridging a ravine  
the ravine walls red  
fire licking the bottom of the bed

crows perching on the headboard  
some as robots  
some with letters on their wings  
some their beaks gaping  
little crows for tongues

gray impasto moon outlined in charcoal  
gray impasto satellites in charcoal  
the indigo sky teeming with fingerprints

the distance  
columns of stacked letters

at the foot of the bed a cyan wolf  
snarling blurry palimpsest  
with the word wolf above it

lying fetally on the bed  
arms inviting the wolf to me

**Marianne DeKoven's *A Different Language***

american fund for french  
wounded bridgman richard anarchism  
anti patriarchal writing  
defined burroughs  
william artaud antonin carmines al cézanne  
paul barth john chomsky  
noam degrees of gram barthelme donald maticalness  
barthes roland from cixous hélène  
work to text the pleasure of conrad  
joseph the text coover  
robert beckett samuel cubism  
parallels to bergson henri  
steins work berners lord gerald culler  
jonathan structuralist poetics bloom  
harold bookstaver may borges jorge  
luis daly mary brautigan richard davy kate breton  
andré deconstruction

derrida jacques of grammatol kalmanoff  
martin ogy katz  
leon dickens charles différance  
kawin bruce doctorow e l kornfeld  
lawrence dodge mabel kristeva  
julia duncan isadora about chinese women  
eliot t s kupferman meyer experimental writing  
defined lacan jacques laforgue jules lasch  
christopher faulkner william lodge  
david faÿ bernard logocentrism  
feminist criticism mccaffrey john magritte rené fifer  
elizabeth martin vernon fish stanley matisse henri  
fitzgerald f scott miller j hillis flaubert  
gustave ford ford madox new french  
feminisms ed elaine foreman  
richard marks isabelle de courtivron  
frank joseph freud sigmund olson elder gass



william orwell george gilbert sandra griffin  
susan patriarchal language grotowski  
jerzy gubar susan perloff  
marjorie helm everett petersson  
robert t hoffman michael picasso  
pablo steins emulation of holland  
norman hugnet georges pinter harold poirier  
richard incoherence polysemy  
irigaray luce iser wolfgang the act of read  
pre oedipal language ing presymbolic language  
jakobson roman james william reader response  
theory joyce  
james repetition in insistence

in landscape do let us go away a play in melody  
in three lives dr faustus lights the  
lights rich adrienne duchesse de rohan a writer  
robbe grillet alain rorem ned elise surville exceptional  
conduct st ignatius loyola an exercise in analysis st  
teresa fernhurst schmitz neil the fifteenth of november  
a por schwartz marvin trait of t  
s eliot showalter elaine smith barbara  
herrnstein five or six men snyder edward  
d four saints in three acts solomons  
leon the sound and the fury frost  
soupault philippe the geographical history of amer spencer  
sharon ica spivak gayatri chakravorty geography  
and plays stein  
gertrude biographical criticism canon gender g  
m p identity note guillaume apollinaire books  
successive ex harriet fear perimental styles  
he didnt light the light works hessell ada how

to write amaryllis or the prettiest of legs how  
writing is written as fine as melanctha  
a hymn the autobiography of alice b tok i have no title  
to be successful las ida bee time vine if i told him  
a completed por mentioned trait of picasso before the flowers  
of friendship in a garden faded  
friendship faded italians jenny helen hannah paul and brewsie and  
willie peter capital capitals julia marlowe  
a circular play a kind of women composition  
as explanation ladies voices last operas and plays a curtain  
raiser lectures in america the gradual making  
of the making of ameri deux soeurs qui ne sont pas soeurs cans  
mentioned pictures plays

stein gertrude cont men  
tioned poetry and grammar portrait of  
mabel dodge at the portraits villa  
curonia and repetition portraits and prayers  
what is english mentioned literature preciosilla  
a long gay book purrmann look  
and long q e d lucy church amaibly rue de rennes russell  
sacred emily the making of americans sonnets that please stanzas  
in meditation a man susie asado many many women mentioned  
a sweet tail gypsies mary tender buttons  
matisse they must be  
wedded to their mexico wife mi careme  
three lives miss furr and miss skeene the gentle lena the mother of us  
all the good anna me mrs edwardes lanchtha  
mrs reynolds mentioned narration two natural  
phenomena a novel of thank you a valentine to sherwood  
ander mentioned son one van vechten wars i have seen operas

and plays what are masterpieces  
orta or one dancing pach what  
happened painted lace white wines mentioned  
the world is round patriarchal poetry  
stein leo picasso steiner george picasso steiner  
wendy polish stewart  
allegra stimpson catharine portrait of constance fletcher

strong jonathan weininger  
otto surrealism  
weinstein norman sutherland  
donald welsh andrew  
roots of lyric wickham florence wilson  
edmund axels castle winslow  
richard thomson virgil wittig monique woolf  
virgina tobin patricia world war  
i toklas alice yale catalogue yale  
collection of american litera vonnegut kurt ture

## Dear Interrogator

I'm a poet. I carry things.  
The Dawn I love, a sculptor.

From New England but born in Ohio.  
My ancestors are English, Scotch, Irish, Germanic.  
Maybe some French & some Galilean.  
I'm a mutt.

Where to begin?  
Knowing or notknowing?  
Where would you begin?

Punctuation, the shape of my body.  
Punctuation, spliced with iron.  
I don't dream of it.

My mother suffers from the giant meattongue  
permeating silica, sterilizing mums.

When the earth was lonely  
it was icy. When hungry, deserted.  
I remember hearing the air open.

The consequences of silence—mostly myself.

Dismemberment, a noun.  
Dismember, a verb, persuasion.

I don't remember a morning without fear.  
Tomorrow will be different.  
I'll build a fire Dawn & I will sit in front of  
eating then blistering upon the stones.

I've prepared for death by being here.

If I could call the heart a crumpled bird.

****

bulbous clouds outlined in charcoal  
receding toward mountains

gold fishhooks dangling from them  
ashy figures from the fishhooks  
dotted textboxes from the figures

some figures face up  
some face down  
some smiling & some wincing

a road splitting the field

on the right yellow arrows  
striking the skyline at downward angles  
a white deer with spindly legs rearing in a window

on the left of the road me  
crouching in a turquoise swatch  
holding a tick by the legs  
eating its abdomen



## Dear Interrogator

I the bearded one.  
I love the one, the Dawn,  
burning green firecracker.

I emerged from the body.  
I arrive, drawn through as a geography.

I'll begin with peaches  
in my arms, for her.

By moving or turning whatever,  
invisible threads, pearlescent shockwaves.  
The gesture. The vapor,  
vertical in a field.

Humanoid or branched.  
A comma, otherwise combustions.

Who knows the root of my mother's suffering.  
Or it's because of grammar.  
Maybe it's not what it seems?

I remember something like rain or machinery.  
The blue color, bottle of mead by the door.  
The way blood behaves, the particulate matter,  
velocity. Where the bones were.

The consequences of silence, cannibalism.

Dismemberment involves sinew, real  
or imagined, & a setting involving people.  
There's no way to undo it.

I woke, still necrotic only on the edges.  
It was winter, flurries on the sill.  
Somehow I knew the light beyond the clouds.

By folding things from paper.

I'd say something right about Dawn.

## Between Dawn Holder and Akira Kurosawa

Dawn splotted with porcelain

Kurosawa presiding over the cinema  
the remnant teeth

rain pooling in the turquoise ashtray

Kurosawa presiding over the cinema  
the procession of the foxes

rain pooling in the turquoise ashtray  
through the open window

the procession of the foxes  
the enflamed azalea  
through the open window

Dawn waking up beside the river  
the enflamed azalea

Kurosawa mourning the peach trees

Dawn waking up beside the river  
her glasses imbedded with diamonds

Kurosawa mourning the peach trees

the turquoise the porcelain of  
her glasses imbedded with diamonds  
the water of the earth

the turquoise the porcelain of  
the earth its flames bones foxes

the water of the earth  
the fenestrate azalea  
the earth its flames bones foxes

her mouth proceeding through life  
the fenestrate azalea  
the cinéma vérité

her mouth proceeding through life  
the remnant teeth  
the cinéma vérité

Dawn splotched with porcelain



orange & turquoise & black dots  
radiating from a single vanishingpoint

columns of blood cascading  
with rows of m c m l x x i i i

black sentence diagrams  
layered with synapses  
beside red bricks  
osteoblasts & osteoclasts

contours of yellow yarn  
under jagged blue lakes

white goats galloping

a giant white goat  
with six spindly legs  
my head atop its neck  
horns from my head  
long white beard from my chin

**Dawn Holder's *Nocturne***

the darkness enveloping me in a violet underworld not copying but materializing nature  
black tubes hovering from the ceiling sustaining a green lagoon bubbling this not dreaming  
the cave cold saturated with fluxing elements maybe lovers waltzing electrons rattling everything  
even me  
two flamingos striding between the stalagmites the earths skull air inside its imagination  
plaster speleothems stalagmite the black plastic ground shifting my peripherals how eyes work  
the walls blooming lichens whose rusty bodies quiver snowy spirits what holds them up  
water dripping hypnosis reverberating the deep ices over the mermaids  
the flowers straightening hotpink limegreen petals pistils white irradiated tufts  
two green mermaids on their backs suspended in the lagoon i listen to myself made of water



in the kitchen

Frenchpress in one hand mug in the other

to my right TIE fighters & Zeroes

below them smokeplumes from the water

21 20' 38" N 157 58' 30" W in black on the water

below the water a pair of skyscrapers

of air & charcoal lines

smokeplumes from the edifices into the water

my body above the waist

to my left the floor fading into a small hole

with a fire at the bottom

red lines anemonelike from it

to frame the skyscrapers

the aircraft in the corner

the ticks in the kitchen

my nipples & the outline my liver

## Remedios Varo's *Simpatía*

The water spilling from the glass  
Not spilling from the glass  
From the spilled glass falling from the table  
Not falling from the table  
The water on the floor the not the Caspian Sea  
The cat on the table a tiger not a tiger  
Harp the hand playing not playing  
Not a harp the hand the cat  
Her hair burning not burning into the sky  
The sky lasering not lasering into her hair  
The sky the room the room not the sky  
The air's machinery cranking not cranking  
Not the night not the day the daylight the nightlight  
The stars on the walls not the stars on the walls  
The stars piercings not stars the piercings  
Where the words do do not enter

The light piercing her body  
Not piercing her body  
Not her body only to be sutured not pierced  
Not to be sutured by light not light needling  
Not needling stippling the cat  
The chair not a chair  
Supporting her only to not support her  
To buoy her buoy her  
Her nightgown fluorescing  
Not fluorescing her nightgown  
Seurchins piling under the chair the space under  
Under the chair not seurchins but bacteria  
Not bacteria not cacti not synapses  
The red tablecloth clothing the table  
Not in red her face in red highlights  
The meanings that do do not

**From Godfrey Reggio's *Naqoyqatsi***

Oilfields & oil drums across the land  
Lightning of red pistons in a transparent engineblock  
Numberstrings combusting  
Chains like being wrapped around a sphere  
The gears of gears eating fire  
A halo falling through an eye  
A stand of trees bleeding through a gray sky  
Rockets bleeding smoke through a gray field  
Patriots their wings popping into place after clearing the tubes  
Whitesmoke from smokestacks  
Crosshairs zeroing on houses  
Figures figures of sand of sand  
Schoolbus exploding  
Where are the children  
Is it really a schoolbus  
Stars careening over a break in the trees  
Artilleryfire like stars like green sparklers on Independence Day  
A man yelling with his tshirt  
A tshirt & an indexfinger  
Men yelling at each other at me  
A man with a stick retreating from a phalanx of riotpolice  
A man firing a pistol  
A trashcan tumbling into a street  
Dark & grainy & thronged with people  
Where is there one head among a throng of heads  
Bodies torn with gas  
The children were at school  
Crossing basketballcourts hands clasped behind their heads  
A woman's face in slowmo wailing skyward between her hands  
Her hands clutching her head  
A man staring at me in slowmo  
Dark pits of his eyes staring  
Where did they come from



## A Play, as in Other Words

*after Christine Hume*

*(The field, dim. The air, acrid mixture of gunpowder, urine  
& peatmoss. The vista: sanddunes with splitrailfence. In the distance,  
a screen broadcasting blurry photographs of you, bright swatches of  
color & all the words you've ever said.)*

BROTHER LOZENGE: The sun pressed my shirt to my body,  
bleached the exposed particles of my skull. I'm inured to this,  
this fractured correspondence.

BROTHER ALGAE: These words sift us then become rocks  
and the underneath rocks. Particulate matter of the neck.

BROTHER REMNANTS: *(Teeth flashing through the cheeks.)*  
The neck, serrated, gurgles with red clay.

BROTHER CONTAGION: Muddy. Muddy, my feet replicating  
the muttering air.

PRECAFFEINATION BROTHER: Dear, Dear Mouth, if only  
I could crawl back to the clover. *(He blinks a single eyelid.)*

*(The screen broadcasting a bubbling black sludge.)*

(CORPORATE TECHNO DEMAGOGUE BROTHER *typing*  
*feverishly at a computer, colored wires & cables unfurling from his back*  
*into the sky.*)

BROTHER TESTOSTERONE: The body. The body and the  
corpus of the body. The hems—um—combusting. *(Singing.)*  
Can I get a (what, what)?

WEARING THE FATHER'S HAT BROTHER: Search the lilac!  
The rose! Rummage the olivegroves! The walls of sugar! Let  
nothing ferment!

POST BROTHER STRESS DISORDER: The casks of wine in the  
cellar. Is it too late to drink them? I need help calming my loss.

PASSAGES OF BROTHER: (*Waving his rope arms overhead.*)  
What've you lost?

GARNET BREATHING BROTHER: (*Somersaulting through the air.*) Your yard?

DROPPED SIGNAL BROTHER: (*Barrelturning.*) Graphics?

BROTHER RELIEF: Not your brotherhood?

BROTHER SPROCKET: Your lyrics.

(*Trees, crops, industries. Sound of wind through the branches like giant golden wings swooshing just out of sight.*)

BROTHER OF THE GREEN SHADE OF NIGHT: In my dream  
your feet lie beside you and when I look at them they shoot tiny  
green bees, tiny green bees, into my mouth, which I suddenly  
spew like stars.

BROTHER POSTCAFFEINATION: Now I can pluck meteors  
like apples from a bough out of the air, heavy as it is with  
likeness. (*He sits at a breakfast table pinching a cigarette in the corner of his mouth.*)

DROPPED SIGNAL BROTHER: I like being a preOedipal  
interlocutor more than a disseminator of a continuously  
sterilized matrix of guarantees.

BROTHER GRAMMAR: (*Mouthing one thing but speaking another.*)  
Here's your land we promised. And your voice.

BROTHER ALGAE: Still, the ammonia flows blue like ribbon.

(BROTHER ALGEBRA *reflecting the blue river below.*)

BROTHER LOZENGE: The river spewed a putrid fluorescent  
foam downstream, amassing in the ventricles, divested and  
commercially obscured.

SCARRED CHIN BROTHER: What a blur the past is. All these leaves, the salamanders under them. How did I get this baseballbat? Burning muslin? Bootsole?

BROTHER GRAMMAR: I made my own shoes, my own music. I needed something to reflect the concrete poured to displace me from the land.

BROTHER REMNANTS: My roots torn need resowing.

MOUNTAINTOPS OF BROTHER: You'll never escape us, we, spirits who dream of content, who sit at the table.

*(The screen broadcasting a cityscape montage with edifices like broken teeth & smoke like thought bubbles.)*

*(The vista: grassy knolls & concertinawire, oily bodies & cornfields. The air: acrid mixture of baby powder, cinnamon & diesel. You feel yourself beginning to sweat & fidget.)*

BROTHER RELIEF: Your orgasm doesn't make you God. It makes you responsible.

BROTHER TESTOSTERONE: Dear Angel, Cut of Pink! Dear Femme, Lacquer of Come Hither! *(Singing in a mock falsetto.)* You sexy motherfucker.

BROTHER CONTAGION: The divided harbor, quilts on one side, wolves on the other. The jagged river, the bridge's narrow span. How it jostled underfoot.

WEARING THE FATHER'S HAT BROTHER: Tie your shoes! Cut your hair! Erase the lead from your chin!

BROTHER ALGEBRA: You should take your twenty thousand beaks and fanned galvanized coverts—

BROTHER ALGER: And leave this valley. Take your arches too.

*(A murder of crows landing on the knoll.)*

*(The sky, a mesh of wires.)*

CORPORATE TECHNO DEMAGOGUE BROTHER: The children's hands are the most innovative and efficient components of the matrix.

BROTHER SPROCKET: Especially since fire took their mothers.

SCARRED EYEBROW BROTHER: *(Picking up a baseball.)* I gave birth to fire from my gut and it felt like it meant I was a cause for leather. *(He drops the baseball.)*

GARNET BREATHING BROTHER: Strong medicine.

POST BROTHER STRESS DISORDER: You mean Ativan?

(SCARRED CHIN BROTHER & SCARRED EYEBROW BROTHER *wilting under a blue scarf.*)

*(The screen broadcasting a slowmotion montage of variously aged women in designer clothes, lingerie, cheerleading uniforms & cat costumes.)*

BROTHER TESTOSTERONE: *(Ogling the screen then whipping about.)* Her mind? What I want's between her thighs. Hooah!

BROTHER CONTAGION: Nice. Nice. Here. *(He hands BROTHER TESTOSTERONE & BROTHER GRAMMAR a glowing plasma.)*

BROTHER OF THE GREEN SHADE OF NIGHT: *(Trudging across the field in a black uniform.)* I dreamt a cat dissolved into a room where we sat on the floor in the foreground of a disembodied windowsill.

BROTHER LOZENGE: I looked out the window for the draining sound. All there was was water falling down a throat.

WEARING THE FATHER'S HAT BROTHER: *(Hunching over the rostrum.)* The decollated can't fight. Nor can the disappeared.

## **Abeer Qassim Hamza Al-Janabi**

they went to the door, they pushed through the door, they were stronger than they were, they were stronger than the door, they had the right of way,

they wore plain American clothes, they did not wear Iraqi clothes, they were not brown like the sand, they were not dressed to be invisible, they did not need to be,

they had guns, they had body armor, they had sand and locusts on their side, they thought their way was the only way, they crossed the threshold, which made a hollow sound,

they had set fire to the rivers, they had set fire to the sand, they had bulldozed the city squares, they had ransacked the cars and mosques and shot the neighbors,

they had guns to make them safe, they had boots that they wore in the house, they used their words, they used their guns, they used their boots,

they yelled, they left the sounds of their American tongues in the room, they separated them, they pushed and shoved and made their mouths and heads bleed,

they took her parents and sister to the back, they kept her in plain sight, they could not/would not hear her words when she begged them, they were deaf,

they were too strong and too many, they made her cry, they made everyone cry, it was what they had been trained to do, it was what God told them to do, they were holy,

they called her names, they might have bit her neck and licked her body, they were like dogs or locusts to her body, they filled the room with names and a hollow sound,

they held her down, they made her bleed, they bruised her legs, they made her purple and hollow inside, she might have stared at a spot on the ceiling, she might have prayed,

they were rancid with breath and sweat, they swelled with alcohol, they were drunk with power, they flashed their teeth and wings, they suffocated her with their tongues,

they broke her down, they broke her into the floor, they made them beg for Allah, the light of Allah, they made them see the light,

they shot the family with their own gun, they shot Abeer last, they shot her in the head, they set her on fire so no one would see what they had done, they left the house a hollow shell,

## Manifest Destiny

Cross the peristyle, enter  
the doorway. I can see you.  
Are you an injured bat?  
Earthmovers in the distance,

seaweed in the estuary, the estuary.  
Masquerade as a barista.  
I'll be a swan, a bald eagle.  
Lounge in a palanquin, with velvet slippers,

spin straw to gold.  
Someday your feet will hurt less.  
Are those your dirges bending the wasps?  
Such a lovely face

should sing a happier song.  
Porcelain shoulders, stolerimmed.  
I'd like you to blink through collagen.  
Here are your claws,

mouthparts of the city.  
You stag. You rabbit.  
Nevermind the nightshade, nightshade.  
Take these strawberry barrettes, or berets.

I made you this field.  
You can't really play here, but you can  
lift your breasts. I'll lock the gate  
so you can wilt like a cup.

Filter the sun through the skirt,  
may your geysers billow the hour.  
Let me pin you to desks  
with candyapples.

Let me gloss you, you  
severed rib, burning candle.  
Howl with peroxide under my shards.  
I was meant to manage your flesh.

I invented math after all.  
How you burn in that embroidered basque,  
those leopardprint Chanel pumps.  
Faint on the couch a damsel.

## **Fathercountry**

The tongue, gantry  
for my son the hologram.  
Who I shellac with pollen.  
The crops undo his gut.  
Father the father,  
salt flickering into a sunflower.  
Splashing in the pool,  
my son, blue chlorinated sac.  
The sky, precinct of milk,  
clouds, foam jalopies.  
I drive history into apples, boobytraps,  
dilapidated rotatorcuffs.  
The heart, not to be spoken.  
I tear him like grass,  
tendon from bone.  
The blackness of things.



A home, a kind of cannibal.  
A gold protease,  
hollow & selfaggrandizing.  
The lake reaching the door.  
I cover the light  
with my hand, an oracle.  
My son on the hillside  
teetering between the headstones.  
I hover in the flyloft.  
The force that gives us meaning.  
The of of the father,  
the elephant flooding the room.  
There's nothing somnambulant  
about trees or influenza.  
My son the syncretic.  
Who stutters on the porch.

The photographs beside  
the fire melting into the woods.  
The wind, tubercular.  
I flex my arms,  
my bulldog tattoo,  
to tickle him to death.  
If he cries, he's unfit,  
my son who hits like a mosquito.  
May he wear my coat  
or be delivered  
to the city's outskirts, stones.  
Father of the of the.  
Overgrown with corn.  
My son moves from Ohio.  
I'm from where I'm from.  
Nothing I could choose.

## **Man in the Woods**

Are we lost  
Man in the Woods  
Are we lost  
What does your robe say  
It says yes  
The bones of your bones have mutated  
Are we lost  
You're a Christian & so wise  
We're not  
What has happened to our bones  
Do you feel lost Dear Lamb  
These woods are dark & wolfthroated  
Is the ink real  
Tell us we're lost  
So we can get to draining the sky  
Of its pregnant blood  
This very uterine evening  
Are we lost to our ink  
Dear Woodsman Dear Robe  
You're lost  
Will we ever find our way  
Not without this bread  
Take this bread I baked into a pelvis  
If you want to be found  
Is this bread a real pelvis  
Here use your teeth on the sinew  
Does this make us monsters

## **Know Thyself**

I am  
my feet divide the land  
how much dust they become  
mass under sleep

the land desires the scorched mass

where I am I circulate  
the agent speaking  
become analogous

the speech act dreams

green lights swish through the valley

I am the cracks  
The lifetime of feet

to name means to desire to scorch speech

my circulation balloons where dust burns

I dream on black ground  
I lose the refrigerator humming

x is x  
the analogy at night  
sleep relating to the address

the green skyscraper lives where a hole began

the cost that is concrete is remnants

the cracking highway carries the prison

the agent speaking is the speaking itself

where am I

the mountain layers the skyscraper

emanate from desire

follow the balloon to green

the address alluvial

I face my departures

crossing where the circuit holds

## **Man in the Woods**

What's your name  
Conduit  
What's your name  
Vestment among the Tinder  
How do you lie down beside the straw  
Like a beard christened  
By blood sloshing in the nave  
How do you sleep  
When the woods pulse with surrogate fathers  
How do you listen  
I listen to the blood beyond the crosses  
There are more bones than bodies here  
Why do you thank the air  
Have you ever been beyond  
The mountain to see how white the sunrise is  
Whiter than air  
Is the end true  
I'll grow talons  
Bleat & ejaculate sulfuricacid  
What's your secret Dear Aqueduct  
Dear Cassock  
What do you want it to be  
I can tell you in my cabin  
Are you lost  
I can make bread for you  
With which you can line the path  
Does this mean we're lost

## Playing with *All Things Considered*

europes becoming the arena to define islam & dutch  
filmmakers murders traumatized what societies seen as a  
dozen religiously voted slit notes in hurt taxidivers  
its too bad muslims their sidewalks turned to teddybears invaded  
triggered in the illsubmission those men of fists on cheeks the square  
opens narration parliament threats against surfing takes only  
moments to capture video civilization spiritual  
girder we enter ourselves large network neighborhood satellite  
city of sports matches moroccan shock the coroner victim  
begins souring the underpass generous language courses the  
influx multipoint rotterdam innercity gentrifica  
tions alienating origins one thing you can be sure is  
that none will take away the mothers headscarves break familial  
ties with an easy way from the world arabic worries are bound  
more & more worsening for now however a colorful fish  
markets among olive blazes pours from speakers into the street



## Vienna, or the City of Music, the City of Dreams

The Kapellmeister stood beside me. He clawed his wig. He was boiled cabbage. I was fashioning a flute. I wanted to admit a frustration with church.

I saw a Lamborghini Countach. It was in a window I mistook for Paris in the spring of my thirtythird year. It wasn't a real Lamborghini Countach. I was in bed, not Paris, and the Countach hadn't been invented.

A volcano erupted halfway around the world. I had a fever. Perhaps my liver was rebelling against Vienna, which had been settled in 500 BCE for its proximity to tourmaline and the future site of St Stephen's Cathedral.

There was lye in the streets like a white silk dress. I tried to tickle my bride. I tried to spit, but my mouth felt like a pooltable that'd been covered in felt.

Ego is a sliver of the letter o, I wrote in burnt umber at the top of the page.

The red pelisse soaked in the bathtub. It crooned until the neighbors had had enough and moved to the woods. Who were these neighbors? What was wrong with this crooning that made them move to the woods to live with Mongol ghosts?

I went to the market. My father was there. He was selling hamhocks. I bought a black mask with a red flea painted on it. It scared the police and made the children smarter.

## **Playing Fair**

Sessions and Shelby nay; Begich yea, Murkowski nay; Kyl and McCain nay; Boozman nay, Pryor yea; Boxer and Feinstein and Bennet yea; Udall and Blumenthal and Lieberman yea; Carper and Coons and Nelson yea; Rubio and Chambliss and Isakson nay; Akaka and Inouye yea; Crapo and Risch nay; Durbin yea; Kirk, not voting, eh; Coats and Lugar and Grassley nay; Harkin yea; Moran and Roberts, McConnell and Paul nay; Landrieu yea, Vitter nay; Collins and Snowe nay; Cardin and Mikulski yea; Brown nay, Kerry yea; Levin and Stabenow, Franken and Klobuchar yea; Cochran and Wicker and Blunt nay; McCaskill and Baucus and Tester yea; Johanns nay, Nelson yea; Heller and Reid and Ayotte nay; Shaheen yea; Lautenberg yea; Menendez yea; Bingaman yea; Udall yea; Gillibrand yea; Schumer yea; Burr nay, Hagan yea; Conrad yea, Hoeven nay; Brown yea; Portman and Coburn and Inhofe nay; Merkley and Wyden and Casey yea; Toomey nay; Reed and Whitehouse yea; DeMint and Graham nay; Johnson yea, Thune nay; Alexander and Corker, Cornyn and Hutchison nay; Hatch and Lee nay; Leahy and Sanders yea; Warner and Webb and Cantwell yea; Murray and Manchin and Rockefeller yea; Johnson nay, Kohl yea; Barrasso and Enzi nay.

## **Playing with an Ingersoll Rand Gravityfeed Spraygun**

The heart saves paint while providing superior finish. Don't use heart unless against ordinary usage, like hearts in the heart hearting hearts, literally and figuratively. The highvolume lowpressure reduces overspray, ensuring more paint lands on the beloved and less escapes in the air, the heart, impastoed, impastoed with color. See the heart for what it is: valved, chambered muscle, shaped special bird. The adjustmentknob allows you to finetune airflow, and its stainlesssteel needle and tip are perfect for waterbased finishes. The usermanual, in every language imaginable, should be read carefully. That is, if you can find it. Remember: the more you experiment, the more you know.

## Would You Like to Play a Game?

the steakknife is	a language vivisectionist
the yellow daffodil is	a sexual innuendo that clangs the tulips
the drunken bicyclist is	a six percent taxrate
the assassin is	an Adirondack chair in the backyard
the jealous Chihuahua is	a moistened ball of cornflakes
the Atlantic littered with whalesong is	a raven stitching the sky to the dormer
the rock in my mouth is	a pigshaped saltpig
the earthmover on the hill at dawn is	a bulldozer on the hill at dawn
the will of President Obama is	a thin curtain bled through with light
the tentcity above Port-au-Prince is	a 2400° kiln
the parsnip rotting in the basement is	a whaleroad sickened with thefts
the beloved's hand is	a candlewick between slides
the acrid billow of black smoke is	a knot in the dialogue
the ipod is	a prisoner of Hartford
the bellybuttonring is	a tsunami
the bearer of the flag is	a deciduous forest

## **Sward Play**

Sounds like sword

Ground covered with grass

The grassy surface of land

Lawn or meadow

Cover with or become covered with turf or sod

Where “students in flip-flops slap” under the campaniles, where “sumacs growing in the sunny sward there” “left a sward as of yore”

That which sprouted up 500 years ago

More now a surname than a lawn, e.g. an American-Canadian poet-novelist

Occasionally in newspapers as “grassy sward” despite the redundancy

Sometimes a grassy knoll in presidential assassinations or a hillock in picnic scenes

First, the poet, in a linen shirt and denim pants, would stretch upon the sward, loafing on the grass, clutching it with full hands. Then he would scour the battlefields, crossing the swards between writhing bodies, delivering water and bandages.

Once upon a time, it was a skin or rind, particularly pork or bacon

From the Old English “sweard” for “skin,” a kin to the Old Frisian “swarde” for “scalp” and the Middle High German “swart” for “hide”

As in the skin of the head, walrus hide

It came from the idea that grass is the skin of the earth

## How to Get My Attention

Curve your feet around mine.  
Navigate the glitter, mussels, stalagmites, turquoise, and wine.

Use *larder*, *cruciferous*, and *vitrification*.

There's no substitute for craft.

Rouse me from hallucination, dirge  
I learned from the moon.  
I almost feel the floor.

When the water evaporates.  
Conjure the sun, its light  
the better blood.

If desired, tell me your dream of living  
on a lake with a garden and some chickens.

## **En Garde, or Actions to Relate to Oneself**

To enpanel tarragon & roast the goat in its narrow frame

To unfasten the clasps of infectious isms

To pluck the ruby lozenges from the torsos rupturing the streets

To cultivate the garden with bloodmeal then silken the gall bladder with eggs & milk

To mine the uvula of nitrogen

To enjamb the theremin & turntable, the smartphone & nounphrase

To vomit gallium arsenide into the compasses of disciples

To fold encephalitis into a red crane, of the air in it

Of the green tucked under the shirt as a way of being

Of the land to pulse through, as a stent

Of kerosene, a scarf in the grass

To pledge allegiance to entropy & the cosmic alligator, dear ouroboros

To entomb the Fabergé eggs of the transitive verb

To swaddle the chupacabra in a shawl to harvest dry the bile of its progeny

To wander the asphalt genocide, the carillon mechanics of bitumen refineries

To resonate the stars their enigmas

Entr'acte: the image of standing beneath a mulberry tree strung with glass lanterns

Of crossing the stream before it turns detergent

Of making love through the silver tendrils this home is

Of writing its opening onto paper

To transmit the natural renditions of a brackish langue

To annotate in vast compendiums the city shapes

To enumerate the four elements in a high res field or machine  
To execute art by ensconcing it in sense  
To polish the reliquaries & Rustoleum the yards yellowing with spent uranium  
To drink wine on the porch while drought begins to denude the pecans  
To ponder the graywhale, that its neurons might invite consciousness  
To remember Aix-en-Provence, a land of baths & orchards & bouillabaisse  
Of lavender windowboxes & branched abstractions  
To attend the funerals of ballerinas & mechanics, baritones & phantoms  
To center & decenter the wreaths  
To disgorge the patriarchy organ with hyphens & antiphonals  
To picket the president's flannelshirted ranch, necktied penthouse  
To sightsee Kennebunkport's crabshacks & tillandsia boutiques under a rainbow  
To stand before the Capital Angel clouded with censers  
Of drying intellect & hydrogenating arteries  
Of infrared thighs that slouch toward innuendoes of tanned hipbones  
Of youth pixelated with Nintendoes into a pastoral dronescape  
To awaken to the sun's anemone  
To spew endorphins into rebel algorithms



**a/node (Treatment)**

## **To Be Multiply Iterated**

in the yard  
a pitchfork  
through the foot

no sound  
but the fog  
closing in

## Soliloquy

who am I now to go on to go without you dear dad who my name is an act  
of spite of the will to persist your absence who can live I will this neighborhood  
of words of you you specter whose resemblance I see in the mirror the sky  
burning another attitude who is the ground now who holds my body its line  
of states floating and changing love who is love and who is a word and who is  
he who resembles the dead the purple lips shaped upon the face the specter  
who leaves who is now my neighbor in dear name dear name I scoop from  
the ground to change to be my own who is a body and who is dead and who  
and who is the image I burn to migrate with and against who the grey suited  
specter mirror I leave for my own sky

## Possible Effects, Footages, Locations, Props, and Stylistic Cues

addresses in Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, & Virginia, AIDS, the aircraft of a failed coup, the algebradesk, Alsace-Lorraine, amber waves, the aqueduct, arcade, PacMan's yellow mouth, bacon, Balsam, bionic sounds, Black Mt, black widows in Masonjars, blackberrybushes above the highway, arms scratched, the blinking red eyelid, the blue Chevy Blazer detailed with white arrows, the blue stethoscope, the boobytrap's white incendiarism, cadavre exquis, Camels, Cape Hatteras, the carburetor, the Chihuahua, cholesterol & myocardial infarction, coffee, crookneck squash, breaded & fried, cruising, dada, deerhead above the mantel with cobwebbed rack, in dented, the desert, diapers hanging from the clothesline, elephants of macramé, wood, marble, crayon, the English Springer Spaniel, the Enola Gay, Excalibur, my father in green fatigues, hospital gown, gazing at my mother in a nurse's smock, bridal sleeves, the flam, fluxcapacitor, foamed milk, the Four Elements, above Gettysburg pastures inebriated with snaredrums & phalanxes, the green house on Harris St which would become a parkinglot, Guernica, H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, Helen, Henri Cartier-Bresson, a hitch of Clydesdales pulling a beerwagon down the street, both ways through the snow, "I saw the best minds of my generation," indivisible with rhetoric, I-40, a bead of gunpowder to California, the Irish Setter, James Earl Jones reciting the Pater Noster, Jeffersonian Neoclassical architecture, jingoism highlightreel, Kansas, Kill Devil Hills, the wind bending the beachgrass, *Koyaanisqatsi*, the lathe red with language, lines about the jungle, the wall, little boxes, *Manifeste du surréalisme*, me as a newborn in repose in the deliveryroom, anointed & awaiting circumcision, *Metropolis*, napalm, 1984, Old Spice giftboxes, an olivetree or a figtree ignited by lightning, pages from a 1903 *Dayton Journal*, paperfootballs, paramecium scuttling & dividing, penicillin, pitchfork through my foot into the Earth, planting gardens by the moon, plutonium, the quilt, Reagan & his omics, the red beard, the rivet, the skyline, the solarcalculator made in Taiwan, the soupkitchen, Southern hospitality's white cone, Spacelab in its declension along the Earth's bulb, Steve Austin's legs, Styx, sunflowers, sweet tea, Terence Malick, the 30-30, *Un chien andalou*, Walker Evans, the wheel, the whitepicketfence, the world being parsed into barrels

**Dear Mailman,**

Thank you for letting us come to the post office.  
Thank you for showing us around the post office.  
It was fun pushing the pedals on the mail truck.  
Thank you for showing us the sorting machine.  
Thank you for showing us the eating room.  
Everything was interesting. Have a nice day.

## Back in the Day

I climbed the oak in the yard  
The oak began to die  
Blood fermented in Tehran  
It was a Monday  
There was a white prayingmantis  
It was armorplated, an indivisible fraction  
It had a Bible wedged in its mouth  
It tracked my movements with its head  
Triangular, alien facsimile  
Dad smoked a pipe  
He let we watch *Excalibur*  
And Ronald Reagan was there  
I mashed my dad and Roland Reagan into a paste  
Together they devalued the sun  
They sharpened the pates of sidewinder missiles  
Mom was there knitting  
She was smiling, hair pretty, all a-perm  
She nursed a shoulder  
It was early on in her suffering  
The Appalachian scartissue spread below  
Burning the verdure  
I didn't know what that word meant  
I heard a volcano explode  
Everything was coated in papermill exhaust and baconfat  
Bacon was king  
That was how cornbread was made  
I was cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs  
I pitched a tent between the petioles  
I used neighbors to find genitalia and gilded feathers  
And porn and cigarettes  
Branches began to fall off  
I began to shimmy  
I saw a large, infectious turquoise toad  
I saw a raven's egg  
I saw a pair of boots with red laces  
I saw a twelvetoed radioactive cloud

I drummed and marched through the streets  
Tickertape snowed over Main St  
And the large velvety thighs of Santa Claus  
I vomited when the air bit my neck  
299 souls were rising in the distance  
They bled from the roots  
Death grew whitehot in my eyes  
My eyes were whitehot with death  
In the fields yams condensed slowly  
I began to wonder about oil, currency, and dreams  
The holy triumvirate of global intercourse  
I stuck my hand in a knot lined with glass bulbs  
There was a man with a great beard loving things  
There was a woman in a white housecoat baking with dashes  
I thought about a green house  
Where did the green house come from  
I had some lovers  
They mauled my caduceus  
I was such a boy  
I didn't know how to be a lover  
God flew away on an absenteeballot  
God floated away on a bowl of M&Ms  
I fell with the leaves  
The oak died

## Soliloquies Delivered Simultaneously

I have his red beard	he has my jawline
southerndrawl	sarcastic tongue
we look sound alike	we share a name
but we're not	which means light

why does he want me	if the land and I are one
sleeping under the sink	where does that leave him
why does he wash	if he's unruly
my wheat in sulfur	what stones do I use

shame on him	blessed am I
for what he does	for throwing him
for selfpreservation	in the lake
in my name	liver indivisible

no one deserves his	blessed is he
provinggrounds	sweet good crow
shame on him	who carries the rifle
this disenchantment	in his hands



## Black Mountain

Dead chickens litter the yard.  
Featherless, some still in plastic, some not.  
The sun, morphemes.  
The dog preens itself in the driveway.  
Dad's truck appears down the road.  
He scans the yard, drags the dog to its pen  
by the scruff of the neck.

\*

Sunflowers buttress the frontporch.  
Heads heavy with seeds.  
I walk under them, between the stalks.  
I pluck the spiderweb with a stick.

\*

The sand burns, the blue shovel beseeches.  
The sandbox falls open like petals,  
the corners rivuleting sand into the grass.  
I sculpt a battlefield with dunes, ravines,  
twig bunkers, phalanxes of green plastic soldiers.  
Dad emerges from the house.  
With firecrackers to enact the scene.

## Central Elementary

*The speaker on the wall, the clock. Cursive letters above the chalkboard. A small United States of America flag above the pencil sharpener. The fluorescent lights buzzing. The rain streaking the windows. CHORUS stands facing the speaker, hands over hearts, voices garbled. The teacher in front, skin taut like plastic.*

CHORUS: I pledge allegiance to the  
flag of the United States  
of America, and to  
the Republic for which it  
stands, one nation under God,  
indivisible, with li  
berty and justice for all.

*The Soviet Union appearing suspended in air. A hammer and sickle throbbing, then winding down, then disappearing in a puff of smoke.*

ME: (*Voiceover.*) Earlier Pledges didn't have "under God."  
Congress added it in 1954 at the behest of President Eisenhower,  
who believed, as did the Knights of Columbus and the Reverend Docherty,  
that the Pledge was incomplete without props to God.

THE CONSTITUTION: (*Stately.*) Congress shall make no law  
respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free  
exercise thereof.... (*Trailing off.*)

JEFFERSON: (*White dust falling from his wig.*) Religion, a private affair.  
A government's stewardship extends to legislating actions only,  
not opinions. I want to revere the citizenry's decision to build a wall—

MADISON: —Yes! A wall, yes, between religion and government,  
which is, is essential to the blossoming of both.

## **Cruisin'**

Between Halltop, East Fork, Froglevel, coves where Papaws were born  
The old republic, glasspack exhaust, drafting, anonymous, highschoolfaced  
With orangestruts, 2" lift, knobbytired, eyebrow salute, posture our necks  
At Shoney's nightowl breakfastbar, celebrating over gravy & bacon & grits  
Wranglerized, Chippewacalved, snakeskin imitation, Earnhardtcapped  
Rust, BondO fendered, rearspoilered, Enkeirimmed, neon groundeffects  
Plaza, the Sky City's first PacMan, Camelot Cinema's sidewalk batsignal  
Mullet aficionados, windshield's adhesive film, cartoons piss, white fountains  
The Russ Ave artery, tires that sqawl, undigital, this existential yippeekiyay  
In Camaros, Mustangs, F150s, Turtlewax, bumpers snapping Jacks  
Kickers, isobaric bassrattled trunkthrob, consoleslouch, leftarm autopilot  
Mindsmokers, pitrow Hot Spot for Mountain Dew spittoons, Fritos manna  
The infield, thronged, tailgate legswingers, parkinglot's styrocooler speakeasy  
In traffic, blinkerlines, the MickeyDees hairpin, & the jockey back down

## Montage

Spinning the bottle in the tent in the yard with Helen  
fantasizing to Sears' models, *Victoria's Secret* angels  
hooking up in a baseball dugout at night  
under the bleachers at a Friday night football game  
in a backseat in a parking lot, on the foggy hood of a car  
on the Blue Ridge Parkway, emitting nocturnally  
in dreams, jerking off in the shower with fruits  
with a tube sock just before  
heavy petting under a blanket on a bus after a band competition  
by the light of the quad, in the topbunk of a dormroom  
playing Truth or Dare with friends after sangria  
fumbling in the bed, on the floor, against the dresser  
on the bed, by the fireplace, by the river  
getting blown at a party in front of other partiers  
paying for lapdances, slinking  
in to the restrooms & stockrooms of  
art museums, bus stations, coffee shops, movie theatres, truck stops  
jerking off to *Red Shoe Diaries* on Showtime  
to porn starring Ron Jeremy & Bambi Woods  
fucking in the woods, against the tree, along the stones  
in the leaves, with a blond in a red skirt.

## Hartford, West End

An egg hangs on the wall  
A vertebra hangs beside it  
There's an upsidedown peace lily beside that  
And a clay tablet beside the lily

There's a man in repose, his shoulder blue  
There are two lovers beside him  
The male lover is frozen, the female lover, waving her hand  
As if she were very hot or were about to sneeze

The door opens to the hallway, exposing fur  
Beside the door, a butterfly made of wool  
A man playing with his son on the beach  
Four neighborhood girls in the gasstation parkinglot

The yellow house and a rubber ball on the wet street  
Telephone operators were women  
They directed traffic or announced the time  
A black deer juts from the wall

There's a Victorian on a hill beside the black deer  
Below it is a hayfield, a woman mourning  
There are more houses, too many  
To keep track of, too many to remember

I never remember which is which  
Dawn and I look at our blue sweaters  
The stars are reduced to a map, butterflies to letters  
And the days spread out beside them

## **The One with Roughhousing**

Exterior, dusk. Interior, car, towel pressed to the back of his head, his head in his father's lap, his father driving. Cut to: the livingroom, the two of them on the sofa, roughhousing, his father tickling him to tears. Voiceover: I fell off, cracked my head on the coffeetable. I couldn't move, everything blurry. His father standing in the kitchen doorway on the telephone. Voiceover: Be still, I said. He kept asking, what happened? His father scooping him up, carrying him out to the car. Voiceover: His body limp, alien in my arms. How serious was it? Voiceover: Is this when my dreams began leaking out? Cut to: a rosette of bloody carpet.

## Promises Delivered Simultaneously

I promise to be your partner      thank you for marrying me  
to cultivate an awesome marriage with you      I promise to love you until I go extinct  
I promise to make creativity and laughter      and to fill our life with beautiful creations  
integral to our life to never be boring      to grow plants flowers and vegetables for you  
but always up for adventure I promise      with life to listen carefully to your countless poems  
a relationship that unites intellectual and emotional      to be present even when going mental  
allowing us to bloom better selves      to be honest respectful supportive and caring  
to be honest respectful supportive and caring      allowing us to bloom better selves

to be present even when going mental      a relationship that unites intellectual and emotional  
with life to help move your art across the earth      but always up for adventure I promise  
to make hummus lemonade cookies      integral to our life to never be boring  
and countless poems for you      I promise to make creativity and laughter  
I promise to love you until I go extinct      to cultivate an awesome marriage with you  
thank you for marrying me      I promise to be your partner

### **Pater Noster Near the Middle**

Our ever Father and who ever  
Art for in glory

Heaven the hallowed  
And be power thy

The name and thy kingdom kingdom the  
Come is thy thine will for be

Evil done from on us  
Earth deliver as but it temptation is into

In not heaven us give lead  
Us and this us day

Against our trespass daily who  
Bread those and forgive forgive we

Us as our trespasses  
Amen



## Soliloquy

who takes his dad and scoops him apart amid the sky scooping faces of  
images floating dearly above the states who does change change and is there  
change resembling a specter that persists bodies the lines of my body  
resemble the dear attitude of your absence who are you to undergo absence  
and who am I left to wait for it the line of names you gave me to migrate  
against memory that of your face your grey suit and purple shirt my grey suit  
and purple shirt who am I specter acting alone now my name is mine not  
yours dear word who leaves who leaves all at once specter I resemble who  
will I spite to purple the sky with who parts me these parts of love who am I  
this face that that you who scooped me up had

## **The One with Spying**

Interior, night. Voiceover: I was supposed to be sleeping, but my chest was clogged with pollen barbs, attendant phlegm. I cracked the bedroom door. Light sliced the darkness. I had to squint. Cut to: the bathroom across the hall, his father shaving, splashing his face with Old Spice. His father's uniform: white shirt, white slacks, white Nikes. Hemostats from his waist, stethoscope from his neck. Voiceover: Soon he'd want to shave and ask me how. How had I learned? Voiceover: He was an ER nurse. He worked graveyard. Was he gentle when drawing blood and stitching lacerations? Was the hospital anything like St Elsewhere?

## **To Be Multiply Iterated**

clear sky  
on the ridge

thick frost  
on the grass

a crow darns  
the morning  
with caws

## **Cameos**

Pizza Server with Septum Piercing: Drew Barrymore  
Aphrodite/Venus: Christie Brinkley  
Belle de Jour: Catherine Deneuve  
Cheerleader: Mena Suvari  
Circe: Brigitte Bardot  
Heather: Heather Locklear  
Lover in Baseball Dugout: Heather Graham  
Lover in the Forest: Anna Paquin  
Lula Pace Fortune: Laura Dern  
Guinevere: Marlene Dietrich, Betty Grable & Ingrid Bergman  
Helen of Troy: Marilyn Monroe  
Elizabeth: Kim Basinger  
Tonya: Charlize Theron  
Highschool Social Studies Teacher: Loni Anderson  
Lee Ann: Michelle Pfeiffer  
Brandy: Farrah Fawcett  
Leda: Heidi Klum dressed as Heidi Klum  
Lo-lee-ta: Sue Lyon & Dominique Swain  
Mary Magdalene: Madonna  
Naiads: Jean Harlow, Jayne Mansfield, Anita Page & Mamie Van Doren  
Ophelia: Kate Winslet  
Penelope: Claudia Schiffer  
Sylvia Plath: Gwyneth Paltrow  
Coffee Barista with Tattoos: Scarlett Johansson  
Selkie: Daryl Hannah  
Sirens: Britney Spears, Carrie Underwood & Christina Aguilera  
Catherine Tramell: Sharon Stone  
Katie: Sharon Stone  
Kathleen Turner/Joan Wilder: Herself

## Event

We buried her.  
We buried her in May in the sun.  
We buried her in the sun, a mouth.

We buried her in the parlance of the times, the sun, May.  
We buried her in the parlance of death.

We buried her after she had fallen.  
We buried her after her bones had become waterlogged, her eyes closed below the falls.

We buried her with closed eyes below the sun.  
We buried her with closed eyes and closed mouths below the sun.

We buried her closed eyes with mouths of flowers

We buried her with a casket.  
We buried her with a casket, a liver.  
We buried her in a casket in the liver of the hillside, flowers of sunlight in May.  
We buried her in a casket in the parlance of the sun, the eyes, and the psalms.  
We buried her in a casket of sun, tied to words.

We buried her after the stones, the water.

We buried her like water, with no light, just the stones of parlance.

We buried her feeding her to the light.  
We buried her filling her with light.

We buried her and her laugh.  
We buried her and her laugh in May, wishing flowers would parlance from her eyes.  
We buried her and her laugh and our laugh trying not to cry.

We buried her in the name of light, eyes.

We buried her saying her name.  
We buried her saying her name, a psalm, a parlance.  
We buried her saying her name, knowing she was fit to be loved.

We buried her with pallbearers.  
We buried her with pallbearers' hands.  
We buried her with pallbearers' hands, cracked and fit and bare.  
We buried her with pallbearers whose hands caught fire from the stillness of the casket.

We buried her with gravity.  
We buried her with gravity in a hillside below the sun.

We buried her gravity of words with the stillness of words that fall.  
We buried her with the stillness of the words: *casket light stone water words*.

We buried her listening to words.  
We buried her listening to words, all there was, all that remained.

We buried her in the hillside, its stone liver, amid the psalms amid the sun.

We buried her as the sun broke the hillside with fire.  
We buried her as the sun broke the hillside.  
We buried her as the sun broke.

We buried her wanting the sun to reverse the gravity that closed her eyes.

We buried her imagining her in our heads with our words.  
We buried her escaping the images of her below the falls, face just above the water.

We buried her crying.

We buried her after the falls took her.  
We buried her after the falls took her image to its mouth.  
We buried her after the falls took her liver, her psalms.

We buried her after the psalms filled with words, burning words.  
We buried her after the liver emptied of words.

We buried her according to parlance.  
We buried her according to parlance, after seeing the casket.  
We buried her to the parlance of water.

We buried her because we were still.  
We buried her because we were stones on the hillside.

We buried her because we couldn't keep her.

## Soliloquy

who am I now who will I be in your absence your name gone my name my  
specter who will I resemble dear named absence dear is too much a word  
who comes here comes to love another in this attitude these faces who will I  
act out for and against whom in this your absence who am I who can't spite  
you only your memory image of leaves across the ground who is this sky  
floating and scooping apart the dear specter of of who are we who try at last  
to undergo change and the migration of states and am I them all their parts  
resembling love who am I and who are you your leaves who lives too much  
these days these parts of the part of me you were can I still be that one  
without you trying to scoop me from one body to another another specter



## **Frog Level**

Where the land flattening beside Richland Creek floods with frogs lungless wedges ribbiting into the night

Where a frog painted on one building where it still squats happily winking & straddling a level

Where the traindepot stood until the car came where it burned down & was rebuilt when great granddad emerged a few blocks away

Where the saloon was the car dealership was where the feedstore the furniturestore the candystore was where the coffeehouse is that no one foresaw

Where the bandmill whose discarded site Bandmill Bottom became a ship my papaw played pirates on & first kissed maybe my grandmaw

Where Dellwood Depot Commerce & Water matrixed crosstown traffic to downtown or to juniorhigh

Where the bikers would divebar in town where once a woman flashed us by where old White Shoes would pass out

Where were the frogs now after the Giles Chemical fire Papaw & Dad fought spewed into the air & the mouth

Where I littleleague on the Elk's Lodge baseballfields where my dad & I watched Halley's dirty snowball

Where I fell through the ice in the green house where I learned to garden to dip Skoal to mimic hiphop to splay hips

Where folks would wash their blood with prayers with rocks where I tried to scour my bones of myths & apples

## Character Development

She stands heels together. She rotates in space, against an orange background. She clasps her hands in front of her. She has yet to meet my dad. She has a bob of dark hair. On either side of her, metadata scrolls and GUI schematics. Hazel eyes, fair complexion. 5'6", average build. She has yet to have children. She smirks and blinks her eyes. 1971. She is 19 or 20. She could be Susan Sarandon or Angelica Huston or Meryl Streep. Family: mother (Jacklyn), father (Leonard), siblings (Dave, Beth), etc. Politics (Democrat). Religion (Methodist). Nationality, musical tastes, books read, pet peeves, etc. She is a recent nursing school graduate. Note the white uniform: polyester one piece, knee-length skirt, starched collar, hose, low-heeled leather shoes. She could be a princess.

She enters and exits hospital rooms. She circles the nurse's station. She records histories. She starts IVs, checks pulses, sutures cracked foreheads. She takes temperatures, checks blood pressures. She watches herself. What she sees floats beside her. She eats a pimento cheese sandwich and an apple. *As the World Turns* on the television. She enters a room where my dad recovers from shoulder surgery. They flirt with each other, oblivious to a suffering taking shape between them.

## **The One with Hunting**

Exterior, morning, his father and he sit on a fallen tree on a ridge. Voiceover: This would've been frontier 150 years ago. I'd taken him hunting because it was something fathers did with sons. Cut to: a deer behind them, his father rising, turning, slowly. Cut to: his father firing, the deer leaping over some brush, bolting down the mountain. His father firing again. Cut to: the deer on its side in a dry rill. Voiceover: It was a trophy buck, sixpointer, wheatcolored coat. What the hell was he looking at? Voiceover: What was I doing? I didn't even like venison. Close up: of the deer's eye. Close up: of blood misting from its nostrils.

## Tuscola Senior High

I cheated a lot the notes, the chairs.  
The same classroom was different.  
What was being when I broke math?  
A test looked from the floor.  
My tongue, bandnerd, pure fact, walks  
in, stops caring, tried by fits,  
swimmingpools, those with water, those  
not. I'm a super person,  
believable, alive, eaten, better out  
of the system, batter over  
the cistern. Rebellion drops  
the sky, the city wealth. The sylph's weld,  
attached to my people, my only cairn.  
The fire, school, wastebasket, period.  
I burp every 5 seconds, chocolatemilk.  
The theatre lacked bricks, gained a phantom.  
Who were you who were elastic?  
A friend's dad, every birthday, bored her  
with elementary, walk to the house  
her birth, just down campus.  
But it was so cute, then.  
Mean people should've been muted.  
I'd come home, eat the home,  
practical talking, would even the score.  
Nobody dances on a sockhop dance  
floor, the gymfloor, janefloor.  
A wet towel across. Experiences are  
overdosing the adrenal text.  
I hope my kids would pay attention  
to be freaked about catching things.  
Kids who stone eachother stone eachother  
in big pink books, photos with glue,  
blackties, "Tesla rocks!"  
Did my father drink knowing I  
wasn't going to be a doctor?  
Mom blamed him on the browniepan  
of discarded seeds. Everyone rode motorcycles,  
Mustangs, especially the surfers,  
lettermen, those that wore them  
with gold hair, gold spirit ribbons.  
The cafeteria moved my heels.  
I look into its movement,  
the slideshow blankens after 3oclock.

## **Soliloquy**

who gets to be his father's ghost who burns from the ground through the sky  
who burns love in a state of specterization who I am images memory purple  
faces who change who disappear over the migration of the body its ground in  
ground who are you now that you are resemblance dear floating face who you  
are now you are leaves scooping the purple lines from lives undergoing  
something else other specters who you visit how you leave and have left  
words dear word suit grey amid the attitudes the faces burning by love and  
change who I am in spite of persisting as you did not or could who holds my  
line now is a specter migrating across the ground with leaves

## Morning

caffeine my father's without the mouth forms flag  
mercury the politic I have sight of reigns the tongue  
I come to places outside the world distributed tempo  
no building's cry no lava's drying deafness

the brain's where steam sloughs breaks down drums  
vagary screams to not be blind the way mustt is  
engineered paint's drip shoulders the ascends of tassel  
names in vernacular undress the country the way corridor's

blasphemy to blasphemy undresses a certain finger  
the elephant I make tears through what all tares through  
subsonic is the sound's transfer of learned posture  
lungs unlike variouses of matriarchs deny red

the phone keeps cigarettes smoked cigarettes smoked  
headbutts the walls loves no sense that imitates  
the dialectic's back in the sewer is what becomes  
nothing even the body's is even if I'm asked to believe

## **Rabun Gap**

As we gather under this mulberry tree, I would like to note some of its significance. Because the mulberry tree does not bloom until the last frost, it signifies calculated patience. Because it blooms so quickly, almost overnight, it signifies expediency and wisdom. Thus, the mulberry tree became linked to Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom. The Greeks attributed the berries' red color to the union of lovers. In Chinese lore, the three-legged Sun Bird roosts in a mulberry tree, which links the terrestrial and the extraterrestrial, the physical and the metaphysical, realms. In Japanese culture, images of the mulberry tree appear on family crests, while the tree's leaves are fed to silkworms. Paper made from the mulberry tree serves as vessels for Shinto offerings. Van Gogh painted the mulberry tree. The mulberry tree is symbolic of the poet John Milton, who apparently spent hours writing under one that had been planted in 1608. Apparently, that mulberry tree still stands and bears fruit.

**July, 1981**

I remember the sky was blue, like gel.  
It was hot and humid. Brian and I were  
out back at the edge of the yard and the woods.  
There was a creek below,  
where we would build dams and catch crawfish.  
Beyond the creek, a trailerpark, Chestnut Mobile Court.  
We squatted on a mound of dirt, smoking cigarettes.

*(Beat.)* Our blond hair had been bleached white  
by the sun. I was eight, Brian six. Maybe  
that sounds too young, but our dad smoked  
and our grandpa smoked. And so we smoked.  
Maybe the Marlboro Man made us do it.

*(Beat.)* Smoking meant puffing, not inhaling.  
What did we know about inhaling? I remember  
I would pinch my cigarette between thumb and index finger.  
Brian would hold his between index and middle finger,  
which was also how dad usually held his.  
I remember the cigarette between my dad's fingers  
as he used the same hand to sip his coffee.  
Or the cigarette dangling from his lips, his head cocked,  
eyes squinted, the smoke billowing around his head,  
while used the tablesaw or peeled an apple for me.

*(Beat.)* Mom was working. Dad was sleeping,  
having worked graveyard. He walked around the corner.  
We fanned the air and stubbed the cigarettes in the dirt.  
We flicked the butts aside. *Please don't see us, please don't see.*  
He was like, you want to smoke, huh? We followed him  
to the front. The sky bluer than before.  
The air shrinking around us. He handed each of us  
a Camel. I remember a joke he told:  
where would you sleep if you were lost in the desert?  
Under the palm trees or by the pyramid  
under the camel's butt? Under the palm trees?  
Not me. I'm going to hotel on the back.

*(Beat.)* My dad smoked, and Brian and I smoked.  
He was like, if you're going to smoke, smoke. Smoking  
is inhaling, like this. Smoke it or eat it.  
It was ridiculous, but my dad's dad taught him to swim  
by rowing him into a lake, throwing him in,  
rowing back to shore, and telling him to sink or swim.



*(Beat.)* We smoked on the front porch with our dad.  
We hacked and panted. We got dizzy and green  
with nausea. He gave us a Swisher Sweet. He was like,  
smoke it or eat it. Maybe you are not supposed to inhale cigars  
but you are not supposed to eat them either.  
We smoked them and collapsed on the railing  
and vomited all over the marigolds.  
We cried and sweated through our clothes.

*(Beat.)* All we wanted was to go sleep it off,  
but we ended up having to clean the yard.

## **Pater Noster Near the Ending**

Dear heavenly coastal lighthouses  
Iron trinity  
Essential prayer of a godful child  
Believed to be from Jesus  
To be Jesus  
Found in red in two different verses  
Recitation  
That in dieselfumes  
Our moral cataclysmic sight  
Heaven  
Traditionally said before taking the field  
For the question built on mountains  
On olivetrees  
Used the way Jesus was  
To be sung  
In the chanting beautiful Mass  
Whose commanding song outlasts the Ave Marias  
Notes celebrated by the Pope  
Silence mantled earth pater  
Teleporting documents to algebradesks via embolism  
*Libera nos* our freedom hollowed  
Not often but a denomination of fathers  
Rather distant Latin for our Father  
Chorale written in Israel  
Refabricated for MIDI  
Poor of a strong father of work & rod  
By Verdi  
For the holy trinity of smoke & blood & wax  
More sumptuous than fanfare for the CD  
The Lord of Prayer  
Set to the driving housemusic of Jesus  
On the cross  
The Latin our Father hallowed  
Horribly beautiful in basic verse  
From the Bible's mouth  
Jesus  
Rose under construction  
Apparent in Italian  
O firm rood camouflaged en masse  
In mass for our fathers  
Our father's house

## One Night

We were at the ocean  
The ocean was before us  
There were cliffs and they were rocky  
They were tall and we did not climb them  
In fact you were not with me  
The cliffs and ocean could have been anywhere  
Birds nested in the cliffs  
And struck out across the water like black boomerangs  
I did not recognize them  
The water was black and made of ink  
It was black and full of fish  
You were not with me because you was already in the water  
I was already in the water swimming to you  
We touched our foreheads together and they sparked  
Peals of laughter in all directions  
I could not swim  
I saw your face and the water moving through her torso  
Only your waist was above the water  
It was like your legs were water  
I began to float on my back  
A light rose in the distance  
It was like the light shone through waxpaper  
The sky looked grainy  
I held a rope in one hand  
And when I whipped it back and forth overhead  
I rose out of the water  
The water drizzled from my body  
I fell back into the water  
And you began to recede into the horizon  
And I kept whipping the rope  
And you receded farther into the horizon  
Why were you leaving  
And why could I not follow you  
I tried to catch you  
The fish were circling  
I had to swim for the shore  
Under me the water churned  
And pulled my feet  
I floated on my back again  
The shore pulled me to it  
The distance buckled  
And I saw you draw up into it

## **To Be Multiply Iterated**

in the shed  
black widows

in Masonjars  
orange blazes

meting out  
the hours

**an/ode**

## an/ode for Dawn

*strophe*        *alba, mattina*, the early light, walking, at dawn between two rivers, one placid rust,  
one boiling larvae, pressing the butterfly from its chrysalitic torpor, dawn, bird  
rouser, suburb mapper, ash igniter, Dawn at play between fields, in Paris,  
beside Notre Dame, eating a baguette with jam and brie in the Tuileries, strolling  
the fountain nudes, the dawning watery age, glass made on a lake amid lilies,  
algae blooms, ice relics, Dawn in a hammock, swatting mosquitoes, enumerating  
the peach groves, rescuing pecans from obscurity, peeling the arid soil to retrieve  
earthen residue, dawn projected on the windowsill, the steaming carafe, on a bike  
pedaling into the April streetscape, when the blue just dawns on the edifices  
and hellstrips of Hartford and beyond, as on wheat, purple mountain chevrons,  
yellow tables, the mercurial faceplates of astronauts and would-be astronauts,  
the shaped eyes en masse on a vista, the dawn,

*antistrophe*    *aube, amanecer, Morgendämmerung*, eclipsing the crescent, where the sun rises  
and also manifests, or conjures, prayers, ejecting them in spiral arms, jetties,  
motes of dust and gas, dawn, the clouds, permutations of, holding air, aerosols,  
smudging the carillon, the tanker prows in the estuaries, Dawn, accreting centaur  
body, transmediating Hylonome, over time, one body into another, and another,  
and and and, somewhere in Pindar, line of spirituals, songs to amuse, dawn,  
lavender-infused, rosy-fingered throughout the epic, the Medusa and the  
thousands of deaths, Dawn deforming the inflated commodity, Adamic sphere,  
zenith of the gazing logos that sheep signal, to bleat, in tongues,

correspondences, haptic fever, cascading, and Dawn, caroming the studio  
for angelheaded, organic porcelain, finding flamingoes in a subterranean  
antechamber, peonies around neon green quinine, dawn, a prelude, forest sweet  
and not sweet enough, dawn the roseate spandrels, valent archipelagos, Chauvet  
handprints,

*epode*

Dawn, whose turquoise folds, radiant nodes, crenellated palazzos, from dusk  
until whose elements light the angles, abstract planes, nighttime places,  
whose song, fierce arabesque, through the ample, rhythmic frame, dawn,  
for once a reason to leave but now one to stay, what is the east, under a mulberry  
tree, in silk refinery, Dawn, a subject, not an object of, who stands up the fire  
to walk the dark, devour the newness of things, here, here, at the beginning,  
is something paper,

## **an/ode to the Wild, Wild West**

The blank clips black mesh to the indexfinger. Looking for  
Polaris, turning grey. It's been years since I was stabbed  
to death by Helen's tongue. I swallow the grandfatherclock, spit  
up its gears, like bones, beside the tarmac to inform  
passengers overhead. Four fiery horses of sulfur are galloping across  
a greenscreen. My signature, a flotilla, is rippling and manipulating  
the Normandys of thought. A keyboard in the fondue. A  
musket and a mahogany crucifix in the window. A filingcabinet  
in the hallway, bifocals dangling from its branches. I stop  
generating bridges and start generating rivers. Who am I to  
think I can bleed? Who am I to be a  
nexus for textual oil? Who am I to touch the  
harddrive that holds the harddrive that holds anatomies? One torso  
and two pewter legs jutting from the wall: doctored with  
ivory, corset, garters, stockings, and Manolo Blahniks. The rotunda is  
crude, fashioned from limestone and grass and adorned with legalese,  
silvercoin. The Internet flicks the apexes of the triangles of  
memory. When I fall I fall where rocks tear peaches.



## **In an/ode Time Aggressionocracy**

Garlic invades the apple. Pubescent thighs tantrum down  
the hall and stairs, curse faucets, and rattle  
suitcases. They cry out constantly for bonechina and  
silver creamers. I try to stay myself but  
the livingroom's claustrophobia machetes me fundamentally. Yellow and  
lavender, sweet disciplinarians, carry ancestors and their photographs  
inside denied figs, their intercostals indifferent to desert  
migrations, red robes, indifferent to cut tongues, the  
violence of concrete. Calves come down from the  
mountains to be smeared on rocks. I build  
ambrosia and stenotypes without the river. The sun  
disintegrates, the door can't muffle blood, the coffeetable's  
32bit playground. Birds forget radar to deliver food  
to. A yellowjacket, its head lopped off by  
imminent death, infiltrating the periphery. A voice with  
diamond stirrups pestles together glycerin and a flag  
and a plumbline, then says it's my duty  
to allow the paste to penetrate my beveled  
armpits. I'm not to float above the neck,  
praying for shrapnel-free life or wrestling serenades. Tornados  
see only themselves, they go about circling their  
neighbors' sandbox. Roads' cities go where tents once  
stood. Water to be drilled presses fiberglass, to  
carbodate books, claw the surname, its inheritance, its  
inherent status. Last Halloween's jackolanterns, freed from their  
tombs, turn to paper and all around sprouts  
newly spectered razorwire. White ears plummet through elaborate  
baskets, unable to believe in their pastel eggs.

### **A Day in the Life, or an/ode on a T-shirt**

1. He sleeps, teeth flickering the approaching dawn. Black sheets, black pillow. The black alarmclock blaring white haloes through the ether.

4. He roars through the street, mouth blackening the air, radioactive scales serrating the edifices. He tromps through the square, the fountain. If there were clouds they would be ominous, roiling puce. If only I had fiery breath to melt asbestos into honey.

7. Mr. Roboto grimacing in his Teflon gray suit. Green, Green Lizard grimacing as he tears off Mr. Roboto's head, white stars exploding from the collar, whirring algorithms caroming about the hull. They are professionals and friends and will meet on Saturday.

10. He shuffles homeward, yawning, eyes squinting. His eyes and black lunchbox are heavy. His dorsal fins knifing the blue hour.

2. He reads the paper over coffee, glasses straddling the nose. What does the paper say? If only I had an everything bagel with creamcheese.

5. He chews the wings off Man-Moth, They are friends and will meet for a beer and wings on Saturday. They will joke and shoot pool and end up arguing with some dudes on the importance of feminism. Green, Green Lizard's wristwatch beeps.

8. He snaps at the helicopters, tongue whipping the air. He kicks open the capitol or the bank or the school.

11. He brushes his teeth in whitestriped pajamas. The mirror, a black circle, reflecting both eyes—

*O eyes  
Old, white, repetitive, intransitive eyes,  
Anodes, salt bridges, ionized aqueous solutions,  
Eyes of the monster and the monstrous  
O eyes perched above some craggy ravine—*

3. He shuffles to his job, his lunchbox black, his heels stirring up white clouds. If only there were lilacs in full bloom.

*Our Fair City shimmering in the distance—  
Infinite cinder, mirror strophe  
Whose museums, parks, and bodegas  
Whose gastropubs and boutiques  
Whose streets, bridges, trains, what interminable traffic  
Marquees and lights and panoramas, hypermedial ejecta  
People, amid manifold visages and creoles, amid  
You, vital mutable concatenation.*

6. He eats a white sandwich. If only it were a pimentocheese sandwich like his mom used to make. If she could see me now.

9. He eats the buses, the cars, and the panicking citizenry. If I had become an engineer or craftbrewer.

12. He wears a black eyemask and clutches a teddybear under his arm. He lies down on the green under the black sheets, beginning to dream.

**an/ode of Fields of Flowers: Mesostics for Chris Carrier**

Come  
deatH  
whomsoever  
investIgate  
romantiC  
mortalS  
pAstures  
glitteRing  
Rod  
wIth  
rEddish  
featheR

Charged  
sHadow  
Raiment  
wIth  
poppieS  
presenCe  
shAll  
deliveR  
thRough  
tIme  
greEn  
bRead

such  
something  
pillow  
shepherd  
taxes  
curtains  
hairs  
dark  
oratory  
disposing  
inheritance  
heretofore

Chance

brighT

letteR

besIde

Still  
Conversations

plAy

oRgans

foR

thIs

mErcury

fatheR



### **an(ti)/(p)ode with Apostrophe**

This is a test, strip of typing, fingers that knuckle  
the hieroglyphs. Higher gifts than mine are  
the dome's. All I eat here's the day, getting through  
sixteen itches of plate glass, forearms that hide.

The arch of arc's an absent letter, an hour  
with sound, beads that water a point's mintfresh  
spartan. O livid link, O peristasis of cooler. I take  
a tack on the estuary filled with suitcases.

I've gone back to where the telephone burns  
a telling form, a telling foam, a telling fun,  
that of rooster, biometric spur, iris booming  
with light that can be slit down the middle, saturated

with before diabolical reception. I off the scalp,  
rainsoaked staff, new sentry, come with grifted  
cream to desert the being home in the unlived.  
I gush, dry up, position my silk between juice & rind.

### **O Caffeine, My Caffeine (an/ode)**

caffeine tramples muscle muscles arteries bends the way birds fly around  
chimneys aluminum skeletons whites of eyes fog incandesces above snow  
rivers that bite heads off bridges I slip inside valves like daybreak to pucker  
bamboo muscle caffeine tramples hunger hungers the brain its folds digs  
crystals into eyes like fog bridges incandescence that lives beyond addenda  
snowfalls of valves hydraulics of daybreaks whitening I hover over  
waterpitchers with anagrams contemplate arterial music of time before  
aluminum skeletons chimneys exhalations caffeine waxes eyes eyes verbs  
washes the way bamboo dreams of birds little stratagems of air locked in  
mouths chisels of saliva forked samplings of rivets heatingvents exhale  
trouble with sand eyes whose valor flags color like whistles I chisel irradiated  
moths with music wax muscle sugar caffeine I flick mouths of air water to  
invent lamps that burn all seismic surefooted among skeletons clocks to  
loosen arteries so humility can wash bridges

## Street Cred, or an/ode on the Street

*strophe*            this street lined with children, pitched voices, car doors, throbbing bass,  
this street lined with roses and peaches on one side, with burning trash  
on the other, this street lined with pickups and motorcycles, clunkers and hogs  
spilling their guts all over, can you hear me now, in this street in a dry town, dry  
county, dustbowl of citizenry battered by the prongs and grammars of one true  
god in flowing white toga, gold leaf brow, this street that scleroses the coronary  
artery, suckles the femoral artery of the angel of fores, of forearms, foreskins,  
forefathers, this street lined with the kwirrs, chas, and wails, the ruby throated,  
this street, a laryngoscope peering through strands of code, jitterings of signs,  
a kind of algorithm or technological line, perhaps, this street, lined with natural  
tendencies, that loves rods, gilds them and places them above the mantel, below  
the glass-eyed buck, legs turned into L's, this street, lined with tornados  
and tornado debris, of which memories, sirens, and fitful sleep are part, lined  
with fireengines, policecruisers, and mailtrucks, taking it to the street with slots  
in it, with doors, backyard gardens, skunks and raccoons, this street lined  
with alphabets, pidgins, cultural miscegenation, this street lined with private  
property, NO TRESPASSING, with houses and shanties, splintering barns  
and rusting trailers, beside Solo cups and Wal-Mart bags, lines of alphabets,  
protected by Smith & Wesson, *KnowWhatIMean, Vern?*

*antistrophe*        this street, lined with cold dead fingers, the disenchanted, the well-tuned phrase,  
the word *street* frying like an egg, this street lined with buses, bus card slots,

parallel and serial connections, multidrop or daisychain topology, this street  
to cross into industry and Arcadia, or kinds of sun, this street an egress lined  
with dreams, broken with crocodiles, public works, this street lined with yards,  
straddled with utilitypoles, parallel to gasmain, sewerlines, like this, like this  
street that bleeds the knuckles like pearls, this street with the Stars and Stripes,  
Confederate Jacks, Don't Tread on Me's, stainless banners, southern cross, this  
street with fake plastic trees, *figus benjamins*, with nicotined chandeliers  
and tchotchked curios, with horsehair pots and bleached sanddollars, this street  
that slips into the future, that looks into an old man to find a young man,  
and both men resembling each other enough so that they might be related,  
much the way I resemble my dad, specter he is, that I am, this street I live on  
lined with dive bars, Slush Puppie fountains, McDonald's Big Macs, pharmacies,  
laundromats, furniture stores, green and orange painted Mexican restaurants,  
this street of salsa with cilantro in suspension, this street with its chicken  
facilities, lines of fluorescent lights and conveyor belts, semis lumbering  
with birds in wire cages, whose feathers unfurl a trail, this street,  
through pastures, mountains, through rice and king cotton, lined with insulation,  
which feeds on itself, the spirit,

*epode*

this street with waterproofing, between the melting arctic, the murderous desert,  
lineage of hoodies, shellcasings, bloodsplatter, bodies, some black, some female,  
the glass constellations, this street being vacuumed, turned into a slalom of dogs

and cats, flattened armadillos, autumn tarantulas, this street to scare teenagers  
into caution or submission, to delineate with commas, this street, its vape lounge,  
farmer's market, masonic lodge, this street, its church, church, church, pew,  
the crucifix skyline, this street's asphalt, from bitumen, either refined or naturally  
occurring, binding aggregate, like gravel, this street in the middle west,  
where Americas meet, chiastically, in a feedback loop, at a river of dark water,  
dark matter, hemorrhage upon hemorrhage, this street of hogbutchers  
and smokehouses, this main street, metonymically vaulted, staked with fanfare  
and tickertape, Strawberry Harvest Queens in convertible Corvettes,  
this monochromatic, middle of the road, ban the books, homonym with fences,  
afterbirths of them, this street freedom, long division, fog bank, yellow brick,  
red shroud, blue heart,

### **An/ode in a Cruel Month, or Some Dried Tubers**

i awoke in a crevasse april my hands flagella hemorrhaging in a butter dish  
the wind a metronome covered in blue speaker fabric my rib cage a sewer  
grate my genome a thunder storm i a brick in the light squeaked through the  
blinds like a yellow rat under the floor salt water rotted the linoleum an antenna  
in my amygdala i did not know about the past a souvenir no songs or singers  
no cities no gotham or metropolis no black berries eroding the time space  
continuum or camcorders bludgeoning the cuneiform  
i drank the asphalt & the zygomatic arches  
i a terrible person careening into damnation

careening into damnation refrigerator in one corner box cars in another  
i sat in the doorway pretzeled my arms around my shins smoke on the dust  
in everything i felt more than a crow salting the land with carburetors & bibles  
a calliope resonated in my ears my teeth softened clouds like mashed potatoes  
the world hung upside down from the rafters shrapnel twiddled its thumbs  
hungry for the radios & machine gunners of humvees i a bassoon a sequined  
tapestry a gigabyte of blue vibrating mater  
whose feet materialized gold

gold rain scorched the grass dissolved the rainbow trout in trout farms music  
floated over head my brain hummed saltwater taffy peanut butter crackers  
pepperoni pizza i curled up in the gravel with blue salamanders stuffed with  
plutonium oak leaves stuffed with irish setters i saw a white house coat aching  
inside a plexiglas antechamber i a peninsula a conch i wanted to be alive &  
fruitful the algorithm of an expensive lorgnette my tongue would bellow over  
my trachea the wind would bellow across the mouth of an aeolian harp  
the syllables trumpets swinging from a white trellis in the west  
the zeitgeist sharpening its slow thighs



the zeitgeist sharpening its slow thighs with steel wool preparing to new world  
order the morels cracking & spraying testosterone into my cerebellum  
serotonin into my cleft hooves the candle wicks became crusty sandal wood  
incense lapsed into yogurt breathing a noose a blue nine behind the sofa to  
see a photon torpedo that fell across a cross beside the library & its balustrades  
the chlorine in the pillows a frozen in time bottle of no perfect notes no cicadas  
only crickets & tree frogs the earth swooned  
i began unwrapping density

to be une personne terrible when i wanted to be a person immune to  
pneumonia or doused with kerosene i did not want to be an infidel  
mitochondria became protein parables became dust cum geysered from a blue  
primordial elephant gave birth to rivers & riverbanks my intestines fizzed with  
the zenith infiltrated the living rooms fist with foot ball the ocean clawed  
the hatteras lighthouse when would my larynx become mine i saw myself  
impaled by a pitch fork in the garden amongst the corn stalks if only i had known  
when what i know to survive requires the dictionary  
& the meteorite in the woods

### **An/ode and an Aria and an Apostrophe**

O apples burn the cinnamon  
O banjo misappropriated from Africa  
O crow that mourns the cross in the trailerpark  
O daisy that lows upfield  
O estuary's pine needles, small boats  
O finger between the legs  
O goat that knows its hooves and the rocks beneath them  
O happenstance that overtakes art, death  
O intelligent psychosis  
O John Coltrane like a train, screeching fire  
O kilt that is plaid, O the part of me that is a kilt  
O lyric, god's foreskin  
O meringue that dries, hardens the ceiling  
O national anthem, the back and shoulders pushed skyward  
O opium Afghanistan  
O Plexiglasembedded solarplexus  
O quotient bellows, quilts of blue cotton  
O rasp, my cheek, her words, dear cold heart  
O shewolf, run the city to tears  
O the tangerine grows eyes and watches me sleep  
O you who convulses above me, winetinged uvula, embossed robe  
O vessel that's a vessel, but then detached  
O xylophone begins  $x$  not  $z$   
O yesterday when I barely remembered my name  
O zenith, plum that fluxes the metaphor

## ABSTRACT

Carrier, C. S. Bachelor of Arts, Western Carolina University, Spring 1998; Master of Fine Arts, Spring 2005; Doctor of Philosophy, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Spring 2015

Major: English

Title of Dissertation: /anode a/node an/ode: Poetry and an Essay on Teaching Digital Creative Writing

Dissertation Director: Dr. Willard Fox

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This dissertation is part critical essay and part poetry collection. The critical essay, “Flipping the Script: On the Pedagogical Relevance of Teaching Digital Creative Writing,” examines the benefits of digital creative writing, i.e. text-based, literary work that requires digital technology at every stage of existence, by organizing those benefits into five categories, or nodes: *poiesis*, *literacy*, *identification*, *authority*, and *cognition*. Then, it argues that digital creative writing, like print creative writing, reinforces and extends the goal of liberal education, i.e. to promote creative, critical, and conscientious citizens. As students read, or interact with, and construct their own digital literary objects, they simultaneously learn to read, interact with, and construct their various selves and knowledge. As for the poems in the collection, they act, in Pound’s words, as “radiant node[s] . . . from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing.” They enact a broad conception of the literary, one characterized by connectivity, interactivity, multimediality, non-linearity, performativity, and transformability, features that coincide with those of digital literary works. Diverse with regard to style, the poems narrate the mind and body at play amid the world’s charged states. The poems cohere around concepts and associations attendant to the anode, node, and ode. The “anode” poems explore relationships among larger cultural forces (e.g. poetry, art, identity, and politics). The “node” poems explore autobiography through the lens of experimental biopic. And the “ode” poems explore and destabilize the ode and its conventions. Ultimately, the work responds to its environment and strives to contain a world that resists being contained.

### **Biographical Sketch**

C. S. Carrier grew up in western North Carolina and earned a BA in English from Western Carolina University in 1998. He earned an MFA in English/Creative Writing from the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Program for Poets and Writers in 2005. He earned a PhD in English from the University of Louisiana Lafayette. He is the author of several chapbooks and poetry collections including *After Dayton* (Four Way Books 2008) and *Mantle* (H\_NGM\_N Books 2013).